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Editor : Samar Sen

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BY SAMAR SEN FROM 61, MOTT LANE,
CALCUTTA-13
TELEPHONE: 243202

MAGIC CURE

THE Congress Government in West Bengal has already unloaded a sackful of schemes on the people. Not a day passes without half a dozen Ministers coming out with some multipoint proposals to change the face of the State. The masterpiece has come, as it should, from the new Chief Minister, Mr Siddhartha Ray, who has announced the Cabinet decision to change the name of the State. None but a genius could have thought of this. While the success of other Ministers would depend upon many factors over whom they have no direct control, Mr Ray has hit upon a scheme of instant transformation. If there is no State by the name of West Bengal, to talk of the agony or miseries of West Bengal will be meaningless; the nightmare will pass, and the problems will dissolve. The people will have a new State with a shining new name. There is no doubt that with an obliging Centre Mr Ray will be able to keep his promise and prove that after all, contrary to the general notion, there is something in a name.

The whole-hogger that he is, he has no inclination to rest at this basic transformation. Many other changes he has up his sleeves. A new State should have a new Governor, and Mr Dias may have to move to a different Raj Bhavan. Better understanding between the Governor and his Chief Minister may be a subsidiary benefit of this change, for it is no secret that Mr Ray and Mr Dias did not hit off during President's rule and the Governor had reduced the Union Minister for West Bengal Affairs to a nonentity. West Bengal is already maintaining two Governors—Mr Dias is still acting in place of Mr Dhavan on leave—and it may have to pay for a third if Mr Dias is replaced. That should create no problem though, as the Centre has promised not to stint on funds for West Bengal's development. Besides, the State Government has already made a saving of Rs 5 lakhs a year by superseding Calcutta Corporation where, immediately after the take-over, the minister-in-charge and the new Administrator played musical chairs for occupying the Mayoral seat, so irresistible were their do-gooding instincts.

Those who are unable to cast off their cynicism in spite of this promising debut by the Ministry may turn to the Governor's inaugural address to the new Assembly. They will find that all promises any

government has ever made have been included in the catalogue of urgent tasks the Ministry has taken upon itself. In what order they will be implemented is a question of priorities, but one can rest assured that the Maintenance of Internal Security Act is going to be invoked immediately against all employers who fail to pay provident fund or Employees' State Insurance dues. A similar promise was, of course, made during President's rule, but it could not be honoured perhaps because in the absence of an elected government the regime could not be sure that the action would receive popular endorsement. On behalf of his Government Mr Dias has promised to fulfil the wish of every citizen. Those who want to go under will have the underground railway to reach their destination; those who would like to go above will have more airlines to take them up in the air; the peasants will have their own land to till, the workers will have more industries to work in, the unemployed will have

more jobs to apply for. The only sector seemingly neglected is politicians; but there is a proposal, not included in the Governor's address, to give the State once again a bicameral legislature which should give hope to unemployed and underemployed Congressmen.

It was really a joyous occasion. The only flaw was the absence of Left Front and some other Opposition members, including the good old Mr P. C. Sen, who has refused to sit with Congressmen. But with the CPI in attendance, this minor lack did not go unrepaired; its leader set an example in constructive opposition by vehemently criticising the failure to distribute copies of the Governor's address to the members. The struggle for "Garibi hatao" and "Purna arthik swaraj" has been launched in all earnestness and the unbelievers will discover faith if they remember that the army, the CRP, the Chhatra Parishad, the Youth League and the MISA have not yet been withdrawn.

Fiction Is Fact

A correspondent writes:

Mrs Gandhi has committed the future of war prisoners with the Bangladesh Government. The Sheikh cannot let them go back to Pakistan without putting some hundreds of them on trial. General Yahya Khan gave orders one year earlier to 'sort them out'. Now is the time to sort them out.

Mr Bhutto may think that the allied command of Indian troops and the Bangladesh Mukti Bahini was a legal fiction. But it is surprising that Mr Bhutto has not yet learnt that in politics fiction is stronger than fact. The birth of Bangladesh owes itself to the fiction of national liberation. But, fiction commands politics. Russia's right to intervene in protection of a fraternal socialist country is a fiction, America's right to intervene to protect liberal democracy is a fiction, Israel's right to Palestine is a

fiction. International politics is an elaborate fiction where morality has a small place. It is the survival of the fittest, who alone can spin the yarn. Mr Bhutto himself collaborated in a fiction when people were slaughtered in Bangladesh on the fiction that they were Indian saboteurs. Now that the table has been turned, he has to swallow the fiction that it was the Mukti Bahini who liberated East Pakistan with just a little help from India.

The fact, if Mr Bhutto wants the fact, is that Mrs Gandhi has vanquished the Pakistani Army and she has no reason now to stoop to conquer. Time was when almost the whole world went against her in the UN as she decided to take the plunge in Bangladesh. Even before that she had gone abegging for relief from the burden of the refugees. The world paid no heed. Neither the generals

in Pakistan nor Mr Bhutto did either. Now they have got to face the consequences, Russia willing.

The war prisoners are no problem for India. The cost of maintaining a humane attitude to them is to be borne by the enemy, according to the Geneva Convention. A few killings or even brainwashing are all in order. On the other hand, confinement of these prisoners, whom Pakistanis bred on militarism consider the finest children of their soil, is hurting them like hell, as Mr Bhutto told an Indian journalist. Not that Mr Bhutto cannot raise another four divisions, but then he would have to start from scratch, he would have to spend development funds on the military, just as General Yahya Khan used relief money for East Pakistan to build pill boxes and lay mines. But, on top of that, Mr Bhutto would be hard put to assuage the feelings of the relatives of the war prisoners. And in a country which was being run by militarists, abandoning the war prisoners would mean spiritual suicide. Redeem them he must, whatever the ransom. Mrs Gandhi has got him where she can put the squeeze and she will go on squeezing till Mr Bhutto gets out of his shape and fits in with Mrs Gandhi's scheme of things.

Take it as a fact, take it as fiction, Mr Bhutto seems to have very few alternatives to choose from. He can get back the war prisoners and the territories lost to India, only on Mrs Gandhi's terms. Whether he recognises Bangladesh or not means little to Mrs Gandhi—the length of countries giving recognition is one mile long. Whether he concludes a no-war pact, stops hostile propaganda, resumes diplomatic relations, starts trade missions, disengages troops from borders, are all for the clerks to write and babble. Mrs Gandhi seems to have one principal idea and that is to make the present favourable ceasefire line in Kashmir the international border. That would once for all solve the Kashmir problem.

Mr Bhutto appears, from his inter-

views with journalists, to be banking a lot on the fact or the fiction that he is a civilian free from military vices. He appears to presume that India would lose if the military gains the upper hand again in Pakistan. He is totally wrong there. India can take on Pakistan whether it is run by Ayub, Yahya, Tikka or some such other Duryodhan. In fact, it is the civilian facade of the new regime and the seemingly radical measures that Mr Bhutto is in the habit of announcing off and on, that should embarrass the new liberator that has emerged in Asia, for unlike war against a military clique, measures against such a regime cannot be passed off as liberation war. Of course, not all military regimes are alike. One can pay a state visit to an army-ruled country from which giant American bombers take off to attack North and South Vietnam. Such visits are for the purpose of ensuring stability in the sub-continent through collective security pacts.

Hit And Teach

General Vo Nguyen Giap has never obliged his adversaries. In the 1968 Tet offensive, when his men seized Khe San, the world talked about a second Dien Bien Phu. Last month, on the eve of Nixon's Peking visit, Washington, Saigon and their associates elsewhere were haunted by the spectre of a second Tet. But the communists remained behind the bush

though they had showed signs of preparation for an offensive along the South Vietnam border. Instead, they only nibbled at closer targets in South Vietnam and in the valleys of Laos and Cambodia.

Why the postponement? Certain Western sources have tended to argue that the Hanoi leadership is divided on the future course of action: one group, it is said, has urged a quick crack at victory. Truong Ching, the chief theoretician, is the leading personality of this group and Giap his main backer. The opposing school led by Le Duan advocates a long haul; it favours using the slender resources to rebuild the shattered economy, particularly after the recent floods, while keeping the pot boiling in the south for an opportune hour.

But the communists again set at naught all this glib talk by their recent attacks all along the peninsula. A lethal rocket barrage in Phnom Penh has come as a grim reminder to the tottering Lon Nol regime that the communists are firmly saddled in and around the city. Now the fighting has shifted to Prey Vang, a smaller town near the capital. They have also nipped a budding offensive by a 2,000-strong South Vietnamese task force along Highway No 7, skirting Krek and have themselves hit back in strength. The battle in Laos is fiercer, particularly in the Plain of Jars. The North Vietnamese troops and their allies there have compelled the Royal force to retreat from two more bases near Long Cheng, the CIA-operated

command post in northern Laos and have mauled fatally the Meo guerillas in the Plain. In South Vietnam the Vietcong operatives, who were lying somewhat low, have again become active in the northern provinces and along the eastern border. Everywhere the battle follows the same pattern: pounding by American-piloted Phantoms and B-25s, operating from the carriers in the Gulf of Tonkin and the Thai bases, has prevented a total rout of the allied forces. These planes have already raided North Vietnam 108 times this year—it is more than the total air attacks throughout the previous year.

