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PITY THE LEFT

THE way elections are conducted on this subcontinent, one is surprised that the Awami League has not won 305 of the 300 seats in the Bangladesh National Assembly, defying arithmetic. The Awami League is the government; and all the government apparatus, including relief helicopters, the press, radio and television, money and what not were mobilised for the party, under the usual vigilant eyes of the Election Commissioner. Other methods are reported to have been employed at 70 doubtful centres to make everything foolproof. But, there is no getting away from the fact that the results amount to a massive mandate for the Sheikh.

The voters, though illiterate, have pragmatic, peasant sense. Never mind corruption, nepotism, maladministration and all that, the Awami League is the Government, operates at every level and can dispense favours. The other parties offered a poor alternative, being out of power; there was no united front. All their talk about corruption, of government machinery being used for party purposes—which were facts—may upset some middle-class men not in the seat of power, but not the people in a semi-feudal society where patronage, and preferential treatment for the haves are taken for granted as natural. The people haven't heard of Westminster. In a way it is good they haven't. When the time comes they would not be deterred by points of order and adjournment motions. They will walk into something, not walk out.

For the time being, however the Bangladesh people have asked Mujib to carry on. It is too early for far-flung, isolated villages to get disillusioned—a process that cities go through much earlier. So Mujib and his men have five years—or less, because the East Bengalis are much too volatile for any safe prediction to be made.

It is the opposition which has come out ingloriously. These people should have known, first, the mind of the masses at a given moment and, second, the tremendous advantage that a ruling party enjoys in an election. It is no use whining now about unfair means—where does one get fair means? The debacle of Prof Muzaffar Ahmad's party is understandable and one is not much sorry for this flagging tail of the ruling party. But what about the splinter 'Maoist' parties that gathered under the ever-leaking umbrella of Maulana Bhashani, whom age cannot make wise? The Maulana has seldom cared for others; he thinks he is the party, the cons-

tition and the programme. It will take the radical left quite a long time to recover from the alliance with him and the parliamentary misadventure. By not joining this game Toaha has proved himself wiser than his erstwhile comrades.

The Kerala "Model"

The State Council of the CPI, at its last meeting in Calcutta, hailed the Kerala coalition Government for its "brilliant performance". It passed a resolution asking all the State Governments to follow the line of the Achutha Menon Ministry since it "has set examples" through progressive activities.

Surely it has set an example by unleashing police terror during the last two months to suppress the democratic movements of government employees and teachers. According to official records, it has already suspended 3,000 striking government employees and arrested 38,719 agitating workers, students and peasants. The arrested include quite a good number of women. These mass arrests and suspensions seem to have broken all previous records of any State. Stories of further police repression on government employees and peaceful peasant satyagrahis are still pouring in. The rape of four agricultural worker women in the Changanassery police lock-up on February 6 after they were taken there for "interrogation" is not an isolated incident. The Chief Minister, Mr Menon, still talks of this shameful incident as a "fabrication", though the police bestiality was reported in the daily of his own party and his party was one of the sponsors of the meeting organised to protest against the police.

The steps taken by the Government to foil the Kerala bandh of February 21 cannot be considered even by a political diehard as democratic. The day previous to the bandh and on the 21st, many people, including some trade unionists

and peasant leaders like Mr V. S. Achuthanandan, Mr P. K. Chandranandan and Mr C. G. Panickar, MLA, were arrested. On the day of the bandh, the police and CRP made lathi-charges—at least at four places in Palghat district. Reports of police attacks on the students of the Mahatma Gandhi College in Trivandrum and on demonstrating satyagrahis in front of the Trivandrum police station and arrests of women NGOs in the night from their homes do not seem to be concocted since most of the newspapers of Kerala have published them.

The "example" of the progressive policies pursued by the Kerala Government cannot be fully understood unless one sees it in the context of its recent move to declare harvesting an essential service under the Defence of India Rules. It is well

known that the landless labourers in India belong to the poorest and most exploited section of the population. They do not get either any fixed wage or any specific share of the harvest due to them fixed by the Government. At a time when the landless labourers are trying to force the State Government to fix their wages and share of the harvest, the Government order declaring harvesting an essential service means the authorities want to suppress the movement. The big landowners have all welcomed this order. They know that it will enable them to turn down the demands of the agricultural workers and get on with the harvesting through blacklegs brought from other areas—a practice which agricultural workers have all along been resisting unitedly.

The Make-believe Takeover

One great virtue of the scheme the Government has now evolved for the takeover of the wholesale trade in wheat is that it can mean all things to all men. The wholesaler who is supposed to be eliminated as a result of the policy can now easily reappear as a "licensed retailer". He will be free to buy directly from growers and with a little ingenuity can circumvent the restrictions on the size of stock he can hold. In addition to this category, consumers would also be entitled to buy from growers. And consumers can mean anybody—from rank hoarders to genuine individual buyers. In other words the slips are so obvious that it is surprising that anybody, least of all the committed politicians and bureaucrats, could miss them. Since there is no reason to believe that nobody has pointed out these gaps, the explanation has to be found elsewhere. The truth of the matter is that the ruling party cannot just afford to displease the powerful food traders and rich farmers who are indispensable for running the quin-

quennial electoral pantomimes along proper lines. So what has now been done is to adopt a policy of live and let live—only you change your spots. For the rest the official PR men will take care and play up the whole thing as marking another great socialist watershed in the country's history.

The crux of the matter is that the entire scheme will remain a farce as long as monopoly procurement by direct State agencies is not introduced. The State governments have already successfully pre-empted such a move by insisting that they do not have the administrative set-up to run the business. But why is it so? And how can they execute all their socialist professions unless they care to build up the necessary administrative infrastructure and reorient the ways of the bureaucracy? It is time that all this fuss over the make-believe takeover was replaced by some serious exercise on how to hold the food price rise and save the poor from the wrath of inflation. The

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FCI's performance has been disappointing, and now we are going to have some more FCIs. The point is that half-measures like this will no longer do. Unless the Government dares to go the whole hog, it is better not to go for such facile short-cuts to socialism which lead to

nowhere. The takeover in the present form only combines the inefficiency of the public sector with the corruption of the private. The public should not be made the guinea-pig for the Government's experiment with socialism.

STC To Import Books

The Government of India has given the assurance that it does not intend to take over the import of foreign books totally. It is only thinking of taking over the import of scientific and technical books, because it feels that private traders are not utilising the foreign exchange sanctioned annually for import of these books and are creating in the market an artificial scarcity. It intends to give the responsibility of importing books of this category to the State Trading Corporation.

Many among the Indian intelligentsia will be shocked at this intrusion of the STC into the holy academic privacy and will not cease to feel shocked even if the STC take-over be partial. They will be angry with this curtailment of their freedom to read, even if that be only in the scientific field. That the STC will determine what to read and what not is certainly not amusing; that the STC will make a mess of the import, with its limited academic qualifications and resources is also highly probable; that the Government of India feels sore at the wastage of foreign money is also touching (although the amount spent on book imports is nominal, six crore rupees against the total of twelve hundred crore rupees on total imports, or .5 per cent). But the funnier thing is that these book-loving people were not shocked when Maoist books were seized at random

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and people in possession of these were arrested simply on the charge of possessing them. That is the boundary line for the liberal mind.

