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HER WAY TO GO

THE Prime Minister has laid down a bitter-sweet recipe for West Bengal—first bitter then sweet. The Centre is ready to help the hapless State with a bulging purse of how many crores of rupees even she does not know; schemes are ready to transform Calcutta from a nightmare to a dream city; bustee-dwellers will have neat little tenements now beyond the reach of the middle-class; the unemployed will have work, the peasant land to till, and, what is most amazing, the civic bodies enough funds which will, after the customary loot, leave a surplus for amenities to citizens. The political parties have not been forgotten either; they have been promised a general election, the ultimate panacea, so that the fortunate among them may once again wallow in power. But all this after normalcy has been restored; the dam of Central goodwill and munificence will burst if law and order returns. In selecting the order of priorities for the State the Prime Minister gave precedence to the Home Minister in her, and all her talking hours were occupied with devising measures to curb lawlessness and violence. Her retinue consisted of the top brass of the Union Home Ministry, experts in smelling Chinese and Pakistani rats in politically inconvenient opponents of the ruling party; they held their little summits with their men in Calcutta and State Government officials furtively, while attention was focussed on Mrs Gandhi's activities. The upshot of these talks may be a grand strategy against the lawless and the anti-social which, in the code of the Government and the political parties recognised by the Establishment, mean Naxalites. The details of the strategy will gradually emerge, but there is no doubt that repression will be more ruthless and indiscriminate. The Centre will be more generous with arms aid to equip the police, the CRP, and the Border Security Force which will scour the State. So much for the success of the latest bandh and the gloating over it.

Neither the Prime Minister nor anybody connected with the implementation of her law-and-order plan has cared to explain what "normalcy" means. In 1966, she and her now-denigrated colleague, Mr Gulzarilal Nanda, had to rush to Calcutta to pacify the angry and by no means peaceful State. She is peeved at last week's bandh, but there were many more four years ago; yet the general election could be held in early 1967. Despite recent attempts to rehabilitate Mr Dharma Vira, there was more

labour trouble in West Bengal in 1968 than in the preceding year when the United Front reigned. But that did not come in the way of a mid-term poll in February 1969; it would have been held three months earlier but for the North Bengal floods. The existence of the Shiv Sena and its violent antics do not detract from normalcy in Maharashtra; nor does the daily incidence of vicious crimes in the city where Mrs Gandhi resides. West Bengal has always been an unquiet State, though lawlessness here is of a different type. It is more political than criminal, and the Government will have to wait till eternity if it plans to hold the next election only when the State becomes politically quiet. West Bengal will never be quiet in that sense; nor non-violent, for violence has entered the soul of all political parties in the State, the Prime Minister's own party not excluded; no party is left out of the all-in bomb-making and bomb-throwing spree. All that the Government can and will do in the name of restoring normalcy is to indulge some parties and try to suppress others.

The Prime Minister's plea of lawlessness is a ruse. She has gained time for her allies to continue their efforts for a mini-front ministry with the support of her party and win over the recalcitrant among the former constituents of the UF who are still squeamish over sharing power with the Congress. The Prime Minister is banking heavily on the lust for power that the left parties have developed in the last three years; she hopes that they will surrender if threatened with deprivation of office for long. Her reluctance to have any election until normalcy has returned is an elaborately laid trap. The Forward Bloc practically walked into it when its leaders argued with her that law and order could not improve under President's rule because permanent officials hesitated to be firm in a transitional regime. As the Prime Minister is not going to order an early poll, the only course open to the Forward Bloc to end lawlessness and President's rule is to form a mini-front ministry. Parties in tune with the Prime Minister will now

set to work on this line on the Forward Bloc, for it is principally the Forward Bloc which has stood all these months between President's rule and a mini-front ministry. To make their plea convincing they may even declare that a mini-front ministry will be for a short period only; it will assume office only to outmanoeuvre the Prime Minister and recommend immediate dissolution of the Assembly and holding a mid-term poll; and even during its short spell in office

the mini-front ministry will be able to record some achievement with generous assistance from the Centre. The Prime Minister and her associate parties are out to bully and suborn the recalcitrant into accepting their policy. If Mrs Gandhi were serious about continuation of President's rule the Assembly would have been dissolved forthwith and within fortyeight hours of her visit Mr Ajoy Mukherjee would not have met the Governor to discuss ministry-making.

Peace Moves

Last week the sultry air of New Delhi was thick with rumours of another peace offensive in Indo-China. The Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister, Mr Nikolai Firubin, who was on a "friendly visit" to New Delhi, was said to be carrying the proposals for a new Geneva conference for peaceful settlement of the Indo-China war. Once the Americans have given a firm pledge of withdrawing all troops from Indo-China, as Mr Firubin reportedly hinted, all the liberation fighters in Indo-China would hurry to negotiate. Although there was no confirmation of the rumoured move, New Delhi managed to find a place, however small, on the diplomatic map as a relay station between Washington and Moscow. A hangover from the Nehru era. Soon however it was discovered that the Russians have no reason to use India as a go-between when their man in Washington, Anatoly Dobrynin, finds himself very much at home there and the hot line is active.

However, the possibility that Moscow is out to peddle yet another peace plan cannot be ruled out. In April last while thousands of Vietnamese civilians were being massacred in Cambodia not much by way of protest was heard from Moscow. Instead it came out with the proposals for calling a new Geneva conference—to be withdrawn only when Hanoi's hostility to the idea became apparent. The latest noise about a peace proposal may or may not be genuine but

there has been growing evidence of the Soviet isolation from the liberation struggle in Asia and the resulting frustration may have turned the Russians towards a peace that would stop the spread of revolutionary ranks in Asia under the leadership of Peking.

Pravda in fact has given vent to its frustrations by accusing China of isolating the national liberation struggle in Asia from its "genuine allies—the countries of the socialist community, the international communist and workers' movement. That revolutionary forces in Asia have been warned in no uncertain terms to be on their guard against the imperialistic designs of Peking. But in a pointed disregard of the Soviet warning Hanoi applauded Mao for his "immense encouragement and firm support" and pledged to follow his advice to "persist in and energetically promote the fight to completely defeat the U.S. aggression". General Giap who is frequently dubbed pro-Moscow and an opponent of protracted war further underlined Hanoi's faith in Maoist strategy in an article in Nhan Dan. "We are unafraid of a protracted war", he said. "As proved by realities, our strategy of fighting protractedly has prevailed over the enemy's strategy of fighting and winning rapidly." Prince Sihanouk and his guerillas have also refused to slacken their armed effort.

The Russians are fast losing their cool. In a recent speech in Tokyo the Soviet Japanologist, Dmitri Petrov, implied that Moscow does not

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consider Peking to be the only trouble-maker in Asia. All the three countries—that is Vietnam and Korea as well as China—contain people, he said, who are indifferent to the dangers of war. It is therefore up to Russia and Japan, as industrialised countries with the most to lose, to take concerted action to ease tensions in Asia and prevent any new wars. Comrade Petrov just forgot to mention that other non-industrialised countries of Asia from South Korea to Thailand are no less interested in the kind of peace he has in mind.

Back at home, it seems India has very little to contribute to the anti-imperialist struggle. The visit of

Madame Binh raised expectations in the minds of certain leftist circles that Mrs Gandhi might utilise the opportunity to bring India closer to Hanoi and the Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam. These circles, who always see a straw in the duststorms of Delhi, will blame Mr Swaran Singh, whose 'personal guest' Madame Binh is, for the incivility of not having turned up at the airport to receive her. But the incivility must have had the sanction of the Cabinet headed by Mrs Gandhi: It is time people ceased to have any illusions about the role that India has decided to play—the role of a lackey of the two super-powers.

Bharat Sevaram and Sriguru Sangha. Government officials are too busy making surveys, calculations and explanations and cannot be bothered with petty problems like providing immediate relief.

Mrs Gandhi's Government, however, feels immensely satisfied that it can persuade six State Governments to agree to rehabilitate the refugees. Trainloads of refugees are leaving West Bengal for Orissa, Andhra, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and for the first time, Bihar. By July 15, it is officially stated, 81,000 have been despatched. Mrs Gandhi's obligations are presumably over; some cash occasionally and heaps of advice and hopes will make her conscience clear. Not that the refugees should have expected any royal welcome. The more clever of them left Pakistan long ago and established themselves in India through devious means. These new refugees, all poor peasants, know nothing except the land they lived on and coming to India do not know what to choose: refugee camps submerged in rainwater or some questionable shelter among unsympathetic people. The leftists here have been suggesting all along that the refugees be settled in the Andamans, where agricultural land can even now absorb all the new refugees, that the refugees should not be scattered all over India and exposed to absolutely uncertain prospects. The Government of India would not dare, however, to make a new consolidated colony in the Andamans which through its proximity to West Bengal may turn red and create some imaginary strategic handicaps for the Congress.

