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CLEANSING THE STABLES

THE process started in colleges and universities in West Bengal. Leftist students were eliminated from the unions and hostels under threat or coercion. The process was then extended to lanes and bylanes in cities and to towns and villages. If climaxed with the holding of the general elections. The Legislative Assembly has been thoroughly cleansed. With the student and political fronts denuded and all leftist vestiges cleanly uprooted, the public expectation was that the new 'progressive' forces of the State would now take up the trade union front. The expectation is being fulfilled. Opening the Sen-Raleigh cycle factory in Asansol, the Chief Minister of the State politely said that the new Government would not tolerate the politics of violence. The same day and a day earlier the CPM office in Asansol was attacked and occupied, the CPM office-bearers and supporters chased out. The Industries Minister of the State was not so polite; probably he did not have the same command over figures of speech. He said that all trade union workers who would not work for 'full production' would be arrested under the Maintenance of Internal Security Act. It might have been pointed out to the Minister that MISA does not confer the power under which such arrests could be made. But that would be neither here nor there. There are in this State so many thousands of people who have been under arrest, for months, without trial that nobody bothers or hopes to get protection from the due process of law. Whether it is MISA or preventive detention or Defence of India Rules is for the lawyers to be curious about; for those who suffer, the gist is the jail and all that goes with it. What purpose is served by knowing which rule is defunct and which is not?

The three central trade union organisations, INTUC, AITUC and HMS, have ganged up and obligingly been following the dictates of the ruling political party. They agreed, some time ago, on the procedures for recognition of unions. Now is their time of times, of course without any formal resolutions, to break up the CITU organisations and lure the CITU members to their respective unions. There have been broad indications from ministers and government officials that the workers need not be afraid—if they 'behave'. Read 'join the unions approved by the Congress' in place of 'behave'.

People at large are also given to understand that under the sage and

strong leadership of the Congress after Resurrection, India is on the verge of an economic take-off. All that the country requires now is industrial peace. Which means workers should not strike work and if they do, they should be cursed by people. The President of India had given a call for a moratorium on strikes (and feelingly added, on lockouts too). The preposterous idea was supported by Mrs Gandhi. Mr Khadilkar, the Union Labour Minister, now makes it known that he has already initiated talks with INTUC, AITUC and HMS for reaching a minimum agreement to create industrial peace. It does not amount to declaring a ban on strikes though, he assured the wonderstruck members of Parliament. It is not necessary obviously; the obliging trade unions would see to it that the workers do not strike.

CITU is in for a hard knock. The CPM is on the run, from every front. The question is, will the revolutionary prospects in the country dwindle because of this? Those who have been following the CPM line would not surely be unanimous in answering the question. Both the student and trade union leaders have run into a blind alley. They spent all their energy in taking out processions and addressing meetings on the Maidan. At a time when they should have got out of their narrow grooves and joined the peasantry in guiding the agrarian revolution, they culminated and attacked each other. Because of their lack of vision, they stagnated and got engaged in fraternal fights. The students and workers were divided and subdivided. All their activities were either confined within the walls of hostels and college corridors or within the factory premises. They revelled in suspecting each other. Arrogance and not humility was their hallmark. Things came to such a pass that they thought nothing of killing each other, letting the exploiters thrive and grin. Their was inter-union rivalry not inter-class struggle. Now that a sort of polarisation has occurred, it is time for the leftists, young and mature, to take

The U.S. Administration whose much-publicised tilt towards Pakistan has made it a competitor for the handsome tributes to the Governments of India and Bangladesh for the rehabilitation of ten million evacuees. Mr Frank L. Kellogg, special assistant to the Secretary of State for Refugees and Migration Affairs, is amazed at the three-month migration—a king-size example of the resilience and endurance human beings can show and what can happen when hope replaces fear and opportunity replaces suppression. The admiring statement was a strong indication that American recognition of this new-found land of hope and opportunity was already in the pipeline. The recognition will clear the decks for the U.S., the Soviet Union, India, and Bangladesh making a foursome in this part of the world. Mr Kellogg's "special praise" for India may have saved to an extent India's hurt, and it may help the process of reconciliation for which a dialogue has been started on various levels.

In the midst of these great developments and greater expectations it is unlikely that notice will be taken of reports of a fresh influx from Bangladesh. These migrants are different from those who returned to Bangladesh after the Indo-Pakistan war and came away disappointed; they are victims of roving bands of marauders in the countryside who have made plunder their means of livelihood after the liberation. It would seem that the carefully nurtured campaign that with the Sheikh in the Bangladesh is little else than fiction and those who talk of disturbed conditions in that country are not all impelled by an animus against the Sheikh and his friends. The appeal of the Sheikh, described by our

In Two Bengals—I

Prime Minister as the father of Bangladesh, for surrender of arms has apparently fallen on deaf ears. The few who responded are loyal to him, but the majority who did not are beyond the pale of his influence. All of them are not plain bandits; there are political elements too, as is clear from the Sheikh's direction to the administration to shoot down the Naxals.

Such imitation is not, however, a one-way flow. There are reports that the West Bengal Government is considering if it should issue a Mujibur-like appeal for surrender of arms. Perhaps the appeal will be delayed till the current "clean-up" operation is through; the Chief Minister may then order a ceremony on the Brigade Parade Ground to accept the surrender of arms most of which will come from the "malkhana" in Lal-bazar. The possibilities are endless indeed. The West Bengal Government is in a position to offer expertise which will stand the Sheikh in good stead in the proposed elections in Bangladesh. With the Sheikh's image and our Government's knowledge regarding the winning of elections the Awami League will be able to prove that all those who feel that the party has lost much of its popularity in the last three months because of its inefficient and partisan handling of affairs are enemies of the country. Such mutual exchanges will make for a closer relationship between the two Bengals than any that a trade agreement or an economic aid programme may ever hope to achieve. The Sheikh has taken a big leap forward in the right direction; he has shown that democracy is as much safe in Bangladesh as it is in West Bengal.

NOTICE

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Business Manager
Frontier

In Two Bengals—II

A correspondent writes:

Breaking the doleful monotony of mourning for his butchered countrymen, Sheikh Mujib has asked his police force to shoot down Naxalites and other trouble-makers. This should not be interpreted as a momentary emotional deviation in an established philanthropist.

Just on the eve of the Pakistani crackdown he had told a British journalist that Yahya was committing the gross folly of not realising that only he, Mujib, was capable of stemming the tide of communism in East Pakistan, and if it came to a fight, power was sure to pass ultimately into the hands of the Maoists.

When, in spite of a big election victory, the Pakistan Government refused to install Mujib in power on his own terms, it was clear to the meanest observer that Yahya meant to keep East Pakistan under his thumb at any cost. Thousands of Pak troops, armed to the teeth, were standing by. In this situation Mujib, who till the day before had professed his faith in non-violence, suddenly declared independence and instructed his helpless, unarmed people to turn every home into a fortress. Didn't he know that this would lead to a massacre of his countrymen? The butchery of hundreds of thousands of men, women and children of course enabled the Indian bourgeoisie to take action in East Pakistan and set up the Awami League. Immediately after declaring independence Mujib surrendered to Pakistani forces and his compeers slipped off to Calcutta and Delhi, waiting for the proper time to go back to Dacca.

After the installation of the Awami League Government Mujib seems to be haunted by the fear of a rebellion—call it a conspiracy if you like—brewing among his countrymen. Hence the policy of relying on foreign troops; hence the extermination of as many would-be rebels as possible by branding them as Razakars; hence the military pact with India on the

model of the Indo-Russian pact; hence the liaison with Indian troops in tackling the exploited tribals of the Chittagong Hill Tracts; and hence the last great commandment: kill the Naxalites and all other trouble-makers.

The Sheikh should learn wisdom from Mrs Gandhi. Did she commit the folly of blurting out orders to shoot the Naxalites? Never. She has always tried to drown such killings in hymns of patriotic exaltation. Mujib should know how to accommodate the superstructure of neo-fascism, though it is a distressing fact that time and again in India the structure slips off, revealing an abyss of dark medieval violence.

Rhodesia

Pearce and his men are expected to report that the black Africans do not accept the Home-Smith formula on the Rhodesian question. It is, in fact, difficult for the Commission to say otherwise, even if Sir Alec Douglas-Home wanted it to do so. When about three months ago, the Commission visited Rhodesia to ascertain the black people's attitude regarding the Home-Smith arrangement to end the Rhodesian crisis, the Africans showed their disapproval in unmistakable terms. The racists did everything they could to distort the reality. Demonstrators were fired upon, the leaders interned and efforts were made to restrict the Commission's mobility. Despite these, and perhaps something more, they could not suppress the muffled anger, and the investigating peer and his men got the message.