In a way the proposal for book imports by the STC is welcome simply because the STC will make a mess of it. There is already an over-abundance of learned books brought from abroad over the whole of the nineteenth century and three-fourths of this century. We have been looking through these international windows of learning for quite a big span of time and seem to have done nothing except earning a couple of Nobel prizes here or erecting a dozen of laboratories there. The basic fact is, this learning has not made any impact on the life of millions of Indians. Not only is this foreign wisdom a complete non-entity in the life of the Indians, it is also a distracting factor and often a burden on their strained lives. We cannot check corruption in public life but create an O and M section in public administration; we cannot provide employment to the starving youth but we import computers; we do not stop the practice of black-marketing and yet we make a fetish of inventory control; we cannot maintain our eleven-year schools for lack of scientific instruments; what good can be higher textbooks on physics and chemistry without laboratories? Of course this is not an axiom but there seems to be a lot of truth in the idea that what does not spring from the soil of the country will not have any abiding and progressive impact on the lives of the countrymen.

Mujib's Mandate

HITEN GHOSH

THERE is no reason why epithets like "stunning", "overwhelming" etc. should occur in connexion with the victory of Sheikh Mujib in the Bangladesh elections. The results were more or less foregone and have come as no surprise to those who know a thing or two. Only those who pretend that they do not know enough or have been really ignorant of what is happening in our part of the world can use such tawdry rhetoric in describing a situation which is very much a part of the political realities in those countries where a close oligarchy rules dictatorially with a show of popular sanction.

One thing has, however, been made clear by the phenomenal effusions of gratitude for the evidence of Mujib's unquestionable hold over his people. This is that even those who oppose dictatorship as a matter of principle can welcome it in certain circumstances, for the results of the Bangladesh elections have put dictatorial powers in the hands of the Awami League and its leader. The so-called popular sanction behind their rule can make no difference to its absolute character. Every person knows that some of the worst dictatorships in the world have been created by popular votes. That Hitler and Mussolini enjoyed overwhelming support of their people did not make their governments any the less odious. The circumstances which allow professed democrats to bless such dictatorships are exactly those which make normal functioning of democracy impracticable, short of a social revolution. It is the fear of revolution that makes such contradiction in theory and practice admissible.

One crucial test of the real attitude of our Mujib worshippers is that in the case of any communist country such demonstration of a

massive support for the government would have raised a knowing smile followed by some routine parroting of platitudes about the value of dissent. In the case of Bangladesh or India for that matter, nothing could be more evincive of the vitality of democratic constitutions in these countries than such popular enthusiasm for a single party or a single leader. These same people will also tell you of the charisma of the leader in question, naively oblivious that operation of democratic principles, which calls for a rational approach to politics, is incompatible with the subliminal basis of the phenomenon. The word *charisma*, they forget, is of theological origin and derived from *charism*, which means a favour specially vouchsafed by God. One does not understand how a people can exercise their rational faculties in a political choice if they are dominated by a belief in the charisma or spiritual gift of a leader.

If anything, the success of Mujibur Rahman or Indira Gandhi does not prove the viability of democratic institutions on this sub-continent. It proves just the opposite. Democracy has never been in existence in this part of the world. What we have been enjoying so far is an oligarchic government by privileged classes over a vast multitude of poor, ignorant, caste-ridden, downtrodden humanity who live and die like animals. In India there has been a show of popular sanction behind this government of a minority, but the experiments with democratic institutions were stillborn. The present dispensation is a product of the miscarriage. Transplanted from the West, the sapling of democracy could not resist the rigours of a colonial feudal-bourgeois bureaucracy. The spirit evaporated long ago, leaving the letter for our rulers to chant like charms. The developments in Pakistan, both East and West, have been no exception.

Unworkable

It is arguable that in Bangladesh, as in India, all articulate groups or

individuals opposed to the party in power have had the opportunity to offer a credible alternative to the present government. But the way the people rejected them all shows that the alternative does not work within the existing set-up. That makes democracy, as it functions in the West, unworkable here. The fact of the matter is that in countries like India, Pakistan or Bangladesh, no alternative exists to the present oligarchic government other than a revolutionary seizure of power by the people themselves. All other choices are fake and inspired by continuous strife within the ruling minority. The strife often results in the dominant party of the ruling class breaking up into contending factions which plunge the country into anarchy. But the people are soon tired of this game and fall into a listless apathy. They realise the absurdity of any choice between the contending factions and in default of a revolutionary way out of the dilemma look for a deliverer or Messiah. And he may be the leader of the strongest of the factions and also in power and sway the people with pseudo-revolutionary slogans. Soon the people become subject to collective hysteria and begin to hope for the impossible.

Democracy is a product of the age of reason and a corresponding phenomenon to the rise of capitalism. It cannot flourish in former colonies where Western imperialism has been replaced by native oligarchies. In certain of these countries dictatorship has been established quite openly and frankly. In certain others, as in India and Pakistan and now also in Bangladesh, a flirtation goes on with the Western political institutions. But the ruling minorities in these regions know that their power and privilege rest on the backwardness of their subjects and an appeal to their collective unconscious. There is no reason, therefore, for genuine democrats to be elated at the phenomenal victory of Mujib. If anything, the mood of the people which it reflects, is one of irrational hope

born of the misery in which they are forced to live. The hope of salvation through Mujib's charisma is not accompanied by any rational programme of collective effort but by stupendous sloth and faith in some miracle. The total rout of the opposition was made inevitable by this popular mood. The people of Bangladesh voted massively for a dictator who had promised them everything, for in their frustration and despair they wanted a shaman or magician to save them.

To ascribe Mujib's victory to electoral malpractices is to misunderstand the political situation existing in Bangladesh. It is a pity that even some of those who dislike Mujib's way with his people should speak of rigging, as if nothing but corrupt practices could account for such popular furore in politics. Rigging or no rigging, in all countries passing through economic and political crisis, a determined oligarchy can seize or retain absolute power with popular consent by appropriate slogans—unless, of course, the ruling minority is overthrown by popular revolution. None of the opposition parties in Bangladesh would overthrow the existing ruling class, they themselves belonging to its disgruntled sections. So there was no real alternative to misery and exploitation of the people at large. Hence the people looked for a Messiah and found it in the clay-footed god that is Mujib. They cannot forget that this prophet unarmed led them through a year of unspeakable horror to the promised land, though himself living in exiled captivity. Nothing but a divine power could do this and even Indian intervention must appear to these people as a heavenly act called forth by Mujib's gift as a leader. Look at the Russians or Chinese or Vietnamese—they had to depend on their human powers and ingenuity and struggle long and hard. Godless people—poor souls—they were not blessed with a leader with the charisma of inspiring distant friendship leading to swift redress. No wonder Mujib is irreplaceable!

The question, however, is whether Mujib can work further miracles—even with the American aid he is so sure of getting. If the history of the underdeveloped countries so far is any guide, the ruling minority of Bangladesh will continue to enrich itself at the expense of the masses and strangle all popular initiative. The aids and borrowings will not only strengthen foreign domination over its affairs but will also accentuate corruption and misery. They will subvert morality at all levels by encouraging wealth-fantasy amongst the masses and breeding intermediate classes of opportunists and privilege-hunters. The spoils system will work to the full and the signs are already there. There is no chance of progress and liberation of the people from age-old oppression and misery. All this can be foreseen with a fair degree of certainty, given the continuance of the present set-up and leadership.

With growing stagnation and corruption, Mujib can be depended on to rouse more and more popular hysteria against imaginary devils at home and abroad. It is unlikely that he will try to achieve a rapprochement with Pakistan against whom much popular resentment can be turned at will. The best way to keep the people united and peaceable in the midst of poverty and exploitation is to gratify their primitive instinct of collective hate against an external enemy. Not insignificantly, the very first act of satisfaction which Mujib has promised to his people after his victory, is to try the so-called war criminals. Even a hungry people enjoy the spectacle at the shambles-gate. And already some opposition candidates who have

lost the election have been beaten to death by the people themselves. Such things will certainly help Mujib for some time. But one doesn't know what will happen when all these diversionary tricks have been

played out and the misery of the people has reached the rock-bottom. Whether the people will then come to their senses and choose the right and rational path of salvation remains to be seen.