Why this sudden offensive? Is it Hanoi's reaction to the Chou-Nixon talks or just one of its seasonal manoeuvres on the battlefield? Perhaps it is neither. The men in Hanoi have shown that they are cool, competent politicians and superb military strategists. When Nixon went to Peking they did not rock his boat, though evidently they did not approve the powow. They knew, however, that Peking was not Camp David. Now that they have chosen to attack they intend to fix Nixon in a political tight corner just before the Presidential election and to show to the world that his much vaunted 'Vietnamisation' is just a hoax. For some time Nixon has been feigning as a dove at home on the Vietnam question while persistently scuttling the political questions involved in it. Hanoi's current move is intended to undo this window-dressing.

View from Delhi

Talking To Pakistan

FROM A POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

MOSCOW is impatient. It cannot wait any longer for India and Pakistan to normalise relations. Its lobby in New Delhi is busy with its high-powered "peace offensive" against the Indian government and the idea

of a summit between Mrs Gandhi and Mr Bhutto is being assiduously canvassed by the luminaries of the lobby and a few instant friends of the Soviet Union. It is all part of Moscow's hard sell for the motecheteen collective

security plan which no Asian country would take. The Moscow lobby now unabashedly claims that the India-Bangladesh friendship treaty was a major breakthrough for the Soviet plan because the three countries are

now linked into an informal collective security system. The treaty in Dacca was decided upon after the Bangladesh Foreign Minister had gone on record as saying that a formal treaty was not necessary. Reports have it that Mujib was psyched into the ritual of a treaty during the cruise of the two Prime Ministers down the Bangla waters. To the Soviet leadership, which revived the talk of a treaty about three years after it had been mooted by Mr Leonid Brezhnev, Pakistan is the only missing link in the plan. Mr Bhutto rejected it outright when it was proposed to him during his recent visit to Moscow.

The Soviet strategy now is to stage a new version of Tashkent and the premium is overwhelmingly on a summit. Acting as a clearing house of information and ideas among India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, the Soviet leadership is pleading that Pakistan should end the state of war with India first. In New Delhi, there is already an exercise on to identify the Indo-Pakistan problems to be resolved. Some of the problems have been outstanding even before the December conflict while others are the direct result of the conflict. Mrs Gandhi favours official level talks to discuss the problems and does not see much point in a summit. In any case, the summit has little beyond symbolic value at this juncture. The prisoners of war issue has acquired a sense of urgency but India cannot discuss it without making Bangladesh a party and Bangladesh would not participate in any talks unless Pakistan recognises it first. Soviet diplomacy has been working overtime to break the deadlock here. But Mr Wali Khan seems to have the solution. He wants the Pakistan Assembly to take a decision on recognition of Bangladesh and in all likelihood when the Assembly meets in April, this might be the first issue to be decided.

Secondly, Pakistan and India are formally in a state of war and there has been sustained Soviet pressure on Mr Bhutto to end this situation. This is possible only through a formal

treaty between the two countries to end the state of war. The larger issue of Kashmir remains but there have been Soviet feelers about internationalising the 1948 cease-fire line which in effect amounts to partitioning the valley. Repeated Chinese statements pledging support to the people of Jammu and Kashmir have ominous significance in the Indian view. It could mean that even if Mr Bhutto agrees to a settlement with India on Kashmir, the Chinese would continue to support any demand for self-determination for the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

Joint Operations

The joint India-Bangladesh operations in the Chittagong Hill Tracts leave little room for doubt that the March 19 treaty underwrites not only the external security of the regime in Dacca but its internal security too. India has emerged in the role of a gendarme in the sub-continent, policing for the super-powers.

The four-day seminar on Imperialism, Independence and Social Transformation in New Delhi threw up an interesting discussion on the role of countries like India in the era of neo-colonialism. A participant from the United States pointed out that countries like India were emerging in the role of sub-imperialisms and there was a flurry of protests from the Indian participants drawn selectively from among the CPI and CPI(M) intellectuals who are convinced that India is damned independent of super-powers.

The seminar has turned out to be a pathetic show, stage-managed by the same old assortment of professional peace fighters. It was sponsored by the World Peace Council and the Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organisation. The representatives from the United States admitted that they had been tricked into attending it and they did not know it was a Soviet-sponsored show. The Secretary-General of the World Peace Council proudly claimed that the inspiration for the seminar came from one of those stray thoughts of Mrs Gandhi

at the Lusaka non-aligned meet when she spoke incoherently about the new role of imperialism. By staging the show in New Delhi and inveigling delegations from the South Vietnam National Liberation Front and the Pathet Lao Liberation Front and from the movements in Africa, sponsors tried to vest it with some respectability.

The fact is that the Indian Establishment had blessed it. Prof Nurul Hasan inaugurated it and Mr G. Parthasarathy, Vice-Chancellor of the Jawaharlal Nehru University, headed the sponsoring committee. It had all the lavishness of a CPI-sponsored show and when pamphlets suggesting that the West Bengal elections were rigged were distributed among the delegates, the sponsors were red with rage and stopped just short of throwing the "miscreants" out of the hall.

As the discussion on imperialism began in Vigyan Bhavan, there was another show on, a major one. Mrs Indira Gandhi inaugurated the annual conference of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry. The FICCI chairman offered the industrialists' co-operation to the Government's garibi hatao shadowboxing, but outside the Swatantra Party was demonstrating against the FICCI for donating large amounts to Mrs Gandhi's election funds. Is this the "differentiation" in the Indian bourgeoisie leading to a split the CPI has been theorising about for years? If the FICCI is disowning the Swatantra Party and financing the Congress, the patriotic national bourgeoisie has arrived, ready to lead the revolution.

* * *

The Centre is busy assessing the new stance of the CPI(M). It does not expect the party to take to the barricades but apprehends serious industrial unrest in West Bengal to be engineered as part of the extra-parliamentary campaign. The Centre has immense faith in the prowess of Mr Siddharta Sankar Ray to lick the problem of law and order, aided by Mr Priyaranjan Das Munshi's storm-troopers.

March 26, 1972

Joi Indira

N. K. SINGH

HER Majesty's opposition must be grateful to Mrs G. for the breathing space she has given them in Bihar, perhaps in return for their wartime services. After all, what is the fun of just sitting in the legislature? You must have a few radical chaps who pretend to oppose you on every issue, to bring out the essence of parliamentary democracy.

The one thing that has emerged from the 1972 mid-term poll to the Bihar Legislative Assembly is political stability, which had eluded the State for the last five years, and hence, was the main plank of all the major parties in the election arena. The party position in the Assembly has undergone such a drastic change that even with a bare majority of eight the newly formed Congress Government has a fair chance of survival unless, of course, there is a split in the party itself on some grave issue. The total strength of all the parties, groups and independents minus the Congress-CPI-PSP alliance comes to about 112 in a house of 318. Even if all these parties, groups and factions combine they cannot pose any serious threat nor can they ever hope to form a government with minor defections from the Congress, as in the past. Then, a number of smaller parties and footloose independents, who were primarily responsible for the political instability in the State, have been wiped out from the political scene. Compared to the dissolved Assembly they have secured 22 seats less this time, their strength decreasing from 48 to 26.

Cynics, of course, would point out that, of the 3,31,34,198 voters in Bihar, only 58,53,432 stamped the cow-and-calf. It is an open secret that about half the votes polled were [are] will be bogus even by a modest estimate. If one takes into account this

figure, than the number of votes secured by the ruling party—by hook or by crook—comes down to a little over nine lakhs, which is roughly nine per cent of the total electorate.

The election results, except in a few individual cases, have not caused any surprise. No one expected either a massive win or a crushing defeat for the Congress nor did any one think that the Socialist Party or the Jana Sangh would be able to maintain their strength. If there is any element of surprise it is regarding the Congress (O) and the CPI; no one expected them to get more than 20 and 30 seats in any case but they have captured 30 and 35 seats respectively. (See the table)

with the 'Bihari Bachao' convention—organised by some Muslim leaders known for their communal outlook—to indict the Congress "silence" over the reprisals against the non-Bengali Muslims in Bangladesh, the Congress (O), the SP, the CPM and the JS gave the ruling party a good stick to beat them with. In their desperate anxiety to win over the Muslim voters (who constitute about 12 per cent of the total electorate) little did these parties realise the blunder they were committing at a crucial moment. Some all-India leaders of the JS and the Congress(O) later tried to undo the harm by disclaiming the demand for the repatriation of the non-Bengali Muslims in Bangladesh, but the stigma stuck.

And Mrs Gandhi, shrewd as she is, made the best of their blunder. She went hammer and tongs at the opposition parties—particularly the Jana Sangh, which had so far thrived on Hindu jingoism—exposing their "opportunism to get votes at the cost

1972 ELECTION

Parties	Seats contested	Seats annexed	Percentage of Party position votes polled in Dec. 1971
Congress (R)	259	167	34.12
Congress (O)	272	30	13.81
CPI	55	35	7.02
SP	256	33	16.08
JS	270	25	12.02
Swatantra	49	2	0.80
CPM	51	nil	1.59
Independents and others	771	26	14.44
Total :	1983	318	100.00
			312

While the Congress entered into a poll alliance with the CPI and the rebel PSP, the opposition parties could not muster their forces to fight jointly the ruling party. Shouting "one nation, one people and one leader" till the other day, they failed to project any big issue that could sway the electorate in their favour. Fragmented and listless, they went into the battle, hoping to find some gimmick that would click. But when they hit upon a gimmick it boomeranged.