The New Refugees

Mr Triguna Sen thinks that the refugees who have been crossing into West Bengal since January this year are doing so because the Pakistani economic situation has become unbearable. The implication is, the refugees are coming over simply in search of food. This over-simplification is likely to antagonise people in general in West Bengal. Even the most kindhearted in West Bengal accepted the refugees in the past with the greatest reservations; the refugees were always considered, probably with some justification, a great burden on West Bengal's economy. The State's economy has been sunk irretrievably and the new exodus will make the confusion confounded; people here, following Mr Sen's statement, will develop some more antagonism towards the hapless refugees.

Mr Mujibar Rahaman testifies that the new refugees have been driven beyond the Pakistani border by the Pakistani October election machinations. The ruling clique fears that many voters would vote against it. The reasons for the present exodus, it appears, are not mainly economical but political, not the unreasonable preferences of the refugees but the political failure of the bankrupt policies of the Governments of India

and Pakistan. The Nehru-Liaquat pact, the Tashkent declaration and all the agreements in between were not meant for the safety and security of the Muslims in India or Hindus in Pakistan but for the peace and honour of the gentlemen in seats of power and prestige.

The West Bengal Government has refused to accommodate new refugees. It has of course its reasons. Since 1947, 44 lakh people have crossed over the border and most of them have settled in this State. In the absence of any constructive approach towards the problem, the Government tried to dispose of it by giving out doles and loans which have been causing a strain on its finances. A new burden is evidently beyond its power to bear, but to hurl a blatant refusal right in the face of the miserable refugees is simply beastly. The three refugee camps at Hasnabad, Basirhat and Petrapol have become glaring instances of how innocent people are paying for the crime committed by the conspirators of partition. Twenty-nine thousand refugees are herded at Hasnabad, 26,000 at Basirhat and 6,000 at Petrapol and all the people who are working to provide them with food and clothes belong to the Ramkrishna Mission,

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At Daggers Drawn

A correspondent writes :

Few could imagine two to three years ago that even students would kill fellow-students to sort out political differences. How to explain this phenomenon? Passionate partisans argue that this is a symptom of the extreme, inevitable—and welcome—polarisation that is taking place; that violence among students, even at this juncture when the ruling classes are sitting pretty, is unavoidable.

The phenomenon is perhaps an extension of the bitter inter-party struggle that marked the UF regime. Confined at the beginning to the countryside, it later erupted in some mining and plantation areas. It was the ruling parties, eager to extend their bases, which were involved. In Calcutta also signs of an arrogance of power were evident, a desire to teach the extremist opponents a quick lesson. Violence leading to murder of political opponents belonging to the same class began to be accepted as part of the class struggle; notorious elements who had served the Congress joined the various parties and became the vanguard when it was a question of attacking opponents. Experts in the science of assault and killing and given an ideological cover, they have trained up many young men to fight to kill. It was the rank and file which suffered, not the leaders. When the dominant parties resorted to bombs and daggers, those outside the UF were forced to pay them back in their own coin.

West Bengal is in a state of unrest and confusion. The most mobile elements, the young activists think that they are attacking the rotten system when they turn on educational institutions, statues, and other targets. People in their forties or fifties are not in a position to judge the depth of their frustration, anger, and determination to do something different, to break through in an atmosphere vitiated by the ceaseless squabbling and buffoonery of the aged politicians who have their hearts set on the Assembly and the Secretariat. The

young are fed up with demonstrations which end up in meetings, meetings which end up in resolutions, and resolutions which lead to nowhere. Besides, the idea of secret cells and cadres with a definite task to perform satisfies the craving for individual initiative, which participation in meetings and demonstrations does not. All this is understandable. But aren't all sorts of people, with their local interests to serve, trying, not to be like guerillas among the people—fish in water—but to fish in troubled waters? Inevitably, many provocateurs are active. And there are reasons to believe that, as psychological preparation, many stupid and mischievous acts—attacks on small hospitals, vaccination centres etc—will be performed to bewilder and antagonise the general public before 'popular resistance' begins.

Mr Sundarayya of the CPM is said to have told reporters that, in view of the number of CPM workers killed by the Naxalites, his party will now have to fight, tooth and nail.

Being a politician he did not care to remember how many extremists have died at the hands of his partymen. Mr Promode Das Gupta also has declared that if the police do not intervene, the Marxists will be able to tackle the Naxalites on their own terms. The scenario of popular resistance is being written, cadres are said to be selecting their areas of action.

As we all seem to live in worlds of our own, the Naxalites, who announce that the liberation army will march in West Bengal in 1970-71, are unlikely to be daunted, though outnumbered. But preoccupation with 'action' is not enough, particularly when some of the actions are unorthodox in the extreme. These are seldom explained in political terms but just mentioned in passing, as a tribute to student revolt. Too many unexplained experiments, too many brainwaves may be counter-productive and result in a backlash. There is yet time for the rank and file of the warring parties to take stock of what they have been doing. Force is the midwife...yes; but is any kind of force the answer to everything?

The French Left

M. Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber's ideas are a bundle of contradictions; nevertheless his diagnosis of the impotence of the French official left merits attention. The left has not been able to repudiate society as it is, being entrenched in it. It draws strength from the future to overcome insuperable obstacles, but is incapable of dealing with the present. It is split between opposition and responsibility. In the economic sphere, whenever a particular line of operation gets into trouble the leftists will suggest the remedy of State take-over or some fiscal stringency, even though in theory they are opposed to bureaucracy and the bourgeois system. It escapes them that the affliction of an area of the economy forebodes a national

economic crisis. The leftists have lost the key to the future and are groping in the dark. What else it could do when it is committed to playing the parliamentary game according to rule; JJS-S says the French left should go the whole hog in revisionism to evolve a concrete strategy. The present vagueness of its aims leaves an impression of confusion and deviousness. But if it falters, if it finds it difficult to openly repudiate the revolutionary idealism in which it has no longer any faith, it is because of the fear of losing its identity. JJS-S has his eyes on sixty or seventy members of the National Assembly who like him believe that revolution is impractical or inopportune in highly industrialised countries. If the parliamentary

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constellation he is chasing proves to be a mirage, it is because his candidness is embarrassing to many. JJS-S does not masquerade his reactionary ideas with progressive laces. The MPs wearing leftist plate-marks are unlikely to find in him the right man to form a third force around. This is reassuring to both the Gaullists and the communists who consider that French politics is fast polarising between them.

The barnstorming JJS-S introduced new mores of campaign in the by-election at Nancy. It started over the difference between M. Souchal and the Government over the decision to build the Paris-Strasbourg autoroute through Metz bypassing Nancy. Lorraine and Metz have strained relations for centuries. The citizens of Nancy have been smarting under the discrimination against them by the Central Government. Paris with all the trappings of Napoleonic grandeur is unapproachable. Little initiative is left for the local Government. JJS-S could judge the local mood correctly and turn the electioneering which the Gaullists hoped would be based on local issues, into a fusillade against the inert Government in Paris. He did not run as a Radical Socialist Party candidate, although he is the secretary-general of the party, but as a European for the development of a French province. The party maintained a distance before the election, for it was sceptical about the Nancy venture. This helped JJS-S in a way. As the candidate of local interests, he had an edge over M. Souchal. On the eve of the election JJS-S announced the formation of the Societe Europeenne de la Lorraine and guaranteed some 700 new jobs. His victory speech centred round the theme that the people had wrested power from the capital, the State and the party bosses.

Will there be a nationwide shake-up in the municipal election next year and the parliamentary elections in 1973? The Gaullists as well as the communists can draw comfort from the fact that there is only one JJS-S and Nancy is unique for its European outlook.

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View from Delhi

Groping For Allies

FROM A POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

NEVER on this side of the Congress split have issues been so blurred and politics so bankrupt as they are now. For Mrs Indira Gandhi, an early Lok Sabha poll is both off and on. It is part of her psychological warfare against party detractors and her political opponents. The gimmick has paid off because while no party wants a snap poll, every party is preparing for the contingency of an election early in 1971. But neither the Syndicate's plan for a Grand Alliance nor Mr George Fernandes' Janus-faced strategy (of alliance with the right and simultaneously with the left) has got off the ground.

At the end of the Jana Sangh conclave in Chandigarh this weekend, the SSP pow-wow in Bangalore, the Swatantra huddle in Madras, and finally the Syndicate's summit at Tirupathi, one might be able to hazard a guess. Only a guess because a certain tentative quality has come over party politics. Every party is timid, nervous and unsure and does not want to commit itself to any electoral strategy prematurely. Mrs Gandhi perhaps was trying to force the Opposition to lay its cards on the table by engineering rumours of an early poll.

For instance at the Jana Sangh conference, thinking was in favour of a limited legislative front against the ruling party and the leadership is not prepared to go farther than this at the moment. The Swatantra party has suggested such limited joint functioning in Parliament and in all likelihood, this is about all that the Syndicate's Grand Alliance plan would achieve to begin with. The wily Mr Rajagopalachari might try to psyche the DMK into joining the Grand Alliance eventually but this would undercut Mr Kamaraj in Tamil Nadu.