If the Commission fails to endorse the Home-Smith arrangement, Westminster will be in disarray. This uneasy situation however, is its own making. When negotiating with the rebels in Salisbury it had to accept the racist constitution of 1969 which denied even basic human rights to the sons of the soil. The men in Westminster had neither the power

nor the will to change them. The new arrangement, which is just an amended version of the 1969 constitution, does not alter the basic situation. Though it contains the necessary padding images to assuage the black sentiment—the ultimate restoration of majority rule, constitutional changes and improvement of the political status of the blacks—its complicated working procedure goes only to ensure the minority rule. The blacks, who are opposed to any such sell-out, have rejected it, putting the British rulers off balance. In the event of the Pearce Commission doing its duty faithfully, the rightists among the Conservatives may ask the government to lift sanctions, grant freedom to the rebels and restore normal ties. But a larger section of the ruling party, and the liberals, and the Labour Party would advocate a further tightening of the sanctions. But, as in the past, this tough stand is likely to be eroded by the help that the rebels may get from South Africa and other quarters operating behind the front-line racists in Pretoria.

The men who have nothing to lose and everything to gain from their political shadow-boxing are Mr Smith and his allies in Salisbury. Sanctions, though incomplete, have been hurting the Rhodesian economy. This prompted Smith to negotiate with the British for an arrangement that would relax the noose around the neck without jeopardising the white minority rule. Now that they find their effort aborted by the insidious blacks and the obliging Commission, they would revert to another, and perhaps more severe, spell of repression to silence the rightist critics who have been persistently questioning Smith's wisdom of talking to Westminster. Smith can also count on help from South Africa.

But the key to the future of this troubled land remains in the hands of the numerous black Africans. In the past they had protested against the racist oppression, though usually in a non-violent way. Their only armed opposition till date was manifested in ZAPU and ZANU. But their united efforts were enmeshed in

the endless squabbles for leadership and power. Realisation of the urgency of a united opposition, however, dawned on the black people during the Pearce Commission's visit. The clerical leaders and those preaching non-violence have been trying to harness the people's force by forming a new organisation—the African National Congress. But this loose non-violent organisation which pledges to remain within legal forms is unlikely to succeed in the present situation of violence in Rhodesia.

Death Near Milan

Unlike in this country where the mysterious disappearance of a revolutionary leader hardly creates any sensation in the Press which in such a case considers that it has done its duty by publishing the version of the law and order authority, the discovery of the charred body of Giangiacomo Feltrinelli beside a power pylon outside Milan has hit the headlines in the Western newspapers. In Feltrinelli's death radical authors have lost a sympathetic publisher and revolutionaries a sincere friend. What the police have said so far in the matter would seem to suggest that Feltrinelli in his attempt to blow up the pylon had actually killed himself. To make their version credible, the police said that he was carrying with him dynamite sticks, bombs concealed in cigarette packages and some secret documents. What is more, the abandoned van found near the corpse was registered in the name of one who is a member of a revolutionary urban group. All that the police have said so far or what they will add in future—the chapter is not yet closed—may sound plausible as Feltrinelli was one of those for whom participation was all important. Although he belonged to one of the wealthiest families in Milan, Feltrinelli never wanted to be just an angel to the revolutionaries of Latin America and Europe. In fact, it was more than arranging the safety of

Regis Debray that took him to Bolivia in 1967; he, however, failed on that occasion to deliver the money he was carrying with him to Guevara's men. The Italian police will readily furnish that the multi-millionaire publisher—actually he made much less from publication 'business' than is popularly believed—had a hand in the Milan riots on March 11 and in the bombing of a Milan bank in 1969. There are also reports that the pistol that was found beside the dead Quintanilla in Hamburg in April 1971—the man who interrogated Feltrinelli in La Paz and who was responsible for the cold-blooded murder of Che Guevara and Inti Peredo—was purchased in Feltrinelli's name. But does that mean anything? The impartial watchers of the Italian political scene can have little doubt that the publisher was a victim of a plot of the neo-fascists. With

View from Delhi

Settlement To Order ?

FROM A POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

PRETENCES are meant to be kept. Especially the one that there is no pressure on India for a package settlement with Pakistan and that it is going to be cold bargaining devoid of sentiment and emotion until India wins all along the line. Moscow's pressure on the governments in the sub-continent is telling. Mr Swaran Singh had to be despatched post-haste to clear the decks for an envoy-level Indo-Pakistan meeting to be held possibly in Kabul shortly. Mr D. P. Dhar is likely to be India's envoy for the talks.

Back in 1962, the United States and British military aid missions to India utilised the ten-day gap between the Chinese announcement of a unilateral cease-fire and the beginning of their pull-out to force India to discuss Kashmir with Pakistan. That was the price of aid. India

elections to be held in May, they must have worked on the idea that fresh urban violence would produce a backlash not only against the extremists but also against the Communist Party which is trying to project a respectable image of itself. The Party's new Secretary-General, Signor Berlinguer's use of some harsh words against the Maoists is part of the attempt to impress the electorate that it has chosen a path of moderation. Its socialist road-to-power formula means bringing together the leftist parties, including the 'most advanced Catholic elements', in order to break the Christian Democratic axis. The formula, however, does not mean that the communists would in no case share power with the Christian Democrats. Signor Berlinguer would be happy to see the Christian Democrats treating the communists as equals in a future government.

had no objection on principle to negotiating Kashmir whose accession to India is claimed to be final, complete and irrevocable, but not the border dispute with China because China was in illegal occupation of Indian claimed territory. The duality of standards was lost on Indian public opinion in 1962-63 when six rounds of Minister-level talks were held over five months with no result.

In 1965, the Soviet effort at Tashkent could not go beyond the problems created by the war. But now, the insistence is on a package deal, covering all the outstanding issues plus those thrown up by the December war. In 1965, the cease-fire on the Indo-Pakistan border was the result of a UN resolution but this time, it was the result of a unilateral offer by India, comparable to the Chinese offer to India in 1962.

In 1962, the Soviet Union was an-

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xious to rectify its position vis-a-vis India and Pakistan and succeeded in giving the impression of strict neutrality by staging the Tashkent summit. It even softpedalled its support to the Pakhtoonistan demand, much to the disappointment of Afghanistan. No wonder, last month when the Afghan Prime Minister referred to this demand during his Moscow visit, the Soviet leadership was cold to it. Since 1968, the Soviet Union has been the biggest arms supplier of Pakistan and is determined to underwrite it as an entity, albeit a truncated one.

The Soviet leverage with India and Bangladesh is high and is to be used to build a new hegemonistic power balance in the sub-continent as the first step towards an Asian Collective Security System aimed against China. India's leverage vis-a-vis the Soviet Union is almost nil and even Bangladesh is in a better position than India is. While Bangladesh's stakes are limited to the war criminals, India would find it hard to put off a Kashmir settlement as proposed by the Soviet leadership now. Rationalisation of the cease-fire line and de jure partition of the valley to formalise the existing reality are the lines along which a solution is being thought of in Moscow. In return Mr Bhutto is under pressure to sign a non-aggression pact with India. The entire sub-continent would come under Soviet hegemony.

* *

Mr Siddhartha Sankar Ray's debut

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APRIL 8, 1972

here as the Chief Minister of West Bengal was by and large a lack-lustre affair but for his brush with the Press corps. He held forth about his party's resolve to make West Bengal the Ruhr of India (with the help of his Marwari big business friends?) and crush "left adventurism." An intrepid Bengali correspondent who wanted the probe report on political murders in the State published was brusquely told off. The correspondent did not represent the people of West Bengal and was an "outsider" (because he wrote a book on the State's agony?) and Mr Ray and his coterie did. Even Mrs Gandhi could not believe that Mr Ray would pull off the election miracle, in a neat operation.

Mr Ray's command performance over, the Capital now awaits Mr Jyoti Basu whom the TV is thinking of interviewing if only to prove that in a rigged democracy, nobody who participates in the bourgeois parliamentary system would be deemed an outcast. Mr Jyoti Basu would then go down in history as the first leader of his party to be honoured by the Establishment TV. The Central Committee is yet to decide whether he should go out to Europe to expatiate on the perils of a rigged poll and to convince the Rumanians that his party is still revolutionary. Intriguingly, a British journalist representing the most conservative British paper is handling the public relations for Mr Basu in London, in case he makes it in the Central Committee and manages a P form.