BHU : Part Of A Bigger Plan

N. K. SINGH

BANARAS Hindu University, which was closed sine die on December 2, 1972 after some twenty days of violence, arson, loot and assault on students and teachers, reopened in a phase-wise programme on February 5. Teaching in all the faculties was resumed on February 28.

But if the atmosphere of tension prevailing on the campus is any indication, normality is unlikely to be restored to the University in the near future.

A three-member Inquiry Committee headed by a former judge of the Allahabad High Court, Mr Justice Gyanendra Kumar, has upheld "one or more" charges of indiscipline against six students of the University.

The student agitators, belonging to the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh (RSS) and Samjbadhi Yuvjan Sabha of Rajnarain Socialists, have been on a rampage. Along with some other opposition parties, the Bharatiya Kranti Dal, the CPM and the Shiv Sena (the last one is obviously a bogus one in Banaras), they have set up a committee, Vishwavidyalaya Bachao Nagrik Samiti, which waited upon the District Magistrate and the SP to complain that the administration was biased in favour of the Vice-Chancellor. The agitation is being, indeed, conducted on a highly sophisticated political level and the opposition parties have launched a campaign against the VC, who has been branded a 'double agent' of the Congress and the CPI by them and, along with the agitating students, they have demanded his exit "if the University was to be saved".

On January 24 these parties observed a 'Benaras bandh'—an utter failure—and on February 26 demonstrated on the University campus to protest against the attitude of the VC.

The Vice-President of the BHU Students Union (BHUSU), Mr Mahendra Nath Singh (subsequently held guilty by the Inquiry Committee), a RSS man, has filed a suit against the VC, the Registrar and the Public Relations Officer of the University, alleging that they had unnecessarily been defaming the RSS and Vidyarthi Parishad for the trouble.

On the other hand the CPI and Congress have formed their own citizens' council which has blamed the RSS, working in collusion with anti-social elements, for the unrest on the campus. The students belonging to these parties, though less militant, are protesting against the RSS activities on the campus. On February 16 some 192 students, including BHUSU President Harikesh Bahadur (belonging to the Congress), were arrested for holding an anti-RSS public meeting in violation of the prohibitory orders. The Vice-Chancellor, Dr K. L. Shrimali, is a Congressman.

A political tug of war is very much obvious.

BHU's is a highly politicised campus. As the Gajendragadkar report and other surveys have revealed, political parties, which have infiltrated into even faculties to some extent, bear the major blame for the endemic lawlessness there. This time, too, the University authorities explained, the situation had gone be-

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yond control due to the organised efforts of groups of students, expelled students and outside political and anti-social elements".

Nearly four years ago, in 1968-69, BHU was in similar turmoil due to the RSS, but with a big difference. Then all the progressive students were unitedly fighting against the pro-RSS VC, Dr Amarchand Joshi. Today the progressive students are split, and the RSS enjoys the support of the SP, the SSP as well as the CPM. Then the students were fighting for demolition of the RSS Bhawan on the campus. Today the main reason—of course covertly—behind the pique of the RSS boys is said to be the move of the VC to demolish the RSS office.

One fact is explicit. Whatever be the role may be the RSS is today the main subject of controversy on the trouble-torn campus.

It is to be noted that BHU is supposed to be the strongest base of the RSS-patronised Vidyarthi Parishad. The RSS maintains an office and conducts 14 shakhas inside the campus premises. In fact, it was the RSS Chief, Guru Golwalkar himself, a demonstrator in BHU at that time, who acquired a chunk of land inside the campus for a paltry Rs 2,500 and established the RSS office. In 1948, after Mahatma Gandhi's murder, the RSS was asked to vacate the building but in 1950 somehow they were allowed to reoccupy it.

Anti-RSS

When in 1968-69 there was a massive anti-RSS agitation in the University, demanding inter alia demolition of the RSS Bhawan, the Government appointed a commission of inquiry headed by Mr Gajendragadkar. It not only recommended demolition of the RSS building but also suggested a ban on the RSS shakha inside the campus. Following the exposure of the activities of the RSS and his association with the organisation, the late Dr Amarchand Joshi had to resign.

When Dr K. L. Shrimali took over, he could not ban the RSS

shakha, but moved for the demolition of the RSS office. In face of the then SVD Government's lukewarm attitude it was impossible to implement the Gajendragadkar Committee decision and he had to move the court. The case is still pending.

Ever since then the RSS has been on a rampage on the campus. Its main objective has been either to get the Vice-Chancellor removed—the Jana Sangh daily, *Motherland*, commented on December 29 last, "so long this political puppet plays his nefarious game in BHU it is not clear how peace and scholarship can return to the University"—or paralyse the functioning of the University. Agitations were worked up on one pretext or another.

The first outbreak of RSS violence during Dr Shrimali's regime took place in March 1970 when a student was stabbed. The VC suspended two students. Later, RSS leaders led violent demonstrations on the campus which ultimately resulted in the closure of the University. Subsequently the ringleader, Damodar Singh, and some of his close associates were expelled. In August 1971 the RSS assaulted yet another student. The VC again expelled about a dozen RSS and "anti-social" elements. Then came the Students' Union election of 1971 and the RSS and its allies were trounced. The newly-elected Union President, S. K. Kapooria, was murdered. A RSS stalwart, D. P. Charurvedi, is standing trial in a court. In November 1971, following the report of the Justice Desai Enquiry Committee, 20 RSS and SYS boys were expelled or rusticated from the University.

All this angered the RSS and its mouthpiece, *Panchjanya*, started a campaign in support of the expelled students and against the University authorities.

Meanwhile political equations changed in BHU. On Rajnarain's initiative the SYS forged an alliance with the Vidyarthi Parishad which had been lying low following the

murder of Kapooria. The RSS got a new lease of life.

Current Agitation

It is in this background that the current agitation needs to be visualised.

The 1972 BHU Students Union election, held in October last, was not without its usual tinge of politics. Ranged against the RSS-SYS alliance was the Congress-CPI alliance. A lot of money was spent by both the combinations and political leaders visited the campus to canvass for different candidates. The Congress-CPI supported Chhatra Sangathan candidate won the presidential election, but the posts of vice-president and general secretary went to RSS candidates. In this bewildering situation, naturally, the RSS group concentrated its energy on getting the Union dissolved.

Meanwhile the University authorities conceded the outstanding demand for student participation without even waiting for the adoption of the forthcoming BHU Amendment Bill. A student-teacher consultative committee was formed. Student representatives were even associated (as observers) with the board for selection of teachers.

The RSS made attempts to run down the consultative committee by opposing its decisions and obstructing their implementation. (Perhaps they feared that if a dialogue between the students and BHU authorities was allowed, they would have nothing to agitate about.) The two RSS representatives, the vice-president and the general secretary of the Union, boycotted the meetings of the committee.

They also resorted to physical violence. A Harijan student was beaten up for daring to fight the election of the hostel union.

The RSS and SYS boys again picked up the one-year-old issue of the expulsion orders against their leaders. On November 17, 1972 they got a 34-point charter of demands passed at a public meeting, took it to the VC as demands officially put

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up by the Students Union Council and asked him to fulfil them by November 25. Next day the Congress-backed president of the union met him with his own 43-point charter of demands.

According to Dr Shrimali, while he agreed to consider both the charters, he pointed out that some demands could not be met as they were unreasonable, e.g. promotion of such engineering and technology students who had failed twice, withdrawal of expulsion orders against those who had been found guilty of gross indiscipline and their readmission to the University, rotation of all the heads of departments and getting the Bar Council of India regulations relating to the Law Faculty annulled. Two of the demands were: financial assistance to the students desirous of visiting the Asia '72 Fair and stopping of "malexpenditure" on the Watch and Ward Staff.