By openly associating themselves

of India's security."

By capturing 167 seats and increasing its share of the popular vote to 34.12 per cent the Congress well reversed the trend which had been gaining momentum over the past fifteen years. Though the party had ruled supreme from 1947 to 1967, there had been a steady loosening of its hold over the electorate. It had captured 210 out of the 318 Assembly seats in 1957, 185 in 1962, 128 in 1967 and 118 in 1969. Its percentage of total va-

lid votes polled came down from 41.35 in 1962 to 33.08 in 1967 and 30.46 in 1969.

Plus Factors

Initially, the Congress had created a somewhat uncongenial atmosphere for itself by making a controversial choice of candidates for the poll. Another obstacle was the resentment within the rank and file over concessions disproportionate to the strength of the CPI and the rebel PSP. But anything that the party could suffer on these scores was more than outweighed by its four major assets: the charisma of Mrs Gandhi, its unmatched resources plus the use of official machinery, the 'national glory' of India's victory over Pakistan and its alliance with the rebel PSP and the CPI which avoided much of the splitting of votes vis-a-vis the break of the Grand Alliance.

There was only one big question mark for the party. How would the members of the minority community accounting for twelve per cent of the total electorate behave in view of the opposition's tirade against Mrs Gandhi's alleged silence over the "persecution" of non-Bengali Muslims in Bangladesh? But, as it happened, the Congress was given an unintended booster by the opposition's foolish game which shocked the masses so much, that a move designed to alienate the Muslim voters from the Congress in fact caused the alienation of many voters from the parties in question. On the other hand, the opposition forgot an important fact of the local Muslim politics—that a large chunk of the Muslim population in Bihar belongs to the lower castes who had not migrated to Pakistan at the time of partition and hence had no stakes in the "Bengali Muslim killing Bihari Muslim" contention.

Another apparent danger which the Congress faced on election-eve was the fear that its warring group leaders would try to checkmate one another and thus harm the party's overall prospects. This danger, however, was neutralised to a large extent by the effort of Mrs Gandhi. She

mercilessly used her 'veto' power whenever necessary.

Barring the Congress, the two main gainers were the CPI and the Congress (O).

Its alliance with the Congress proved a real boon for the Communist Party of India which increased its number of seats from 25 to 35. As against 1969 when it had contested from 169 constituencies, the party contested a few seats this time (55) which helped it to concentrate its efforts and resources.

Although suffering from many handicaps including lack of resources and effective leadership, the Congress (O) too did well by capturing 30 seats as against its strength of 16 at the time of the dissolution of the Assembly.

The two main sufferers were the Jana Sangh and the SP. The Sangh had been rising steadily in the State. Unrepresented in the Assembly until 1962, the party gained three seats in the general election that year and in 1967, following the anti-Congress wave, it was able to secure 26 seats, which swelled to 34 in 1969. The main cause of the Sangh's rise was the series of communal riots which took place during this period. It also gained by making inroads into the tribal-dominated region of Chhotanagpur by playing up the anti-Christian sentiment. This time, with the Janta Party of Raja of Ramgarh having merged with it, the party was hoping to get a boost in the Rajas's former strongholds in Hazaribagh district. Little did it realise that the late Raja was the Janta Party; without him it would be like enacting Hamlet without the Prince of Denmark.

Apart from the fact that no serious riot had taken place in recent years, Mrs Gandhi's lightning victory in the recent war knocked the bottom out of the Sangh's base. Added to this was its blunder in joining hands with the merger of the Samyukta Socialist convention. Not only did its number of MLAs fall from 40 to 25 but its percentage of popular votes came down from 15.63 per cent to 12.04

per cent.

For the Socialist Party—formed by the merger of the Samyukta Socialist and the Praja Socialist—it was a virtual rout. The party got a big jump in 1969 when the combined strength of the SSP and the PSP rose to 87 and it secured 24.57 per cent of the total valid votes polled. Even after its strength had been considerably eroded by landslide defections, it continued to have 64 seats in the badly split 318-member Assembly but this time it secured just 34 and lost quite a few of its stalwarts. By and large the SP has itself to blame for its debacle. The party's over-emphasis on the backward castes and its blatant opportunism in demanding the repatriation of non-Bengali Muslims from Bangladesh boomeranged.

Others

Among smaller parties, though the Swatantra has maintained its strength of two in the new house, its Chairman, Mr Y. K. Chaudhary, was defeated in his home constituency. The rebel PSP has managed to win four seats against the tally of five in the dissolved House.

In the tribal belt of Chhotanagpur, the Congress has made spectacular gains at the cost of the four Jharkhand splinters. It bagged 47 out of the 79 seats in this region. The Jharkhand parties' strength has been reduced from 17 to 7. Apart from the split in their rank and file what has largely been responsible for their reverses is the reported withdrawal of support by the Christian missionaries operating in the belt.

Of the 19 parties in the election arena, eight were completely wiped out: The CPM, the SUC, the RSP, the Forward Bloc, the RPI, the BKD, the RCPI(ML) and the Muslim League. The Independents, however, are very much there, with 12 seats.

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What Next ?

R. P. MULLICK

BY committing the mistake of giving up all semblance of fairness, in the rigging of the recent election in West Bengal, the Central Government has taken a great false step in its internal policy which it may not have time to retrieve in future.

It has replaced the element of popular consensus by the element of fear. Although it will be able to hide this truth from the public outside West Bengal for some time, it will not succeed in putting blinkers on their eyes for an indefinite period.

The high priests of power politics in New Delhi have been busy conspiring ever since 1969 to subvert the "awful majesty" of the people who endorsed a left-socialist alternative to Congress rule in West Bengal.

The broad strategy and tactics employed by the Centre were :

To deny the united front government any breathing space, by continuously provoking anti-socials into some eruption or the other of public disorder. The engineered troubles in Telipara-Chandernagor close upon the formation of the second United Front Ministry in March 1969, the communal clashes provoked over the construction of a Shiva temple in an area claimed by another community (Calcutta, April 1969) and the tensions deliberately induced in Titagarh in the same month, showed the immediacy of reaction of the Centre and allied vested interests.

To foment misunderstanding between the constituent units of the United Front through the tactics of (i) infiltrating dressed-up political mercenaries, touts and agents of the Central Government's elaborate intelligence machinery and the secret police, (ii) creating bloody feuds over the possession of agricultural land between different segments of the poor peasantry and landless agriculturists through the clever manipulation of group alignments engineered by such agents.

To heighten intra-party tensions in as many of the left constituent units of the Front as possible by (i) diverting the newly awakened revolutionary urges among the toiling people into suicidal and self-defeating attacks by one group of cadres on another ; (ii) taking advantage of the lack of political training of new party recruits, (iii) heightening bitterness and a feeling of estrangement with false and premature calls for struggle sounded in areas and situations where the prevailing stage of subjective maturity did not warrant them.

It is now clear that, in the implementation of this essentially power-oriented strategy, the Centre's executive functionaries have won their first round. It is also evident that the Centre's intelligence machinery had a high degree of acquaintance with many closely guarded secrets of party organization of these left constituents, especially of the CPM—a fact which was not appreciated in time.

It was known to New Delhi that most leaders of the United Front suffered from petty-bourgeois traits in their political character: a facile assessment of the striking power of the toiling people's organizations they led ; hasty decisions over movements that affected large collectives of society ; vacillations and hesitancy in the face of impromptu "resistance" engineered against working class movements by seemingly militant groups of a counter-progressive character ; a fundamental incapacity to recognize the inexorable power drives of the Centre's executive machinery and its immense hold over the State's administration, at least in the upper echelons which delivered the goods ; and a basic contradiction between belief in the possibility of wielding the State machinery of administration and the objective realities of careeristic interests that prevented such a contingency, between acceptance of the constitutional procedure and allegiance

(more a vision than a concrete pursuit) to the ideal of social revolution through armed struggle, and between the essentials of revolutionary people's bases and the superficial links of a trade union, a cooperative, a cultural organization and the like through which such bases were supposed to grow.

In fact the big bosses of New Delhi's CIA had already seen through the Leftists' "airiness" of hold over the masses, and their inherent weaknesses due to the lack of financially self-supporting field-organizers in sensitive and crucial areas.

Unlike continental communist party cadres in Europe, the organizers and second-line supporter-cadres of the CPM and other leftist parties who formulate their ideology and programme of action in terms of class struggle, lacked and still lack the resources which alone can sustain such workers in the cause of revolution. The Government, aware of the helplessness which squeezes out a discharged or suspended employee from his field of trade-unionist struggle

ଅନ୍ତିକ

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has employed the policy of victimization with varying measures of success. In fact, the Central executive authorities, hell bent on muzzling up organized expressions of grievances and movements, extended their field of operations in collusion with anti-social criminals (on secret services' pay rolls) and lackeys, to "break-the-strike" level of reactionary and en-masse goondaism.