The confusion on the left is worse. The CPI feels rewarded for its touting for the ruling Congress and the CPI(M) now feels obliged to take a tough line against Mrs Indira Gandhi just to demarcate itself from the revisionist CPI. Mr E. M. S. Namboodiripad might object to the minority ministry that was ruling Kerala (now it is ruling without a legislature!) but he had no inhibitions about supporting a minority at the Centre. Time was when Mrs Gandhi wanted the CPI and CPI(M) to be united—on the question of supporting her. That phase ended the moment she knew she could ditch the CPI(M) and its 19 members in the Lok Sabha and survive any vote. It is in her interest now to keep both the right and the left parties divided so that there is no room for non-Congressism of the pre-1967 vintage at the next poll. This is the rationale of her selective support to the CPI in its attempts to play off its political vendetta against the Marxists.

Mrs Gandhi is not everything in her party. Mr Jagjivan Ram has his own strategy and he is dead set against any open alliance with the CPI even at the impending Kerala Assembly poll. Mrs Gandhi will find that things do not go exactly to her plan. Or she might herself begin realising that an open alliance with the CPI and the Muslim League in Kerala and the CPI in West Bengal might be a liability in the Hindi belt.

Her entire strategy is based on wresting majority in the Hindi belt. Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Delhi Union Territory account for four-tenths of the Lok Sabha seats. If she has to emerge as the leader of the largest single party (she has no hopes of winning independent majority) she has to win over half the seats in the

Hindi belt at any cost. Together with a series of opportunist adjustments with the satraps of the peripheral States, she hopes to head a coalition after the elections. There can be no inhibition over ideology. It could be a left coalition or a right coalition. This is one reason why the Congress-R would shun a programmatic alliance or a joint front based on any programme at this stage.

Deadlocked Parliament

It would be well to recall the leadership's attitude to such suggestions in the past. At the pre-split Faridabad plenary session, Mr C. Subramaniam circulated his famous thesis on the possibility of a deadlocked Parliament in 1972 and the means of averting it. His thesis was rejected with contempt by Mr Y. B. Chavan on behalf of the bosses and the Congress talked of politics of commitment and a resolve to fight things single-handed. Once again, at the June AICC of the ruling Congress, Mr C. Subramaniam raised the issue but it was ignored by the leadership. Nobody so much as referred to the danger of a deadlocked Parliament. Mr Subramaniam had said that though the time before them was too short, they could still hope to avert a deadlock.

Mrs Gandhi takes a deadlocked Parliament for granted. In fact she would like one so that she is the leader by a manipulated consensus. A clue to her thinking could be found in a little-noticed article by her chief tactician, Mr D. P. Mishra. The former RSS storm-trooper turned PSP leader and now an apostle of democratic socialism says that if the Hindi region has to have its dominance over national politics, it is necessary to re-elect the Congress-R from the region. The election strategy of the ruling Congress will be oriented to winning a majority in the Hindi belt and going in for opportunist power adjustments with the right and left in the peripheral States, even if it means letting down the party in the non-Hindi States. What if Mr Subramaniam is finished and there is no Congress-R left in Tamil

Nadu as long as the DMK retains power in the State and supports Mrs Gandhi at the Centre? A similar understanding with the Akalis, the Bangla Congress, the BKD or even the Shiv Sena is perfectly logical, given the only goal—Mrs Gandhi's return to power at the head of any kind of coalition, formal or informal.

So far the strategy has succeeded. The main challenge to her in the Hindi belt is from the Jana Sangh and the right. But the right has been successfully divided by isolating the Jana Sangh. The command performance at the June AICC and later from Chandni Chowk was designed to isolate the Sangh from the rest of the right by raising the communal bogey, which would also appeal to the left allies. The left shows no trend towards unity. The two communist parties will be kept sniping at each other while the SSP and the PSP can never unite. If anything there is a chance of the two socialist parties splintering into four. The established leadership in both these parties have seen to it that there is no chance of merger and the leaders would rather prefer both the parties splitting so that there are three if not four socialist parties. Mrs Gandhi can always choose her allies from among the fragmented factions.

No Clear Pattern

As of now, it looks as though no clear pattern of alliances will emerge except on the eve of a poll. No party wants to make a prior commitment and the approach of each party is timid and halting. What may eventually prevail will be unprincipled, opportunist regional alliances with no regard for programme or policies and the ruling party will set the fashion for the new political permissiveness. If winning the majority in the Hindi belt requires banning the CPI(M) it would be done because the June AICC resolution is aimed against what is imprecisely described as left adventurism. It can be interpreted to cover the CPI(M) or a section of the CPI(M). It has always been the ruling class's strategy

to hasten the split in a communist party through a policy of selective arrests. The CPI(M)'s tactic of providing polling agents for Mr Giri may come home to roost. It is a strange spectacle, the party demanding an immediate poll in West Bengal and asking for a late poll in Kerala while supporting a minority Ministry at the Centre.

July 19, 1970

Kerala

Preparing For The Fray

RAMJI

THE Election Commissioner has come and gone and it is more or less certain that the elections will come off during the first week of September. This is what the mini-fronters want and since they enjoy Mrs Gandhi's patronage they are likely to get what they want. The more so, as the Marxists are vehemently clamouring for elections in December. The Marxists point out that the voters' list is not yet ready and that thousands and thousands of voters were left out during the enumeration mainly because they, mostly peasants and workers, were neck-deep in their struggles when the enumeration took place. If the elections come off in September there would be no time for scrutiny of the voters' list, filing of objections for deletion or addition and publication of revised voters' list. The time available for all this would be just a week, or so. There is justice in the Marxists' contention that under such circumstances, with lakhs of voters left out, the elections would be a farce.

The various political parties are busy getting ready for the fray. The main preoccupation now is not election propaganda but getting as many allies as possible into one or the other of the various fronts that are taking shape. The CPI-led mini-front succeeded in patching up, for the time being, the differences between the PSP and

the ISP inside it, through just a change in nomenclature: the old co-ordination committee has become the united front committee. This appeased the ISP which withdrew its objection to the PSP joining the front. It may be recalled that this was the issue which had threatened to break up the front, and which induced the Chief Minister, Mr Achutha Menon, to cure the ailment by killing the patient: he got the Assembly dissolved and he and his Ministry became representative of none other than themselves. The leverage of official position and leadership of the mini-front has induced the CPI to assume grandiose roles. The CPI with just five percent voting strength in Kerala, is among the diminutive parties in this State. But, thanks to the indulgence of the Governor, who allows the Chief Minister to continue as such, even though his majority in the Assembly is highly suspect and even though the Assembly has been dissolved the CPI image stands bloated up. The mini-fronters are now evolving their election plank, for which a committee is at work. But, even before the all-party committee met, Mr M. N. Govindan Nair, Secretary of the State CPI, ignoring the other partners, begged the question by stating that the mini-front would be seeking a confidence vote for the Ministry during the elections. This has irked the other partners who have a larger following. One thing is certain. There is going to be quite a lot of bickering over the division of seats, especially as the CPI, the smallest party, in terms of voting percentage, is demanding an inordinately large share of seats, none of which it can win without the support of others.

The two parties in the mini-front with substantial following, though confined to specific regions, are the Kerala Congress and the Muslim League. While the CPI could easily appease the League by granting it an adequate number of seats in the Malabar area, where it has no roots, it would be quite a different affair when it comes to the question of seats for the Kerala Congress. Many

of the CPI seats now claimed by it are those where the Kerala Congress is stronger.

Behind the facade of the front, frantic activity is going on for permutations and combinations. The Kerala Congress is trying to forge an alliance with the Indicate Congress on the one side and the Muslim League and the Syndicate Congress on the other, to form what is termed a 'democratic front'. The Kerala Congress wants to cut the pompous and conceited CPI down to size. The picture is changing so fast and frequently that it is difficult at present to predict the final shape of things.

In A Quandary

The Indicate Congress, with its servile leadership, is in a quandary. After giving all-out support to the mini-front while it was in power and singing hallelujahs to it, it now finds that, according to the mini-front rating, it has to take a back seat. Under mini-front dispensation, about 30 seats have been allotted to it, out of 133, on the assumption that it will play the second fiddle to the front and remain as its humble henchman without aspiring to any position in the government. The silent surrender of the Indicate Congress, initially, to the assumption of leadership by the mini-front, showed that it would be satisfied with this undignified role, although it commands more popular support than all the mini-front parties put together and, next to the Marxists, it is still the party with the biggest popular following in the state. After the initial shock of being taken so much for granted, the Indicate leadership has begun to show some signs of spirit and some consciousness of its undoubted popular strength. The Indicate Congress President has now stated that if the mini-front wants a mandate from the people for the present ministry, it will have to contest all the seats and that it would be too much to expect the Congress to support an anti-Congress line, which was one of the original planks of the United Front and which the mini-front claims it has inherited. Further, it is certain now that the

Indicate would plump for more than 60 seats and would reject most of the seats now offered, since most of these are Marxist strongholds. Apart from this, groups have surfaced inside the Indicate Congress. Of this, one is led by Mr C. M. Stephen, who is for an alliance with the Kerala Congress and through it the Muslim League and the Syndicate Congress, to revive in effect the anti-communist party alignment which took place after the 'liberation struggle'. This section is gathering considerable strength.