When these things failed to rouse the students the RSS started a campaign that the Central Government was considering to introduce a bill in Parliament to deprive the University of its traditional "Hindu" character. This failed to get the support of the students. However the RSS students, points out a booklet ("Statement on the Closure of Benaras Hindu University") published by the University authorities, in collaboration with expelled students and other outsiders "continued to organise unlawful meetings on the campus, making unauthorised use of loud-speakers, disturbing classes and dislocating traffic inside the campus."

Signs of Alarm

According to Dr Shrimali, the trouble began showing "signs of alarm" on December 1 when he went to inaugurate the students' union of a local college and was assaulted by a section of the mob shouting slogans for readmission of all expelled students. On his return to the campus he was again gheraoed by a crowd of 500 people which, according to the authorities, "included

several anti-social elements including an alleged murderer of Shri S. K. Kapooria."

The Academic Council met in an emergency session, expressed concern at the events of the day and assured the VC of its "full support" in all the actions he may take "in the interest of peace and normal functioning of the University." The Teachers Council of the University also met on December 2 and expressed concern at the incident.

The police, who were called in on December 1 to protect the University, were withdrawn from the campus two days later following an assurance by an office-bearer of the Students' Union that peace would be maintained. This, observers feel, gave enough scope to trouble-makers to reorganise themselves. On December 5 the Vidyarthi Parishad and SYS organised a 'black day' and led a procession to the Town Hall.

The agitating students, who were looking for an opportunity, chose December 7 for their next move when the new Governor of U.P., Mr Akbar Ali Khan, was to lunch with Dr Shrimali. Having learnt that students had planned to gherao the Governor, the venue of the lunch was shifted from the Vice-Chancellor's Lodge to a hotel in the city.

The scheduled meeting organised by the RSS-SYS combination marched to the VC's residence. According to the authorities, finding that the VC was not at his residence, they gheraoed his lodge from all sides and some of the students even climbed up the trees. In these circumstances both the Commissioner and the DIG, Police, advised the VC not to return to his residence till the crowd had dispersed. The police entered the campus and dispersed the violent mob by using force. Most student leaders were arrested.

After this the RSS went on a spree of violence. There were many sporadic incidents of threat and assault on individuals at different places.

Next morning, with the University roads still strewn with brickbats,

violence erupted when Dr Umesh Prasad, Reader in Economics, was badly assaulted. He had to be hospitalized. Mr Hira Singh, a senior research scholar and a member of the Students Federation (CPI), Student Union President, Harikesh Bahadur, and Congress leader Upendra Vikram Singh, who contested the Vice-Presidentship, were also beaten up. The Red Cross Office, BHU Cooperative Stores, Raj Stores, Students Cooperative and PWD store were broken open, looted and set on fire.

According to the University authorities, "the mass outbreak of violence, arson and looting by unruly elements necessitated the closure of the University" and students were advised to vacate the hostels within 24 hours because "a large number of expelled students and quite a large number of other anti-social elements from the city had taken shelter inside the campus under the protection of the agitators." It should be noted that in a campus of about 24 hostels where six thousand students live, it would have been pretty difficult to apprehend these "lawless" elements.

There may be a substance of truth in the student leaders' allegation that when called in to the campus on December 8, the PAC constables virtually run amuck, beat up innocent students in their rooms and took away valuables. Even the Congress-backed president of the Union said: "Once PAC enters the campus, the situation deteriorates because only lawful and innocent students get beaten. I was surrounded with 20 innocent students who were beaten mercilessly by the PAC." But he

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further said: "The responsibility for this whole tragedy goes to the RSS Vidyarthi Parishad and a section of misguided SYS (Raj Narain Group)

According to the Secretary of the State Unit of the Vidyarthi Parishad, Mr Mahesh Sharma, about "8,000 students had collected peacefully to seek a clarification from the Vice-Chancellor on his attitude to their demands." But the police beat up more than 500 students, mainly of the Birla and Brocha hostels, in Dr Shrimali's presence. The condition of 200 students was serious when they were forced to leave the campus and not allowed even to visit the hospital or to report to the chief proctor's office. He did not agree with the argument that the police entered the campus as there was a possibility of outbreak of violence. He said that if even a single instance of destruction of property or violence between November 17 and December 7 was proved "our members will quit offices in the Students' Union".

But the teachers, academicians and eminent citizens of Benaras had another view.

Considering the attack on the VC and Dr Umesh Prasad as "an assault on the entire academic community", on December 9 a meeting of over 1,000 teachers strongly condemned "the manner in which a group of students especially the Vice-President and General Secretary of the Students Union belonging to Vidyarthi Parishad in collaboration with the expelled students and outsiders, declared trespassers, put the whole University to ransom and created such an ugly situation which ultimately led to violence, arson, loot

and physical assault on members of the academic community".

While appealing to the political parties "which are misguiding the youth, not to interfere in the University's affairs" the teachers asked the University authorities, the State Government and the Government of India to take strong and effective steps against the miscreants so that normal functioning of the University may not be affected year after year.

Political Plan ?

A deeper analysis of the events, however, leads one to believe that BHU is part of a larger plan, and a political plan at that. Ever since the Jana Sangh was trounced in the 1972 Assembly elections it has been trying to create trouble on one pretext or another. And where pretexts do not exist, attempts are made to create them. The movements against the price rise and the Simla Agreements are examples.

Of late, the country has witnessed a spurt in student violence often raised on the basis of some just grievances intermingled with some imaginary ones. The Delhi University, where the Union is in the hands of the RSS-controlled Vidyarthi Parishad, is one example. BHU is another. According to reliable sources, the main slogan of the RSS boys in BHU was "Dilli ka Badla Banaras main Lenge", that is, we shall avenge Delhi in Benaras. At both places, again, the RSS is active in collaboration with some 'left' forces and quite often makes the undemocratic set-up of the universities a pretext to launch agitations. These agitations have culminated in large-scale violence leading to calling of the police inside the campus and providing the students with a classic cause—"police brutality"—for continuing their agitation. Normality is disrupted and the RSS gains strength in the process.

The Lumpen Problem

S. GHOSH

EVEN the staunchest supporters of the CPI (ML) do not claim that the lumpens have done any good to the party. Rather they now admit that by entering the party they caused great damage.

As a matter of policy, the CPI (ML) documents were never clear on the point. But, when the question was raised among party circles, the members used to quote the Chinese experience.

The extent of the actual harm done to the party by the lumpens cannot be factually assessed till the reports of the primary units of the party are collected. But, that too, is not an easy job for several reasons.

We can only state that serious attention was never paid to the question in the theoretical writings of the CPI (ML).

We can only conjecture what the classical theorists of Marxism thought about the lumpen proletariat. This stratum covers a good number of people, owing to mass unemployment both in the urban and rural areas in the so-called underdeveloped countries. Its concentration varies in different areas, subject to the specific conditions of the locality in question. But without a proper line of theory and practice, the problem cannot be solved. This stratum will continue to exist even after revolution is achieved and if not properly guided by the party before and after the revolution, it will do harm to both the party and society.

As reference to the classical Marxist writings, one can mention Engels and Mao Tse-tung. But their viewpoints seem to be apparently, diametrically opposite. When Engels analyses the classes he puts the lumpen proletariat at the bottom of the category. Mao has also done the same thing. But apart from this similarity, their positions do not correspond.

