

frontier

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A fringe benefit of President's rule in West Bengal was that there were fewer people to sermon and make promises. The majority of the bureaucrats kept to their station for they knew that their hour of glory was brief. In the beginning the Governor was an exception, but he mended himself—probably at somebody's bidding. His pious principal adviser tried to fill the gap for a while ; he took to the politician's habit of issuing messages on sundry occasions and advising the people on what to do or not to do forgetting that his writ does not run an inch beyond official files. He has been silenced by the announcement of the mid-term poll. Before that, however, he was threatened by the loquacious local boss of the CPM with detention under the Prevention of Violent Activities Act if the party was returned to power. The CPM leader is known to be as easy with apologies as with threats. Remember his letter after the 1969 poll to the then Speaker of the Lok Sabha denying that he had asked the people to get ready for a bloody revolution and requesting the Speaker to transmit the denial to the Union Home Ministry so that the record might be put straight. Mr Promode Dasgupta's threat to M. B. B. Ghosh may well be dismissed as the bluster of a naturally ebullient person further unhinged by visions of power and dubious glory.

The snap remark, however, suggests that the CPM will not be averse to invoking the detention Act if it can reascend the gaddi, though it had sponsored a Bangla Bandh in protest against the Act and its twin measure, the Maintenance of Public Order Act. The suspicion is reinforced by the absence of any pledge in the common programme of the CPM's six-party pocket front, the ULF, that efforts will be made to annul the sinister measure. Nor is there any promise to release the political prisoners, though in his endless capacity for interviewing and petitioning Mr Jyoti Basu sent a letter to the Home Secretary a few days ago demanding release of about a score of CPM cadres detained under the PVA Act. It seems the CPM is gaining in wisdom through the parliamentary drill. It is against a blanket promise of repeal of undemocratic measures and grant of general amnesty to political prisoners as had been made in the 32-point programme of the second UF. It wants the people to believe that laws will shed their obnoxiousness if Mr Basu re-occupies the Home Minister's chair ; his presence in Writers' Building will dispel all dross

from the administration. Otherwise why should the party in its much-trumpeted six-point demand—in imitation of the Awami League in East Pakistan—seek control over the CRP in the State? The demand is an eye-wash for even now CRP units function under the direction of the State Government. The obvious implication is that this “force of occupation” will be transformed into a force of liberation if the CPM can form the ministry in West Bengal. All these may well be subtle guarantees of good conduct, hints to the Centre that the party will not repeat the follies of two years ago.

Other left parties have gone further. If the CPM is penitent, they are pleading innocence. They have shifted the entire blame for the turmoil and the fall of the second UF to the CPM appropriating to themselves the achievements of the regime. Most of them had criticised Mr Ajoy Mukherjee for resigning in a huff but he has been cleared by the United Left Democratic Front of seven parties perhaps to soften up the Bangla Congress. With furtive talks going on at district levels for adjustment of seats with the Congress(R) and the Bangla Congress, these parties cannot adopt a programme which is frowned upon by the two Congresses. They cannot promise an amnesty despite the tears they are shedding over the treatment of the Naxalites by the police at the behest of the CPM. The six-party ULF and the seven-party ULDF have both watered down the 32-point programme and shorn it of all contents not to the liking of the ruling party at the Centre. They are no less prolific with promises, though. The electorate in West Bengal need not be reminded what these promises mean. The whole range of parliamentary options has been exhausted in West Bengal, and few in this State will be impressed by talk of revolution by consent. Many will no doubt vote, with the Army on duty, but the majority will do it without any hope or illusion. And whatever the verbal protest the deployment of the Army will please

both those who want power at the Centre and those who want to capture the State Assembly.

The Airport That Was

The lightning guerilla attack on the Cambodian airport of Pochentong that literally wiped out Lon Nol's airforce is reported to have been viewed by the Pentagon “with a great deal of discouragement”. Perhaps not quite. Lockheed, Boeing and McDonnell might rather take heart from the White House decision to replace the decimated Cambodian airforce with a sophisticated American fleet. The real discomfiture, if the prophets of the Pentagon are still left with any sensibility to suffer one, was caused to top brass like General We- yand and Admiral Moorer who were dispatched to Cambodia late last month to make an on-the-spot study of the situation. True, they thought, guerillas controlled 60 per cent of Cambodian territory and were slowly tightening the noose around Phnom Penh in a classic Maoist encirclement of cities by the countryside. But the situation yet was not hopeless. American B-52 bombers were levelling the countryside and drying up the ocean guerilla fish is supposed to swim in while South Vietnamese mercenaries moved in force to reopen the vital Highway 4, linking Phnom Penh with the outside world. “I don't think”, Admiral Moorer said, Cambodia “is deteriorating as much as has been reported.” As if to give him a momentary sense of victory the guerillas loosened the stranglehold over Highway 4. The fire-power at last was paying, the Americans concluded with satisfaction. But hardly had the din of the “victory” celebrations died down in Phnom Penh than the Khmer guerillas struck at Pochentong. Americans and their Cambodian and South Vietnamese minions could now see the realities better in the illumination provided by the huge orange flame from the American ammunition dump.

The days since the attack have witnessed no respite. Hemmed in on all sides, driven mad by fear and frustration, Lon Nol's and Thieu's troops have started fighting each other. At the time of writing there is a report of renewed guerilla assault on Highway 4—Phnom Penh's lifeline. Already the attempt to bring fuel supplies to the beleaguered capital up the Mekong has proved disastrous. If the Highways I (between Phnom Penh and Saigon) and 4 continue to remain cut off for some time Phnom Penh might go under faster than the Pentagon ever imagined.

Meanwhile in Washington the dovish Senators are very worked up not over the devastation caused to Indochina by American bombers (after all they themselves have blessed “interdiction” bombing of Laos and Cambodia) but by the discovery of “America's expanded military activity” in Cambodia. While withdrawing troops from Cambodia last summer Nixon promised that apart from “air interdiction missions” there will be “no US air or logistics support”. A Senate amendment in December also put an unqualified ban on the use of American soldiers and advisers. Flushed with this “success” the Senate doves were ready to wink at Nixon's falling back on his earlier promise of no air support to Lon Nol. To keep their conscience clean the term “interdiction” was stretched to mean all kinds of aerial operations. But now the Senators are said to be surprised to discover that interdiction also means air lifting of GIs into Cambodian battlefields as evidenced by photographs distributed by a news agency. The very fact that the American soldiers did not come rumbling on tanks but aboard sneaking helicopters must place it, so would argue Nixon, in the category of “air interdiction”.

The American President is at liberty to bluff his people with assorted antiseptic vocabulary but there is no escape from the ruthlessly logical course of the war he has initiated. Wars, especially people's war, are

lost or won on the ground and there must come a time (as indeed came in the battle over Highway 4 —(and now in Laos) when puppets can only be saved by the direct participation of imperialist troops. And once on ground they will be forced to spread their strength thin by trying to hold too much of territory and suffer blows from elusive guerillas. If they settle for a couple of cities only that could well be besieged and attacked as the guerillas have been doing to Phnom Penh.

Coup In Uganda

The coup d'état in Uganda which ousted Milton Obote on January 25 was the second in Africa—the first being in Ghana—that jettisoned the head of a state when he was away from home a state when he was away from home on an official visit. Speaking after the coup, Major General Idi Amin, the new ruler, whipped up the charges of northern dominance and corruption against Obote and reportedly regrouped his forces after some initial infights between factions in the army. When informed about the coup in New Delhi on his way back, Obote replied coolly to pressmen that he still had the popular backing and expected to wrest power again from his toppers.

Whatever may be the viability of these claims and counter-claims, there is yet no news of a popular burst-up or mass demonstrations against the ouster of Obote. Nor is there any show of warmth for the new rulers. The people seem to be apathetic. The trouble with Obote—or for that matter with the nationalists of his genre—is that he did not come to power at the head of a grass roots political movement, but through the trapdoor of an alliance, pragmatic at best, with Kabuka Yekka of Buganda against their arch political opponent Benidicto Kiwanuka. And after the capture of power these feudal forces began to square off

against each other for their regalia and Obote became enmeshed in moves to keep up his disparate alliances and could not bring about minimally necessary structural changes for the common folk. Even his modicum of social and economic reforms—his euphemism for socialism—made his political co-brethren rave and strut against him and his 'socialist' policy.

In foreign relations, however, Obote was more purposive. To the discomfiture of his opposition he stuck stuaiously to the policy of regional co-operation, anti-racism and neutrality and refused to give in to pressure. This obviously annoyed the West and their cohorts in South Africa who were eager to kick out Obote and plant their men in Kampala. Notably Pretoria, after 1968, began to take a new line and changed from the policy of apartheid at home and conciliation abroad to an overt aggression against her neighbours. Evidently these dark forces have found in parts of the Ugandan army—the most pro-Western institution bequeathed by the colonists—faithful collaborators ready to join the bandwagon and trigger Obote's ouster. After some early bunglings the plot has worked this time. The Western interests in Uganda—scotched by Obote's policy of partial control—can hardly have reasons to refuse co-operation in any such perfidy. Only the President of Tanzania has condemned it. President Nyerere can ill afford to ignore the straws in the wind.