* *

The seminar on "Imperialism, Independence and Social Transformation," it turned out, was financed by the Government's Indian Council of Social Science Research though managed by the CPI solidarity-wallahs. The concluding days of the seminar clearly went against the Soviet and CPI interests because the discussion went off the party line. A Soviet delegate found himself isolated when he

defended India's green revolution pleading that it helped the country to withstand U.S. pressures under food supplies. Other delegates refused to share the Soviet-CPI enchantment for India's national bourgeoisie and in the end the agreement was limited to supporting national liberation movements the world over and nothing more. In inviting delegates from abroad, there was a conscious attempt to minimise participation by active members of the national liberation struggles. Instead the super-revolutionary scholars of metropolitan and imperialist countries packed the list. One of the delegates remarked that Mrs Gandhi seemed to have a better grasp of India's problems than the party-lining Indian theoreticians inducted to buttress the effort of the Soviet delegation. Of the 60 odd papers, the majority were just piffle but a few were outstanding but the sponsors would fight shy of publishing the better papers because they go against the government's line and the CPI's line.

April 2, 1972

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April '72 issue contains:

- * Red Detachment of Women (Story of a Chinese Ballet)
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Obsolete Leftism : The New Alternative

HITEN GHOSH

FEW people would accept the results of the West Bengal elections at their face value. The staggering gains made by the Congress are highly suspect. And there is no lack of external evidence to confirm this suspicion. But the pity is that the CPI(M) and its allies are struck all of a heap: they had put implicit trust in the mechanism of bourgeois democracy to hoist them to political power. Evidently, they had reckoned without their host's capacity to forestall their attempt to turn democratic processes to 'revolutionary' ends. The shock and indignation they have felt at the enormity of their adversary's wickedness is like that of a virtuous Hindu wife who suddenly discovers evidence of her husband's infidelity. The usual reaction of the Hindu wife is to sulk and rage and ultimately to take refuge in her own righteousness. Our leftists can do no better.

That the West Bengal leftists could keep speaking of fair elections even after all that had been happening in the State for the past two years shows how puerile and silly their thinking has grown. They have become so accustomed to their grooves and so stereotyped in their responses that in the vastly altered context of a fascist menace they are unable to evolve new and appropriate reflexes. Indeed, both before and after the election, their behaviour pattern has been oddly inconsistent with the real situation. They have been acting in character, though grotesquely out of context, like a psychotic patient who has lost all contact with reality. Sometimes, they remind one of an absurd play by Beckett or Ionesco.

Even now, the CPI(M) and its allies are clinging to the hope that they can restore democracy by insisting on free and fair elections. They

still believe that if elections are fair, even as fairness goes in an exploitative and repressive society, they can win power and keep it. There is only one explanation to account for this persistent delusion. Not to put too fine a point on it, the leftists cannot operate save within the context of parliamentary democracy. They flourish in the climate of bourgeois permissiveness. But as the latitude offered by the bourgeoisie in belief and action directed against its supremacy does not include any revolutionary upsurge, the leftists in India must do everything to avoid one.

But this scrupulous loyalty to the norms of democracy has not earned the leftists, let alone the CPI(M), any kudos from the self-centred vested interests. The latter continue to look upon the left as marauders on the outer fringe with whom they are in no mood to share power and privilege yet. One wonders how the CPI(M) can still hope to enjoy its reprieve in the midst of economic stagnation, naked exploitation and ruthless repression. Its politics cannot be assimilated into the exploitative and repressive system that exists in India and survive as a legitimate foil to rightist interests. In countries where legal political opposition exists as a part and parcel of the reigning orthodoxy, leftists as a revolutionary force cannot operate within the context of legality. The latter exist as a radical fringe calling the very basis of society into question.

In India, the CPI(M) and, even more so, its leftist allies now belong somewhere between this radical fringe and the charmed circle of political power. As they foreswear all revolutionary action they are not of the radical fringe and fall over backwards

to inveigle themselves into the inner sanctum. But the respectability is not easy to acquire and the price is rather forbidding. In other words, left opposition in our country can form part of the exploitative and repressive order only at the cost of self-liquidation. Any peaceful co-operation between the exploiters and the exploited presupposes an affluent economy, however brief and fitful the affluence may be. In India these preconditions do not obtain and thus all opposition to the existing structure of power and privilege must be either sterile or subversive. In our sick and stunted economy, the narrowing margins of spoils and privileges rule out any viable compromise. The issues must be forced or abandoned.

Sterile Existence

There is no doubt that the CPI(M) and its allies in West Bengal have chosen to lead this sterile existence, the remaining alternatives being equally repugnant. They cannot shed their radical stance and dissolve themselves into the relentless tide of reaction now sweeping the whole country. Nor can they take up arms against it. With an overwhelmingly poor and illiterate electorate, the leftists' only chance of winning political power rests in a radical posture. They hope to sway the exploited and oppressed multitudes with their fake shibboleths and wheedle them into voting left with calculated gestures of sham militancy. Of course, these histrionics sometimes pay. But there is no magic drug hidden in the closets of Writers' Buildings to remove the sterility from which a leftist government must suffer. And death being the only alternative to sterility the CPI(M) and its leftist allies are seen clinging to a precarious and futile existence. Steering a middle course between orthodoxy and radicalism they make the worst of both worlds. They can win power by radicalism but can keep it only yielding to orthodoxy. Perhaps they vaguely expect to 'abuse' the terms of their

authority while in power, in the interest of the poorer classes and somehow change bourgeois democracy into its revolutionary opposite. But this dialectic of double-crossing is a game at which two can play and the party of vested interests and their social-democratic ally have played it far better this time. The last elections in West Bengal are the logical working out of this shoddy manoeuvre. This is a fate that must overtake any leftist movement in Indian conditions which, instead of devoting itself to a revolutionary programme, relies on chicanery as a means of survival.

But things have come to such a pass that the very survival of the CPI(M) is at stake. At all events, the party cannot live on parole any more. The Indian ruling class makes no bones about dispensing with democratic etiquette to ensure its survival. It would stick at nothing to maintain its grip on the levers of power. The tactics by which the CPI(M) has grown powerful are seen as an insidious threat to the monopoly of power by the vested interests and their beneficiaries. Even a sterile leftist government in a State like West Bengal could pose a serious threat as a catalyst for social upheaval. But as the leftists under CPI(M) leadership cannot work except within terms of a free and fair democracy they are nonplussed by their adversary's unprincipled manoeuvres. This is something they had not bargained for. Hence the strange paradox that while the Congress rides roughshod over the democratic way of life, the CPI(M) remains a stickler for its nuances and niceties. Even though all elections are rigged, it would ask for elections again.

The CPI(M) and its leftist allies can overcome this dilemma only by trying to win power by revolutionary means. Political power derived from a revolution maintains itself by the very inner logic of revolution. A new democracy automatically takes the place of the old phoney one, leaving the erstwhile exploiters no initiative any more. The exploiting classes must do everything to pre-

serve the facade of popular representation while strengthening their oppressive rule in every sphere of public life. It cannot be any business of the Marxists to shore up this facade. They must expose its hypocrisy but at the same time cease to believe that the ruling class can live without fraud and deception.

Once this disingenuousness on the part of the exploiting classes is taken for granted, the leftists should not want for clues as to the course of action they must follow. Mass struggles leading to an upsurge and/or guerilla warfare with a view to gradual attrition of authority and ultimate seizure of power by the people can be the only proper perspective for leftist movement. Without this avowedly revolutionary orientation left parties in India are doomed to be lost in the wilderness.

A measure of how far removed leftist thinking is from this perspective is that the CPI(M), to say nothing of the other parties of the left, has always supported the so-called progressive measures of the Congress government. It often talks of state capitalism but does not recognise one when it comes to fighting it. It scoffs at bourgeois democracy but would die defending it as it alone holds out the promise of political power. The party seems to have learnt nothing from the Soviet experience, which demonstrates how a proletarian revolution can spawn and nurse to strength a formidable social bureaucracy subsisting on exploitation and discriminating privileges. Jean-Paul Sartre once spoke of barbarous and civilized socialism but Indian Marxists have no notion that there can be such a thing as 'socialism' with oppression and exploitation of the masses. They look at the new situation with old glasses and dismally fail to act in the proper way.

But the most miserable deficiency of the Indian left is not attributable to any intellectual error. Its source is elsewhere. Indian leftists are afraid to start revolutionary action. In a vastly poor and illiterate country

they expect to win majority support at polls through radical slogans and some mass movements. But as the kind of power which elections confer is not adequate to fulfil radical promises, the whole drama of futility is enacted over and over again. But the exploiting classes in India cannot sit with crossed fingers while the pseudo-radicals make haywire with their interests through democratic procedures. The leftists in West Bengal have been denied this exercise.

The Resilient Economy

K. S. RAO

INDIA is truly a land of miracles. The way her economy has responded to the challenges of 1971, unquestionably the most difficult year since independence, is nothing less than marvellous. Nearly ten million refugees were sheltered and fed. At the same time, a full-scale war was fought and won. And there was the usual toll taken by natural calamities. Yet there was no visible sign of strain anywhere. Surely no one can take exception to the claim that 'the increased fiscal burden was fully met, the real resources required for refugee relief and defence were mobilised in time and prices and balance of payments were kept under reasonable control'. Indeed, 'the economy has shown a remarkable resilience and responsiveness in meeting the challenges' (Economic Survey 1971-72).