The October 1971 Bengal Bandh, and the earlier September 1968 token strike of the Central Government employees, furnished evidence of new coercive methods being evolved by the administrative machinery of power, the monopoly-proprietary interests of big business and the ruling Congress. The vast legions of lumpen proletariat and the unemployed, paradoxically, provided the Government with ready material for executing their schemes. The leftist parties, undecided still about the Centre's real intentions and the scope for utilizing the constitutional procedure in the task of building up an infrastructure of revolutionary mass-and-class organizations, fumbled in articulating a consistently uncompromising political policy apropos the Congress-(R) Government while it was still a weak force, almost a minority group, in Parliament, rendered insecure by the wide margin of unsafety which the opposition posed. In their lack of political foresight, the CPM failed to realize that it was more profitable, even from the revolutionary strategic point of view, to keep the national bourgeoisie, emerging with a liberal-democratic mask and paying hypocritical homage to socialist slogans, thwarted by the nakedly reactionary ultra-Rightist forces of monopolist upper bourgeoisie. The radical left in West Bengal should have utilized to the full this irreconcilable contradiction between two sections of the rising industrial-feudal-bureaucratic complex of the ruling class. After the defeat of the Congress (O) candidate in the Presidential election (1969), there was no need to ensure a political margin of safety for the Congress (R)

—a party that was fast acquiring an image of credibility in the eyes of these very cartels of the private sector's comprador-plus "Swadeshi" capital, and earning their unstinted political support, as had been the solid upholders of the higher strata of this complex. The Congress (R) was quick to exploit this fundamental strategic mistake. The leading party of the United Front, the CPM, should have taken the cue from various remarks (often unguarded but always typical of ruling class interests) for their veering round to the support of the "new" Congress.

It is no longer a secret how the huge propaganda machinery of the ruling class has been preparing and modulating public opinion outside West Bengal, long before the Centre's toppling operations began. It was an unscrupulous combination of blandishment (to Ajoy Mukherjee and political wayfarers of his type) and blackmail (to small party groups, like the Jharkhand, the Muslim League, the breakaway splinter Socialists etc.). The mouthpiece of the jute lobby was more outspoken: "The Naxalites pose an open defiant challenge to the authority which a Government notoriously tender to all leftist manifestations is ill-positioned to control or check. New Delhi gave the Communist-controlled Government of West Bengal too long a lease of life...." [Editorial in the *Indian Express*, under the caption "Towards Civil War"; August 15, 1970]. Surprisingly, the tenacity, the virulence and the single-minded committal of the ruling party (to deprive the people of West Bengal of their right of self-determination) was lost on the Communist Party of India. Gone were the days when this party's CEC member, Mr Indrajit Gupta, had taken the canard-makers to task for "fabricating" a report that the party Chairman S. A. Dange had laid the blame on the Left Communist Party for the fall of the United Front Ministry in West Bengal. [December 27, 1967]. Even the detachment of a non-aligned political attitude that was still discernible in the decision of its West Bengal Council

'to reject the Bangla Congress invitation for campaign against the CPM', and in the maintenance of its "main aim" for the restoration of the full United Front [April 19, 1970], is now gone. But, with the unfolding of a new situation when a State election procedure can be completely manipulated through strongarm methods employed by the party in power (buttressed by the administrative forces of "Law and Order"), the CPI now has possibly found the compelling necessity for making a painful reappraisal of its policy in the context of constitutionalism. Is that being reflected in that party's present stand of non-participation in the Congress (R) Ministry which is being installed under Mrs Gandhi's dictatorial shadow and in her motivated presence?

Possibly, also, such a tactical change in the CPI's role in the context of parliamentary politics of West Bengal is a projection of Soviet Russia's fresh process of evaluation of the internal situation in India, now that Mrs Gandhi and her personalized leadership in the ruling party have acquired unprecedented dimensions. Does the unkind cut of Sudan's Nu'meiry, executed in the fierce, murderous repression of pro-Soviet coup leaders (in that country) rankle in the USSR's memory?

Sweeping Range

How will the public react to this new emergence? Accept at face value the liberal-democratic posture of the ruling class, exhibited in one facet of the establishment—a pretentious benefactor (of a dying people), a "liberator" (of the new-found colony of Bangladesh) and a stabiliser (of the status quo of the "haves")? Or, will the people recognize the danger implicit in this uninhibited employment of the State's executive machinery in almost every aspect of public life, from election to student unions in colleges/universities, to people's democratic movements for the fulfilment of basic demands and necessities of life and the fundamental liberties of a citizen?

It is clear that the Centre is aware of these two possibilities. This is the

reason why it is trying so frantically to put a decent gloss on the naked iron claws of its coercive apparatus. Look at the specialized cajolery indulged in by *National Herald*, P.M.'s family institution, published from New Delhi and Lucknow : "Some people may view the sweeping victory of the Congress in the elections as an unhealthy sign, and they are sad over the vanishing of the opposition.... The CPI's success in West Bengal as well as in some other states is mainly due to its alliance and understanding with the Congress.... the CPM has an important role to play within the democratic set-up, and it should not think of a militant strategy because of the present setback." And why this special pleading, and holding of an olive branch to the CPM, the party that is being advised to be "courageous in defeat" and to keep "a watch on the Congress"? It is because "the people of West Bengal have placed a heavy responsibility on the Congress, and it should not forget that they are capable of voting against it as earlier, if the Congress Government that will be formed in the State do not come up to their expectations." Evidently, while foreclosing all possibilities of any party staging a come-back to power and prestige, by the massive employment of a policy of blood and iron, the more refined among New Delhi's political strategists have not completely given up hopes of winning back the CPM, and along with it other leftist parties to their comity of parliamentarian ninnies—as dressed-up opposition.

The future in West Bengal holds two dire but nonetheless potentially revolutionary possibilities : complete disillusionment of the people with parliamentary politics and its deceitful facade, the ballot-box ; or slow but steady organization of cells of armed struggle against the State machinery of repression at all levels.

The Central Government, its allies (the vested interests) and its lackeys will strike back and try to suppress such popular upsurge in future, but will the Army jawans and the ordinary rank-and-file police remain unmoved by people's disaffection ?

Indian Bourgeoisie—A Rejoinder

ARJUN BANDYOPADHYAY

THE paper on the Indian Bourgeoisie (March 4, 11 and 18) rightly tries to examine the role of this class by considering its historical origin and anti-imperialist stand during the national movement. The writings of the Indian economic nationalists show that there was a contradiction between British imperialism and the nascent Indian bourgeoisie. The paper also correctly avoids the term comprador and introduces the new term 'capitulationist'. It is shown that the Indian bourgeoisie has been losing gradually its anti-imperialist stand and becoming more and more a victim of capitulation. (The Chinese thesis is also the same : after 1958 the Indian Government i.e. the Indian bourgeoisie began to lose its independent character.) But, despite this correct perspective, a few questions arise.

Who exercises political power in India i.e. whose interests the Government looks after? Against whom it cannot go? In other words, is the bourgeoisie which apparently exercises political power, really independent of other forces and pressures? Until now, parliamentary politics of sorts has been active here and India is a predominantly agricultural country. So it is natural for the ruling class to depend on the rural vote, that is, this class is completely dependent on the top peasantry which constitutes only 15% of the rural electorate but, because of the skewness of land distribution and rate of literacy, plays the vital part. In its hands lies the real power. It should always be kept in mind that the interests of the affluent peasantry and the bourgeoisie are not the same. During the British raj the presence of an imperial power prevented a coalition between the rural elite and the commercial class. The British allied themselves with the former against the latter. Through Gandhi

the bourgeoisie tried to establish a link and since independence it is dependent on the affluent peasantry. In a way it is at the mercy of the latter. What price does the affluent peasantry demand from the bourgeoisie for delivering the votes? A satisfactory quid pro quo has to be arranged. The mechanism of the pay-off works via the terms of trade between agriculture and industry. It may appear puzzling that the bourgeoisie acquiesces in such an arrangement which runs directly counter to its own class interests. But what is lost on the swings can be won back on the roundabout. The advantages flowing from the exercise of political power more than compensates for the losses suffered through shifts in the terms of trade, for it enables the bourgeoisie to deploy the instrument of State policy to increase the degree of monopoly power. But the bourgeoisie cannot survive for long this situation. It can recover the losses only by exploiting the urban proletariat and petit-bourgeoisie. On the other hand the poorer peasants can organise themselves and agitate for higher wages and fairer share and the top peasantry tries to extract more concessions from the bourgeoisie. Moreover, "the rich peasants can use their current ability to deliver the rural votes to prevent any alteration, through statutory measures, in the structure of land distribution. Forces with a built-in bias against change therefore come to the fore." In India the bourgeoisie has been outmanoeuvred by the top peasantry. Its exploitation of the petit-bourgeoisie and the common people through indirect taxes has touched the utmost limit. The only chance of recovery is the widening of the home market but it also depends on the development of agriculture which the bourgeoisie is unable to perform as the top peasantry

does not want any radical change in the agricultural structure "An affluent peasant tends to conform to the 'cost plus' principle, and looks forward to a certain fixed return. Since politically manipulated terms of trade have assured him that even a limited output would still yield a sizable surplus, he has no anxiety to disturb the schedule of what can be called static production." The predominance of the top peasantry can be reduced only if the process of urbanisation is accelerated, but is impossible for the Indian bourgeoisie to break through the vicious circle. So the Indian bourgeoisie is at the mercy of the rural affluent and it is the latter who exercise real power in India. Hence the principal contradiction in India is between the feudal exploitation and the common peasantry. (The above arguments are based heavily on the article 'Class Relations and Growth of Output' by Ashok Mitra).