Whodunit ?

A correspondent writes :

Leaders of the CPI(ML), unlike Lenin, leader of the underground Social-Democratic Party, seem to be least bothered to reach the masses with precise information about its programme. As a result, there appears to have grown a divergence between its professions and practices which has produced an acute credi-

bility gap, which is an unfortunate measure of the party's organizational failure. True, CPI(ML) is the most hunted party but that has to be accepted as the fate of any underground party. Its decentralization programme is in theory sound ; in practice it may lead to chaos.

Because of the CPI(ML)'s communication troubles, spurious leaflets and posters are cropping, which are used by imposters to sabotage the party. Let alone leaflets and posters ; one can cite hordes of actions, fobbed off as CPI(ML) actions, whose bona fides are sometimes highly suspect. Who, for instance, killed Gopal Sen, the Jadavpur Vice-Chancellor ? There is no categorical admission by the CPI(ML) of its responsibility in the murder, although people at large have taken it for granted as its doing, because of the party's association with the liquidation programme. But is the party really out to create red terror by indiscriminate murder ?

Last week a list of names was hung, in the humanities staff room at Jadavpur University, in which about fifteen professors were called beasts and informed that they would be liquidated within three months. The CPI(ML) did not own up as its originator but it became the first suspect. However, there are strong elements of doubt. The party has yet to come out with the announcement that it has taken to a programme of creating red terror in educational institutions by indiscriminate murder of teachers. The selection of names in the Jadavpur list does not admit of any single criterion. Teachers who are famously pro-American were not mentioned ; radical teachers even if they do not subscribe to the CPI(ML) viewpoint, were. Why the mentioned names were chosen is not clear and no explanation given, although the names and departments were meticulously typed. As a piece of political communication, it was horrid.

Maybe it was not a CPI(ML) doing at all. Who else could have profited by it ?

The Jadavpur campus is at present a CPI(M) stronghold. Hundreds of students and outsiders professedly belonging to the CPI(M) control the campus. There was a proposal that the campus should be given over to protection by representatives of teachers, students, employees and the authorities. The CPI(M) stands to gain by the proposal, because the team thus formed would be substantially dominated by the CPI(M). The proposal was bound to come up as was also the list referred to in a campus meeting last Saturday. However, something happened when the list was noticed on the previous day. CPI(M) students, within half an hour of the appearance of the list, went to the rooms of the mentioned teachers and offered protection. At the same time they burst into the room of a teacher, who was suspected to have Naxalite leanings and to have typed the list. The teacher was away and so nothing happened that day. But on Saturday, hundreds of CPI(M) students surrounded the teachers' meeting, where, naturally, the tension came in the way of any substantial deliberations.

After the meeting, the suspected Naxalite teacher was singled out and was about to be lynched. Thanks to the brave action and persuasion of other teachers he was spared his life. But many teachers, including a woman, had to bear the brunt, physical and psychological. Simultaneously there was brutal beating of two Naxalite students, who had mysteriously appeared on the scene. Through the exceptional adroitness of a Congress leader-teacher, it was decided that things will be thrashed out when the University opens after the Saraswati Puja holidays.

The CPI(M) has good reasons to denigrate the CPI(ML), to whip up anti-CPI(ML) feeling among the teachers, and to force them to come under its protective wing. That pro-American teachers were left out of the list was perhaps to prove Naxalite-CIA collusion. That three CPI(M)-leaning teachers were in-

cluded in the list is no matter, it could have been a clever wash. That some teachers, who have had no love for the CPI(M), have been completely unnerved by the drama and gone in for CPI(M) protection, is a significant pointer.

Meanwhile Jadavpur teachers are given two options; they will be liquidated by the CPI(M) if they do not take classes and thus help the CPI(ML) to close down the University; they will be liquidated by the CPI(ML) if they do take classes and help the CPI(M) to keep the University open.

Diabolical fun. Time was when

View from Delhi

Splendid Isolation

FROM A POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

ELECTIONS are going to be held in West Bengal, after all, judging from the flurry of activity in the Election Commission here. But the party most confused and confounded now is the CPI(M) whose stakes are now limited practically to West Bengal. In Kerala, it has decided to use the election campaign to "politicise" issues through a mass denigration and contempt of the judiciary, the courts and the Constitution. The party's defeat in the mid-term poll there and the growing belief that it cannot hope to win power in the State by itself for many years to come has induced some common sense among its leaders. What beats one however is the rationale of the incredible waiting for an election to start the campaign for politicisation. The CPI(M) knows that except for the Palghat Lok Sabha seat which Mr A. K. Gopalan is obliged to contest abandoning his old borough Kasargode, it cannot be sure of any of the 18 seats from the State. It is simple arithmetic. Always the largest single party has been isolated by the rest and defeated in Kerala.

physical possession of factories was considered the only means to win over workers to political beliefs; ideological debate was given the least importance. Political bankruptcy has reached the stage when the same blunder is perpetrated even in educational institutions. No doubt the cadres of both the CPI(M) and CPI(ML) are armed with strong Lenin lines to prove that they are right. But the only point is: can physical threats be a means of converting intellectuals to Marxism? Can they even neutralise the hostiles? We have had, true, enough theory without practice; we are having now bellyful of practice without theory.

In West Bengal, the CPI(M)'s proximity to power has added to its confusion. It had an early lead over others in the race for releasing the manifestos. But that has not helped the leadership any better to work out the tactics. Does the leadership seriously believe that it can win power independently? At the same time, over the question of a mini-front in West Bengal the situation is qualitatively different from what obtained in Kerala in 1969. Unlike in Kerala, the Muslim League is not a factor and secondly, unlike in Kerala the CPI does not have the hardihood to openly gang up with the ruling Congress against the Marxists.

What is in doubt is a stable government after the elections. The CPI's thesis that unity of the two communist parties is a pre-condition for any stable government in the State flows from its inhibition about supporting a Congress-led government in the State. If the CPI(M) fails to win a clear majority with the help of its minuscule allies, there is little chance of avoiding a deadlocked Assembly.

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The CPI(M), all the same, has to decide where it belongs—to the spectrum of parliamentary politics or outside the spectrum. The CPI General Secretary was not far wrong when he tauntingly described the CPI(M) as a regional party. Its stakes are limited to West Bengal and Kerala but the stakes are highest in West Bengal. Time will soon come when it would realise that even if it polls 49 per cent of the votes in West Bengal, it might be kept out of office by others. This is the kind of polarisation the CPI(M) has dreaded in Kerala but the nightmare came true. A similar situation may develop in West Bengal and the party's dead-end strategy, based on an equivocation on its belief in the parliamentary system, would reach its dead-end.

West Bengal's law and order problem is still something of an enigma here. An official assessment expects a qualitative change—a drop in the curve of incidents in the next two weeks because all the anti-social elements who enjoy party patronage would have to return to their "parent parties" now that elections are round the corner and elections mean proximity to power. The "power vacuum" imposed on political parties through President's Rule has driven these elements into activities which dovetail into what is described loosely as the "Naxalite" violence in the slum "jungle" of Calcutta. But the official assessment is likely to go wrong here because the CPI(M) being the best organised party in the city is coming into clashes with the CPI(ML) cadre unless of course the latter decides to call off its annihilation campaign for the duration of the election campaign.

With the State destined for continued political instability even after the scheduled elections, the Centre does not seem to have any idea of what it is going to do or would expect the next Government in West Bengal to do about the law and order problem. It certainly is not going to send more CRP units, more wireless sets and more small arms. So the Centre's only hope of solving

the problem seems to lie in the CPI(ML) mercifully abandoning its tactical line of urban guerilla warfare or in wearing the party's cadre out through prolonged counter-insurgency operations.

The CPI(M), though the principal and most effective party in the State, has no studied answer to the problem either. Crushing the Naxalites, smoking them out and the like is impressive talk from its desperate leaders. The elections will force a confrontation between the CPI(M) and the CPI(ML) and in the bargain both the parties would have lost valuable cadre. The end of the confrontation or its tapering off will not solve the CPI(M)'s dilemma satisfactorily because the nagging question remains: whether it should be a part of the parliamentary system, once it knows that it cannot come to power or stay long in power in West Bengal by winning elections.

January 30, 1971

Kerala

Pre-Election Scene

RAMJI

ELECTION for election's sake; the winning of seats being the be-all and end-all of all elections. This is the salient feature of the pre-election scramble by almost all the parties in Kerala. Under this, the popular following of political parties is a mere commodity for an ultra cynical style of trading in which ideologies and popular sentiments have no relevance. And for parties which have no following worth speaking, the sky is the limit, in the latitude available for manoeuvring and shameless deals. The CPI with its tactician, Mr M. N. Govindan Nair, in the lead, has set new horizons in political horse trading. M.N., who had unilaterally thrown open the door to the allegedly, arch-reactionary Kerala Congress to join the mini-front Ministry, has succeeded in roping in the

party to line up with the mini-front-Congress-R combine. And this immediately after prolonged tirades against the Kerala Congress by Congress-R and by the CPI, both of whom had been condemning the party as the Kerala version of the reactionary Congress Syndicate: a party which was against bank nationalisation, against abolition of privy purses, against constitution amendment, in fact, against all the highly publicised progressive measures of Indira Gandhi. But, overnight, the Kerala Congress became like-minded and progressive. The price for their allegiance was paid: and that amounted to three Lok Sabha seats. In return, the Congress-R and the CPI are likely to win a few seats in the central Travancore area which, otherwise, would have gone either to the Marxists or to the Syndicate. The present team-up is an extreme example of political somersault. And the mini-front Congress-R-Kerala Congress combine feel that they have almost all the 19 Lok Sabha seats securely wrapped up.