A significant feature inside the Indicate Congress is the emergence of a group of youthful Congressmen (not Youth Congress) who have formed themselves into a Congress Radical Forum, which wants the Congress to be alive to its strength and to fight the elections singlehanded. The Radical Forum-sponsors state that this is in tune with the resolution of the Kottayam State Convention of the Congress in 1968 and since this has not been revoked by another convention, the KPCC has no power to go against the resolution. This youthful section, which is as much disgusted with the servile attitude of the KPCC leadership as with the establishment-conscious 'yesmanship' of the Youth Congress leaders who have been taken into the KPCC executive, is fast gathering round it a considerable section of Congressmen. And if their demand is not met by the KPCC, it is certain that they will be putting up candidates of their own, without reference to the alliance commitments of the Indicate Congress. The Radical Forum is likely to be a lively thorn in the flesh of the Indicate Congress. The Radicals are staunch Congressmen and they feel that the Congress has to be rid of reactionary leadership if it has to take its legitimate place in the political picture of Kerala. If, as is likely the KPCC leadership refuses their demand, they have planned a state-wide convention, to decide their election strategy. And it is quite likely that they might come to an understanding with the Marxists, since the leaders have stated that if there is any question of alliance or understand-

ding with any party by the Congress, it could be only with the Marxists, the only party with statewide mass following. Further, the Radicals maintain that with the socialist ideology of the Congress it is logical for them to be in favour of Marxism, although they might not fully support the Marxist party as such.

The Marxists, who do not have the benefit of the wide publicity which the other parties, especially the mini-frontiers, get in the press, are quietly taking stock of their strength. With the arrival of EMS from his foreign tour, the Marxists are going to evolve their election strategy.

collision was the role of the Soviet Union. It played a role which no imperialist or reactionary country was in a position to play. Before evidence is adduced, a brief survey may be useful. India and China were two friendly neighbours but with borders not formally delimited. The borders became lively in 1949-50; communism on the border has many implications. In the past these borders were occasionally disputed and conflicting claims (along these borders) can draw sustenance from history, ethnography or from common justice. It is indeed difficult to pinpoint the issue. But this much was certain that (1) the McMahon Line has never been recognised by China; the Lhasa authorities of Tibet disputed it right in 1947 immediately after India became independent (Report of the Officials of the Government of India and the Peoples' Republic of China on the Boundary Question—published by the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India), (2) and that the Indian Government was never in actual control of the Aksai Chin area, but China was (Nehru's speech in the Lok Sabha on February 23, 1961).

India-China Dispute And The Soviet Union

P. C. DUTTA

MAO'S warm handshake with the Indian Chargé d'Affaires in Peking caused not a little surprise. India has been caught in a state of mindless reflex. But what are the Chinese really up to? The Indian foreign office men asked each other this question for several days and apparently ended as short of positive answers as they had started. They plumed for Dinesh Singh's suggestion that the search for answers should be left to the officials who in 'mutual exploratory contacts' might or might not find a basis for more formal discussion of India-China problems.

Those about to embark on that search will not have an easy time. The present diplomatic picture is full of loose ends. With the Soviet Union and America controlling our purse, both hostile to China, the prospect is not encouraging. They would not allow the structure of containment of China to collapse. *New Times*' (June 9) broadside against China's Asia policy, exploiting the native distrust of the bourgeoisie of Communist China, indicates that Moscow does not want India to go ahead. The American reaction, too, is never tardy. The Indian big bourgeoisie found in Mao's gesture just diplomacy and considered even Indira's mild response, not as reasonable but as impudent. What the left parties think about foreign policy seems almost the same as that of the

bourgeoisie. Not unreasonably did Indira Gandhi tell her questioner in an appreciative mood that the two communist parties no longer looked for foreign guidance. Election politics allows no scope for risking nationalist-minded middle-class opinion. To an average Indian the handshake was a good thing in that it took place at all; but pessimism persists. The expectation got short shrift from the Indian Government spokesman who just dug in and kept insisting on full recognition of India's border claims as a precondition for any fruitful talks. To people it is no longer a matter of fleeting policies or an apparent inability, it is the State and its institutions that are more suspect than ever. Retrogressive India will not be allowed to conclude peace with revolutionary China. But a progressive India is not an immediate possibility and the average Indian looks askance, oblivious of the dangerous potential of the situation.

The dangerous potential and the sheer enormity of the tragedy entailing enormous loss in men, money and material, of the quarrel between two friends whose affection was heightened by shared captivity until they faced each other over the border, impel us to look back again and again for an explanation of how the break came about.

One of the most important factors that helped to cause the head-on-

Mao's China and Nehru's India were not hostile to each other. In a confidential letter in 1950 to India's Representative at UN, Sir B. N. Rao, Nehru wrote: "There can be little doubt that the Chinese Government is trying its best to be friendly to us. Apart from present-day conflicts and in the long run I am sure that it is of great importance to Asia and to the world that India and China should be friendly" (quoted by B. Shiva Rao in his article 'Nehru and the U.N.', *The Statesman*, December 6 and 7, 1965). The main task New China set herself was to defeat the exploiters at home and the menacing imperialists abroad and to win to her side the waverers. Among the waverers were a whole number of newly independent bourgeois States which as bourgeois States detest Red China but as oppressed States prefer peace with her. This explains the peaceful boundary settlements with Burma, Nepal, Pakistan

and Afghanistan. The same is true of China's negotiations with India because the basis is almost identical. Her policy is to group around herself those capitalist countries which are strangled by imperialism. That is why her proposal of concessions to a number of countries has more than a capitalist significance. She distinguishes between big dangers and little danger and incurs the lesser dangers rather than the greater in order to consolidate and strengthen revolution in conditions of gherao by the imperialist powers and eventual conflict. The fundamental condition, however, for the permanent security and victory of a socialist country is world proletarian revolution, but that revolution need not be exported is an objective law. Therefore, for China to pursue peaceful co-existence with India was neither inconsistent with her revolutionary declaration nor difficult.

For Nehru New China originally appeared to be not a State of the classical communist type but a peasant-nationalist one and certainly not a satellite of Soviet Russia. A partly materialist, partly metaphysical Chinese communism was to Nehru an essential manifestation of China's sanguine hopes in a desperate situation. And Nehru was eager to see that the two communist giants stretching across the world from the Elbe to the Pacific coast of China did not unite. He would have preferred to befriend China. But India is a big bourgeois State with powerful domestic reactionary forces and among the States bordering on China there is no other country but India on which the imperialists can rely in a long-term plan of military intervention; in their common hate of revolutionary China all the bourgeois States are directly interested in having India at loggerheads with China.

Soviet Role

What, however, was extraordinary was the Soviet Union's role right from the start. It is less known. In a confidential letter to Sir B. N. Rao in 1950 Nehru wrote "I have a strong feeling that the future of Asia is ra-

ther tied up with the relations between India and China. I see that both the USA and the UK on the one hand and the USSR on the other, for entirely different reasons are not anxious that India and China should be friendly towards each other. That itself is a significant fact which has to be borne in mind" (quoted by B. Shiva Rao, 'Nehru and the U.N.', *The Statesman*, December 6 and 7, 1965).

Nehru kept this significant fact in mind throughout and tried to cash in on it as far as he could. The more anti-Chinese he became, the more aid did he get not only from America but also from the Soviet Union, to tide over domestic difficulties. The Nehru Government secured two Soviet credits totalling 350 million roubles (Rs 3,000 million) right after the Indian Government had supported the counter-revolutionary uprising in Tibet, thus creating the first breach in India-China friendship, disregarding the principle of non-interference. It was about this time that Nehru had the first communist State government in Kerala ousted. As the Sino-Soviet rift which began from the 20th Congress of the CPSU on the question of 'parliamentary road' and Stalin' widened and became public, the Soviet hostility towards China became brazen. Disregarding the Chinese counsel to the contrary, Tass issued a statement on the Longju incident in September 1959 which hid as much as it revealed. Not even Nehru was prepared to go that far and he was then censured by the monopolist press in India as being soft towards China when even the 'brother Soviet Union' held her responsible for all the clashes on the border. This was the final green signal. Pressed by the domestic need for foreign aid, assured of Soviet 'neutrality' against China, and with the CPI and the Anglo-Americans ready to respond, Nehru thought it was his moment of truth. Had there been no Soviet instigation in the shape of anti-China statements, Nehru would not have gone to the extent he did. Nehru acknowledged it, saying "Soviet neutrality in the conflict was of