MARCH 17, 1973

Our sole agent in Bangladesh

CHALANTIKA BAIGHAR

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Dacca-1

In his *Peasant War in Germany* Engels wrote that the lumpen proletariat, "this scum of the depraved elements of all classes, which establishes headquarters in the big cities, is the worst of all possible allies. This rabble is absolutely venal and absolutely brazen. If the French workers, in every revolution, inscribed on houses, *Mort aux voleurs!* Death to thieves! and even shot some, they did it, not out of enthusiasm for property, but because they rightly considered it necessary above all to keep that gang at a distance. Every leader of the workers who uses these scoundrels as guards or relies on them for support proves himself by this action alone a traitor to the movement." (p. 23) Engels' statement needs no elaboration.

Though, like workers, the lumpen proletariat do not enjoy any property and are among the have-nots, they cannot act as the motive force to change the society. The workers, as a class, are related to bourgeois production, by which they are not bound to property and so are the most selfless, most concentrated, most organised, most enlightened and most easily moved section of the society.

Mao says in his "Analysis of the Classes in Chinese Society", "Apart from all these, there is the fairly large lumpen-proletariat, made up of peasants who have lost their land and handicraftsmen who cannot get work. They lead the most precarious existence of all. In every part of the country they have their secret societies which were originally their mutual-aid organisations for political and economic struggle, for instance, the Triad Society in Fukien One of China's difficult problems is how to handle these people. Brave fighters, but apt to be destructive, they can become a revolutionary force if given proper guidance". (CW-I. P-19).

In the underdeveloped countries, the number of various types of lumpen proletariat is not negligible. Mao analyses the origin of this stratum excellently: "China's status as

a colony and semi-colony has given rise to a multitude of rural and urban unemployed. Denied proper means of making a living, many of them are forced to resort to illegitimate ones, hence the robbers, gangsters, beggars and prostitutes and numerous people who live on superstitious practices. This social stratum is unstable; while some are apt to be bought over by the reactionary forces, others may join the revolution. These people lack constructive qualities and are given to destruction rather than construction; after joining the revolution, they become a source of roving rebel and anarchist ideology in the revolutionary ranks. Therefore, we should know how to remould them and guard against their destructiveness".

(The Chinese Revolution and the Chinese Communist Party SW-II, P. 325).

But the task of guarding against their destructiveness is not easy. Even under the leadership of the CPC they became a source of trouble from time to time. There are also examples of successful utilization of this force.

But what was the policy to guard the party against these roving rebels? "The political ideology of roving rebel bands has emerged in the Red Army because the proportion of vagabond elements is large and because there are great masses of vagabonds in China, especially in the southern provinces. This ideology manifests itself as follows: (1) Some people want to increase our political influence only by means of roving guerilla actions, but are unwilling to increase it by undertaking the arduous task of building up base areas and establishing people's political power. (2) In expanding the Red Army, some people follow the line of 'hiring men and buying horses' and 'recruiting deserters and accepting mutineers', rather than the line of expanding the local Red Guards and the local troops and thus developing the main forces of the Red Army. (3) Some people lack the patience to carry on arduous strug-

gles together with the masses, and only want to go to the big cities to eat and drink to their heart's content. All these manifestations of the ideology of roving rebels seriously hamper the Red Army in performing its proper tasks; consequently its eradication is an important objective in the ideological struggle within the Red Army Party organization. It must be understood that the ways of roving rebels of the Huang Chao or Li Chung type are not permissible under present-day conditions. The methods of correction are as follows:

(1) Intensify education, criticize incorrect ideas and eradicate the ideology of roving rebel bands.

(2) Intensify education among the basic sections of the Red Army and among recently recruited captives to counter the vagabond outlook.

(3) Draw active workers and peasants experienced in struggle into the ranks of the Red Army so as to change its composition.

(4) Create new units of the Red Army from among the masses of militant workers and peasants."

(On Correcting Mistaken Ideas in the Party. SW-I, P. 114).

From the opinions of Engels and Mao two points may be generalised:

(1) As allies the lumpens are very unstable.

(2) A line of distinction can be drawn between the urban and the rural lumpens.

Our Urban Lumpens

In our country well-dressed urban lumpens are rampant these days. The ruling class is taking utmost care to nurture them in their own interest. Some lumpens earn their living as wagon-breakers and smugglers. Some are engaged in illicit liquor business. Some are the right-hand men of the slum-barons and house-owners and help them to increase house rents by ejecting the poor and helpless tenants. Some get their earnings from auctions and as brokers. And as these are not steady business, paying mudh at times and nothing at another, they resort

Teachers In Travail

I. K. SHUKLA

TEACHERS lathi-charged in Jaipur. Teachers in Delhi gheraoing the Chief Executive Councillor, called him बदतमीज़ (अशिष्ट), the nearest and neutral translation in English being, 'ill-mannered'. The police broke the teachers' cordon and they ran helter-skelter. Teachers being transferred to places 80/100 kms distant in Haryana and disappearing in their thousands. One of them while boarding a bus, was hauled up and locked up in police custody. Asked why, the police told him he had 22 grammes of opium! Institutions in Haryana being downgraded to teach teachers a lesson. Primary schools, in this process, being abolished. The Haryana Chief Minister refusing to meet them. Thousands of them in jail.

We should not cavil. We have a hallowed tradition. In the 'thirties Sampurnanand was the Education Minister in the newly installed Congress Government in U.P. At a function a teacher had the temerity to read out a poem detailing teachers' plight. The scholarly Education Minister became furious and had him suspended. This is recent history. And now a legend.

There was the illustrious Dronāchārya who did not wince in demanding as guerdon the thumb of a tribal student Eklavya lest he should demolish the archery of those in the higher classes with his superior skill. We are a tradition-bound people. Therefore it is salutary to refresh our memories by occasional, if not continual, references to our glorious history and legend.

Will teachers unite forgetting the various artificial barriers and divisions? The university teachers perhaps will like to stay aloof. They are a class apart. But what prevents the teachers from primary upwards to higher secondary to band themselves in state-wise and India-wise bodies? Will they realise that their

to snatching things from passers-by or railway passengers. Bank robbery is a big business which, we think, has nothing to do with these 'petty' lumpens. Below the above categories, there is a rank of petty thieves and swindlers. There is another category of vagabonds of well-bred stock, who are happy with their fathers' income and are pleased to stand in the street corners for eve-teasing. A number of lumpens serve as police informers. Another vast section of the lumpens must be mentioned—the seasonal and permanent beggars. The seasonal beggars come to the nearest towns when there is no work in the fields and go back to their own places at the time of sowing and harvesting.

When the CPI (ML) movement was in the peak, the terror they created made these professions almost impossible to carry on. But the party could not achieve its aim of capturing the state power. So, it could not provide alternative means of living to these people. For that reason, the vagabonds and lumpens joined different political parties for living. Though these infiltrations do not create any trouble for the parties of the propertied classes, the urban lumpens created absolutely different problems within the CPI (ML), by their superiority in the use of arms and making of bombs on the sincere cadres. In many a locality it was found that these "military men" were directing the political cadres of the party.

The party of the proletariat is most disciplined. But the lumpens are so used to indiscipline and anarchy that after joining the party they feel it quite impossible to adjust themselves. When these lumpens were absorbed in the party units of their locality, the people lost faith in the party there, and the image of the

party was damaged.

The lumpens have their own special organisations and codes. If they are not alienated from their previous places of activity, they retain their dual membership of their own gang (the members of which may belong to different political parties) and of the party at the same time. And for that, a parallel organisation of the lumpens may run within the party, even defying and threatening the party cadres.

To avoid such a situation, the lumpens who came forward, enthused by the party ideal, could have been allotted mass work in alien localities far away from their past influences, where they could serve the people and likewise reform themselves without being looked down upon by the surrounding population.