The CPI, and particularly its boss M.N., have become famous for speaking from borrowed strength. The alliance with the Kerala Congress has increased the consciousness of strength of the CPI. Thus, M.N. has openly threatened to rout Mr V. K. Krishna Menon by a margin of 50,000 votes in the Trivandrum constituency, where he has decided to contest against the PSP candidate. This is the price which Mr Menon will have to pay for refusing to be a stooge of the CPI. Before announcing his constituency, Mr Menon had consulted the CPI over the Tellichery seat. He was informed by the party that it was their seat. Mr Menon had announced that he would not fight against either the CPI or the CPM as he was indebted to these parties for his victory in the Midnapore by-election. Hence, when he learnt that the CPI was to contest Tellichery, he pitched upon Trivandrum, which has been allotted to the PSP, a component of the mini-front. Mr Menon has stated that the PSP

has all along been his inveterate enemy at personal and ideological levels and that it would be a pleasure to fight this party. At the same time he has refused to be aligned with any party. After he had had his decision and announced his intention to fight the Trivandrum constituency, the CPI had a brain wave. They found that Mr Menon could be an ideal tool of theirs in the Tellichery constituency, to fight the Marxist candidate who held the constituency in the last Lok Sabha. So, on second thoughts, the CPI offered Tellichery to Menon as a 'safe' seat for him. Menon openly stated that the CPI could not expect him to pull their chestnuts out of the fire and that he is going to stick to his original resolve and contest from Trivandrum. Upon this, the CPI and the Congress-R have unleashed a campaign of slander and vilification against Mr Menon, which has struck a jarring note even among staunch Congressmen and CPI followers. To discredit Mr Menon in favour of the PSP is too strong a dose of progressivism for most people to swallow. Mr A. K. Antony, the young and unfledged secretary of the KPCC(R), in the fulness of his new found position and strength as a party boss, has flung unedifying epithets against Menon and threatened him with dire consequences for daring to challenge the PSP candidate. And Mr M. N. Govindan Nair, the all knowing political operator, has sworn to defeat Mr Menon by 50,000 votes. But the chances are all in favour of Mr Menon. The PSP candidate is by no means an impressive leader and Mr Menon commands allegiance which cuts across party lines. Further, the Marxists, a force in Trivandrum constituency, have decided to support Menon to the hilt. Incidentally this foregone decision of the Marxists, is the main charge against Mr Menon. It is a question of progressivism: that of the PSP versus that of the Marxists.

The Congress-R, which had plumbed for ten seats, had to be satisfied with 7. Mrs Gandhi saw to it that

the Kerala Congress, and the CPI were favoured at the expense of her party. Her flying visit achieved this. And this has left a trail of frustration among a big section of Congressmen. Indiraji's progressive approach is measured by her partiality for the arch-reactionary Kerala Congress, dubbed the agents of landlords and estate owners by the Congress-R and the CPI in the past.

"Benefits"

With the addition of Kerala Congress to its ranks, the mini-front-Congress-R combine assumes all the ideological hues and functionalism of the Syndicate in Kerala. The "popular" benefits of this alliance surfaced immediately after it was concluded. A staunch supporter of the Kerala Congress had arrears of Rs 70 lakhs, by way of Sales Tax to the Government. For recovering this, the Government had instituted revenue recovery proceedings, under which several buses of the businessman had been seized. But, immediately after the new alliance with the Kerala Congress, the Government abruptly withdrew the proceedings and allowed the culprit to go scot-free, in spite of his tax arrears. This is one of the striking 'popular benefits' of this progressive alliance.

For the rest, the visit of Indira Gandhi to Kerala threw up an example of evasion that was a masterpiece in political subterfuge. This lady who had condemned the Muslim League up North and who had clearly stated that her party had no truck with Muslim League and the CPI, very diplomatically left the Muslim League out of reckoning when she launched a tirade against the Jana Sangh, during her visit to Kerala. As for the CPI she studiously left this party also out. To back her up, the president of the State Muslim League announced, after his return from the Bangalore meet of the Muslim League, that Indira Gandhi had never condemned the League as communal and that reports about such comments were deliberate lies put

out by the monopoly Press in the North.

The Marxists have cut themselves off from the SSP and the other small parties which were all along with them at the State level. The reason given out is that the alliance of the SSP with the Syndicate group and the divergence in all-India policies between the two parties made it impossible for the party to team up with the SSP for the Lok Sabha elections. The SSP and other splinter parties, which were with the Marxists, have formed a separate group. The Marxists have announced their candidates for ten seats held by them in the last Lok Sabha. For the rest they are on the look out for Independents who would oppose the Syndicate and the Indicate groups in the Lok Sabha.

The Palghat seat, supposed to be the pocket borough of the Marxists, is going to be contested by Mr A. K. Gopalan. The mini-front-Congress-R-Kerala Congress axis have not announced, at the time of writing, their intentions regarding this seat, which has been till now left free by them. They are now trying to set up an Independent candidate who will have the support of both the Indicate and Syndicate groups, in order to present a united front against A.K.G. This was tried out during the last elections; then at Kasaragode, A.K.G. was opposed by an ex-Jana Sanghi, passing muster as an Independent and enjoying the support of all non-Marxist parties.

The election campaigns have not started yet. The people have yet to come into the picture. Rather, they are taken for granted by the various parties: obviously they are always on tap to be used to promote the big business of elections.

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A Game Of Democratic Socialism

PRAFULLA KUMAR SENAPATI

THE three-year-old, happy wedlock of the Swatantra and Jana Congress parties has broken down, following the desertion of the junior partner, the Jana Congress. The sudden flash of socialist consciousness in the minds of the Jana Congress boys, their righteous indignation over the dishonesty and impropriety committed by their big brother, particularly with regard to leasing Kendu leaves, were given out as the motives for their retreat from the holy alliance. The ringleader of the Jana Congress, Dr Mahatab, announced his lofty resolve to take up cudgels on behalf of the toiling people of Orissa to fight out the filthy Swatantrites. This avowed grave-digger of the Swatantra party and political pontiff realised somehow, if late, that the Swatantra party was a party of feudal landlords that ruled in obedience to the batons of the native capitalists and imperialists. Dr Mahatab, whose apt counterpart could only be West Bengal's Atulya Ghosh, then started throwing to the toiling people of Orissa the crumbs of his Socialism which had dawned upon him so late. It was customary with Dr Mahatab to assume that the people of Orissa were naive and credulous and to build his edifice of power on their being so. But with the advance in the peoples' political consciousness he and his party would find it hard to wash their hands of the crime of joining hands with the Swatantrites in 1967 and of the reign of terror, injustice and oppression they

NOTICE

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Business Manager
Frontier

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unleashed since. Hardly any socialist measure was mounted by them within this period to relieve the people's agony and suffering, even if it was sheer day-dreaming to conceive of such relief within the bourgeois framework.

The catalogue of crimes committed by Dr Mahatab's Jana Congress and Singh Deo's Swatantra is a long one. Could Dr Mahatab and his party exonerate themselves from the charge that they, in collaboration with their Swatantra brothers, let loose a police rule, leading to the brutal murder of Pradipta Mishra in the 1969 students' strike? Could the Jana Congress think of any rational explanation to absolve itself from the crime of deploying the police to beat down a teachers' strike in the same year and of hiring the social scums to attack the teachers at night, camping before the then Education Minister's bungalow? Could the Jana Congress deny that it and its Swatantra allies moved the entire government machinery against the headmaster of Tendakura High School, Jaladhar Nanda, for his folly of writing a book, *Samyabadar Bhumika* (Role of Communism)? His services were terminated and poverty and starvation inflicted on his family. Nimei Biswal, another teacher of Bolgada High School, was another casualty of this coalition government because he exposed the sharp practices of the Congressite headmaster. Let us also not forget the way in which the peasants of a village in Ganjam were killed, the way in which the Harijans of a village near Banpur lost their (not too precious!) lives. One wonders why the Jana Congress high priests did not step out of the Ministry then? The conspiracy hatched so systematically against Nabajivan Mandal, the sustained slander against its workers who moved among the Adivasis and exposed the oppression and exploitation perpetrated on them institutionally by the police, the forest department, and individually by the Sahu-kars under the protection of the police, also were the work of the Jana

Congressites. Why didn't Dr Mahatab and his camp-followers who have defected to Indira's party of amorphous socialism and whose hearts now bleed at the sight of people's miseries even protest against the way in which two Marxist student leaders, Santosh Mahapatra and Bhagirathi Misra were arrested?