Since, however, real resources are not made up merely of air and water and India is not quite plagued by any abundance of either guns or butter, not yet at any rate, it may not be altogether out of place to inquire where the resources came from and who bore the brunt of it all.

No pronouncement on the burden (or the benefits) of a fiscal measure is possible without an idea of the pattern of income distribution. Unfortunately (or perhaps fortunately), information on income distribution is hopelessly scanty and out of date,

Studies based on whatever data are available point unmistakably to an extremely sorry state of affairs and an aggravation of the disparities in the sixties. (vide, for example, 'Poverty in India' by Dandekar & Rath). In the absence of more recent information, one can only talk generally about the impact on 'growth' and its prospects whatever that may signify for the well-being of the majority of the people.

Even without the 'biggest refugee influx in history' and a war on its hands, the performance of the Indian economy in terms of growth has not been particularly impressive in recent years. In 1969-70 and 1970-71, the two years immediately preceding the onset of the Bangladesh crisis, India's National Income grew at the rate of 5.3 per cent and 4.8 per cent respectively. 'For the two year period, the average annual compound rate of growth works out to 5 per cent' (The Fourth Plan Mid-term Appraisal). In 1971-72, the rate of growth is not likely to exceed 4 per cent. The Fourth Plan had envisaged an annual compound growth of 5.6 per cent per annum.

Coming in the wake of 2.5 per cent growth in the Third Plan period and near stagnation for half-a-century prior to independence, annual growth of real national product at the rate of 5 per cent may not appear to be too dismal. As the survey itself recognises, however, the sectoral trends are far from reassuring. Even agriculture, the sector which accounts for much of the 'physical progress' that occurred, does not present a uniformly bright picture. For, apart from the fact that the abnormally depressed farm output figures of 1968-69, the base year, made for an undue inflation of the production index for 1969-70, the breakthrough in agricultural production is confined largely to wheat and 'success has continued to elude in respect of fibres and pluses'. Moreover, it is not easy to say to what extent the spurt in the output of the two grains was the bounty of a favourable monsoon. Even the Mid-term Appraisal grimly

reminds that the possibility of a setback to agricultural production in the remaining years of the Plan should not be ignored'.

The only other sectors which helped boost the national product substantially are 'Public administration and Defence' and 'Banking and Insurance'. Outreaching the 5-year target in just two years the two sectors recorded a growth rate of 7.9% and 8.9% respectively as against the expected rate of 2.0% of 4.7%. In fact, but for the contribution of these purely tertiary sectors, the overall growth rate would not have exceeded even 4.5 per cent, as 'industrial production, the most important component of the national product, next to agriculture, has been almost stagnating since 1970.

Saving Ratio

Still graver in import for future growth is the failure of saving and investment ratios to move up. The sharp decline in the ratio of net investment to net domestic product which took place in the three years following the terminal year of the Third Plan i.e. 1965-66 from 13.4% to 9.5% has not been effectively put back. The saving ratio which fell from the peak level of 11.1 per cent in 1965-66 to 7.9 per cent in 1967-68 has been stationary at around 8.4 per cent since 1968-69. Net saving of the public sector as per cent of its net disposable income declined precipitously from 21.6 in 1965-66 to 9.5 in 1970-71, while in the private sector the decline was from 9.1 to 8.2.

What could the draft on real resources to meet the challenges of 1971 mean in this situation? A rise in public consumption of such an order could not but lead to a further decline in the saving ratio unless there was a matching contraction of private consumption which was scarcely in evidence. How then did the economy stretch itself except by suffering a severe setback to its growth prospects in the coming years which, even otherwise were not very cheering? One cannot agree more with the Survey than when it says, "The

extent of their strain cannot be spelled out in terms of current resources alone'. The question is "how 'unobtrusively' can the economy recoup itself and 'resume the pursuit of growth'?"

The major thrust of the strategy for growth suggested in the Mid-term Appraisal is an extension of the area of the public sector and an effort to raise the marginal rate of saving in the public sector. How massive this effort will have to be to reach even the moderated targets would be seen from the fact that in 1970-71, i.e. even before the critical months had commenced, this rate had turned negative and the rate which the Appraisal would require it to reach is over 70 per cent (and this calculation took no account of the consequences of the events of the latter half of 1971). What are the chances that the public sector will be able to curtail its consumption so drastically with no resultant pressure on private consumption? It is doubtful if any one even in Government would consider this practicable or rate the chances of such an outcome materialising as very high. Therefore, unless 'foreign saving' comes to the rescue, India may have to settle for a growth rate of not much more than 3-4 per cent per annum in the next few years which would yield a rise of barely 1 per cent annually in per capita income.

The reality may, of course, turn out to be better than that. After all, sinews of growth like those of war can be wrested by the State, if not forthcoming voluntarily, quite unobtrusively, from those whose shadows do not stalk the corridors of power everyday. Hence growth may yet take place so that supply of cars, TV sets, and cooking ranges do not trail too far behind demand even if the percentage of people below the poverty line keeps creeping up. The resilience of the Indian economy is as infinite as the capacity of its masses to suffer privation in silence. Besides, if the growth rate in physical terms fails to oblige, 'Public administration and Defence' and 'Banking & Insurance' are there to make

up any short fall. There is no reason why the country while drawing up its national income account should not value the services of its fighters and administrators as highly as bread, butter or shelter.

France After May 1968

DAN JACOBSSON

THE events of May 1968 came as a shock. France was paralysed, ten million workers were on strike, violent demonstrations took place in the universities and the large factories. The police and the government were caught unawares. Their methods were outdated, their resources were 'insufficient'. Only CGT and the French Communist party could rescue De Gaulle.

The Government acted quickly after these events. More policemen were recruited, their equipment modernised and their methods became more brutal. The man who took over the job as Minister of the Interior is Raymond Marcellin. He immediately started working with great enthusiasm. But, he said, "We know events do hardly repeat twice. But, as Minister of the Interior I do mean and so does the President that we must strengthen effectively the instruments of oppression by all means. The purpose of this is that all instigators of violence should be punished irrespective of their social class. Law contains everything we need, and the Republican law has now been so well worked out that it gives us all possibilities".

A few examples of the law passed after 1968: (a) 3-12 months' unconditional imprisonment for 'violence against the police'. (b) 3-18 months' unconditional imprisonment for 'threatening with violence and murder in speech and in print'. We have the famous case of Alain Geismar, the leader of the banned party, La Gauche Proletarienne, who was imprisoned for writing against the State in *La Cause du Peuple*.

(c) 3-6 months' unconditional imprisonment for insulting police. (d) 6-12 months' unconditional imprison-

ment for possessing objects which could be used as a weapon.

Thousands of arrests during the past four years fall under these categories. Besides, the revolutionary press has been heavily fined in order to ruin it economically. Radical books, films, stage-plays have been forbidden or censored, while rabid fascist newspapers like *Minute*, *Rivarol* are flourishing.

These were not enough. The Government has introduced a few more new repressive laws—the right to search houses; a measure which forbids the confinement of company and factory officials, and another against collective transgression. The right to form any kind of organisation may also be banned. The law against 'collective transgression' allows the police to suppress all kinds of 'commando actions'. But, in reality, all types of demonstrations could also be considered illegal.

The first lesson Marcellin has learnt from the events of May 1968 is that the police must be organised and trained for counter-insurgency. Les Compagnies Spéciales d'Intervention is specialising in breaking strikes, occupation of universities and demonstrators. The ordinary police force has been increased considerably, retrained and renamed Les Corps Républicains (CRS) and para-military forces, Les Gardes Mobiles. The riot-police (CRS) is divided into small groups, each consisting of three small buses and a jeep which gives the command. They also have other heavy equipment—small, quick lorries fitted with bulldozers to demolish barricades, big lorries transporting giant-size shields to shut off the roads. With regard to uniforms and outfit policemen are following the foot

steps of their American brothers. They put on American police-clothes, carry helmets, transparent shields etc. Motor cycles have also been introduced. Policemen on motorbike ride on the pavements and through the narrow lanes to smash isolated groups and prevent demonstrators from regrouping. Marcellin has brought tanks, which look like the ones now being used in Northern Ireland. They are fitted with machine guns and have enough room for 12 armed men.

The French Gestapo is known as Reseignements Généraux (RG). It has a great number of agents-provocateurs and informers all over the country. It collaborates with another intelligence organisation known as Service d'action Civique (SAC). SAC is associated with the Gaullist party, Ordre Nouveau (a fascist organisation), and other parallel organisations.