greater help to India than all the military aid received from the West in those days" (Source: *Indian Communism, Split within a Split* by Mohan Ram). About who started the fighting even some Anglo-American newspapers hostile to China gave different versions. For example, the *Sunday Telegraph* on October 21, 1962 reported: "India made a secret high level approach to the West for support shortly before launching her offensive against the Chinese on the Himalayan border, it is now learned". The *New York Times* of April 19, 1963, quoting a UPI dispatch from Washington, reported: "Gen. Maxwell D. Taylor, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, indicated in secret congressional testimony made here today that India might have started the border fight with Communist China. . ." (Source: *The Wall Has Two Sides*, by Felix Greene). But the 'brother Soviet Union', but for a brief spell during the Caribbean crisis in 1962 (when in anticipation of Chinese help she denounced the 'notorious' McMahon Line—*Pravda*, October 25) continues to hold China responsible to this day (*New Times*, June 9, 1970). The Soviet authors and journalists outbid even the American and Indian authors and journalists in portraying China in the blackest colour. China is recklessly irredentist, they say, relying frequently and confidently on a map in a book by Liu Pei-hua's *Brief History of Modern China* published in 1952. Leaning on an article by Professor Liu Tannien published in the *Lishiyanjie* magazine back in 1961 illustrating the extent of the Chinese Empire "stretching to the Pacific in the East, the South Sea islands in the South, the Himalayas in the West, and Siberia in the North", Mr M. Ukraintsev writes ('Asia and the Peking Empire-Builders', *New Times*, June 9, 1970): "Today Peking is reviving the antiquated concept of Sino-centrism and China's supremacy". The map and the article showed the author's concept of territories that had been taken from China by the imperialist powers, and not by the revolutionary

subject people. But to seize on this map and that article as evidence of China's neo-imperialistic expansionism is no more justifiable than it would be to suspect the Indian Government of similar ambitions on the basis of maps published in India illustrating the extent of the Indian Empire in its prime, incorporating Afghanistan in the North-West and the Javanese Islands in the South-East. To allow inferences from a lone map or a single article to outweigh such concrete evidence as China's liberal boundary pacts with her former vassal States, Nepal, Burma, Mongolia, as sovereign equals is, to say the least, dishonesty.

It is now known that Chou En-lai assured Nehru in 1956 that he would accept a boundary on the McMahon alignment. Considering that Koumintang China as well as the Lhasa authorities rejected the McMahon Line, this is no small concession. But the belief of certain people is incorrigible, an act of faith, not conclusion. China has repeatedly made official statements that she is ready to settle her boundaries with the USSR on the basis of unequal treaties (they were considered unequal by Marx, Engels and Lenin) which formed them, and not on the basis of a claim for "Siberia in the North". On his way back to China from India, Chou En-lai said at a press conference at Kathmandu in 1960 that with the USSR there was only 'a very small discrepancy on maps and it is very easy to settle'. The optimism has been proved mistaken. Moscow who lectured China during the Sino-Indian dispute saying 'it was wrong for people to die in clashes', 'what are a few square kilometres for a country?', would not yield an inch of 'her ter-

ritory' to China. Preaching is one thing, practising another.

Crucial Questions

The crucial questions must now be asked. (1) Why was Stalin's socialist Soviet Union reluctant to see India being friendly with socialist China, and (2) why did the animosities to China develop to such monstrous proportions since his death? The first question is a riddle and the answer to this will not be easy. But one can suggest. The Soviet Union has been reverted to great-nation chauvinism after Lenin's death. Stalin's paternalistic attitude was noted even by Lenin. The Soviet Union would not like to see any communist State to be independent of her politically and militarily. Stalin was distrustful of free communication lest it restored nationalism and capitalism, while himself remaining almost oblivious of the fact that nationalism and capitalism were striking roots in his own country under the impact of the war and under the theory of 'socialism in one country' which later developed into 'communism in one country' and under the principles of 'special incentive to the scientists, managers and specialists' guided by 'pay according to labour.' The latter left to itself made wide differences between man and man in the Soviet Union and created conditions for the growth of the 'Soviet bourgeoisie'. After Stalin's death, what was incipient became prominent. War had devastated the whole country, the people hungered for peace and prosperity. In their weariness and subsequently in their self-confidence born of the mastery of nuclear weapons, they forgot the classical communist precept that socialist victory would not be secure and permanent so long as capitalism and imperialism remained and so long as there was no world proletarian revolution. Peace and business became their motto, the highest standard of living in the world their goal, the profit incentive was accepted for growth. A capacious home market and needy socialist markets abroad gave tremendous fillip to Soviet industry. But

peace proved to be a mirage. No sooner had the great war ended than the Chinese civil war came to the fore. America intervened but the Soviet Union would not. The Korean war came, but the Soviet Union would not embroil herself. The Soviet Union took a perfunctory attitude towards revolutions and national liberation wars lest they embroil her. Peace became the supreme task of the entire world communist movement at the behest of the Soviet Union. But peace does not fill the hungry stomachs of the millions. Prosperity in the Soviet Union does not automatically bring prosperity to the colonial and semi-colonial countries. And the United States has been riding roughshod over the peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America. The people became restless but the Soviet Union would not risk her detente with the USA. Jointly they decided to divide the world into spheres of influence. Friendship with China means opting for revolution, trouble, risking friendship with the USA and ultimately war. The predominant requirement now of the Soviet Union was sources of raw material for her industries and market for her finished goods. But China stood in the way. With the authority of the longest and largest, if not the greatest, revolution in history to her credit, she struck a heavy blow at Soviet revisionism and exploded Khrushchev's sanctimonious piffle. Russia became wild with rage. China's insistence on armed liberation struggle against foreign domination, colonial and neo-colonial, her insistence on self-reliance came in the way of the US and the USSR getting at the raw material sources peacefully left over by Britain, France, Holland etc. That is why the two super-powers are furious with China and supplement each other, each in its own way to contain and eventually destroy revolutionary China. India with her space, population and neutral image, was thought to be the best stick to beat China with, besides serving as a huge market after the loss of China.

CORRECTION

In the last paragraph of Ashok Rudra's article in the issue of July 11 the sentence "Women no doubt constitute a social class" should read: "Women of course do not constitute a social class".

The suggestion that the Soviet Union protected India from falling into the American camp is not borne out by facts. Along with collaboration, confrontation between the two super-powers does take place, but only when one power treads a little too near the other's backyard. Confrontation—and let-it-not-be-forgotten, withdrawal. Brezhnev says that the Third World cannot 'secure the establishment of their independent economy' unless they 'cooperate' with the Soviet Union and this 'cooperation', according to Kosygin, will enable the Soviet Union to 'purchase in these countries increasing quantities of their traditional export commodities' and 'variety of manufactured goods'. In the eyes of the Soviet leaders, the people of the Third World are only to supply them with 'these traditional export commodities' from generation to generation. Does not this theory boil down to this—industrial Soviet Union but agricultural Asia, Africa, Latin America; industrial Soviet Union—subsidiary processing workshop, Asia, Africa, Latin Ame-

rica? After years of 'cooperation' and 'aid' what a secure independent economy India has! India has become now the largest dumping ground for Soviet military goods. Indo-Soviet friendship has so over-reached itself and become so burdened that the people are becoming restless and see clearly that in concept, form and result the Soviet aid can hardly be distinguished from the American aid, the Brezhnev collective security plan from the Dulles plan.

Indo-Soviet friendship has landed India into an unenviable position. Not even a diehard supporter of Indira Gandhi would suggest that India cuts a very fair figure so far international politics is concerned. Despite stupendous 'aid' from the two super-powers India is passing through the worst economic crisis in her history.

Mao is not so thoughtless as to shut his eyes to the possibilities of fresh attempts to win India, now strangled by the two biggest imperialisms.

Consultancy Services In India

BY A CORRESPONDENT

CONSULTANCY firms who offered their services to the projects being undertaken in the public sector raised an outcry in the press as soon as the decision of the Government of India to undertake the planning, design, procurement and other engineering works for Bokaro Steel departmentally under the Central Design Bureau of HSL was announced. The undertaking stated to have been given by the late Mr Nehru is sometimes recalled, as if the follies and foibles of a dead Prime Minister detrimental to the interests of the country cannot be remedied.

There is little justification for public unease. What is happening is simply that one more portion of the project works is now being undertaken in the public sector, thus slash-

ing off the earnings of the private sector.

The consulting engineering firms that came into existence soon after the beginning of the five year plans are, by and large, American, Indo-American firms or firms set up by the Western countries. In some cases the names of the foreign collaborating firms have been deleted afterwards to make them look more Indian but the fact remains that the purchase, outright or otherwise, of technical know-how and importation of technical personnel, often with no theoretical qualifications and under the dubious designation of 'experts' at exorbitant prices continued unabated. In the eastern part of India there are firms specialising in the power field and in the projects deal-

ing with steel, and other metallic industries. One of these, an American firm which came to this country during the first five year plan, tagged 'India' to its tail and parted with an insignificant portion of the share, but actually its operation is still controlled by the American principal. Even the technical works are severely limited to copying the blue-prints and calculations from the drawings and basic design work done in its America office. In other words, the function of the Calcutta office with its huge air-conditioned rooms and a fleet of Indian engineers, among whom those with qualifications from American universities draw twice the salary of their Indian counterparts, is simply that of a post office. Despite the glut of qualified and trained technical personnel in the country, technical personnel who are called 'experts' are being brought from America for execution of contracts at high salaries and facilities. The U.S. Government's specific stipulation that for the assistance given to any project an American consultancy firm must be appointed gives an added leverage to these firms to extract contract works within restricted competition, and at the same time to export back a considerable part of the aid money to America.