The image of the Swatantra and the Jana Congress is tarnished. The Swatantra, with its record of feudal exploitation and oppression fresh in people's minds, could not beat a face-saving retreat. However, its cunning partner which wanted to live politically for the next five years and to fleece the people for another five years, has found refuge in the hallucinatory slogans of Indira's pseudo-socialism. This synchronised with the time when the Ruling Congress was trying to pick up its old chums like Jha in Bihar, Ajoy Mukherjee and company in West Bengal and Mahatab and his drummer boys in Orissa.

After the collapse of the Ministry in Orissa, an alternative to right reaction consisting of PSP, Jana Congress and Ruling Congress was envisaged. Alternative indeed! Marx and Lenin have taught us that the so-called socialist parties are a variety of the same content—the content is bourgeois. Myriad might be the masks but the same face peeps through them. The CPI unit in Orissa, like the macrocosmic CPI, with its phoney communism and peddling in revisionist wares was seen joining this alternative of 'progressive' politics. The aftermath, the disillusion that their failure to play the game successfully would breed, would definitely leave an indelible impression.

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Uganda, Guinea And Cambodia :

Lessons And Tasks

A. K. ESSACK

COUNTER-revolution reared its ugly head and struck at the strategic African State of Uganda. Its chief executioner and agent has been Major General Amin. It has only won the first round when it took certain parts of Kampala. That is all.

The struggle has just begun, not only for the people of Uganda, but the whole of Africa. The issues are simple as they are straightforward. Will Uganda continue on its path of socialism or go back to capitalism? Will it continue on its road of greater independence or will it languish into a neo-colony? This issue affects the whole of Africa. For the struggle between socialism and capitalism has no national boundaries.

The whole of imperialist propaganda is geared to spreading the false story that this coup is an accomplished fact. The aim is to demoralise those who are fighting and win over those who are sitting on the fence, watching. But nothing is further from the truth. The fact is that the coup is really a minority affair even in the army itself. The Ugandan army has about 5,000 men and reports indicate that three battalions, at Jinja, Barotta and Bukabo, have refused to join this gang of plotters, and are still loyal to Obote.

Temporary defeat can be turned into victory if lessons are learnt quickly and acted upon speedily.

Firstly it is clear beyond all doubt that imperialist strategy in the seventies involves the reconquest of Africa. The Institute of Strategic Studies said so and it has been confirmed by many things, including the invasion of Guinea and the coup in Uganda. The fact is that the direction of the independent African States travelling on the road of socialism, giving support to national liberation move-

ments endangers imperialism and attacks the foundations of capitalism as a system for the first time since the conquest of Africa. For imperialism too it is a matter of life and death. Therefore imperialism has cast away its velvet glove and has revealed its iron claws for all to see. From a position of pressure and persuasion it has moved to a position of engineering an armed overthrow of the African States as the only way to make them change course.

This then is the measure of imperialism's seriousness and its desperation. It is in this light that we must view the sale of arms to South Africa. It is not just an economic issue, of making more business. It is not just the question of protecting its investments, but one which forms part of a wider strategy to reconquer Africa. Imperialism is determined that the balance of power remains constant in the whole of Africa.

The West has no quarrel with those African States which say that socialism can only be established by collaboration with imperialism. These States just entrench capitalism under the slogan of socialism. But Imperialism regards as its deadliest enemies those States which are determined to control their economic resources for the benefit of the people. In such societies there would not be any place for imperialism. And it is these who are the prime targets of imperialism.

Let there be no illusions about this. Establishing such a socialism is a serious business. Imperialism will not allow it. It will pursue and harass. It will go to war if necessary. It will invade or engineer coups. It will sidetrack issues by proposing dialogues while it sharpens its knife for the kill. It will pretend to give its aid through world bodies,

while its economic experts size up the situation and then galvanise into action sections of the indigenous bourgeoisie and other traitorous elements in society. It gives no quarter, for in this life and death struggle it expects no quarter.

Mortal Enemy

Imperialism's mortal enemy is a politically conscious people which is armed. Against such a force imperialism had no defence. It believed it had. It believed that all that would be necessary would be to rely on the murderous and killer weapons of death and destruction that would wipe out all in a short time. It was this that it tried to use in Vietnam. Here man proved mightier than weapons and American imperialism suffered a very ignoble and ignominious defeat.

Guinea is even smaller than Vietnam and it does not have a mighty revolutionary base area like China. But it too when faced with the supreme test rose to defend its revolutionary conquests, its road to socialism and sent the combined forces of Portuguese mercenaries and Guinean traitors packing. They too suffered a humiliating defeat and the reason was the revolutionary preparedness of its people. This involved 1) Political mobilisation of the masses. The people were told of the dangers, the principal enemies, their stooges and agents. They were told who and what they were fighting for and who what they were fighting against. The Guineans thus put politics in command. It was the party that led all along the line, and it was the party that held tightly to the gun. 2). Having mobilised the people politically it gave them gun, which was to be kept by their side, at work, in the factory, farm and kitchen.

What then was the result? In the contest between armed revolution and armed counter-revolution, the politically conscious people's militia proved decisive and it was responsible for the routing and defeat of the mercenaries, Portuguese and Guinean traitors. President Sekou Toure said,

and it needs to be emphasised, The essential quality of the revolution is to be measured by the degree of political consciousness and militant commitment of its people." The people of Guinea went through the sternest of tests and they emerged with flying colours, its steel being tempered in the heat and furnace of class struggle.

The most urgent need of the hour for those countries embarking on the road of socialism is: 1) Political mobilisation of the people with the party in command. 2) Arming the people by the speedy creation of a people's militia. This brooks of no delay for only then can revolution advance and its conquest be defended.

Cambodia provides revolutionaries throughout the world the lesson in unity. It showed the difference between real unity and empty unity. It showed unity between real friends by showing up unity between false friends. It brought to the fore the essential difference between talking unity, the unity of conference halls and the unity forged on the battlefield in the fields and forests.

Last year imperialism perpetrated a coup in Cambodia which ousted Sihanouk who ruled for 15 years and installed a puppet, the Lol Nol military junta. In this way, US imperialism showed that it recognised no boundaries and trampled the sovereign rights of the small nations. It believed that the people of Indo-China would sit and do nothing or would take the next plane to the United Nations to lay a complaint. The people of Indo-China did nothing of the kind. They met in a summit of its leaders—leaders of North Vietnam, the Provisional Government of South Vietnam, the Laotian Patriotic Front and the Kampuchea National Front. They regarded that an attack on one of them was an attack on all. They too thus dispensed with national boundaries, for struggle against imperialism has no national boundaries. The united forces overran Cambodia and so swift was their success that Nixon had to drop his image of a peace lover and

COMPETITIVE POLITICS AND ELECTORAL CHANGE IN INDIA

is the theme of *Economic and Political Weekly's* Annual Number 1971, just published. Papers in this section include:

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intervene directly solidly behind the Kampuchea Liberation Front and today less than a year later liberation forces are shelling the capital Phnom Penh. Imperialism here too is faced with a heavier and even more ignominious defeat.

The lesson then to be emphasised is that in the struggle between socialism and imperialism there are no national boundaries. And it is Obote's road to socialism that is being attacked. Africa has to learn the lessons of Cambodia quickly and speedily. The urgent need of the hour is to forge that unity that will move into action before counter-revolution will have time to consolidate. It is not only defending socialism, but also matter of self-preservation. Uganda is strategically placed. If Amin succeeds, it would be turned into a base for counter-revolution and daggers could be pointed at the throats of Tanzania, Sudan, Kenya, Congo (Kinshasha). These could be pressed if into our throats counter-revolution if so wished.

The need of the hour also for the revolutionary and anti-imperialist States is to get together immediately and force unity of the Cambodian type. Counter-revolution has already united. The presence of British troops day before the coup shows that. To wish for all-African unity now is to ask for unity between puppets and revolutionaries and this is the sure way of allowing the traitorous Amin clique to consolidate. They must not be given any breathing space. The revolutionary States must act now, before it is too late. The overwhelming support given to Guinea shows that progressive and radical Africa will also come to the aid if such a course is taken. It needs courage and boldness.

Left Intellectuals ?

PARESH CHATTAPODHYAY

N. KRISHNAJI

MANY intellectuals who profess leftism in public but privately seek personal advancement within bourgeois establishments either conveniently ignore the underlying contradiction or live with a sense of guilt which manifests itself in various forms. But if one is honest how does one resolve the contradiction? We argue here that, for most people in this category, the resolution lies not in turning into revolutionaries overnight but in making allowance for a transition through a process of gradual disengagement from the Establishment and in beginning such a process.

We define a left intellectual as one committed to socialism. By socialism we mean *scientific* socialism that Marxism stands for.

Compared to any time in the past there is perhaps, at present in India, among intellectuals, specially in the universities and the higher institutions of learning, a larger percentage professing leftism. *Objectively* this is a reflection of a greater appeal of socialism to the people of India at present compared to the past. But how many of these intellectuals really deserve to be called 'left'? Most of the 'left' intellectuals, specially in social sciences in India, are 'left' only in their private conversations. Even in what they write one would be hard put to find even a faint trace of their 'commitment' to socialism; on the contrary, most of them secure professional growth through writings which are essentially bourgeois in content and analysis.