So if the Indian bourgeoisie intends to play the role of the "national bourgeoisie", it has to fight on two fronts: with feudal elements in society, and with imperialism. We have seen that it is not able to fight the first battle. Regarding the second front, we should remember Marx's analysis of class struggles in Germany between 1848 and 1850. The German bourgeoisie as a result of the belated development of German society, was not in a position to play any revolutionary role. Due to sloth and craven development the German bourgeoisie had no alternative but to play a vacillating role and "the moment when it menacingly faced feudalism and absolutism, it saw itself menacingly faced by the proletariat." It wanted change but by bargain and compromise, and sought to come to terms with the conservative forces. The bourgeoisie in the Third World has strong similarities with the bourgeoisie of Marx. They are also latecomers and their origin lay in a colonial and semi-colonial environment where the imperialists in their own interest introduced some capitalistic pattern from above

in an elaborate feudal setting. Up to a limit (i.e. in India up to 1947) they could play some sort of "national" role (though research should be carried on regarding the collaboration of the British and the Indian commercial and industrial class during the 19th century), but beyond it they help counter-revolution. This weak bourgeoisie time and again seeks the protection of the State and, being frustrated in many ways, ultimately helps bring fascism, as did the German bourgeoisie in the 1930s. Lenin's analysis of class forces in Russia tells the same story. The Russian bourgeoisie was small and ineffective and had been sponsored by the Russian Government. In the late 19th century much was either formally government-owned and controlled or foreign-owned and subsidized by the State. (This trend is clearly perceptible in the present Indian situation—the series of nationalisations indicates the process). For this reason Lenin saw in the Russian bourgeoisie no consistent revolutionary role, and to paralyse the instability of the bourgeoisie was one of the programmes of the Bolsheviks. In Russia the bourgeoisie itself was not willing to complete the bourgeois revolution because of its lack of independence, its entanglement with the landed aristocracy, its fear of advanced proletarian consciousness. (This is also true of the Indian bourgeoisie. In other forms all the elements are present here). Lenin said, "a victory of the bourgeois revolution is impossible in our case as a victory of the bourgeoisie. This may seem paradoxical, but it is a fact. The predominance of a peasant population...the strength and consciousness already organized in the socialist party of the proletariat—all these circumstances give our revolution a special character. This peculiarity does not eliminate the bourgeois character of the revolution... The peculiarity is merely determined by the counter-revolutionary character of our bourgeoisie and the need for a dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry for victory in such a

revolution. A coalition of the proletariat and the peasantry, which wins victory in a bourgeois revolution—that is precisely what is meant by the revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry."

Weaknesses

In India's case this analysis is very much relevant. Here also a bourgeois-democratic revolution cannot be accomplished by the capitulationist bourgeoisie. The national movement led by Gandhi showed the weakness of the bourgeoisie. During that period it could not achieve that revolution. Gandhi understood this, he appealed in the clearest language to the obscurantist feudal elements and solicited the zamindars. After independence Nehru during the period of the First Five Year Plan tried to make a bourgeois breakthrough but the Indian bourgeoisie could not outmanoeuvre the top peasantry. Hence economic crisis followed. Later also the effort was renewed but widening of the home market is not possible. So a weak bourgeoisie, hankering after real power, keeps its hopes on the charisma of a leader and State protection—the appeals for nationalism and socialism are in words only. The consequence of all these is well known in history.

Of course Mao sees in colonial and semi-colonial bourgeoisie, oppressed by imperialism, "a certain revolutionary quality at certain periods and to a certain degree...in its opposition to the foreign imperialists and the domestic governments of bureaucrats and warlords." According to him, "since Tsarist Russia was military-feudal imperialism which carried on aggression against the other countries, the Russian bourgeoisie was entirely lacking in revolutionary quality." But China's national bourgeoisie has a revolutionary quality at certain periods and to a certain degree because China is a colonial and semi-colonial country which is a victim of aggression."

Is India at present a colonial or

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semi-colonial country in the sense China was before 1949? Is there any physical presence of a foreign army in India or is India the victim of aggression? (Here terminological clarity is necessary. What is a semi-colonial and colonial country must be defined. Who forms the national bourgeoisie? In an inner-party directive in 1948 Mao categorizes the class as middle and petty bourgeoisie. But this is not satisfactory: the middle bourgeoisie may have comprador characteristics, specially where the big bourgeoisie is protected by the State). On the contrary the present Indian situation has similarities with the situation of pre-revolutionary Russia; here also the bourgeoisie, incapable of widening the home market, seeks by any means, markets abroad. So the scope of playing a national role by the Indian bourgeoisie is almost nil. Again, after the debacle of the American policy in Indochina, American imperialism does not want to be involved physically in an effort to suppress revolutionary upsurges in other countries. They would carry on the milder means of oppression and maintain apparent neutrality. Moreover, America herself is in the midst of an economic crisis. On the other hand, subtle and camouflaged in Marxist ideology is Soviet revisionism whose role is no less dangerous in the sub-continent. Its role in Indonesia and other countries is clearly counter-revolutionary, but Russia does not get involved directly. So the contradiction between imperialism and the Indian nation will never reach the stage of sharp contradiction. In critical moments they would help the ruling class, the weak bourgeoisie and the top peasantry. So the second principal contradiction in India is between the weak bourgeoisie and the proletariat and other strata and here the bourgeois-democratic revolution would be achieved without the bourgeoisie.

A Strategy For Survival

A. P. M.

A leading cigarette-manufacturing company of foreign parentage had for some time been trying to procure a licence for expansion. A few months back, its representative in New Delhi went to see a Central Minister in that connection. He talked at length of the pioneering and developmental roles his company had been playing in the context of India's economic development. The interview came to an abrupt end as the Minister curtly told the representative that his company had profited enormously and expatriated huge sums of money out of the country in the name of pioneering and developing industry in India.

Citing this case, a public relations man connected with an international company having extensive manufacturing activities in India, told this correspondent recently that the important business houses, especially those having international connections, were now opting for a politically and research-oriented public relations policy. Till a few years ago, especially before the split in the Congress business houses in India used to build their PR line with the maximum attention focused on the government secretaries attached to the economic ministries. For more than a year now, particularly since the remarkable Congress (R) victory in the March 1971 General Election, they have been deliberately shifting their attention from the secretaries to the ministers. This shift in policy has called for a significant reorientation in PR itself. The resourceful companies are now devoting much more time, funds and men to socio-economic-political studies of a particular situation at a given time than ever before.

The larger business houses, the "Condemned 20", have mostly set up research bureaus staffed by trained research workers with a slant toward sociological, economic and political

research. This is being done in all seriousness and certainly not as a status symbol. The kind of research they are undertaking is basically politically-oriented, an interesting portion of which is devoted to a study of the political inclinations of individual ministers in New Delhi. People connected with such work point out that no eyebrow need be raised in this regard. All industrial corporations in the West, Japan and Australia undertake regularly such studies. Their introduction in this country actually indicates a major advance in the PR profession in India. Besides, decisions made in New Delhi these days which affect industry are political rather than economic. To be able to forecast how the Government would react to a particular action or policy on the part of industry, it is essential to understand the political considerations which may have a bearing on it. Far more than ever before, the PR departments of most of the big-time companies are being utilised in assisting their managements in preparing strategies for dealing with the Government.

While all this is particularly true of the business houses having international connections, it is learnt that the entirely deshi business houses are

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also opting for the politically and research-oriented PR policy. Analysing this development, the PRO of a leading Indian business house told this correspondent that the business relations between New Delhi and industry were giving way to political relations. New Delhi's preference for political considerations in place of what these people called economic ones had compelled the private sector to reorient itself.

How is industry faring in this newly-acquired political game? Judging by the universal consternation in business circles following the takeover of the internationally prestigious Indian Copper Corporation, the private sector is certainly far from

proving itself to be a match for Mrs Gandhi's lieutenants. The once-sahib establishments are desperately thinking up gimmicks in order to convince New Delhi of their genuine anxiety for India's economic growth. One company manufacturing industrial gases, for example, has already planned to introduce operations by laser. "for we must make the Government admit that we are doing something worthwhile". On the whole, however, the business houses appear to be satisfied with the results of their no-nonsense PR approach. "We are at least able now to dispense with the pretences and tell the Government what exactly we think of a particular matter", they point out.

vision personalities accompanied Nixon to China. They spent hours before television cameras and used up acres of newsprint, describing and analysing the trip. Except for descriptive tidbits of the trip (such as Mrs Nixon's visit to the kitchen or Kissinger crossing a bridge to visit Chou in a villa adjacent to where Nixon was lodged), these stalwarts of the American media could not give us anything about the nature and content of discussions in Peking, Shanghai and Hangchow. The joint communique is the only substantive piece of news-item left by the week-long trip, and it has its own share of banalities along with the speeches delivered before, during and after the trip. There is a gap between untold facts and playful platitudes as deep as the Grand Canyon. Meanwhile, a steady fog of statements and speculations emanates from typewriters and voices to cover up the gap.