Marcellin has invented a new instrument: police-students. Their task is to listen, take photographs, provoke, report everything to RG. A few of them have been caught, but it seems there is still a large number of them lying in ambush among the students.

Terror Actions

On June 5, 1971, plainclothes policemen and their agents-provocateurs plundered shops in Quartier Latin in Paris. Well after the plunder the 'real' police arrived. The purpose of the action was to terrify ordinary people and turn them against the genuine left.

It is well known that the immigrant workers in France live worse than animals. Continuous racist propaganda is going on to divide the French and the immigrant workers. For example, when Algeria nationalised the French oil companies the reactionary press suggested that the Algerian workers should be sent back. Behar Rehala, an Algerian worker, was shot by the police because he stole a yoghurt. In 1971 about 15 foreign workers were murdered by fascist gangs.

Police action against workers on strike is becoming very common. For example, the actions against the wor-

kers in Renault in Paris and Le Mans, railway workers in Avignon, workers of Colgate-Palmolive in Compiègne.

After coming to power De Gaulle made a new Constitution for his own benefit and the Gaullists took the radio, the TV and a part of the press under their benevolent wings. Now Pompidou is consolidating the foundation of the repressive State. CGT and the French Communist party, which have accepted and joined the rat-race of the election and the parliamentary system, are pouring cold water on their militant members and deliberately confusing the issues. The Gaullist State has contained CGT and the French Communist Party. It knows that the real threat comes from the genuine Left. So does the Communist Party. A recent Gallup poll carried out among the French youth shows that most of them believe that only a genuine revolution can save France. The poll has shocked the older generation. The murder of Pierre Ouverney by the fascist management in Renault factory led to big rallies organised by the Marxist-Leninists, though the CGT and the French CP blamed the workers for their 'left adventurism' and did not join the massive demonstrations. Even some delegates of the CGT criticised the secretary of the CGT.

The Marxist-Leninists, however, know that a spontaneous revolt like that of May 1968 will not last for a day. So, the key word of the day is the building of a solid organisation based on the principles of Marxism Leninism and Mao Tse-tung Thought.

For Frontier contact

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Film Culture

BY A FILM CRITIC

FILM culture is apparently in difficult straits. This seems to be the opinion after the protracted deliberations of the All-India Film Societies Conference which met at Calcutta. The film society movement which over the past few years, has gained acceptance from an impressive section of the articulate public and has crystallised around a few clubs, mostly in the metropolitan centres, suddenly finds itself facing formidable odds. The principal hurdle is of course the lack of a steady supply of films from abroad which the clubs could screen for the benefit of their members. The all-India body, the Federation of Film Societies of India, has developed a pathetic and unhealthy reliance on the different embassies in Delhi to get films. The Central Government does not seem to be particularly keen to encourage this trend but during the last twelve years it has done precious little to reverse the trend. The Federation, unable to put its house firmly in order, looked on helplessly when it found its own afflicted bodies running round to get films from different embassies on their individual initiative under circumstances which gave reason to believe that particular embassies were not chary of encouraging such action even to the detriment of the overall interest of the movement.

So the source of films remains the headache and the movement seems to founder on this rock. Admittedly the Centre encouraged the movement particularly at its initial stages but failed to provide an institutional apparatus to keep it going by ensuring a steady supply of films. A film archive was set up in Poona (incidentally all the outfit of the Union Ministry of I & B are Bombay-Poona based) with fanfare and an assurance was obtained that member societies would be free to draw on its store. In addition the Archive itself would sponsor programmes and circulate through clubs. As the Archive started pro-

curing more films its enthusiasm to lend them flagged apparently because it wanted to have the credit of sponsoring more programmes, albeit the individual clubs, particularly the smaller ones, which could not afford the luxury of an Archive programme, could only starve under the circumstances.

The Federation as the principal supplier to its members had to increasingly fall back on only the embassy sources. The embassies often take them for granted and not often make them accept films not wanted by them because in their case the film society circuit is mostly the only circuit open to them—the commercial exhibitors won't touch their products with the longest of bargepoles, because they don't consider these saleable material.

Meanwhile, thanks to Mr L. N. Mishra's Socialist impulse, films from the USA have practically stopped coming, it had to be because to the philistines of North Block anything which is channelised or proposed to be channelised through STC is a commercial commodity and films, unlike books and periodicals, are not a cultural commodity on this score. Since independence the Government has not applied its mind as to how indiscriminate input of films from the USA could be stopped. What the people are interested in is better type of films rather than every product of Hollywood. But the Government thought otherwise and allowed free flow. Its effort to wheedle the film importers and exhibitors to toe their line did not succeed and unable to find any other instant solution it stopped imports altogether without devising a rational and concrete policy. The posh houses in Calcutta promptly switched over to Hindi film exhibition merrily.

To come back to the film clubs' lot. They are deprived of a source on which they occasionally fell back. Distributors of these film have also a strange practice of destroying their films after a few years when they consider that the chance of commercial exploitation is over.

The Federation itself can hardly

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escape a measure of blame. Some years back the Centre gave a grant to it for importing films from abroad. It did import two films but could not continue with the programme due to organisational weakness. Another potential source, the International Federation based in Paris, was not exploited for reasons best known to the organisers. There was hardly any consistent policy to procure Indian films to build its own film library. A void has thus been created and a way out is not in view.

Of the foreign agencies the USIS, the Maxmueller Bhavan and the French Embassy have offered programmes through the film clubs which are imaginative, instructive and may be adopted as a model to other film-producing countries. Among such countries the USSR and Japan are notorious for their rigid and codescending attitude. As a result the member who have an opportunity to see films spread over many decades as far as USA, France or W. Germany are concerned do not find opportunity to be acquainted with the best of Russian and Japanese tradition in cinema. The Film Society movement can hardly survive let alone progress without a regular publication to propagate their cause and to moot discussion on important films and trends in world cinema. In this again the central body has not been particularly able to make a mark. In the early year of its existence the Federation did bring out a few issues of its journal but the endeavour soon collapsed creating another void. Seminars and symposia are few and far between. Meeting with foreign film personalities are largely through the courtesy of I & B Ministry and the Societies have hardly any contact with film makers on their own.

It seems that sole reliance on Government outfit and foreign agencies has stood in the way of the film society movement's flowering and charting its own course. A vigorous movement to build a cultural milieu in respect of Cinema which is likely to be a bulwark against bad taste is the principal objective of the movement. It may have been only partly realised in

so far as the enthusiasm one discerns in the people who conduct the affairs. But beyond that it could hardly make a dent.

Tidal Bore

One offshoot of the film society movement is the lively interest some organisers have taken in trying their hands in short film making. The fact that they are non-professional, does not necessarily mean that their products are amateurish. *Tidal Bore*, a short on the bore in Hooghly river in Calcutta made by Vijaya Mulay has all the deft touches of a professional. The sharp eyes for detail may well be the envy of many a professional. The enchanting shots on the story where children joyously as the high tide approaches, the women with religious fervour making the most of the holy river, the boatmen whose life blood the perennial stream represents, lend it a dimension which even one who is familiar with the mood of the river has not perhaps seen before. Bangubai Hingal's sonorous music and Satyajit Ray's rich resonant voice add to its creative power. Even the porsaic animation dealing with the problem the bores pose for the port somehow makes it an integral part of the film.

Book Review

HAND AND BRAIN IN CHINA & OTHER ESSAYS

By Joseph Needham, Joan Robinson, Edgar Snow, Tim Raper. Anglo-Chinese Educational Institute, London, 1971. 4s.

YET another flood of light on the China of the early seventies, this time from four brilliant Western specialists, three of them of world fame. The pictures presented are no visionary outpourings; they are the fruits of solid, painstaking research into the working of a developing socialist society.

Needham, celebrated historian of Chinese science and civilization, relates China's fast and all-round pro-

gress in science and technology within the brief span of her socialist existence to ancient and medieval Chinese history. Without detracting from the great organizing power of her socialist system he shows how China's extraordinarily quick development, with practically little external help, of highly sophisticated devices like multi-stage rockets responsible for sending up her first man-made satellite, giant steam turbo-generating dynamoes with flawless water-cooling systems, electro-encephalographs, electro-cardiographs, artificial heartvalves and electronic red blood cell counters, her excellent electric locomotives, her spectacular progress in hydraulic technology as manifested in the canal-dam-bridge systems and her world record of 100,000 metres of drilling through rock in a year—are historically related to certain basic scientific developments that had taken place in ancient and medieval China, mostly ahead of corresponding developments in Europe. In the final chapter, "The Alchemy of Human Nature," Needham shows how this modern leap forward from a far-off medieval base has been made possible by a combination of three methods. One: adopting the highly developed techniques of the advanced West. Two: revitalized revival of excellent old Chinese methods which the author himself has found to have worked wonders. Three: Devising of "entirely new methods" by means of adaptation and re-adaptation of both old-native and new-Western techniques in terms of the concrete needs of concrete situations prevailing in China. Workers are taught how the dialectical philosophy of the unity and struggle of opposites everywhere in creation as explained in the writings of Mao Tse-tung would help them to understand and correctly resolve the contradictions in the world of nature.