When we define a left intellectual in relation to his commitment to socialism we take it not in the sense of oral or even written commitment but, what is crucial, in the sense of applied commitment, that is commitment as shown in (concrete) *practice*. In this context it should be made clear that we are not confusing

between a left intellectual and a Marxist or a Communist (they are equivalent) in as much as we are not raising any *organisational* question. A Marxist or Communist is inconceivable outside of a political organisation and the discipline following therefrom, whereas a left intellectual is perfectly conceivable without any organisational affiliation. Secondly, we hold that the category, "Marxist or Communist intellectual" is an unscientific (that is, un-Marxist) category since such a categorization accepts, knowingly or unknowingly, the separation between mental and manual labour for a Communist—impermissible in Marxism—though we know that this is the usual practice with Communist Establishment in India (Right or 'Left'). However, even this distinction between a left intellectual and Communist does not absolve the former from commitment to socialism in *practice* even though he may not be subject to any organisational discipline. As a matter of fact most of those who believe that they are left intellectuals advance the one or the other of the following arguments to justify their lack of commitment to socialism in *practice*.

(a) The intellectuals come, by and large, from the bourgeoisie or the petty bourgeoisie from whom one cannot expect anything significant for the revolution. Hence by the very nature of things they are incapable of any commitment in practice. They can show their commitment only in words. This is the argument of self-pity.

(b) The working class in a bourgeois society cannot gain revolutionary consciousness on their own; the necessary consciousness is brought to them from outside by bourgeois intellectuals. This is a fundamental Marxist-Leninist proposition. It follows that intellectuals have an important role to play in favour of the revolution. But this role consists only

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in bringing consciousness to the masses from 'outside' and thereby guiding them. In other words the intellectual's commitment to socialism is theoretical, not applied; an intellectual who has expressed commitment in words can sit back in contentment because he has played out his part. This is the argument of self-righteousness.

Let us consider argument (a). Whether the role of the bourgeoisie or the petty bourgeoisie as a class is positive or at least non-negative depends, of course, on the stage of the revolution. But on the whole, even if this role is hostile, it does not mean that the intellectuals coming from these classes will also be *automatically* hostile. In fact one of the contradictions of a bourgeois society or even a semi-feudal, semi-colonial society—is that the working class, the leader of the revolution, cannot as such lead it, unless it is given a revolutionary consciousness by the intellectuals.

To the extent that the role of the intellectuals is important as outlined above, the premises of argument (b) are valid; but its conclusion is invalid. This argument assumes, solely to justify absence of practice, a gap between intellectuals as 'givers' and masses as 'takers' without emphasising the necessity of the intellectuals being integrated with the masses in course of their ideological work. Such an integration can take place only through revolutionary practice by intellectuals.

At this point we should consider another argument that would be made to justify lack of practice by the left intellectuals:

(c) Revolutionary practice lead-

ing to one's integration with the masses can only be resorted to by professional revolutionaries. It is not possible for most of the left intellectuals to leave their families and jobs in order to become professional revolutionaries even if they have the courage and honesty to do so. Hence, they are obliged to hold on to their existing position in society with the hope, however, of turning into revolutionaries when the 'time is ripe'; in the meantime they (verbally) express their solidarity with the revolution. This is the argument of all-or-nothing.

Needless to say this kind of (0, 1) logic is absolutely undialectical. Either you are a professional revolutionary from the very beginning (when does it begin?) or you continue to enjoy, in your day-to-day life, all the privileges and the patronages that the existing society confers upon you—this is what the logic boils down to. It does not allow for any process of change or transformation from one position to the other except, possibly, through a sudden jump at a single instant of time.

Disengagement

This precisely brings us to the point where we should clarify what we mean by practice for a left intellectual. We, of course, don't assume him to be a professional revolutionary, who cannot be conceived of outside of a political organisation—the case we have excluded from the very beginning. The practice of a professional revolutionary, who is completely integrated with the masses, is of course the supreme practice on behalf of socialism. But practice of a lower order is perfectly conceivable for an intellectual who deserves to be called left. By such practice we mean *concrete manifestation*, in one's day-to-day and professional life, of a *process* of disengagement from the Establishment. In other words we do not postulate that a left intellectual should abandon his family and his bread-and-butter job, at least to start with; but we do postulate a beginning—however modest—of a process of his disengagement from the Estab-

lishment, e.g. this disengagement could take the form of a refusal to help, by consultancy or otherwise, the national or international Establishment (private or public); refusal to accept official honour and patronage, national or international, is another form. This process of disengagement must also be reflected in one's day-to-day life, again, however modest the beginning maybe. The process will be concretely manifested in the intellectuals' attempt to shorten, step by step, the gap, on a *material plane*, between the way they live and the way the masses they are supposed to serve, live.

The disengagement is, of course, an act of negation but this negation contains within itself the potential for positive action—*engagement* for socialism. Secondly, also as an indispensable minimum, the intellectuals, particularly in social sciences, must show unambiguously, in the main corpus of their professional work, their commitment to socialism.

We are perfectly aware of the difficulty of drawing a precise line of departure for the beginning of the process of practice. Secondly, there can be no uniform standard for everybody, considering the various objective limitations in real life. But whatever the difficulty of such an exercise one thing, we believe, is clear: intellectuals professing leftism should not at the same time contribute towards the strengthening of the system they are supposed to be fighting against. Granted the difficulty or even the unreality of total disengagement at one stroke, let each intellectual show *concretely* laying down his *own norms*, how he is disengaging himself from the system and engaging himself for socialism. Let the process begin somewhere. Otherwise, the intellectuals enjoying all the patronages and privileges of the system, though expressing leftism, will do exactly the same thing as a parliamentary opposition does in a bourgeois democracy—stabilise the system and thereby strengthen it. In such a case all leftism—however 'red'—is bunkum.

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FEBRUARY 6, 1971

Calcutta Diary

GYAN KAPUR

IT is the misfortune of Calcutta's citizens that no one, not even the councillors they elect, consider the city important enough in itself except as a means to an end. Traditionally, Calcutta Corporation has been a sort of training ground for supposedly bigger political plums by way of State Assembly or parliamentary seats. This trend was set in motion by the Congress. However much other parties may hate the Congress, in this respect they have been willing followers. The latest to follow this well-worn trail will be Calcutta's Mayor, Mr Prasanta Sur, who is being put up for a parliamentary seat by the CPM. If elected, Mr Sur may very well look after Calcutta's interest from far-off New Delhi but we all know what it means. Apart from hair-brained schemes like the New Market Hotel, there has been at least a sense of realism in the Corporation's affairs during Mr Sur's tenure as Mayor. Of course, this may continue, but as likely it may not. For individuals do make a difference.

Perhaps the Corporation constitution itself requires a few changes. If members of State assemblies and Parliament can be elected for five years at a time, why not the councillors? And why should the Mayor be elected every year? Why not make the tenure of office of the Mayor five years? In that way whoever gets the job will have a sufficiently long period to do what he wants, granting of course that he is serious. He can be judged by his actual performance as against promises. Presently, the time is too short for anything of the sort. So it is no wonder that succeeding Mayors consider their main job to be to make promises knowing full well that they will not be in the job long enough to be judged by what they actually do. But such a change is not likely to find favour with many. For one, there will be fewer political

plums to distribute and for another it will be too much like work.

* *

Slogans appear from time to time on walls in the city stating that the major cause of the ills of the State is the division of Bengal. This, of course, is true to an extent which even those who write them may not realise. The division is an accomplished fact and only those who live in a fool's paradise can hope for a re-unification at some future date, near or far. However, the evils of partition could at least be mitigated given the will on either side. As yet the prospects are bleak, Sheikh Mujib's sweeping victory in East Pakistan notwithstanding.

The PSP which can claim to be the fifth column of the ruling party inside the socialist camp, however, seems to be determined to do something about it even if in an indirect way, by creating conditions in West Bengal similar to those in East Pakistan. Unless it is moved by some such idea, it is difficult to understand its motives in calling for handing over the State to the Army, police and CRP for conducting the elections. It is the Party's contention that otherwise the elections are going to be 'rigged or bloody.' The elections, of course, may well be bloody. Already quite a lot of blood is flowing with no signs of its trickling down.

Actually, Mr Samar Guha's demand is for handing over the State administration to the Armed Forces and police first. The conduct of the elections is to follow as a result. Probably, if the Armed Forces feel the elections cannot be held, Mr Guha will have no objection to abiding by their decision. Votaries of a united Bengal might feel happy that even if the two states cannot be united politically, they are one in having identical miseries. Such is the stuff of which our socialists are made.

Their faith in the Armed Forces is equalled only by their reliance on the bureaucracy. Witness Mr Guha's action in making his breath-taking suggestion not to the President or the Prime Minister, not even to the Go-

vernor but only to the Election Commissioner. After such an election, if it does not go the way he likes, as indeed it never can, Mr Guha would no doubt ask for military rule to continue till conditions to his liking return.