The lumpens of the rural areas are the jobless and landless people. Some become petty thieves. Though they are uprooted, they cannot be as notorious as the urban lumpens. All are known to each other in a village and village kinship does not let them to be absolutely reckless. Those who dare to be so, leave the village and join the lumpen-population of the nearby towns and some, setting up headquarters there, raid adjacent villages.

Until a revolutionary party in the underdeveloped countries gets a strong foothold and leadership over the masses, the party has to remain cautious about the inclusion of the lumpen proletariat.

When the revolution sweeps everything decadent and moribund, the majority of this stratum get a chance to become human again through the continuous process of cultural revolution. Then the conscious and free people will decide what to do about those who do not reform themselves in the long run even after getting all the chances.

In the meantime, we can assure the lumpens and vagabonds here that they need not worry so long as their patrons remain in the State Ministry.

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functions do not end with agitating for increased d.a. merely? That if this is their only plank, they will be alienated from the vast masses who are not so articulate, nor so organized. That thus far they have been, from confusion, or apathy or wrong ambitions, siding with and imitating the upper classes, however unwittingly. That they must soon identify their class base and align with the workers, peasants and the exploited classes. Economism will help only up to a point. The dead end appears to be imminent.

Meanwhile let the rulers stop insulting September 5 as Teachers' Day. It happens to be the birthday of an ex-President of India. At least the rulers can well stop insulting him by dissociating his birthday from any other ritual of diversion and deceit, staged this day all over the nation.

And let teachers stop playing the game of the rulers. Recently they refused coming to the rescue of a teacher fighting a racist government because he was arrested as a writer and not as a teacher. The journalists refused to help him for he was not accredited to any paper. Nothing could serve and gladden the Establishment more. Our militancy and consciousness have to be more vigilant, meaningful, and comprehensive if they at all aim at striking at iniquity. Equivocation is a variant of inaction.

For Frontier contact

VISALANDHRA

BOOK DEPOT,

Srikakulam,

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Panbazar,

Gauhati-I,

Assam.

MARCH 17, 1973

GRAND POPULARITY CONTEST

NO ENTRY FEE—YOU MUST WIN A PRIZE

FIRST PRIZE: One Scooter Vespa or Allwyn Refrigerator. 2nd Prize: One Tape Recorder or Automatic Camera or Radiogram. 3rd Prize: (100) TOYO Japan Model 3 Band All World Transistors costing Rs. 275/-. 4th Prize: (10) Toyo Junior Japan Model 3 Band All Transistor costing Rs. 250/-.

WHAT YOU HAVE TO DO.

Use digits from 4 (Four) to 19 (Nineteen) in the Blank Squares so that the TOTAL should be 46 (Fortysix) when added vertically, horizontally and diagonally using each figure once only. Entrance Fee: NO ENTRY FEE. This is only a Popularity contest. LAST Closing Date: 18-4-73. RESULT Date: 20-4-73. Specimen for help total 42.

7	10	13	12
14	11	8	9
16	17	6	3
5	4	15	18

RULES FOR CONTEST—(1) Use plain paper. (2) Corrections, erasures not accepted. (3) Promoter's decision shall be final and legally binding and is an express condition of this contest. (4) Correctness will be judged with the OFFICIAL SEALED SOLUTION. No prize will be given in cash. (5) FIRST PRIZE (1) will be given to the entry found similar with the official solution. (6) SECOND PRIZE (1) will be given to the entries found similar to the three upper horizontal rows. (7) THIRD PRIZE (100) will be given to the entries found similar with any row or any figure anywhere in the official Result. (8) FOURTH PRIZE will be given to those ten (10) entrants which would be found satisfactory to the promoter. (9) The winners shall have to pay for postage, packing and licence fee in respect of the prize secured by them. (10) The winners of 3rd and 4th prize will also have to pay half cost of the transistor in addition to the expenses and will bind themselves by our rules and procedures. (11) Soon after the declaration of result a letter will be issued to the winners to deposit Licence fee etc. (12) Send 45 paise postal stamps for result. (13) One family can send only one entry. (14) Write your address in English or Hindi. (15) Keep cutting or copy of rules for guidance or reference in future.

DIRECTOR, CONTEST DEPARTMENT :

PANASONIC INDIA (WFC-46)

P. O. BOX No. 1137, DELHI-6

Calcutta: The City Of Renaissance—II

BENOY GHOSE

ON 5th June 1756, Nawab Siraj-ud-Daulah set out for the invasion of Calcutta, with the aim of driving out the English zamindars and traders. On 16th June he arrived outside Calcutta, and his troops flocked into the town by fording the Mahratta ditch. Siraj himself took up his quarters in Amirchand's garden, in the area known as 'Simla' in north Calcutta. The Black Town, or the native Bengali quarter of Calcutta in the north, consisted then almost entirely of bamboo and straw huts. As the English decided to defend only the European quarter (around Dalhousie Square), they "set on fire the strawhouses within the lines of defence, to clear the Town as much as possible." The attack began on 18th June. On 19th June, Governor Drake held an informal Council and decided to abandon the Fort. In the afternoon of 19th June, J. Z. Holwell was appointed the 'Jimmadar' (zamindar) of Calcutta. On 20th June Holwell surrendered to Siraj, and the fighting ceased. Siraj-ud-Daulah entered Calcutta as victor. Three days after, on 11th July 1756, Siraj re-entered Murshidabad in pompous celebration of his victory.

The victory did not last long. Calcutta was recaptured by Clive in February 1757. By 11th June 1757, a grand conspiracy against the Nawab was conducted and completed in Murshidabad by William Watts, the chief of the English factory in Qashimbazar, with the connivance of the Mir-Jafars and Jagat Seths. On 22nd June, Wednesday, the English army under Clive, started from Katwa, crossed the Ganges, and reached Plassey about midnight. On 23rd June, Thursday, exactly one year and two days after the Nawab's capture of Calcutta, the battle of Plassey began, and ended within about 12 hours. The victory of the

British was complete by about 5 p.m. It was a kind of military magic. On a swift camel, with a few servants, Siraj arrived at Murshidabad at midnight. A cold wave of terror gripped Murshidabad. On the next day, Siraj left the city with his devoted wife, unnoticed. On 29th June, Clive entered Murshidabad in the morning, and in the afternoon went to Mir-Jafar's palace (Hirajhil) and "there in the presence of all the Rajahs and great men of the Court, he led Jafar Ali Khan by the hand to the royal seat (*masnad*), seated him on it, and saluted him as Nawab of the three Subahs, upon which his courtiers congratulated him and paid him the usual homage."

Next day, on 30th June, Siraj in disguise was alighting from a boat, a little below Rajmahal, where he was seized and sent under armed escort to Murshidabad. As a prisoner the Nawab of Bengal was brought to his capital-city Murshidabad, with great secrecy at night, on 2nd July 1757. That very night he was brutally murdered in prison. Next morning, the Nawab's mutilated body was placed on an elephant and led through the streets of the capital. When the corpse reached the bazaar in front of Siraj's old residence, "a noble matron in dishevelled dress, without shoes on her feet, without a veil to cover her head, was seen to rush out of the palace and approach the elephant, beating her breast and uttering cries of anguish. It was the mother of Siraj."