This free exercise of dialectical thought has resulted in a tremendous release of local initiative. Everywhere little local groups, often led by talented though obscure individ-

uals, are, without waiting for official approval, setting up little narrow-gauge railways, making roads and bridges and dams and special machines to solve special problems, thereby making substantial contributions towards solving the great national problems. All effort is visibly geared to the end of building up a harmonious socialist system.

Finally Needham points to the apparent paradox of an atheistic Communist Party preaching the high moral doctrine of 'fight self, repudiate privilege'. Chinese socialist practice, Needham thinks, is indeed changing the heart of man, something that theologians have only dreamt about, and that "Maoism in China today, in spite of whatever negative sides there may be to a highly moral way of life, is something terrifically vital and creative".

Prof Joan Robinson in her essay on "Chinese Economic Policy" shows how Galbraith's and Mahalanobis's idea that the eternal problems of an underdeveloped country are a large population with insufficient capital and education have been proved utterly wrong by the achievements of Chinese socialism. "When people can be organized to work and study", she says, "and when they can be inspired with the faith that they are working and studying for the benefit of themselves and of their nation, manpower can begin to equip itself with capital and with technology and to find natural resources formerly undiscovered."

Mrs Robinson shows how the key to the balanced progress of Chinese economy lies in the correct relationship between industry and agriculture and between heavy and light industries as set forth in Mao Tse-tung's speech on the "Ten Great Relationships" delivered in April, 1956. The mistake made by some socialist countries in attaching excessive importance to heavy industries at the expense of light industries and agriculture, resulting in an insufficient supply of goods for the market and an unstable currency, has been avoided. The emphasis continues to be on

heavy industry, and it is for the purpose of gathering capital quickly for heavy industry that there should be more investment in light industries and agriculture, "for light industries and agriculture can accumulate more capital and faster". Again, "advance in agriculture is not possible without the support of industrial investment, and advance in industry requires the support of the agricultural surplus to feed its workers and provide its raw materials." The dispersion of industry all over the country preventing the filthy crowding in the cities noticeable in all the so-called developing countries, the enthusiasm and initiative released by the fact of the workers managing their own welfare, keeping the channels between the masses and the leadership continuously open, the principle of progress through experiment, trial and error and the analysis of mistakes, the growing agro-industrial self-sufficiency of the communes, the newly set up industries all the time absorbing the surplus of labour from ever-improving agriculture, the heightened spirit of democracy and self-reliance in industry since the Cultural Revolution and the complete sweeping away of the Soviet type of hierarchical management—are the other significant features pointed out by Professor Robinson. "This is the prescription for development," she concludes. "No one seems to have found another way."

"The Open Door" by the late Edgar Snow, considered the most astute and realistic of the China-observers, paints a basically similar picture based on his recent detailed interview with Chou En-lai. He refers to the steady progress of Chinese agriculture as attested by the enormous 1970 total grain output of 240 million tons, to Chinese attaining the status of the world's largest producer of cotton, cotton yarn and cotton cloth and her current self-sufficiency, in oil output. Some wheat is imported because it is cheaper in China than rice, also to balance rice exports to Cuba and Ceylon in exchange for sugar and rubber and to

make up for the millions of tons of rice China sends to help Vietnam and other countries. China is moving fast towards the goal of annually producing 30 to 35 million tons of chemical fertilizer. Snow particularly draws attention to the stability of China's currency, her successful avoidance of inflation, her stable, and in some cases gently falling, prices, the abundance and cheapness of food as, Snow says, "any visitor to China may see for himself."

The myth of severe party purges following the Cultural Revolution is repudiated by the assertion from Chou En-lai that "less than one percent was expelled." while others not re-elected had gone down to the countryside to 'temper themselves'. The post-C.R. administrative structure has been simplified, reducing the former 90 departments to a mere 26. Decentralization policies have resulted in intensified regional and local self-sufficiency. From Shanghai alone about a million have migrated to the countryside.

Right to Strike

While in the new constitution to be framed in the near future the Thought of Mao Tse-tung will be formally recognized as the guiding principle of all work, the people will have greater rights to 'freely air their views to arouse the masses to engage in great debates; also to strike. The idea of the army dominating both party and the government is entirely wrong.

Chou drew Snow's attention to China's steadily expanding world relationships and the increasing 'revolt' of the world community against the imperialist policy of containing China. Regarding the United Nations Chou envisaged two possibilities: either its organization would become more revolutionary or it would suffer the fate of the League of Nations. He vividly described how the super-powers had kept China militarily encircled and how the Russians had in practice refused to disengage in the disputed

border areas. The extreme hypocrisy of the super-powers manifested itself in their continuous arms expansion while talking of disarmament. Chou reasserted that the sole aim of Chinese nuclear tests was to break the nuclear monopoly and nuclear blackmail war. China wanted all foreign troops to be withdrawn from all territories so that the people of every country could determine their destiny without any outside interference.

Edgar Snow professes to share and confirm the truth of these observations.

Tim Raper unfolds the saga of China's conquest of hunger and her big crusade against hunger all over the world. Every flood or drought used to kill millions of Chinese in the pre-communist days but during the terrible droughts of 1959-62—one of the worst in Chinese history—"not even the best-informed critics of the regime could point to evidence of deaths from starvation." Scientific socialist planning had within a decade worked the most unbelievable wonders. The shadow of hunger has been dispelled from China at a time when 30-40 million people in the Third World starve to death every year.

Raper brings out concretely the diametrically opposite characters of Western and Chinese aid. Western aid to underdeveloped countries is more than offset by the falling prices of the raw materials the latter produce, the rising prices of the goods they have to import, the outflow in profits, etc. Chinese aid, on the contrary, is given with the purpose of helping the receiving country to attain self-sufficiency. Much of Chinese aid consists of actual gifts or grants. Between 1950 and 1966 China gave away over £600 million. More than 25 countries have benefited from Chinese aid, one of the earliest being India which, during the famine of 1951, received 100,000 tons of rice.

China set the most glorious example in socialist aid practice by undertaking to construct the 1,000 mile

railroad linking Zambia's copper belt with the Tanzanian port of Dar-es-Salaam, to enable them to carry on vital imports and exports avoiding the routes through the 'White African' racist countries. To meet the cost China has advanced an interest-free loan of £150 million repayable over 25 years. Two other features of Chinese aid projects are that the receiving country is treated as an equal partner and not as an object of charity, and that Chinese engineers live at the same standards as their native counterparts. By contrast we in India can cite cases of Russian engineers drawing emoluments of about Rs 35,000 a month! Every aspect of Chinese aid is clearly indicative of the aim to see the recipient country attain self-reliance and shake off the imperialist stranglehold. China's example, Raper concludes, in overthrowing exploitation and hunger "shines like a red beacon in the darkness—an inspiration to all freedom-fighters in their struggle against tyranny."

The little volume *Hand and Brain in China* contains the image of a whole world, a new world of hope slowly coming into being.

SATYA JANA

Clippings

On The Brink ?

...The euphoria which enveloped Bangladesh at the time of independence is beginning to wane, and undercurrents of unrest and impatience are breaking up the strong mood of nationalism.

To put it mildly, Bangladesh is on the verge of disaster again.

The flagging economy needs a massive dose of international aid (and there are no signs that relations with the United States will improve for some time). Tens of thousands of modern weapons have gone underground and with the Awami League now showing signs of fascism, many Bengalis believe that

their country will be plunged once again into chaos.

First and foremost, there is the very real danger that the implacable hatred between the Bengalis and the 1,500,000 Urdu-speaking non-Bengalis might trigger off another bloodbath. Events over the past three months have shown that in spite of Shaikh Mujib's pleas for tolerance, the slightest incident could provoke widescale rioting.

Although the Government has attempted to play down the incident, independent foreign observers assert that more than 2,000 Biharis were slaughtered at Khalishpura, an industrial centre near Khulna, two weeks ago. The carnage evidently started when the bodies of two Bengalis were posing as "freedom fighters" continued.

Large numbers of terrified non-Bengalis have concentrated in ghettos in most big towns. They are unemployed and wholly dependent on relief organizations for food and shelter. They have no future in Bangladesh and unless the international community can persuade Pakistan to accept the bulk of the state's minority community, rioting and killings will continue.

Law and order is generally in decline. Groups of armed Bengalis posing as "freedom fighters" continue to loot trains and abandoned property. The police force, confronted with superior weapons, is demoralized and ineffectual.