The present furore on ITT's donation to the Republican party fund is, likewise, an exercise in unreality. It is, also, theatrical, full of sound and fury, at the end of which we will have rows of empty seats, to be occupied again when a different play is acted. At the moment of writing, we are reaching the climax of this play ; heroes and villains, in appropriate costumes, are drawing out their swords.

What is the point of all the furore? Entertainment, excitement or enlightenment on the election system ? Campaign contributions by the rich have been an accepted part of the American political scene for a long time. Equally accepted are periodic outbursts against it which peak and then trail away without having any effect on the system of collaboration between political figures and Big Money. The Republican Senator from Nebraska was honest and brutally frank when he said, "Conventions are bought in this country all the time, and everybody knows about it." Why does not somebody do something about it ? The answer is perhaps that nobody wants to—or for that matter, can—do anything about it.

Letter From America

The Manipulator

ROBI CHAKRAVORTI

NIXON returned from the China trip, smiling, waving and using hyperboles and non-informative platitudes, ready and eager to cash in on the role of a "peacemaker" President, when—bang—the scandal of the ITT (International Telephone and Telegraph) contributions to the Republican party fund struck up a discordant tune. The image of the President, blown to monarchical proportions, suddenly ran the danger of being tarnished ; Nixon the politician peeped through the polished and well-rehearsed image of Nixon the "peacemaker".

When the ITT scandal broke, a *Washington Post* columnist wrote, "Chou En-lai's present of two pandas, enchanting though it is, cannot compete with ITT's gift of \$400,000 to the Republican National Convention while three antitrust suits were pending." Nixon the Magnificent seems to be fading away, replaced by Nixon the Manipulator. It is as if we are about to witness a pantomime by Marcel Marceau playing two antagonistic parts at the same time.

The analogy of pantomime is appropriate here. For, there is an air of theatrical unreality in both roles in which Nixon was cast. Nixon the Magnificent, travelling thousands of miles in search of peace, is no less or no more real than Nixon the Manipulator. The mass media which created the benign image got busy changing the props and the script, casting him in the villain's role. The only difference is that Nixon deliberately chose to play the former role and the mass media maestros chose to go along ; the second role has been thrust on him. Both events are, however, part of the eternal drama of American politics in which the politicians (actors), the political system (the stage) and the voters (the audience) are bound in an intricate web of relationship. We cannot understand the acting if we fail to understand the stage and the audience.

Look, for example, at the part Nixon played in China. Seven million dollars were spent on Nixon's trip. Top journalists and tele-

Corruption, let me hasten to add here, is not unique to the political system in the U.S. In one form or another, it exists in all political systems of the world. The unique features of political corruption in the U.S. are that it is on a much larger scale than in any other country, is well organised and often blatant, and it has come to be accepted as a fact of life. From time to time, voices are raised against political corruption, individuals are caught and punished, newspapers follow up with ringing editorials and reporters win public acclaim and prestigious prizes. But the system of interdependency between politicians and Big Business is not changed. The cost of political campaigning has gone up since the emergence of television and "image politics", and therefore, the politicians' dependence on large contributions has, also, increased.

Cumbersome

The political system in this country not only breeds corruption; it is, also, cumbersome. The process of general election is long and tedious, taking about eight months, beginning with primaries and ending with the final day when voters cast their votes for a long list of seekers of public offices, from Congressmen, both Federal and State, City Councilmen down to dogcatchers; the list, also, includes the Presidential candidates. An Englishman voting in a general election casts one vote for a candidate for one office, using a ballot about the size of a post-card. Election in Canada, the northern neighbour of the United States, is equally simple, takes a shorter time than in the U.S., is cheaper and less theatrical.

The party conventions in the U.S. are like a monstrous tribal ritual played out in the circus atmosphere of a Roman Coliseum, complete with dancing girls, music, balloons, and even church dignitaries. Four years ago, I was watching the inauguration of the Republican party convention on television when an Indian friend of mine became indignant at seeing evangelist Billy Graham on the platform.

"What is he doing there?" he asked, frowning. Coming from a "traditional" society, he had wrong notions of the so-called "rational" society of the United States. It was his first shocking lesson in how the sacred and the profane, God and Mammon, can be smoothly combined in the guise of a rational choice of political candidates.

The long cumbersome process of election, using Madison Avenue and television media and the circus atmosphere of campaigning creates a grand illusion of political excitement and involvement. Compared with so much effort, the voter turn-out is usually disappointing. Out of the approximately hundred million adult citizens (the number will increase in this year's election), who are voters, about forty million do not vote in the Presidential election. This means four out of ten eligible to vote abstain. As a political observer pointed out, "Voting is not a strenuous form of act-

vity, but it is apparently beyond the level of performance of four out of every ten adults."

Once elected, the tripartite bond of relationship between the elected representative, the expensive and illusory system of campaigning and Big Money is further strengthened. Time after time, candidates have blamed poor campaign funding for their poor showing at the polls, and often, the chief reason given for such showings is the poor image of the candidate. If you appear good on television, in pictures and with ghost-written speeches, you are taken to be a really good candidate on whom money can be invested as on a good horse on a race track.

A couple of years ago, Jack Anderson wrote a blunt profile of corruption among Senators. "Kept under lock are 100 sealed envelopes which can be opened only on orders of the U.S. Senate," Anderson wrote. "Each envelope was sealed by a Se-

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nator, and inside, presumably, is an accurate accounting of his personal holdings... The sealed envelopes would show that, on the national income scale, most Senators belong to the top of one per cent. The envelopes, if they could be opened, would reveal a direct relationship between the holdings of the Senators and their voting records... In less sophisticated terms, the titans of industry who paid to get their stooges elected to the Senate, actually owned them."

Anderson, along with the late Drew Pearson, had also written a book whose title is self-explanatory—*The Case Against Congress : A compelling indictment of corruption on Capitol Hill*. The book makes general as well as specific charges against individual Congressmen. Two of the Congressmen, Dodd and Powell, ended their political career in disgrace as a result of these exposures. The system of corruption which is built into the political process has not, however, been overthrown.

The furore about ITT's contributions to the Republican Party has brought into view a problem about which there have been periodic outbursts of interest. The problem has, from time to time, been studied, analyzed and publicized; publicity has sometimes led to the slaughter of a few careless politicians. But, the system of corruption has thrived and flourished. Over sixty years ago, a journalist published a book entitled, *Treason of the Senate*, which anticipated criticisms of later reporters such as Anderson. "Who pays the big election expenses of your Congressmen?" the author of the book asked. "The bulk of the money for the 'political trust' comes from the 'interests'. Do you imagine those who foot those huge bills are fools? Don't you know that they make sure of getting their money back, with interest, compound upon compound?"

That was in the first decade of the century. A lot has been written since then, Andersons and sensational exposures have agitated and entertained the American public and then, as

surely, disappeared from public notice. The circus of politics has grown more colourful, business interests have become bigger and politicians more dependent on heavy contributions for

their survival. The show has continued to flourish; only the composition of actors, the stage and the audience have changed from one time-period to another.

Operation Sonar Bangla

HIRENDRA CHAKRABORTY

AMUSING are the ways of bureaucracy everywhere, the sacred precincts of Tagore's Visva-Bharati not excepted. It is common knowledge that Tagore's *Amar Sonar Bangla* was accepted as the national anthem by the people of Bangladesh and Visva-Bharati was requested to furnish copies of the official notation. The notation as prepared by the late Indira Devi Chowdhurani in 1912 B.S. which has been published in *Swaravitan-46* for the last two decades and sold to the public was printed in ten thousand folders for free distribution in Bangladesh.

Suddenly at whose intervention and insistence nobody knows, the Hon. Secretary of the Visva-Bharati Music Board in his letter of February 1, 1972 informed the Acting Head of the Bangladesh Mission in Calcutta that the Board had approved the tune of *Amar Sonar Bangla* as recorded by HMV (No. N83415) sung by Sm Suchitra Mitra in 1946. It further said that the notation of the same record would be sent to him in due course. Needless to say, distribution of the ten thousand folders of the notation of Indira Devi printed at the expense of Visva-Bharati as contained in *Swaravitan-46* was stopped in Bangladesh.

The obvious conclusion is that the notation prepared by no less a maestro than Indira Devi Chowdhurani which was published in *Sangit-prakashika* of the late Jyotirindranath Tagore and which was accepted by Tagore himself till his last day is no longer an authentic notation of the song.

A few lines about this strange attitude of the members of the

Music Board found their way into *Jugantar*, after which Mr Shantidev Ghosh, one of the ruling triumvirate of the Visva-Bharati came forward with the apology that the tune of the song was changed a little during the life-time of Tagore and that Dinendranath used to teach this changed tune to the students of Visva-Bharati and its School. It is further said that it was known to Indira Devi and that she, Rathindranath and Mr Anadikumar Dastidar approved of the tune of the recorded version, as they were wont to do.