Another firm, though very Indian in appearance, is in fact also a post office of America, West Germany and other Western countries. The main planning, design, drawing and basic calculations are mostly copied from American and other Western countries and purchased at fabulous prices. It is said to have some connection with Tatas.

In the western part of India, of two firms, both under Tatas, one was renamed to make it look more Indian. But it remains as American in content and approach as previously. The second firm deals with nuclear, aeronautical and other advanced mechanical and electrical engineering. Thus, four big firms in India desire to capture the field of consultancy services between themselves just as in monopoly capitalism.

The chief functions of the consul-

Calcutta Diary

GYAN KAPUR

tancy firms are to advise and suggest to their clients in India, mainly the State and/or Central Government undertakings, the feasibility of projects, the adoption of correct designs and processes, and help in the purchase and procurement of equipment from different available sources, preferably indigenous. That is to say, their advice and suggestions should be unbiased and not motivated. What happens actually is quite the contrary. The advice and suggestions are more often than not couched in language and technical jargon so as to force the purchaser to keep his choice limited to manufactures of Western countries or to indigenous manufacturers who have set up their factories in collaboration with capitalists from the Western countries and America. Secondly, the rank and file of the engineers of the governments, except those who are in the top superintendent, managing director, echelons, like chief engineer, general technical director, financial director, etc., are kept absolutely inactive except signing bills and minor administrative works and have no say in technical matters. This, ipso facto, engenders frustration and disillusionment. In addition, each project has 'advisers' whose functions are rather dubious. The chief engineers, superintendents, etc are generally the proteges of these advisers. Thus through secret mutual arrangements decisions are taken on vital matters by the managing directors, chief engineers, etc on procurement of material, machinery, design, acceptance of tenders without even having the feasibilities or technical suitabilities examined by the departmental engineers. In one word, they retain absolute say in all matters but at the same time their responsibility is virtually nil, protected as they are by the advisers and consultants. For this self-imposed, often willing, helplessness, high salaried officials from public sector projects or the senior engineers who get caught in some shady deals find berth, after their retirement or in times of difficulty, in these consultancy firms. The posts they

are offered depend on the amount of contract value they helped the consulting firms to gain or on their value as contact men for negotiating contracts with their previous employers. No less important is the fact that sons of ambassadors or highly paid officials in foreign service or in Central and state secretariats are provided with lucrative jobs for obvious reasons. They give the necessary tips at the opportune moment and help them in bagging contracts for themselves and their satellite manufacturing and construction firms.

Incidents and illustrations can be multiplied to show that the vicious circle that has been set up by the camarilla of the consultants, advisers and senior government officials is really serving the interests of the neo-colonialist powers who are now having heyday in India thanks to the five year plans executed under 'mixed economy'. The advisers whose functions are rather obscure are really the key men in the chain. Being direct contact men of consulting firms and as also the advisers of the Central or State Governments they have unlimited power and privilege to select men in top positions in projects and industries who would readily fall in line with their opinion without demur and thus facilitate landing on contracts by firms of their choice.

In the circumstances the decision of the Government of India to take up the work of the consultants themselves departmentally, such as, by the Central Design Bureau or HSL or by the newly set up Government firm, Consultancy Services (India) Ltd under Water and Power Development is welcome. But then, with 'socialism going downhill' as evident from the Centre's volte face in the case of granting licences to Birlas for Goa Fertiliser Project or to Tata's Mithapur Project despite the Dutta Committee's emphatic recommendations to the contrary, there is not much hope that any fruitful result will be obtained eventually. Ultimately the Centre is bound to succumb to the pressure of the aid giving countries. And that is the price of aid.

THE mixture as before—this sums up the situation in general in this city. No doubt there are a few changes hastily scribbled on the margin of the prescription now and then. Of these the most novel has come from the Corporation of Calcutta whose contribution to original thinking, not to speak of work, is not expected to be much.

The mayoral chair of the Corporation apparently has some of the qualities of the Judgment seat of Vikramaditya and these are passed on to whoever occupies it. Otherwise it is difficult to explain the present doings of our Mayor, Mr Prasanta Sur, who started in a businesslike way to bring some sort of order out of the Corporation mess. Incidentally, Mr Sur happens to be one of the few elected representatives on the contemporary scene who goes about in trousers which today is much nearer the dress of the common run of employees and workers than the supposed national dress of the other leaders but which is really the dress of the exploiting landed gentry. In spite of good beginnings, however, Mr Sur has fallen prey to delusions of grandeur from which successive mayors have suffered.

It is difficult to explain otherwise the Mayor's serious attempts to open a luxury hotel on the site of the present New Market. With his undoubtedly greater drive and ability to get things done he has even got promises of the money required from the LIC. Neither the Mayor nor the LIC apparently thinks, that a few crores of rupees of the policy holders could be put to any better use than building a hotel to woo international tourists to see the doubtful charms of this city. Housing in the city remains a chronic problem for those not entitled to get free company quarters. The much-vaunted housing loan scheme of the LIC proved a trap for the unwary middle income people, some of whom spent a few hundred rupees without even getting

the loan. Municipal housing is common in many countries, even in capitalist Britain. It is really strange that the nationalised LIC and the communist Mayor could not agree on anything better to spend the money than on a posh hotel to cater to the needs of tourists, mainly Americans.

If it was a sure thing to augment the Corporation's finances, the scheme might be thought to be a necessary evil like octroi. But the luxury hotel business is not so much of a certainty as a moneymaking proposition, not to speak of the Corporation's ability to run it. Only in the recent past one hotel has started functioning with loans from the ratepayers' money granted by the Central Government. According to reports, it is not faring very well. Another one is on the way to completion. By the time the Corporation comes up with its own, of course, the tourist trade may pick up. But that is a far-fetched possibility. In the end the Corporation is sure to be left with a white elephant and a loan of a few crores of rupees adding further to its proverbial hard up finances. But leaving all that aside let us take a ride into the future and imagine the course of events as they may very well take place. Over, then, to the time machine and watch the fun unroll itself:

Notices were served on the stallholders to vacate their stalls so that construction work on the new hotel could start. As might have been expected, the stallholders joined forces and challenged the Corporation's authority to eject them. After a bitter legal battle lasting over two years, the Calcutta High Court finally gave the verdict in favour of the Corporation. But the stallholders still refused to vacate. They launched satyagraha, lying down in Lindsay Street and Jawaharlal Nehru Road paralysing traffic and clashing with the police. They wanted alternative accommodation on a suitable site. Ultimately, after protracted negotiation it was decided to fill up the pond in front of Lindsay Street and build a temporary site there at a cost of Rs 50 lakhs. By the time tenders were finalised and work started costs

had gone up. Finally, the work was completed and the stallholders shifted. By now it was estimated that the cost of the hotel would go up by 50%. The LIC refused to grant further loans. Ultimately, the State Government came to the rescue.

At the weekly meeting of the Corporation a bitter debate took place as to what should be the name of the hotel. Some leftist members wanted it to be called Lenin International Hotel. But Congress members insisted that it should have the name of Gandhiji, the father of the nation. Forward Bloc members were equally insistent that it should be called after Netaji. Both Congress and Forward Bloc members walked out and threatened they would launch a satyagraha and not allow construction to go on if their demands were not accepted. Ultimately, as a compromise the name of Chittaranjan was accepted by all as being non-controversial.

Construction was stalled for over a year as there was some delay in payment from the LIC and the contractors refused to supply any more material without payment. Ultimately, the Mayor in one masterly stroke solved the problem. He leased out two entire floors to the contractors against their bills at half the market rates.

As construction neared its finish, a new problem arose. The Corporation employees demanded that the entire headquarters be shifted to the new building. Efficiency would improve, they maintained, in air-conditioned comfort. In the interests of citizens this was the least the Corporation could do. Finally, they had their way and another two floors were allotted for the Corporation's own offices. Four out of the eight floors were already accounted for.

Some of the Councillors now proposed that with so many receptions being accorded by the Corporation, they should have a separate hall reserved for this. Half the floor went for this. As for the other half, others thought that the Councillors should each have a room at least where they could entertain guests from outside

the City. This also was found a reasonable thing, and took away the other half of the floor.

After all this, free lunches and dinners for the Councillors, their families and guests were accepted as a matter of routine not worth discussing.

The first five floors were occupied in due course to the satisfaction of all concerned. But the opening of the last three floors which made up the hotel was delayed over a vital point. What should be the entertainment? Ultimately, all foreign things were debarred and it was decided that there would be only purely native culture. Only songs of Rabindranath would be allowed and, of course, kirtans.

The hotel's inauguration was announced with a fanfare. Anyone who was anything in the City tried to get an invitation and cards were sold in the blackmarket. However, the great evening at last came. Unfortunately, there was one point which had been overlooked by all concerned. Electric bills worth a few lakhs of rupees had not been paid for years and notice of disconnection of supply had been ignored. Just as the Mayor was praising the Corporation and himself on this fine venture which had already put the city a few crores in the red, the suppliers of electricity chose this moment to act and cut off supply.

The mike went dead, the lights went off and the pandemonium that resulted gave the hotel a publicity which killed it at its birth.