Night descended on Murshidabad, the capital of independent Bengal. Day dawned on Calcutta, the capital of colonial Bengal, under the British imperialist rulers. What then is the historical significance of the battle of Plassey of 23rd June 1757? And the cries of anguish of the old mo-

ther of Siraj? An eminent historian says:

"On 23rd June, 1757, the middle ages of India ended and her modern age began... When Clive struck at the Nawab, Mughal civilization had become a spent bullet... On such a hopeless decadent society, the rational progressive spirit of Europe struck with resistless force... In the space of less than one generation, in the twenty years from Plassey to Warren Hastings (1757-1776), the land began to recover from the blight of mediaeval theocratic rule... The dry bones of a stationary oriental society began to stir, at first faintly, under the wand of a heaven-sent magician. It was truly a Renaissance, wider, deeper, and more revolutionary than that of Europe, after the fall of Constantinople."

—Sir Jadunath Sarkar, K.T., C.I.E., M.A., D.Litt., edited *The History of Bengal*, Vol. II, Dacca 1948, Pp. 497-98.

Murshidabad to Calcutta

It was then not the gunners and artillerymen of Robert Clive, but "the rational progressive spirit of Europe", personified in Clive, his English soldiers and native sepoys, which struck at the Nawab's army at Plassey. The decadent and corrupt oriental society began to stir, "under the wand of a heaven-sent magician". There was stir indeed, but at the Murshidabad treasury first, where Clive, his colleagues and native collaborators were bewildered to find heaps of jewels and gold, and then looking at each other's face, with Clive's smile, they helped themselves liberally. Here the East and the West met, at the treasury vault, at Murshidabad.

When questioned on this scandalous episode later before a Select Committee in England, Clive furiously retorted: "Am I not rather deserving of praise for the moderation which marked my proceedings? Consider the situation in which the victory at Plassey had placed me! A great prince was dependent on my

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pleasure; an opulent city lay at my mercy; its richest bankers bid against each other for my smiles; I walked through vaults which were thrown open to me alone, filled on either hand with gold and jewels! Mr Chairman, at this moment I stand astonished at my own moderation"!

Clive ruled from Calcutta, from 1757 to 1760 and again from 1765 to 1767. Where was the first Governor's dwelling house in the city? Tradition has always had it that the Royal Exchange Building, demolished in 1915, was Clive's house in Calcutta. There is a reference to another house, occupied by Clive, in the Public Consultations (1760). "The Sea Customs Master reports to the Board that he has pitched upon the Dwelling House belonging to Huzaroomull, lately possessed by Colonel Clive, as the most proper place for a Custom House."

Clive's misrule brought total ruin to Bengal. After he returned to England (1767), a senior official (Richard Becher) wrote to the Directors: "...the condition of the people of this country has been worse than it was before... This fine country, which flourished under the most despotic and arbitrary government, is verging towards ruin." The consequence of his policy of indiscriminate plunder and exploitation was the terrible famine of 1770, in which about one-third of the inhabitants of Bengal perished in hunger and disease. This was how "the rational progressive spirit of Europe", struck Bengal "with resistless force".

In 1772, the Directors appointed Warren Hastings as Governor of Bengal. Unlike the illiterate Clive, Hastings was educated at Westminster School. He was a connoisseur of Indian painting, and some of his collections are in the India Office. These were acquired in 1809 for £759. Along with the extension and consolidation of the British imperialist rule in this country, through recourse to all kinds of mean intrigues, he began to encourage scholars like Wilkins, William Jones and Colebrook, and his favourite

Munshis and Dewans like Naba-krishna, the founder of the Sovabazar Raj Family and a great patron of Calcutta culture. About 'Nabo Munshi' and his achievements, we shall speak later. One of the major achievements of Hastings was the transformation of Calcutta into a full-fledged political capital-city. He accomplished this by shifting the judicial and other administrative departments from Murshidabad to Calcutta. In defence of his plan for making Calcutta the first capital-city and its advantages, he wrote to the Directors: "Another good consequence will be the great increase of inhabitants and of wealth in Calcutta, which will not only add to the consumption of our most valuable manufactures imported from home, but will be the means of conveying to the natives a more intimate knowledge of our customs and manners and of conciliating them to our policy and government". It is true that "if Job Charnock is to be considered the founder of Calcutta as a seat of trade, Hastings may be regarded as the founder of Calcutta as the political capital of the British Empire" (Firminger).

The Spirit of Europe

Throughout this period, that massive symbol of Indian medievalism, the elephants, were found strolling majestically on the streets of Calcutta, as they were doing in Murshidabad. From the days of Clive and Hastings, till about the foundation of the first institution of English education, the Hindu College in 1817, the elephants continued to stroll, scaring the carriage-horses, their owners and riders. "Elephants were at this time (1805) allowed to traverse the streets, and accidents from horses being scared by them, appear to have been numerous" (Rainey). One such typical accident was thus reported in a newspaper (1805): "A few evenings ago, Mr and Mrs Hutteman, with 3 of their children, were returning home in a carriage. They met an elephant on Esplanade Row, opposite the tank;

upon which the horses got wild, and ran the carriage in the drain close to Mr Brady's house, and upset it". This Mr Hutteman had a school of his own, where he taught English to the natives. There had been encounters between elephants and horses since the days of the Aryan and Greek invasions in India. But this was something new in Calcutta, and in the 19th century, the age of Renaissance. Maybe, the elephants, the pillars of feudalism, were trying to scare off from Calcutta the trotting horses, heralding the dawn of the "rational progressive spirit of Europe".

A little about 'Law' and 'Justice', for which Hastings and others staked so much. In July 1800 one "Berjoo Mohun Dutt was executed in Lall Bazar, convicted of having stolen a watch from the dwelling house of R. Fleming Esq." In July 1807, one "Gora Chund Chundal, was executed pursuant to his sentence in the Jaun Bazar, near the premises in which he committed the Burglary, for which he suffered. A prodigious concourse of spectators assembled to witness the execution". In 1806, "Lieut. Charles Ryan was tried in the Supreme Court, for the murder of Lieut. Carry, in a duel, the jury returned a verdict of manslaughter and the judge sentenced him to pay a fine of Rs 100 and suffer imprisonment for 6 months".

Not "in the twenty years from Plassey to Warren Hastings (1757-1776)", as Sir Jadunath says, but even in the fifty years from Plassey to Wellesley, our land (Bengal) was thus beginning "to recover from the blight of mediaeval theocratic rule", and thus on our "hopelessly decadent society, the rational progressive spirit of Europe struck with resistless force". Like Doorgah Pujja celebrations at the great houses of the wealthy baboos of Calcutta, there were celebrations with fireworks at Government House, on occasions of successful conquest of Indian territories, and these were largely attended by the new class of native aristocrats. We are quoting

below the description of fireworks in one such celebration at Government House in Calcutta, in February 1803:

"The fireworks afforded an abundant display of ingenious variety of execution. The most remarkable objects were, four figures of Fire representing the fight of the Elephant, admirably conducted; a Volcano of fire, which continued for a considerable time to discharge Rockets and Flames of different colours; two beautiful Temples, some very fine fountains of fire and blue lights, and a great variety of Stars, Suns etc. Amongst other ingenious devices was a Globe, which after discharging fire for some time, opened and discovered a transparency in Persian character to the following effect: May your prosperity be Perpetual." (*The Calcutta Monthly Journal*, Feb. 1803).

(The first of this series appeared on March 3. More will follow).

Views In Brief

Elections, Bangladesh

The present regime in Dacca is the aborted child of an exported revolution cooked up by the reactionaries of a neighbouring country in order to satisfy their own geo-political needs. Hence, the March 7 election results in Bangladesh should not create much stir in the air; the result of the so-called free and fair elections was obvious—it was an election, Indira-type, West Bengal colour.