President Yahya Khan in Islamabad must indeed feel happy that he was more farsighted than his neighbours. He may well claim that they will have to follow him.

* *

Even if it is a pre-election strategy, the CMDA machinery has started moving. That money is not much of a problem was proved by the issue of Rs 650 lakh Bonds by the CMDA carrying interest at 6 percent. These were oversubscribed no sooner they were issued. There is no reason to suppose that even ten times this amount cannot be raised. Incidentally, these Bonds are eligible for investment of accumulations of provident fund and are probably the highest interest carrying securities approved for this purpose.

While the trade union movement is ever watchful about rising prices leading to demands for higher wages, unfortunately too little attention has been paid to the workers' savings by way of provident fund. By the time the worker gets his provident fund money, its value is usually a fraction of the original amount. This could be offset to some extent if the money is invested in high interest yielding investments. However, the rules stand in the way. It is interesting to learn that even Units of the Unit Trust of India which are as good an investment and safe as well and have been paying 7 per cent dividend, are not considered eligible securities for provident fund purposes. So also, I understand, are fixed deposits even with the State Bank of India. There are many different ways of defrauding the workers.

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Story Of A Closed Firm

BY A CORRESPONDENT

A 35-year-old big engineering concern of Calcutta, Gresham and Craven Limited, has been closed down, rendering about 1,200 workers and employees jobless.

The firm, a major manufacturer of sophisticated components like vacuum brakes, ejectors, injectors, vacuum equipment and many other items for the Indian Railway, has been suffering from acute financial crisis for the last two years. Its British owner, Westinghouse Brake and Signal Company Limited, stopped investment in this Indian unit from 1969 after squeezing out a huge profit. With a paid-up capital of Rs 4.6 lakhs, the British company has so far taken away to the U.K., as profit, nearly 8 times this amount on an average every year.

The closure was declared suddenly on the midnight of January 15. Though the employees had been anticipating that the company was either going to be closed down or sold out, they were surprised to receive the closure notice at a time when the Government of West Bengal had just come forward with certain measures to end the deadlock. Mr Dilip Roy, Vice-President, Gresham and Craven Mazdoor Union, in a recent press statement, alleged that this act of the management was motivated. The Labour Adviser to the West Bengal Governor convened a tripartite meeting which was due to be held on January 25. The management under the pressure of their British parents closed down the firm before that date with a view to closing it down permanently.

A memorandum submitted by the Mazdoor Union to the Prime Minister alleges that a deep-rooted conspiracy of the British owners of Gresham and Craven against India's national interest has thrown this industry into a quagmire. Withdrawing their business from India the British owners of the firm have been

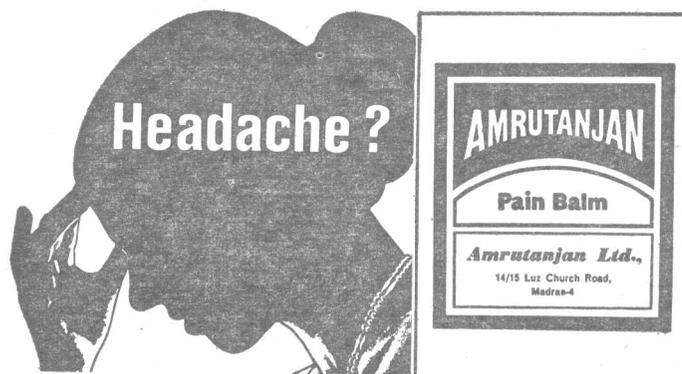
trying to compel the Indian Railway Board to import from the U.K. essential railway components manufactured by this firm valued at Rs 1.5 crores annually.

With the stoppage of further investment and the lifting away of the accumulated profit by the British owners, the Indian management, towards the end of 1969, faced such a financial crisis that there was no money available to buy even raw materials in spite of a good order position. While the draining of profit out of India could not be stopped, the adverse effect of recession and devaluation of the Indian rupee was still there. Due to all these factors, a very acute financial crisis appeared in 1968-69 and the year 1969-70 saw practically no working capital. Because of lack of finance, casting and other material could not be had and work could not be sent to the shop floor, the suppliers having refused supplies except on cash payment. Over 90 per cent of the workers and employees had to sit idle.

Finally the payment of wages to workmen and employees was stopped.

But the profitability of the firm seems enormous. According to company records, the firm earned a huge profit since its inception in 1935. During the four years from 1962 to 1966, the firm yielded a profit of Rs 1,56,35,622. The average annual profit in the seven years from 1962 to 1969 was 385 per cent of the paid-up capital. Even taking into account the year 1969-70 when the owners were trying to stop production, either selling out or closing down the shop, the annual average profit for the eight years was more than Rs 13 lakhs. In other words the company did not suffer any loss till 1969.

The firm even now has orders on book valued at Rs 1.6 crores. The Fourth Five Year Plan is sure to yield orders of greater value annually. It has also on book foreign orders from Burma, Ghana, Sudan and Nigeria valued at Rs 4.8 lakhs. The volume of this trade may be in-



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creased many times and extended to more countries under Government patronage and initiative.

Explaining the financial position and the prospect of the firm, the memorandum of the Mazdoor Union submitted to the Prime Minister, states that the firm would start yielding profits immediately if financial help of only Rs 50 lakhs is flown in. The firm has within its availability the most modern technological know-how for the production of highly sophisticated railway components which have a very good demand within the country and abroad.

The Board of Directors of the Gresham and Craven of India also submitted a memorandum to the then Labour Minister of the United Front Government of West Bengal in October, 1969, pointing out these facts.

Seeking a loan of Rs 50 lakhs from the State Government, the memorandum stated that the sudden fall in demand for wagons by the Indian Railway affected the company causing heavy losses for the last three years. As the parent company of the U.K. has stopped payment of further guarantee and the company under Indian management reached the limit of overdraft facility of Rs 20 lakhs with their bankers, the Board of Directors had no alternative but to approach the West Bengal Government for financial assistance through scheduled bank guarantees.

Considering the genuine crisis the union of workmen and employees had not resorted to any action for the last three years which could have caused a loss of man-hours or production. In 1969, the Management and the Mazdoor Union approached the UF Government seeking financial help. But the UF Government fell and nothing could be done. After the fall of the UF Government, the management and the Mazdoor Union approached the Governor of West Bengal with the same request. But nothing concrete was done and the firm had to be closed down permanently.

A deputation on behalf of the Mazdoor Union went to Delhi to

impress upon the Prime Minister the Government's duty to come forward and save this industry which is essential for the Indian Railway and also to save the economy of West Bengal from deteriorating further.

Jokers Mild

MRIGANKA SEKHAR RAY

SINCE his *Awara* days, Raj Kapoor has been frantically trying to go Chaplinsque in his antics and expressions, resulting, of course, not in any creative assimilation of the master's influence, but only in some irritating feats of vulgar aping. Raj Kapoor seems to forget the fact that the baggy trousers and the holed shoes are just too big for him and even if he dons the superficial Chaplin dress, he won't be a second Chaplin. But the mania is too deep-rooted to be cured and in his latest film *Mera Naam Joker*, Raj goes even further, trying to embellish the tramp-clown image with intellectual and spiritual adornment. But this three-part soap-opera turns out to be a compendium of the amorous entanglement of Raju, the clown-hero. The first episode which depicts the adolescent Raju's emotional upheaval in course of his relationship with Simi, the school-teacher, is good material spoiled by much high-falutin philosophic crap about the clown and his role in life. The characterisations are also one-dimensional, especially of Raju as the noble angel incapable of committing any sin and so when he stumbles on his lady-teacher undressing, this sight, which could have led any normal adolescent to a healthy masturbating spree, goes him on to the confessional chamber. The other two episodes are just commonplace film dramas, an affair with a Russian acrobat ending in separation and another, an attachment with Padmini, who ultimately leaves the joker in the lurch to become a film star. All these three heart-throbs have now gathered to see the joker at his final act and as the three flashbacks finish unfolding

Raju's many-splendoured past, at the end of this four-hour long technicolor third-degree grilling, we are warned that this is positively not the end and Raj Kapoor, like the hooded hero of a Republic serial, threatens to come back again. A horrifying prospect.

While Raj Kapoor has no qualms about calling himself the joker, the two Johnnies, Dev Anand in *Johnny Mera Naam* and Horst Bukholz in *Johnny Banco*, are a trifle chary of giving out their real names. Dev Anand has some rough time with Pran but Hema Malini provides some refreshing interludes. Bukholz, a compulsive gambler in Barcelona, hoots off to Monte Carlo, after grabbing 20,000 dollars from a crook. Both the heroes, of course, win in the end, getting back their doll and the dough, and both films have everything. Colour, glamour, stars, everything minus the two most important elements, logic and intelligence.

In *Ekhashey Pinjar*, we have Uttam Kumar, the peeping-tom of a writer prying into a world of sinners—some born criminals, some have strayed into the wrong path against their will. The latter category offers a delicious specimen, Neela, a village girl involved in a smuggling racket. Uttam Kumar, somehow, gets stuck with Neela's family, spending his money and wise counsels to reform the wayward heroine and as the film plods on wearily and aimlessly along an uncharted path, one suspects that the director must have lost some vital pages of his scenario and has decided on some not-too-effective off-the-cuff devices. But as Uttam Kumar heroically smashes the crime ring, we know that his labours and investment are not at all wasted, for he has successfully proposed to Neela who have gone to prison to serve a three-month S.I., as a compromise between the laws of the land and the demands of a film climax.