In addition, the various militant groups of the Liberation Front and supporters of left-wing political forces have refused to surrender their arms. A senior officer of the Mukti Bahini, the left-wing guerrillas, estimates that almost 20,000 weapons, including rifles, light machine guns and mortars, have gone underground.

Sections of the Mukti Bahini are becoming disenchanted with the Government. Citing one of the causes they point out that a popular officer, Major M. Jalil, was arrested by the Government for insubordination in January. It is clear that there had been a longstanding feud between Major Jalil and the commanding

officer of the Mukti Bahini, Colonel M. A. G. Osmani, and this culminated in a showdown after independence.

According to his supporters, Major Jalil, who commanded a force of 3,500 men on the western border, is supposed to have opposed withdrawing Indian troops to prevent them looting a jute mill. The Indians deny the allegation and say they had been called in to support the Government when Major Jalil refused to surrender his arms after the war.

What is certain is that the affair has split the former liberation force into two factions and many freedom fighters are openly criticizing the Government today.

Unemployment, food shortages and the rising price of essential commodities are expected to exacerbate the law and order situation within the next few months.

The Government is still not sure of production figures for the coming year, but it is estimated that the deficit in food grains will rise to 20 per cent this year. Smuggling of food grains to West Bengal—where rice fetches a higher price—has intensified, warehouses were destroyed during the recent conflict, and both the winter and summer crops are expected to be affected by the shortage of fertilizer and seed.

India has promised to ship half a million tons of food to Bangladesh before June, and the United Nations has agreed to send 200 tons, but the Bengalis say that no consignment has arrived so far. In any case it is doubtful whether the shattered ports and communication routes will be able to handle shipments once the monsoon sets in.

Shaikh Mujib will, without doubt, introduce a system of parliamentary democracy when the Constituent Assembly meets next month, but many Bengalis are beginning to fear that other institutions such as the press will come under pressure and that the ruling party will not tolerate any form of criticism.

These fears may indeed be well-founded. In the first place, Shaikh Mujib has surrounded himself with

sycophants from the old bureaucracy who served the two successive autocratic regimes of President Ayub Khan and President Yahya Khan.

After 15 years of conditioning and now under pressure from militants in the Awami League, the bureaucracy still believe its first duty is to suppress the fourth estate and any form of criticism. As an example, Mr Abdus Salaam, veteran Editor of the *Bangladesh Observer*, was dismissed within 24 hours after he published a sane and constructive editorial urging the Government to summon the Constituent Assembly at the earliest possible moment.

...Behaving in much the same Bengalis have already begun to tighten the screw on the western correspondents who have been reporting some of the more unpalatable events in recent weeks. The subservient press in the state has reacted in much the same way it did during the tenure of Presidents Ayub Khan and Yahya Khan.

(Peter Hazelhurst in *The Times*, March 27, 1972).

Letters

Elections : Many Voices

Leading articles in your weekly as well as a good number of letters published therein have consciously or unconsciously nourished erroneous and misleading ideas about both the nature of the recent election and its possible implications.

Echoing the CPI(M), you have stated that the election in West Bengal was totally rigged. The purpose in essence is to build up a revolutionary image of the CPI(M), as if the 'rigging' was resorted to in West Bengal alone to thwart the possibilities of a 'radical' government under the CPI(M). Criticism have been levelled against the CPI(M) in a very subtle manner so as to create further illusion about its 'revolutionary intentions. Barring some 30 or so constituencies in Calcutta, 24-Parganas

and Burdwan where fascist (or semi-fascist?) method were adopted openly, without any scruples, it is impossible to establish that the election in West Bengal was totally rigged unless one also admits the nature of the election to be the same in other states too. True to its narrow, regional and hypocritical politics, the politbureau of the CPI(M) has demanded fresh elections in West Bengal only though admitting 'rigging' in some other states. It should be made clear that the CPI(M) has suffered neither more nor less than the other all-India parties as the Jana Sangh, Swatantra, Congress(O), SSP etc and as such the election manoeuvres by the Congress(R), the most organised political party of the ruling class, for the present, should by no means prove the revolutionary bona fides of the CPI(M).

The truth really lies in that elections can never be free and fair in a class-ridden society, the more so in a backward, semi-feudal country. There is no use accusing a particular political party of violating even the standard definition of a free and fair election in our country. With the mad rush for ministerial power gaining ever-increasing momentum amongst the election-oriented parties, with mounting tension amongst the lower-level party cadres, such things are a foregone conclusion. No political party joining this race can feign injured innocence. Is it unknown to anybody that every party, including the 'revolutionary' one, takes care to build special machinery for impersonation and false voting in every election? If a stronger party practises the same on a wider scale and more openly and daringly, others cannot have the moral right to cry for justice. Election is a game where nothing is unfair. Ask anybody residing in the 'free zones' of the CPI(M) in Baranagar, Dum Dum, Haltu, Jadavpur and Uttarpara, you will hear how the CPI(M) made no secret of its resort to the same methods, though without much success. In a semi-feudal semi-colonial State all political parties aspiring for

governmental power are bound to display fascist trends. The decisive factor, however, is the patronage of the ruling class or its strongest section in specific circumstances. No one can forget how the hoodlum of the CPI(M) demonstrated their capacity to strike against the 'Naxalite anti-socials' during their heyday in direct collusion with the 'progressive' section of the police. Just a sign-board of 'communist party' does not make any difference. The CPI(M)'s Marxism is as much false as Indira Gandhi's socialism and this is the only lesson that should be driven home amongst the masses.

It would be futile to expect a large number of CPI(M) cadres to turn 'revolutionaries' overnight because of their tragic experience in the last election. The CPI(M) differs from other non-Congress parliamentary parties only in name. Can we expect the cadres of the SSP to turn towards 'revolution' just because Mr Madhu Limaye has threatened boycott of elections and resort to counter-violence following his party's debacle in the 'rigged' election? Frustration cannot change the basic reactionary politics of a man. The CPI(M) has already asked for a fresh election in West Bengal and there is no reason why the cadres should not rally behind the slogan and make fresh efforts for capturing governmental power through constitutional means. Some quotations from Lenin will perhaps suffice for dealing with the few recalcitrants and the parliamentary game in the name of the defence of democratic rights will continue with a new colour and added gusto. True revolutionaries expect very little of the committed CPI(M) cadres who have so long been systematically and successfully fed on thoroughly bourgeois counter-revolutionary ideas. They can hardly think about anything other than elections and trade unionism. If they are at all forced to adopt violence, with their present politics in their heads, violence will be nothing else than counter-violence. There cannot be any question of united front between the

disgruntled CPI(M) cadres and the CPI(ML) unless the former undergo a radical change in their outlook by accepting the international leadership of the Chinese Communist Party. This, in fact, equally applies to the cadres of any other party as well.

BIKASH MUKHERJEE
Calcutta

Each time the CPM cadre felt this was the last straw, the leadership has beaten a retreat.

Another interesting feature of this party is absolute lack of self-criticism. This party has never gone wrong. It has been betrayed (by the revisionists), subverted (by the CIA and of late the KGB) aggressed (by pseudo-democrats through semi-fascist tactics), pilloried (by various organs of the bourgeoisie) and so on. Well, in a spartan world weaklings do not survive.

If the party still attracts sympathy from among the intelligentsia, it is only because the aspirations and hopes of many people in this unfortunate land are interwoven with this huge apparatus. The fact that the party of the ruling classes has chosen to unleash increasing oppression on this party in no way establishes its vanguard role or the correctness of its line. At the moment, there is a void. At the moment we hope this party shall sincerely fight as social democrats to combat fascism, if not as communists fighting for revolution.

JUPITER
Calcutta

It is very natural for the people of a semi-feudal, semi-colonial country, who have long been under the spell of the revisionists and the neo-revisionists, to have faith in elections. It is the task of the cadres of the Communist Party to rouse the masses and raise their revolutionary consciousness. Dimitrov said, the "masses must be taken as they are, and not as we should like to have them. It is only in the process of

the struggle that they will overcome their doubts and vacillations. It is only provided we adopt a patient attitude towards them...that they will be able to rise to a higher level of revolutionary consciousness."

I am tempted to raise one more point in the present context. Uptil now all sorts of mass organisations and movements have been termed by the CPI(ML) cadres (the Charu Mazumdar faction) as counter-revolutionary—a deviation from the path of armed struggle. Today, fascism, (the open terroristic dictatorship of the most reactionary, most chauvinistic elements of finance capital) has come to stay. In order to counter fascism in all its forms, anti-fascist mass organisations and movements should be built up. The fundamental slogan today must be: "United Front of the revolutionary people against fascism", everywhere, in industry, offices, schools colleges, sports-clubs, cultural associations. Everywhere it has become urgent to carry out mass political action against fascism.