Psychedelic Cinema

MRIGANKA SEKHAR RAY

TRUTH, Antonioni seems to suggest in his *Blow-Up*, is stranger than photography. In fact, truth in this film has a relative, multi-faced character. It is like blown-up reality, the expressionist's delight. As Antonioni remarks aptly, "We are surrounded by a reality which is not defined or corporeal. Inside of us, things appear like dots of light on

backgrounds of fog and shadow. Our concrete reality has a ghostly, abstract quality." *Blow-Up* has all the ingredients of those bright, luminous, psychedelic paintings, with their spell-binding, hallucinatory charm effecting an expansion of mind, a stretching of emotions, as happens in a dream. The film begins quite simply with its gentle evocation of the city atmosphere and a band of student-mimes playing about and we see Thomas, a fashion-photographer of the cool generation, rushing for his studio after a hard day's photographing session in a poor peoples' lodge. But his studio is another world, the world of unreality, with its glass-caged models and the queer-shaped photographic gadgets and futuristic furniture. For Thomas, each exposure in the camera is a discovery, a revelation of additional dimensions to inner reality. Photographing a model has the soothing effect of a wholesome and healthy coitus. Like most of Antonioni's protagonists, Thomas is also a casual, detached observer of life. But his shell of complacent non-involvement is shattered when he finds, in the blown-up negatives of some snapshots he has taken in a park, that unconsciously his camera has seen a murder. Some silly objections raised regarding the technical validity of such blowing-up operations can be summarily dismissed, for Antonioni is hardly bothered about the physicality of the dramatic incidents in his films, and Thomas' search for the details of the murder has a much deeper significance than the superficial whodunit chores. His is a voyage of discovery rousing the people from an enforced stupor and pointing out the truth beneath the surface of reality. In course of Thomas' sojourn, Antonioni shows us bits of modern England as he sees it, the frenzied, restive world of modern youths in a beat club, shadowy almost faceless figures in a pot party and lovers' embrace to be climaxed by a brutal murder. In this futile, degenerate world, no cause is strong enough to sustain itself and Thomas' efforts end in a cul-de-sac and when he picks up the imaginary tennis-ball, he is thrust back to his old life

and may be at peace with himself. Antonioni's film, a projection of his own personality, is full of excellent images and the fascinating colour photography captures the characters and the backgrounds with the right kind of feeling.

Lalan Fakir

ABHIJIT MUKHOPADHYAY

TO write a serious play on Lalan Fakir, the nineteenth century Bengali minstrel whose music and philosophy influenced to a great degree the shaping of Tagore music, is a hard task. The more so, when biographical data are so scarce. Obviously the playwright Manmatha Roy had to face this hurdle. To cross it he could have worked like a researcher. Mr Ray, however, opted for the beaten track. As a result the play becomes another run-of-the-mill, sloppy, sentimental product, not unlike those on Antony Firingee and Mukundadas.

It can yet reasonably be said that, had *Lalan Fakir* been changed to a full-scale musical with a little effort, it could have given us a much-needed respite from tearjerking dramatics. It would have been more in tune with the talents of Rupakar which has such wonderful voices like Sabitabrata Dutta and Rasaraj Chakrabarty. Presumably the playwright failed to think of this possibility.

Sabitabrata Dutta, the director, failed to maintain a high standard of production. The crude jatra type acting had at times a disturbing effect, the only exception being Sm Tripti Mitra. Trite remarks would fail to evaluate her performance as Matibibi, the consort of Lalan. It is an experience to go and see her as Matibibi. Mr Dilip Bandyopadhyay as Bhuban, the postman, and Sm Kamala Bandyopadhyay as Fatema, also acted with some understanding.

The lighting has proved once more that of late even the gimmicks of Tapas Sen fall flat on the audience.

Clippings

Russians In Prague

Textbooks on strategy say that it is not enough simply to conquer a country: the conqueror must know how to occupy it. The Russians in Prague might be tempted to invert this proposition—it is not enough simply to occupy a country: the occupier must know how to conquer its people...The Russians sowed folly: they are reaping silent fury...There are some phrases that you can no longer use in Prague without provoking a burst of bitter laughter—phrases like the "international brotherhood of the proletariat", for example...The reactions of the Czechoslovak public in the theatres and the cinemas are unpredictable...sometime ago...one of Prague's few actresses to have given evidence of sympathy to the "brothers" (Russians) had to pronounce the line: "All right then, yes—I am a whore!" It was a good five minutes before the cheers, the cat-calls and the whistling died down and the performance was able to resume. (Claude Roy in *Le Monde*).

Yanks in Singapore

There is one good reason for Mr Lee's (Singapore Prime Minister) relative unconcern about the details of the continued British military presence (after the Tory victory). American business in Singapore is expanding so fast that it is likely to provide a much more lucrative source of income than the British army wives' purse. In the next ten years American oil companies alone, prospecting and operating rigs off Indonesia and Malaysia, are expected to spend over half a billion dollars. Singapore's boom seems guaranteed to continue with or without the British presence. (*The Economist*)

Japan's Century ?

Most American and European economists who predicted that the 21st century will be Japan's will have to revise their predictions if the current mood of this country is to prevail in

the coming years. Most of the economic projects that Japan has planned have gone out of gear because of the unforeseen developments in South-East Asia. Japan's aid programme was conducted at the expense of the people (at home). With the common man calling for bigger government investments in eradicating social hazards for a better living environment, most economists believe that Japan will have to concentrate on internal problems rather than on those involving foreign countries.

Some of the praise that has been lavished on Japan in the past was taken by the Japanese with a smile. The Japanese by nature like to hear foreigners, especially if they are visitors, talk good about them. But now when foreign visitors talk highly about the Japanese economy and other aspects of their country, they are quick to point out the "wrong impressions" of foreigners. When the Japanese aid programme to be dispensed in the 1970s (always Japan plans for the distant future) was made public most papers here were quick to point out that the problems involved were assessed without taking "realities into consideration." The "reality" they pointed out was the dual structure of the Japanese economy: well-dressed people driving cars on superhighways but living in a 9 feet by 9 feet room without a bath or a sewerage system. (*Hindusthan Standard*).

U.S. Economy

The industrial economy of the United States has not been prepared for peace. In 1969, 3.4 million Americans worked in industry on Pentagon orders, 1.1 million civilians were on the Pentagon payroll and 3.4 million Americans served in the uniformed armed forces. Adding those whose livelihood is indirectly dependent on the 7.9 million Pentagon and military-industry employees, about 20 percent of the United States labour force of 77 million (excluding the armed forces) is economically dependent on the Department of Defence... In 1968, six industries

had more than 25 per cent of their labour force dependent on Pentagon orders. They were: ordnance and accessories (76.8 per cent); machine shop products (27.8 per cent); electronic components and accessories (38.6 per cent); miscellaneous electrical machinery, equipment and supplies (33.8 per cent); aircraft and parts (72.4 per cent); and other transportation equipment (26.4 per cent). A few States account for more than half of military industry—Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Texas and California and Washington. Finally, there is a concentration of certain occupations in military work. Defense workers made up 6.1 per cent of the nation's employment in 1968, but here are the percentages of certain skilled occupations in military industry: All engineers 20 per cent; aeronautical engineers, 59 per cent; electrical engineering, 22 per cent; mechanical and metallurgical engineers, 19 per cent; draftsmen, 14 cent, and skilled metal workers, 10-25 per cent... More than half of the nation's research and development budgets and manpower work for the military. The combined effect includes elaborate technology for military purposes and depleted technologies in many industries. (Seymour Melman in *The New York Times Weekly Review*)

"Social Scientists"

...during the past fifteen years North American social scientists have succeeded in persuading the Pentagon and other controllers of purse strings, that heavy investments in the social sciences—and in research abroad—will yield rich dividends. Early samples of the goods offered included the Area Handbooks which summarised information (about several parts of Afro-Asia) of potential interest to the US army, produced under the direction of renowned scholars at a series of distinguished seats of learning, under the overall charge of the Human Relations Area files of Yale University. This was in the mid-50s. Since then... such ties have multiplied rapidly. Today innumerable

conduits are available for feeding such analyses to the manipulative organs of the United States Government, and adequate numbers of social scientists stand ready to serve in the formulation and execution of state policy. (Satish Saberwal in *The Economic and Political Weekly*).

A Flop

Enemy planes would have heavily bombed Delhi and blown up most of the major installations during... (a recent) "blackout." Almost all the peripheral towns were flood-lit. Executive Councilor A. C. Shubb, who flew over Delhi in a Dakota during the exercise, commented: "It seemed as if people were celebrating Diwali.

Most of the car drivers had the headlights on. A large number of houses were lit as usual. And surprisingly, the entire compound of Union Finance Minister Y. B. Chavan's bungalow presented a festive look with all the lights on. This was the ninth exercise in Delhi and was termed "the worst" by Mr Shubb and the Director-General. (*Hindusthan Times*).

Naked Protest

Disciplinary action is to be taken against students who frolicked in the nude on the campus at Keele University (England).