It is apparent that this issue was forced in the Music Board by Mr Shantidev Ghosh who wields considerable power and influence on the doings of the Visva-Bharati administration. It is he who urged the Board to cancel its previous decision and accept the minor deviations as a masterpiece of alternative tune which, according to Mr Ghosh's own testimony before the Board on 1.2.72, was inspired by his own faith that this was later changed by Tagore himself. But strangely enough, this piece of knowledge is still unknown to those who used to learn music from Tagore and Dinendranath in the period referred to by Mr Ghosh.

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My enquiries of knowledgeable persons of the Sangit Bhavan of 1936-1960 reveal that, first, this tune was never changed by Tagore nor was it taught by Dinendranath in a way different from the printed notation of Indira Devi. Had it been so, Tagore would certainly have told either Dinubabu to notate the song afresh in accordance with the changes in the tune or would have asked his niece to prepare a revised version of her notation which the poet had done in the case of such songs as *Vasante Ki-Shudhu* (Bahar and Folk tune), *Ashadh-sanghya*, *Ei to tomar prem*, *Megher pare megh Jameche* (*Swaravitan* II, 37 and 38). The first set of notations of the songs was prepared by Surendranath Banerjee and the alternative notations were afterwards made by Dinendranath. It is most untrue to say that Tagore and Indira Devi were wont to accept any and every change in tune. Had it been so, Indira Devi would not have raised such hue and cry against Dinu Babu's alternative notation of *Viswavinarabe* which was earlier notated by herself.

Tagore discussed this matter at length in *Chithipatra* (Part V) and supported his niece whereupon Indira Devi's notation was duly rehabilitated. So they were not used to accepting such deviations so indiscriminately as claimed by Mr Ghosh in *Jugantar* of 23.2.72. Dinu Babu's said notation reveals his misconception of the metrical divisions of the song; but then, it was the right of the creator to place it on record.

Of the five celebrities called to the witness box by Mr Ghosh four are dead and mute and therefore unable

to affirm or deny the veracity of his statement; and although the fifth person, Mr Anadikumar Dastidar, is still alive, he is beyond the world of memory and consciousness. By the by, Indira Devi was never a member of the so-called Music Board and so the question of her approving of Mrs Mitra's record cannot arise at all. None of the persons referred to by Mr Ghosh left anything in writing which could show that the tune of the song had undergone any change during Tagore's life-time. The contrary seems to be the truth because a few weeks ago the self-same Music Board permitted Mr Manna Dey and Mr Ashoktaru Banerjee to record the same song according to the notation of Indira Devi as printed in *Swaravitan-46*.

Variation in tune or notation of a Tagore song is not a new thing. Reference may be made to the song *Ami Chini Go Chini tomare* which was first notated by Jyotirindranath, then by Sarala Devi Chowdhurani and lastly by Dinendranath. In such cases the latest one usually assumes the importance of the revised version approved by Tagore. But no such thing happened in the case of *Amar Sonar Bangla*.

Divergences between Tagore's printed notations and the recorded versions of his songs are so common and numerous that a discussion is bound to be both endless and tiresome to the general reader. As for example the tune of the two initial words of *Ki paini tar hisab milate* sung by Mr P. K. Mullik does not agree with the printed notation of the song and this record was published in Tagore's life-time. But from this it does not follow that this divergence was effected or approved by the poet himself.

Although Mr Ghosh has admitted that both the printed notation and the recorded tune have equal validity, it is curious that the Music Board has, at whose instance we do not know, preferred to distribute the notation of Mrs Mitra's recorded tune, rejecting the printed notation of Indira Devi. Where, then, is the consolation of equal validity?

After going through the sequence of events one would be tempted to ask the Upacharya, Dr P. C. Gupta and the members of the Music Board if they had made enquiries of the Notation section of Visva-Bharati and the ex-principal of Sangit Bhavan who is also an official notationist of Tagore; if they had taken into consideration the note of the Notation section dt. 3.2.72; if they had considered the opinions of noted scholars of Tagore music that the negligible deviations of the recorded tune were due more to the personal predilections of its tutor, namely, Mr Ghosh himself because pronouncing the words *tomay bhalobasi* between the beats of the Tala instead of on the beats of the Tala and sending a few vocal thrusts here and there in the song do not constitute a real divergence in tune. These gimmicks are characteristic of Mr Shantidev Ghosh and he has already admitted his responsibility. Then why does he invoke the good name of Tagore to father his son? Is it not a fact that Mr Ghosh's singing seldom agreed with his notations and vice versa? That is why Tagore in his life-time never allowed Mr Ghosh's notations to be published in the official publications of Visva-Bharati.

We would therefore request the Government of Bangladesh and its cultural leaders to ponder twice before accepting the changed notation. At the same time I would request eminent scholars of Tagore music to protest. I would appeal to the singing public of Bangladesh to pick up the tune of the song from the printed notation of *Swaravitan-46* because there can be no two opinions about its authenticity and validity.

For FRONTIER contact

S. P. CHATTERJEE

Statesman Office

Steel Market

Durgapur-4

APRIL 1, 1972

NOTICE

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Preventive Detention

An eminent jurist of international repute, Mr Peter Evans, has stated in the course of his article in the monthly organ of the International Commission of Jurists (Geneva) that the West Bengal Prevention of Violent Activities Act, 1970 is 'more cruel for internees than the victims of military dictatorship of Uganda'.

The eminent Indian jurist, Mr C. K. Daphtary, is also one of the members of the commission.

Comparing the statutes of Uganda and West Bengal Mr Evans says: 'The military dictatorship of Uganda would seem to have done better in its reaction to civil disturbance and the right to civil liberty than the democratically elected Government of West Bengal'.

Mr Evans...says; 'In a branch of modern legislation which any lawyer must regard with extreme distrust, this African decree produced by a military and dictatorial Government is more liberal and contains more safeguards against abuse than comparable decrees of statutes agreed to by many parliamentary legislatures'.

"A nearly contemporary legislative provision in West Bengal compares very unfavourably with the Uganda decree.

"The 'West Bengal (Prevention of Violent Activities Act) 1970' is in many ways more precise in defining acts alleged to be subversive but the internee has no right to legal representation before the Advisory Board and the report of the latter need not be disclosed to him.

"The distinction between an examination of the 'facts' and the grounds justifying a detention is unclear in the Bengal statute, Section II (i) of which provides that the Advisory Board shall 'after considering the materials placed before it (the "ground") and after calling for such information as it may deem necessary from the state government...submit its report etc'. It is to be feared that in the Liversidge

v Anderson tradition in the Indian legal world this will generally be narrowly construed and that the Board will content itself with an examination of the 'grounds' rather than 'facts' alleged to support them. And the internee has no right to a lawyer to draw attention to inconsistencies or discrepancies in such grounds.

"It only remains to be said that all such legislation is objectionable and when looked at long after the events which have given rise to it, appears to the historian to have been of doubtful benefit—when not actually mischievous—in the solution of the civil disturbances which have at the time been said to justify it.

'Internment, imprisonment, call it what you will, on suspicion, without trial or legal protection is arbitrary imprisonment, is an immoral procedure and can only rarely be justified and when so justified only in the context that there are extensive safeguards against indiscriminate and unreasonable use of such powers. Yet such powers are widespread in the contemporary world and their use would seem to be increasing. It is paradoxical that democratically appointed legislatures seem all too often to find no difficulty in arming their executives with powers which are a fundamental breach of the Rule of Law.

"The use to which such powers have been put in some of the newer democracies have often bordered on the scandalous, mere opposition to the existing government being often a ground for locking up whole parliamentary oppositions as 'subversive persons'. On the other hand it must be admitted that the boundary between legitimate opposition and conspiracy to displace such a government by coup d'état has been all too often blurred, giving apparent justification for what is basically objectionable.

"The power for the executive to use such power has in general in the older democracies been restricted to war time, e.g. the famous English Defence Regulation or to situations of widespread violence, as in Northern Ireland, but in some of the newer

states they derive from the constitution itself.

"Article 22 of the Constitution of India permits legislation governing internments (called Preventive Detention) to both state and central governments, the new and unlawful constitution of Rhodesia does likewise, while in South Africa such powers are part of the normal police powers in day to day use.

"In Common Law countries slight, but not very effective, checks on the arbitrary and unreasonable use of the powers of internment are in general a feature of the legislation conferring such powers, such as the setting up of appeal boards to advise the minister ordering internment, and provisions for hearing internees' objections to their incarceration, and or periodic reviews of each and every case. If judiciaries have played an undistinguished role in safeguarding the basic right to freedom of an interned person (save and except the former Burmese High Court), and have confined themselves to peripheral issues such as the use of the correct procedure in effecting arrest the proper service of the notice of the "grounds" for internment, and the apparent sufficiency and reasonableness of such grounds (or otherwise), it is because they have followed the English decision in Liversidge v Anderson which laid down that though on an application for an order of habeas corpus the court could and would consider the sufficiency of the 'grounds' on which the minister acted, it could not examine in any way the 'facts' on which such grounds were formulated".