The Film Society Scene

Czechoslovak films continue to be the mainstay of the film society programme and the three films for this country which are already in the circuit, are tokens of the varied nature

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of Czech film-making. *Honour And Glory*, set in the turbulent years of the Hussite wars, is an interesting throwback to the violent chapter of European history when religion dominated human values and passions. It has beautiful photography and an excellent evocation of period atmosphere, but it may be a little too distant for the local audience. *The Distress Of Young Bohacek*, is a modestly-done comic piece about a reluctant groom and his ultimate response to love. The characters are expertly sketched and the film has occasional flashes of breezy comedy. The three episodes of *Dialogues 20.40-60*, are variations on the theme of love as seen from the viewpoint of different age-groups, the young, the middle-aged and the old. The complex emotional textures and the moods of the different age groups, the buoyancy of the youth, the balanced caution of the middle-aged and the brooding loneliness of the old, are superbly handled. Almost the same lines are spoken in all the episodes and the protagonists all belong to the show business. Maybe, the transitory nature of the show-business and of love and life might have a meeting-point somewhere.

The DEFA documentary *Beethoven* (shown by Calcutta Film Society) traces the great composer's life and work, carefully relating his achievements to the contemporary historical background, and interpreting the social forces shaping Beethoven's career as a musician. His initial enthusiasm over the French revolution, his concern for the common people, his condemnation of Napoleon's tyrannical rule, as embodied in his opera *Fidelio*, his protest against Metternich's oppression—in fact the film's emphasis is on Beethoven as a social revolutionary working through music. The film has a fluid visual style and amazing bits of authentic documentation. Staggering specially is the haunting picturisation of the pastoral symphony where all the elements of nature seem dancing to Beethoven's music.

Focus on Calcutta

Now that CMDA has taken up the hatchets for its "Calcutta-saving

crusade", a film on Calcutta could be a timely appraisal of the city's problems. And Film Division's *Calcutta, A Doomed City (?)* could have served that purpose, had not the film totally missed its mark. The film is composed of interviews with the Mayor of Calcutta, a CMDA executive, a journalist and a businessman, which are just clumsy bits of ill-assorted information and the interviews are not intelligently used, either as a counterpoint or as a supplement to visuals. The CMDA official just complacently dishes out the hackneyed P.R. platitudes, the journalist quite apathetic and the businessman just casual. The common people who speak are not provocative enough. Only the Mayor tries to raise some important points but unfortunately he is given the minimum of screen-time. Moreover, there is no sense of involvement, nothing of the emotional rapport which is so very essential for an understanding of Calcutta's problems. This colourless objective reportage never attempts to go into the roots of the evils and cleverly skips over the unsavoury point of Central injustice. Strikingly absent also is the vitality, the lively throb, which is always there in this city under all the dirt, squalor and confusion.

Clippings

The Monk's Advice

FOREIGN officials in Phnom Penh who brood over Cambodia's problems and vie for Lon Nol's ear may be a bit disconcerted to learn that the premier gets some of his most intimate advice from a clique of Buddhist monks who often see him for hours at a stretch.

High among these well-placed advisers is Mam Pro Moni, a crafty-looking, 39-year-old bonze whose confident air and haughty demeanour befit his Cambodian title: "Grand Intellectual of Glorious Purity". He belongs to the Mohanikay Buddhist sect. He describes himself as an astrologer, mineralogist and historian.

He sees Lon Nol each week but will not divulge the content of their discussions beyond saying that they range from personal problems to affairs of state. To provide some sense of the wisdom he shares with the Cambodian leader, Mam Pro Moni offers the following predictions:

Peace will come to Cambodia this spring, but will not endure unless several requirements are met: all Vietnamese from north or south must leave the country; no American troops can return; US businessmen must help Cambodia recover through heavy investment—and they must act before their Japanese counterparts do so. (*Far Eastern Economic Review*).

MAP

Tucked away in the summaries of President Nixon's 1970 budget estimates was a modest sum for the MAP (military assistance programme) of \$495 million. Everyone concerned with the subject was dimly aware that other sums were spent separately on Vietnam or given away in the form of surplus weapons. But just how dimly they were aware of the enormous scope of the US arms programme has now been brought out in Congressional hearings conducted by Senator William Proxmire of Wisconsin.

Military aid does not run to hundreds of millions of dollars; it runs to thousands of millions. Just how much it actually totals is lost in a labyrinth of schemes sponsored by the defence department, the state department, and even the department of agriculture. Estimates offered at the hearings ran from \$4,800 billion to \$7,000 million, and the Pentagon's own spokesmen said they did not have all the figures.

The former chief of military aid programmes in the Pentagon, Townsend Hoopes, was himself surprised at the discovery that most angered Proxmire—that \$700 million in PL-480 funds had been spent for military purposes in the past six years. "I was totally unaware of this", he said. Proxmire glumly wondered if the "Food for Peace" programme

should not be renamed "Food for War".

Other shockers included the discovery that weeks of investigation by the comptroller general of the US had failed to find anyone in the Pentagon who knew the value of all the surplus weapons given to South Vietnam. Neither could anyone come up with a year-by-year breakdown of the cost of military installations that the US had built in foreign countries and then given away. The Pentagon offered an estimate of \$900 million worth of installations that had been handed over the past six years. But it could not even estimate the figures for Thailand or South Vietnam.

Hoopes said the enormous shift of aid funds that he helped initiate from MAP to the defence budget was intended to protect the "integrity" of MAP rather than evade (Senate Foreign Relations Committee headed by) Fulbright. Since escalation in Vietnam made it impossible to make a firm worldwide request for MAP funds in 1966, he said aid to the Vietnamese was switched to the defence budget. Aid to Laos and Thailand was switched over in the following year, for the same reason. This helped explain the decline in MAP at a time when military aid was actually doubling. (*Fat Eastern Economic Review*)

War Criminal

If General Westmoreland, former Commander-in-Chief of U.S. forces in Vietnam, were to be tried according to the standards established during World War II for war criminals, he could be found guilty in the view of Prof. Taylor, former U.S. prosecution counsel at the Nuremberg trials.

Prof. Taylor, who is a retired general and teaches law at Columbia University, expressed his view in an interview with the *New York Times* and in a T. V. broadcast.

He recalled the precedent of Japanese General Yamashita, Commander for the Philippines, who was found guilty of atrocities committed by his troops, and was hanged.

A general is responsible for controlling the conduct of his troops, Mr Taylor said.

(Agency report)

Military Intelligence

Emphasising the vital need for sound army intelligence, Gen. Choudhury (former chief of staff), had a mild dig at military intelligence at the time of the Goa operation. "An enquiry was made by HQ, Southern Command, as to whether there was any armour with the Portuguese forces. Armoured cars or tanks were specified. Very shortly afterwards a packet of photographs arrived with a covering letter saying that these pictures of Portuguese "tanks" had been taken at great risk by an agent. There were tanks all right, each one poised on a tall scaffolding and designed to contain 15,000 gallons of water... (*Hindustan Times*)

Killers

I have been delighted to note that the West Bengal Government has decided to effect a five-year moratorium on the killing of tigers and leopards.

When it will ban man-killing? (Letters, *Hindustan Times*).

Teacher-Naxalites

The number of student Naxalites (in Delhi University) is not alarming. It could be very small, only 80 out of 80,000 i.e. 1 p.c. Most of these are fashionable Naxalites belonging to sophisticated families or the charas brand. They may be misguided, lured or acting due to other considerations. Similarly as the "power grows out of the barrel of the gun", to them Naxalism grows out of charas pipes. Real Naxalites are teachers.

...The teacher-Naxalites are the committed lot. They work with a plan and a purpose. They brainwash students. They operate as responsible and enlightened Naxalites and therefore they are very dangerous. They get support from some of the top people of the university who are either also leftists of the

same brand or for political reasons as they need vocal support from this section for their personal designs as a matter of give-and take. In return these top men help their supporters with various kinds of favours.

The student-teacher gang-up operates from certain staff quarters and flats and also from various areas around the university, including the Ridge, Kamlanagar, Vijaynagar and Chandrawal. The Naxalites of Delhi University also regularly visit the slums and villages to preach Mao's doctrines through slogans and plays.

...The Chief Executive Councillor, Mr V. K. Malhotra has recently warned against the Naxalite activity. He was also instrumental in barring the admission in Delhi University of doubtful characters from Bengal in early July. (*Campus Reporter, Delhi*)

Letters

A Letter From Prison

The masses are awakening, the sick mother is now determined not to allow her children to starve before her. Labourers are feeling that they are no less respectable than the employers and capitalists. Peasants with their backbone broken and bent down by the pressure of feudal torture and exploitation, are rising, with the knowledge that they are the real owners of the land and the mainstay of the nation. Students and youths have learnt through long years of unemployment and exploitation around them that they owe a duty and obligation to save the masses from the exploitation of the ruling class. They have gathered around the peasantry, labourers and other toiling masses leaving aside the semi-feudal and semi-colonial temptations of a career and the pursuit of self-interest. I am proud of the fact that I am one of those sacrificing and devoted fighters who are determined to establish a land of equality, justice and right to living. How can a student keep himself aloof from the struggle of the masses and

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pose indifference to the exploitation of our country by the four mountains of exploitation?