Professor Roy Shaw, speaking on behalf of Professor Campbell Stewart, the vice-chancellor, said that... he believed that Keele was a scapegoat for the frustrations of militant students angered by the war in Vietnam and other areas. He added: "The university is the most accessible form of the capitalist society and they are venting their frustration on it". The students' nudity had done more to embarrass the university authorities than anything else. (*The Times*)

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Role Of The CPM

Mr Prabir Kr. Mukherjee's and Miss Sumita Banerjee's complaint (June 20) about Ashok Rudra leads to no quarrel with me because their concerns are not mine. But I find it difficult to resist the temptation of taking up issue with them on the CPM's role. The question of class struggle is one of the fundamental questions of Marxism and it is on this question, the CPM claims, it has come out of the 'class collaborationist' AITUC. It is, therefore, worthwhile examining the concept of class struggle and the Left CPI's role in it. In his article "Liberal and Marxist conceptions of class struggle" Lenin said—'Marxism recognises a class struggle fully developed, "nation-wide", only if it does not merely embrace politics but takes in the most significant thing in politics—the organisation of state power.' Does the CPM's tactical programme take in the most significant thing i.e., the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the destruction of the bourgeoisie, i.e. the existing state? It does not. The CPM too recognises the class struggle in the sphere of politics, but on one condition—the organisation of state power, i.e. violent revolution, should not enter into that sphere *now*. According to Marx and Lenin, class struggle necessarily leads to revolution, and the organisation of state power. According to the CPM, it leads to Governor Dhanvan, to elections and to the organisation of non-Congress governments in the States and at the Centre—that is participation in the administration of the State, the very organ of class oppression which class struggle is supposed to destroy! From this does it not follow that the CPM is equally class-collaborationist? Its class struggle is like marking time in military drill—but the company never seems to get on the march. The CPM leaders conceal their utter bankruptcy and opportunism—perhaps even from themselves, by constant allusions to the unpreparedness of the people. The economic crisis

is deepening, discontent is growing, yet we are told that the people do not want change, do not want revolution. The truth is, it is not the masses but this aged conventional leadership that is not prepared. I do not think the CPM has any definite orientation and direction. It dithers today to the left, tomorrow to the right. It is all confusion and helplessness, limping after the right CPI, combined with futile efforts to dissociate itself from it. The CPM confines class struggle to a wage increase of 'five kopeks on the rouble' and makes naive efforts to make the bourgeoisie ashamed of being the bourgeoisie. P. Ramamurti quoted figures in his report to the All India Trade Union Conference at Ranji Stadium, Calcutta, May 28-31, 1970 and went into ecstasies describing the distress arising out of the inevitable crisis of capitalism. But what, one asks, is the use of quoting figures if the exploitation is attributed not to the bourgeois organisation of the social economy but, say, to Congress policies and to the tyranny of administration? What is the use of expounding the theory of class struggle and its corollary—violent revolution—if one tries to find ways to communism other than through violent revolution? It is extraordinarily instructive to note that the figures quoted by Ramamurti show the exact opposite—that reforms or 'modest relief' as they say, are not possible. The whole wage increase has been and is being negated by the price rise. In the process the poor man has become even poorer. No Marxist rejects partial demands. That is nonsense. But we oppose the deception of the people by the idle talk about modest relief. We reject the left CPI's theory of modest relief in present-day India as being utopian, self-seeking and false. This does not square with the theory of the crisis of capitalism enunciated by Ramamurti. The CPM tones down Marxist slogans to 'partial demands', tries to fit them into their narrow reformist yardstick acceptable to the middle class who are an important constituent in vote politics and thus spreads bourgeois ideas among the workers. The Right CPI's reformism is parti-

cularly dull and repellent but it is impotent; the Left CPI's is insidious and therefore more dangerous.

True, miracles have happened here. Lakhs of people went to the Brigade Parade Ground to hear Promode Dasgupta. Everybody in West Bengal is communist except the Naxalites. But this communism was a form of expression of the opposition sentiment of all, not excluding the bourgeoisie. The chief preachers of communism in West Bengal are well-meaning middle class youths who are more or less furious with the government. But communism is not merely oppositional sentiment and socialism is not capitalism plus a Jyoti Basu-Namboodiripad cabinet at the Centre. About shedding blood the less said the better; and about *deeds* this is what Lenin said—"He who knows that there is no reformist path and passes that knowledge on to others is doing a thousand times more *in deed* than those who chatter about reforms and do not believe what they themselves say."

What are the left CPI's deeds? Prior to 1967 there was a price-rise resistance movement but with the participation in administration by the leftists it has been completely paralysed although the prices have been soaring higher and higher. It is not hard to understand that the prospect of facing the same music subsequently obliges the leftists not to indulge in food politics. The strike in the jute, tea and textile industries and the nominal rise in wages of workers following it are cited as great achievements. Yet a cursory glance will reveal, here too, reformism in all its vileness. In the jute industry alone about 60,000 workers were laid off and retrenched and there was great industrial unrest. But with the conclusion of the peace treaty, against a nominal rise in the pay packet everything else was laid to rest, the retrenched workers remained where they were. Has the position of peasants improved or worsened? They are poorer today and are being ruined, while the jotedars and capitalists through the price rise rake gold in shovelfuls.

The left CPI always manages to find ways and means to justify what it claims to abhor—parliamentary democracy, Indira Gandhi, Soviet revisionism, the repressive measures by the police (of course so long as they do not touch their membership).

Can our angry opponents disprove these facts?

A READER

Naxalite Tactical Line

In his "The Naxalite Tactical Line" (July 4) Mr Abhijnan Sen, like many of your correspondents, has seen only one face of the "tactical" wall. His analysis is partial. In reality it has been something like reaching a predetermined target, as is done by most of your correspondents. In Mao Tse-tung's writings one finds no such call as "physically annihilate your class enemy" indiscriminately in order to organise the peasants. This cannot be a slogan. As regards liquidation of the class enemy the call is always defensive. The class enemy will be annihilated in a frontal battle. In the history of the communist countries nowhere was such conspiratorial annihilation carried out. In his report on the Hunan struggle Mao Tse-tung said that the peasant revolutionaries punished the Chinese counterparts of Indian joteders and the rich capitalists strictly according to their crime—in a very few cases there were, however, excesses. The punishments he referred to included eating of their ducks, pigs, lying down on the couches of the rich ladies, making the offenders wear monkey

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caps and parading them before the people. But here in India the "activists" spring upon a single man and annihilate him on grounds most inadequate for capital punishment. The crimes of the person annihilated, in some cases, are cited as :

He was an 'absentee' village school-teacher (they are trying to destroy schools and colleges without the prospect of an alternative educational system); he was the village post-master and used to take paise or chicken for writing moneyorder forms; he was a usurer etc. etc.

Would Mr Sen enlighten us as to why schools and colleges are being raided? Can peoples' war liberate the country overnight and establish a revolutionary educational curriculum? Such activities will only create an illiterate mass of young men who will receive neither conventional nor revolutionary education. What education helped the so-called revolutionary leaders to understand Marxism-Leninism which, however, has now been relegated to the background by "Maoism"?

MRINMAY SEN
Calcutta

Writers' New Union

The much awaited polarisation has taken place in the Telugu literary world with the split in the Progressive Writers' Association on July 4, 1970.

Even before its emergence there were revolutionary writers and poets like Subbarao Panigrahi, the warrior poet and ballad-singer, who was shot dead by the police in an encounter in the hilly forests of Srikakulam in 1969. Panigrahi had mobilised the people wherever he went with his "Jamukula katha" (a popular folklore form of storytelling) troupe. Nasser is another revolutionary poet-singer, who is educating people with his "Burrakatha" (another folklore form) troupe.

The formation of the RWA came

like a bolt from the blue to the inactive and reactionary class-collaborators of the PWA when they, with the aid of the State Government, were about to conduct a seminar on "progressive" literature and to felicitate the revolutionary poet Sri Sri, the author of *Mahaprasthanam*, at Hyderabad. It is noteworthy that Sri Sri, along with the young "Digambara" and "Thirugubatu" poets, has boycotted the Government sponsored seminar and refused personal felicitations. The RWA has been formed at Hyderabad with Sri Sri as its President, Messrs. Kutumba Rao and Ravi Sastry as Vice-Presidents and Mr Ramana Reddy as the Secretary. Other office-bearers include "Digambara" and "Thirugubatu" poets.

The bourgeois press publicised the RWA as "Naxalites in literature" and hurriedly published "interviews" with reactionaries in literature like Nori and Viswanatha. Viswanatha has gone even to the extent of making a sinister suggestion to the Government that it should take police action against the members of the RWA.

It is a fact that "progressive literature" was useful to many, including Sri Sri, as a passport to enter the cinema, radio and the reactionary consciousness and become class enemies. The formation of the RWA, thus, became a historical necessity. In spite of his revolutionary zeal, Sri Sri is known for his modesty and oscillating tendencies. The youth are carefully watching the developments in the RWA. People hope that it will play a significant role in rendering unequivocal support to people's revolution.

K. V. SOMAYA JULU
Vizianagram.

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