"In the following sub-section the person representing the government may require the committee to keep secret any facts of the identity of informants which in his opinion should not be disclosed. This ties in with the section of the decree which gives an internee a right to professional representation before the committee. Thus though 'facts'...may be withheld from the internee and his legal representative, they cannot be withheld from the advisory committee. (From *Searchlight Patna*).

(It is being proposed not to renew the PVA Act when it expires in West Bengal. Wider use of the no-less-obnoxious Maintenance of Internal Security Act is being contemplated).

Letters

Analysis Of The Tragedy

So the election illusion is gone. The myth of parliamentary democracy is fading. But it is a bit late. The tragedy is too much for the CPM. How does it come about? Intelligent thinking would lead one to conclude that the CPM played into the hands of the Establishment and fell into their trap unwittingly. Are the Naxalites Congress agents? In that case, the Congress government must have killed their own agents at Dum Dum Jail, Alipore Jail, Berhampore Jail, Asansol Jail, Serampore Jail. Are the Naxalites anti-socials? In that case the Congress Government must have done a good thing by killing almost all the anti-socials in West Bengal. So the Congress is against the anti-socials and, therefore, progressive. They should be praised. It is a tragedy that today we have to tell the CPM that the Establishment does not kill anti-socials, but keeps them alive and encourages them.

It is clear that there was a revolutionary movement popularly known as 'Naxalite movement' under the leadership of the CPI(ML). As the CPM leaders did not want this troublesome path to disturb their even life, they desired that the movement should be defeated. The Establishment took the opportunity and utilised the situation. They created false Naxalites and got the CPM cadres killed by them. Actually these anti-socials were Congress agents and not Naxalites. The CPM said: "Naxalites are killing us", but they should have said that Congress was killing them. Had they said this, the scheme would have been foiled. The Congress wanted the CPM to say that Naxalites were killing them.

The CPM exactly did it and fell into the Congress trap.

The Naxalites established themselves firmly in wide areas. They were in full control. In those areas no innocent person was tortured, no girl teased, no roughs were found loitering and misbehaving, no person was unduly harassed or pressurised. At these bases the youths were preparing to promote revolution. The authorities could never oust them from their position. It was only with the co-operation of the CPM that the authorities could dislodge them. The massacre at Baranagar was a pointer. The role of the CPM took an anti-revolutionary turn and was, in fact, suicidal. This would be evident from a fact whose significance should be deeply realised. During the 1971 elections the Naxalites were in control in many areas of West Bengal. In such a situation the CPM virtually won the elections. During the 1972 elections the Naxalites were out, thanks to the efforts of the CPM. But this time the CPM lost. Does it indicate that the Naxalite movement was helpful to the Establishment and harmful to the interests of the people?

There is a proper time for everything. There was a time in 1967 when, after the election results were out, popular enthusiasm reached an all-time high. It was a climax. People behaved as if they had broken their chains. They were like wild fire, like devastating flood-water. They were ready to finish the oppressor. The Establishment fell. That was the opportune moment. They should have been beaten to the finish. The CPM should have given the lead, immediately breaking down parliamentary institutions and all that. But the CPM leadership failed to grasp the situation. Charu Mazumdar did understand the situation. Hence the rising in Naxalbari. On the other hand the CPM leadership allowed the fallen exploiters breathing time, allowed them to stand up, to gain strength, to conspire, to prepare the blue-print. Under the circumstances the tragedy

could not be avoided. Now, the only path open to the CPM is, perhaps, to organise popular non-cooperation, bringing into focus Delhi's scheme to exploit West Bengal.

ABDULPUTRA BIPLAB
Barasat

The massive victory of the Congress-CPI alliance in West Bengal is chiefly due to the bright image of the ruling party after Mrs Gandhi's deft handling of the Bangladesh problem and the people's craving for peace and a stable government. The CPM's failure to fully appreciate the impact of the Bangladesh liberation on the people of West Bengal, particularly among those living in border areas, and the suicidal mistake of the party in equating Mrs Gandhi with Yahya Khan also contributed to their defeat.

The evidence of the people's preference for the Congress as against the left alliance is manifest in a majority of districts, but the results of some constituencies in Calcutta, 24-Parganas, Burdwan, Murshidabad and Nadia give rise to reasonable misgivings. In the Murshidabad election, the Congress secured 400,000 votes as against 187,000 votes in the 1971 elections. In Nadia, the Congress-CPI alliance secured 140,000 more votes than the total votes secured by them severally in the 1971 elections. This overwhelming increase in the number of votes cannot be fully explained by the impact of the Indira wave and the efficacy of the alliance. The votes secured by the alliance candidates in some individual constituencies are fantastically high. In eight Burdwan constituencies (Burdwan North and South, Khandakosh, Memari, Kalna, Nadanghat, Manteswar and Purbasthali), the Congress secured 376,000 votes as against 164,000 in 1971. In two of these constituencies (Nadanghat and Kalna) the votes secured by the CPM this year decreased by over 30,000 in each case as compared with last year's figures. The results of some constituencies in Cal-

cutta and 24-Parganas also are equally strange. In Dum Dum, where a record number of votes, about 107,000, were cast this time, the Congress candidate won by a fabulous margin of over 76,000 votes. In this constituency, the CPM secured 50% votes less than in the by-election held some nine months back, whereas the Congress registered an increase of about 400%. Moreover, what makes the polling picture in this constituency even more complicated is the curious fact that the margin of the Congress victory this year is more than the total votes cast in this constituency in any of the general elections. The results of Baranagar, Panighati, Behala (North and South), Manicktala, Ballygunge, etc. also leave much scope for honest doubt and misgiving and it will be difficult to explain away the whole thing as a logical corollary of the pro-Indira swing. Moreover, a large section of the non-aligned population of these constituencies could not vote because of large-scale intimidation and violence on the polling day. Since the complaints about irregularities and manipulations in these constituencies are of a basic nature and may shake the people's very faith in the efficacy of the democratic procedure, the Chief Election Commissioner should institute an immediate and thorough probe in these areas.

SUCHITRA DASGUPTA
Calcutta

What does Mr Promode Das Gupta want to achieve by another election? The bureaucracy will remain the same, the behaviour pattern of the police will not change, the same thugs will operate and rigging will be done in the same way. Rather loopholes detected in the operational methods will be plugged and perfected.

Mrs Indira Gandhi is the most farsighted and shrewd politician of our ruling classes. One sees with wonder how she has swept away the old guard who were unable to deliver the goods, how she was able to create a progressive image by the abolition of

the privy purse, nationalisation of banks and general insurance, and, to cap it all, the 'liberation' of Bangladesh. But she knows it very well that this euphoria will not last long. Inflation will go up, the price rise break new heights, and unemployment mount. As a result of the discontentment disorders are bound to take place.

To meet such a situation, the ruling classes have brought into play roughnecks and thugs. They will see that people in their localities behave properly, that no organised discontent and protest are voiced against the establishment, that law and order as per their prescription is maintained. Our people have become allergic towards the police. So, they will remain behind. The free-lance killers won't be apprehended, nor will the news of killings and badgering strike newspaper headlines. One local daily and another weekly are already finding it difficult to reach their readers. The days of party squad, street-corner and gate meetings and the "chachhe chalbe" type of movements are by and large gone.

This is the lesson the CPM should take if it wants to be and continue as a revolutionary party, if it doesn't want to be another CPI. Mouthing slogans of armed revolution but practising parliamentary politics and orienting the party organisation accordingly to legal and revisionist ways have led the CPM to this sordid state of affairs. We have seen how the so-called militant and well-knit organisation of the CPM collapsed like a house of cards on or before election day, how the vast following of the CPM behaved before the terror of the police and the thugs. They are good for Brigade Parade Ground meetings but not before the armed counter-revolutionary forces. This is the lesson of Indonesia.

The Naxalites have no doubt committed great mistakes. They wanted to force the pace of revolution by individual annihilation of the class enemy and by adopting the methods of guerilla struggle in cities and towns — divorcing both from the difficult

task of mobilising the peasant masses. Almost all of the finest boys of the post-1966 food movement have gone because of this wreckless and adventurist policy.

The road of revolution is not easy. It is a difficult, long and tortuous path. There is no short cut to peasant armed rebellion.

K. ROY

The left leaders lent the government unreserved support when under the umbrella of social-imperialism, it violated the sovereignty and territorial integrity of a neighbouring country and installed a government of its liking: They let the Centre beguile the people. Hence the Indira wave. The strategy of encircling China, thereby encircling communism in this sub-continent, passed unnoticed. The embryo of reaction took flesh and blood and nurtured and today we see the fascist giant.

The government did these leaders one favour. They were spared, while their cadres were killed, one after another. Those who believed that offence is the best form of defence are no longer among us. Of course, they also committed mistake. In their eagerness to settle scores with the CPI(M) first, they invited the Gandhite hoodlums in some places. Later on they paid heavily for this mistake. Today, a horde of bandits holding Indira Gandhi's photo as their totem are alive. Only an anti-fascist united front comprising the entire strata of the working people is the only way to combat fascism.

APURBA MAJUMDAR
New Barrackpur

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