The spark that had been kindled in the Naxalbari area by the local peasants in alliance with tea garden labourers against the century-old feudalism in 1967 has now spread throughout the country like a prairie fire under the leadership of the CPI (ML).

To stifle this mass upsurge the ruling class has taken the help of the PVA Act and the Anderson Act of 1932. The policemen who are the tools of the imperialists have a black history of torture and oppression. The Police Department which consists of brutes and fascists arrested me under the PVA Act framing several fake, fantastic charges as they have done and are doing in many cases. But I know that the local people love me as one of their own for my ideology and the struggle of my party against oppression and exploitation.

May I ask the judges, the keepers of human rights and justice, where were they when several of our comrades were shot dead by the police in Barasat, Beliaghata etc? May I ask them why they do not feel ashamed and humiliated when the police killed many bright boys in the thana lockups without any fear of judgment? I as well as they all know that they also are the miserable victims of this system.

A PVA DETENU
W. Bengal

"Freedom Of The Press"

I am tempted to make the following comments on Mr Vivekananda Mukherjee's memorandum to the Prime Minister as given in your 16th January issue (page 13). Mr Mukherjee complains that since 1966 his editorials have been tampered with. Why did he not protest then? If the Editor's integrity is at stake now, it was equally so in 1966.

Whether Mr A. K. Sen is at fault is not my point here. My point is that—people—particularly an editor

of Mr Vivekananda Mukherjee's stature—are not expected to yield to any pressure.

TULSI BANERJEE
Howrah

Death Sentences

It is heartening to learn that the Orissa Civil Defence Committee has taken up the cause of Nagbhushan Patnaik and other guerillas belonging to the CPI(ML) who were sentenced to death in the first week of December. But it is rather surprising that neither the Civil Defence Committee nor the Sarvodaya leaders have uttered even a word about the earlier death sentences passed on two members of the CPI(ML) belonging to the Nellore District of Andhra Pradesh. As early as October last, Intha Ramana Reddy (35), a peasant revolutionary of Kovur in Nellore District, and Puli Srinivasulu (18), a student of XII Class in a Nellore High School were sentenced to death by the Sessions Judge, Nellore, in connection with the murder of a despotic landlord in the Maddurpalli village of Nellore District. After the formation of the CPI(ML), these two were the first to be sentenced to death among that party's cadre. There is no news whether or not any appeal to High Court was made on their behalf.

I feel that there should be proper co-ordination between the civil rights defence committees of various States so that stronger public opinion can be mobilised not only against all police atrocities against the revolutionaries but also against the death sentences on them.

GUDIVADA APPARAO
Visakhapatnam

The Yagashram

We have read with interest about the Vishwayatan Yogashram and its Swamiji's involvement in the very recent jeep press photographer incident in Delhi involving the Prime

Minister's son Sanjoy Gandhi. It has been revealed that the compound of the Yogashram was being used for keeping a fleet of jeeps for Mrs Indira Gandhi's election purposes. The story behind the Yogashram is not known to the public. The Director of the Vishwayatan Yogashram, Swami Dharendra Brahmachari, is said to be a Yogi teacher and astrologer of the Prime Minister, many other Ministers and other influential persons in government in Delhi.

In reply to my question No. 8382 dated 4.5.70, the Minister, Mr K. K. Shah said that government accommodation had been allotted in favour of the Vishwayatan Yogashram centre near Pant Marg, New Delhi—a total of 1,866 acres of land with built-up units for 20,460 sq. ft. of plinth area. The Yogashram would utilise the land measuring about 1,393 acres for the construction of an office, a library, class rooms and Yogic therapeutic research laboratory and pay for the same at the rate of Rs. 5,000 per acre plus 5% annual ground rent thereof. The remaining portion of the land measuring about 0.463 acres would be utilised by the Ashram for their bona fide residential purposes and for this area of land, it would pay at the rate of Rs 1 lakh per acre as annual ground rent. The existing structures on the site had been sold to the Yogashram for Rs 63,674. The Yogashram would demolish the structures within two years. In case, however, the Ashram failed to do so it would have to pay a further sum of Rs 80,176 towards the cost of the structures.

These were all very concessional terms. The vast area of land and huge building is worth over Rs 50 lakhs; over and above this, the Education Ministry alone has given about Rs 5 lakhs. Details of payment made by other Ministries were not given to me at the time of writing although I asked for it.

In reply to my question No. 1970 it was revealed that Bungalow No. 1 at Jantar Mantar Road, New Delhi was allotted to the Vishwayatan Yogashram on 21.1.1958 on lease

and licence basis on the recommendation of the Ministry of Education. The Bungalow was got vacated from the Yogashram on 2.4.1965, owing to default in payment of Government dues. The arrears of rent were later recovered with the assistance of the Ministry of Education. JYOTIRMOY BOSU, ex-MP, Calcutta.

Dismissal

I was illegally and arbitrarily dismissed from railway service on 21.9.55 after I had put in more than twelve years there, on charges of criticising the Pay Commission recommendations at a meeting of the E.I. Railroad Workers' Union, leading a hostile demonstration of railwaymen to protest against retrenchment of 8 peons of the E.I. Railway, and fomenting a general strike on and from 9.3.50, by an order, received by me on 23.9.55 from the F.A. and C.A.O., N.E. Railway, who, in my case, assumed the role of both the prosecutor and the judge. I preferred a representation on 23.10.55 against this dismissal to the President of the Republic of India who is the legal authority under the relevant rules to dismiss a railwayman, and have been following it up by reminders to successive Presidents, Prime Ministers, Railway Ministers, Chairman, Railway Board, and by requests to several MPs, both right and left, to take up the case. I also appealed to the Chief Minister and some of his colleagues of the first United Front Government of West Bengal in June, 1967 to forward my case with their observations. But I do not know what these public men have done for me and the President is yet to respond to my representation. May I now appeal to the people of my country?

S. K. GHOSE
Calcutta

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Jews And Arabs

Arabs and Jews are neighbours from time immemorial living in an air of conflict and concord, in perpetual war and transient peace and in the contemporary world, geopolitically Israel is an island in the sea of alien Arabs.

The creation of the Jewish State with the simultaneous creation of the Palestinian refugee problem is the logical product of the British Divide and Rule policy. The inhuman persecution of Jews under Nazi tyranny is the saddest defeat of civilization and every nation, every man in the modern world cannot shake off the moral responsibility in not being able to save the unfortunate Jews from the brutality of Hitlerite Germany, and Great Britain with the help of the Allied Powers made an attempt to atone for her colonial crime by carving out a territory for the Jews out of the Arab land. Neither the Jews nor the Arabs were responsible for this British hypocrisy. The assessment of the immortal scientist-philosopher Albert Einstein is revealing. He said, "It was much less our own fault or that of our own neighbours than of the Mandatory Power that we did not achieve an undivided Palestine in which Jews and Arabs would live as equals, free in peace. If one nation dominates other nations, as was the case in the British Mandate over Palestine, she can hardly avoid following the notorious device of Divide et Impera. In plain language this means: create discord among the governed people so they will not unite in order to shake off the yoke imposed upon them. Well, the yoke has been removed but the seed of dissension has borne fruit and may still do harm for some time to come—let us hope not for too long." (*Out of My later Years*, New York, 1950). What the scientist-prophet said two decades ago is borne out by what is happening to-day in the Middle East. This era of discord must not continue. The artificial division of the indivisible has become the order of the day—divided Germany, vivisec-

ted Vietnam, partitioned India and bifurcated Cyprus (?). This process has got to be ended. Negotiation and not confrontation is the only method to solve this vexed problem.

The Spirit of 'Forget and Forgive' should be the guiding force to make an end of this conflict. Certain facts are to be recognised

- (1) Recognition of Israel as a State by all Arab States.
- (2) Just and mutually acceptable solution of the Palestinian refugee problem.
- (3) Mutual dialogue between Israel and Arab States "undisturbed by others" as advised by Einstein.
- (4) Determination of both Jews and Arabs to live as peace-loving neighbours.

In this regard, it is worth recalling the radio broadcast of Professor Albert Einstein for the United Jewish Appeal on Nov. 27, 1949. He said, "One of these ideals is peace, based on understanding and self-restraint, and not on violence...It may well be that we would have reached this ideal, had we been permitted to work out, undisturbed by others, our relations with our neighbours, for we want peace and we realize that our future development depends on peace."

If we can fulfil the desire of the greatest scientist of this century, it will be the most befitting homage to his immortal soul. Peace cannot emanate from the sorrowful tears of the trodden, the oppressed and the displaced, the Jews, Palestinian Arabs and the Arabs as a whole must learn to live in amity and concord as perpetual conflict will lead only to mutual annihilation.

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