S. SEN
Calcutta

It is not fascist forces only which are responsible for fascist development. As the resolutions adopted at the thirteenth plenum of the Communist International (December 1933) pointed out, "...fascist dictatorship is not an inevitable stage of the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie in all the countries. The possibility of averting it depends upon the forces of the fighting proletariat which are paralysed by the corrupting influence of social democracy."

The foundation for fascist development has been here for a pretty long time. But the Government of India was hiding its fangs because of the strength of the leftist movement. But then the CPI(M), CPI and other so-called Marxist parties started to paralyse the working class movements with revisionism, joined hands with the reactionary Indira Government and attacked the communist

revolutionaries. The last has boomeranged on the cadres of the CPI(M).

We have come to a period when a momentous decision will have to be made by the honest cadres of the CPI(M)—will they still follow the path of parliamentary democracy, or will they meet the fascist forces by uniting with the communist revolutionaries? After the last election, the actual character of parliamentary democracy should be clear to them. It is also high time for the revolutionary communists to decide whether they will still follow the path of left adventurism, retain their antagonistic attitude to the cadres of the CPI(M) and other so-called leftist parties, thus strengthening fascist power; or resist the fascists unitedly from a common platform and try to build up real revolutionary movements of the peasantry and working class.

PRANAB RAY
Calcutta

I was very much amused to read the news of CPM boycott of the Assembly—in your home State, CPM leaders had been trying to deceive the working class and peasantry that the Democratic Revolution will be carried out under a parliamentary system but the election results in their own strongholds have shown that they will never come to power through elections and now they should think of an alternative. One factor should be clear to all democratic forces—that so long as imperialists and social-imperialists are aiding the Centre, no party or front will ever come to power through elections. Either the CPM and the democratic forces should not participate in elections or they should not complain about the methods and results of elections. The rank and file of the democratic front will have to get ready to face the onslaught of all class collaborators like the Congress and the CPI. One thing is clear: The present CPI(M) politburo members will not mind if the rank and file are slaughtered. The cadres

would do well to send the barristers and the syndicate into the wilderness to purify the party. In this context, the interview published in *Frontier* on February 19 exposed the revisionist class character of the CPM leadership and the ultimate goal of Congress and their CPI henchmen.

The elections have given a mandate against the CPM leadership. Let history give the verdict. Will the democratic front learn from this rigged elections? Let us hope.

READER
Bombay

The Maoist Communist Centre (MCC) seems to teach us how to integrate the universal truth of 'Maoism' (a derogatory term coined by the present CPSU leadership to berate Mao Tse-tung Thought) with the concrete practice of the Indian revolution (March 25). The MCC regards the results of the last elections as 'people's verdict'—the people deliberately punished the CPI(M) for its sins of parliamentarism 'by totally rejecting' the party 'at the polls'. In the estimation of the MCC, therefore, the last elections were a genuine thing freely participated in by the people. But the latter part of the same paragraph seems to assert that all, or almost all, general elections under a bourgeois parliamentary set-up are rigged.

One hardly hopes to comprehend the dialectical unity of these two mutually contradictory assertions unless one is initiated into the so-called Maoism by the leadership of the MCC.

'The great Indian people', according to the MCC, 'have clearly and sharply pointed out the path to be adopted by real revolutionaries'. Which path? Defeat CPI(M) and return the ruling Congress to power! This is the great lesson the MCC leadership wants the revolutionaries to learn from the great Indian people!

These people cannot distinguish between "our direct and main class enemy, the bourgeoisie" and "our nearest adversaries, the petty-bourgeois

democratic parties" (Lenin); they rejoice at the electoral defeat of the CPI(M) at the hands of the ruling Congress party—the main party of counter-revolution in India in an essentially rigged election, and declare it as 'people's verdict'. I cannot accept these people as true interpreters of Mao Tse-tung Thought; in fact, they are distorting the great revolutionary theories of Mao.

I do not hold any brief for the CPI(M), a petty-bourgeois democratic party masquerading as Marxist-Leninist and entirely given to ministerialism. But to describe the results of an essentially rigged election as people's verdict and to gloat over the defeat of the CPI(M) in such an election is a political position no proletarian revolutionary can take. This is not the right way of isolating the ministerialist leadership of the party from its potentially revolutionary cadres.

BIJAN CHATTERJI
Calcutta

'Shoot Them'

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman is reported to have ordered the police to shoot what he called Naxalites, at sight.

It is interesting to note that the Prime Minister of a country, which was subjected to much repression has now emerged as the "protector of law and order." (Yahya also argued that his crackdown was to "maintain law and order.") I am sure quite a large number of the Naxalites participated in the liberation struggle of Bangladesh. Now, however, misguided they may be—if they are at all—the police should not have been given a free hand in dealing with them. Being a resident of West Bengal I know what such orders mean. By utilising his immense popularity, about which we hear so much, Mujib should try to open a dialogue with them. A Yahya-like attitude does not befit so popular a leader.

The Sheikh described Mrs Gandhi as the "greatest leader of the op-

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pressed people all over the world." (At least, so said the Yuba Congress election posters.) It seems that, apart from adopting the Indira Gandhi brand of socialism, Mujib has not failed to adopt the technique Mrs Gandhi uses to put down her opposition. I remember a poster in Calcutta which read: "Padma-Gangarjal eki khate boi." (The waters of the Padma and the Ganges follow along the same stream). No comment is necessary.

A SIRAJ
Calcutta

So Mujib will shoot his Naxalites *on sight*. Here in Bengal the more Democratic, Socialist, Nationalist Indira Government (that Mujib admires so much) never went so far as to make such a clear statement of intent. The executive used to stick to terms such as 'Terrorists'. But then, perhaps, Fathers of Nations are a class apart.

I may state here, apropos nothing and everything, that I am now reconsidering Peking's stand and statements, without anger and indignation. *Joi Bangla*.

JUPITER
Calcutta

Telengana And E. Pakistan

There seem to be some similarities between the liberation struggle in East Pakistan and the Telengana struggle of the fifties. The struggle in Telengana was against the despotic rule of the Nizam, while in E. Pakistan it was against Yahya's dictatorial mili-

tary rule. To start with, the movement was launched by some liberals and was confined to demanding some reforms under the Nizam's rule; so was the case with the agitation of the Awami League in E. Pakistan, seeking more freedom and powers within the domain of Pakistan.

Communists took over the leadership of the struggle in Telengana, took to arms against the Razakars and the Nizam, liberated hundreds of villages, organised self-rule in rural areas, distributed thousands of acres of land to the people. According to stray reports reaching India and as also can be seen from Toaha's statement (*Frontier*, March 11, 1972), militant Communists played some role in organising armed bands to resist army terror. Armed struggle was also taken up by some other groups.

Seeing the rising tide of the armed struggle in Telengana and how it was catching the imagination of the people in wider and wider areas and fearing its impact on the neighbouring States, the Indian army stepped in. Similarly, the Indian soldiers entered E. Pakistan, for some time under the guise of the Mukti Bahini and later in an open manner to prevent militant elements in the struggle from gaining the upper hand and to see that such a development does not have any repercussion in neighbouring West Bengal.

While armed struggle was in progress under the leadership of Communists in Telengana, Congress leaders deserted the people and ran for safety to the neighbouring Andhra State and established their office at Vijayawada, as the Awami League leaders ran away from E. Pakistan and established a Mujibnagar.

Having liberated the then Hyderabad State from the Nizam who surrendered within three days of the Indian army offensive, the Congress Government, under Sardar Patel's instructions, shot down three thousand Communists and their followers, restored the lands to the *deshmukhs* and landlords. The leaders who ran away came back to share the spoil of power. Likewise, having 'liberated' E. Pakistan from Pakistani rule, the Indian Government saw to it

that all armed liberation forces were disarmed and the runaway Awami League leadership came back to take the reins of power.

This picture of similarities between Telengana and Bangladesh was drawn by a young revolutionary writer at a recent meeting. I am narrating it for the benefit of your readers.

NARAYANMURTHY
Andhra

College Election

The farce which was conducted at Presidency College in the name of college elections has been admirably brought out by your student correspondent (March 18). As a student of the same college, I can vouch for it.

The Chhatra Parishad first appeared in the college with three demands: the common room should be expanded; the canteen should be reformed; and union elections should take place.

The students unanimously agreed that these measures should indeed be undertaken. But since most of the students were not interested in politics, they did not want these steps to be taken under the banner of any particular political party. The CP however was of the opinion that a canteen or a common room could not be reformed except through the ideas of Indira Gandhi.

A STUDENT
Calcutta

That Subject Again

Thanks for allowing me to reply to Mr Amitava Bagchi's letter in your March 25 issue. But how can one reply to something which does not yield a glimmer of sense? Mr Bagchi is indeed unanswerable.

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