Much illusion has been created about Sheikh Mujib in this country by reactionary as well as some leftist papers. Before drawing a conclusion let us examine the profile of the so-called Father of the Nation in Bangladesh. Mujib was a student leader of the then Islamia College, Calcutta, and a right-hand man of Saheed Suhrawardy, the then Chief Minister of Bengal and the leader of 'Direct Action' in Calcutta in 1946. When Mr Suhrawardy went

back to East Pakistan with his disciple after partition, the then Muslim League regime discarded them. So, these professional politicians needed a separate platform to preach their ideas.

It is wrong to say that Mujib was the leader of the language movement in Dacca in 1952; it was spontaneous; it was led by an amorphous group of students of Dacca University.

In 1954, the Muslim League was swept out of power by the United Front led by Sher-e-Bangla Sk. Fazlul Huq, and Maulana Bhashani; Mujib was made a Minister in the Huq and later in the Aaur Rahman Cabinet. His record as Minister and subsequent prosperity deserves a probe. All through his earlier life he was an unemployed graduate or a party whotimer and came of a poor peasant family.

In 1956 the Awami League was divided on the question of foreign policy. Mujib joined the communal Suhrawardy who was made Prime Minister of Pakistan under American pressure. Maulana Bhashani left the Awami League and formed the National Awami Party. Even today, Mujib's movement in the Indo-Soviet pocket is viewed with suspicion.

His surrender to the Yahya regime on March 25, 1971 was perhaps deliberate: he was to be available for a compromise over sharing power behind the back of a misinformed people. It is surprising that in the whole turmoil, his family did not lose a single life. His family was given adequate protection by the then Governor Malik.

The whole thing needs to be viewed in this perspective. The Awami League in Bangladesh is like the Congress in India—two identical flowers of the same bud. It was the Bengali businessmen who gave all sorts of help in cash and kind during the 1970 elections in the then East Pakistan in the hope that they would reap the harvest later. The same people are in the real leadership of the Awami League today; after the initial setback they are

plucking the fruits; a number of opportunist Hindus of the old Congress origin have also joined this bandwagon.

Mujib-bad is a hoax; it is no philosophy, no ideology—it is a pseudo-ideological cockpit of social, political corruption. The elections in Bangladesh were an exhibition of the squalor and reactionary character of bourgeois electionism—one need not take it seriously. Miracles rarely occur. It is a transitional phase in socio-political development. The days of darkness will disappear; a revolutionary leadership will surely emerge from the masses leading the people of this subcontinent to the dawn of revolutionary socialism.

SISIR K. MAJUMDAR

Violence, White And Brown

There is worldwide condemnation of the murder of three diplomats by Palestine commandos in Khartoum. No violence is commendable, and the censure is quite proper. But there appears to be emerging a sickening pattern of noise that the diseased conscience of the world community impels it to make every time there is such an incident. And dangerously, some principles are getting established as respectable and legitimate:

1. Mr Nixon has a right to fuzz semantics. He called it international terror. (It is terror all right, at best group terror. As for international terror the proper example is American bombing in Indochina, its extermination of Red Indians, its overthrow of governments in Latin America not amenable to its exploitative pressures etc.).

2. Once again 'peace', 'tension in West Asia' have been heard. So, it is the duty of commandos to maintain peace and of Zionism to violate it. (Israel's cold-blooded murder of over 100 passengers in a Libyan airliner was calculated to promote

peace in the area. Perhaps, therefore, there was no stridency in the tone of its denunciation the world over. Israel's raids in Syria and Lebanon leading to deaths of hundreds are not from the archives of ancient history. They are recent, regular, recurrent. Mr Heath then did not burn with righteous indignation. Pope Paul did not feel appalled then.) Conclusion: Israeli violence is no violence. Those who wrongly call it violence are enemies of peace in West Asia.

3. Peace in West Asia is acceptable to the world community at Israel's terms, that is, reprisals against Palestinians, retention by it of the looted territory in the 1967 war, murder of airline passengers, its deliberate provocation of terror as in Munich, etc.

4. Israel has no obligation towards peace in West Asia, nor the U.S., nor Pope Paul etc. Israel has no responsibility to the 'world community'. (It is given a blank cheque to do whatever it likes. No condemnation and cacophony of curses will follow. No conscience will be stricken by its outrageous and heinous conduct in West Asia or elsewhere.)

5. Shout 'terror' if the people killed can be numbered or if they are notable. If their number is large (as in the Libyan airliner) or running into millions (as in Indochina) and if they are ordinary mortals, it is not terror. Too, if those killed are Asians/Africans it is not terror. Only when whites are victims it is terror. Conclusion: The larger the number of the killed, the easier the conscience of the world community. Indignation is in order at white men's (Anglo-Saxons') death. Not otherwise. No indignation is called for when coloured patriots like Cabral are gunned down by Portuguese agents, or when King Hussein orders execution of sixteen leaders of the commandos. American-supported and instigated violence is no violence.

6. The atrophied conscience of the world community stirs into arti-

culcation spasmodically. It cannot do so always for it is anaemic. In no case whenever U.S. and other Anglo-Saxon nations are involved. Germany was spared nuclear spray. The yellow Asians, Japs, had to be the guinea pigs. According to George Bilainkin (*Destination Tokyo*) Roosevelt and Churchill in September 1944 had agreed to use the bomb, when available, against Japan. Even when faced with defeat by Germany in December 1944, they did not drop it on her. And long before August 6 and 9 of the next year

when Japan was blasted Truman had been notified of the Emperor's surrender offer by Stalin himself. Yet Truman lied to the State Department. In 1966 he confessed he was a liar.

But in face of all this it is strange the world has a community which boasts of a conscience! The fun is, some Asians vie for shouting honours! Nixon is a competent successor to the heritage of horror handed down to him by his predecessors.

I. K. SHUKLA

Pale Grandeur

MRIGANKA SEKHAR RAY

DINEN Gupta deserves some mild praise for attempting in his *Marjina-Abdallah* a welcome diversion from the banalities of the conventional family drama in ordinary Bengali films. But unfortunately, as it happens in all such attempts, it has remained only an effort, not a full-fledged artistic achievement. This off-told tale from the Arabian Nights has been filmed many times and in many languages, (including a Bengali version made in the thirties) but still the classic adventures of Alibaba in the treasure-cave and his sudden transition from rags to riches have an ageless charm, and that is why this story material has fascinated the film-makers in different periods. But it needs a proper approach to bring out the interesting ingredients which could lend themselves well to a celluloid transposition, and that is where Dinen Gupta has failed miserably. He has gone in for straightforward dramatic narration without stylising his form into operatic or musical patterns. But in interpreting a legend or a myth in creative terms, some kind of stylised presentation is a must, so that the subtle nuances and the archetypal elements beneath the story-surface could be highlighted, and some new dimension added to the ex-

isting material. The director has not learnt this simple truth and his film has not grown beyond a crude mixture of suspense-thriller and domestic melodrama, that too terribly slow and sloppy. The murky decor and an indifferent photography have failed to bring alive the grandeur of a lost world and the use of colour in Marjina's climatic dance sequence is pointless. The performances are mostly wooden; only Jahar Roy as Baba Mustafa and Geeta Dey as Alibaba's simpleton create some moments of boisterous fun. And when we see Mithu Mukherjee as Marjina trying frantically to look sexy, we sadly remember Sadhana Bose in this role, gliding through the screen with a nymph-like gait.

Five Painters

SANDIP SARKAR

THERE was an exhibition of paintings by five artists at the Birla Academy from February 20 to March 4. At present there are three major groups of artists—Calcutta Painters, Society of Contemporary Artists and the Canvas Art Circle—who have significantly influenced the

art movements of Calcutta by suggesting new trends and indicating new points of departure. The five who exhibited at the Birla Academy have not formed themselves into a group but there are certain signs that they might. Of them four are very young and have come out from the Art College between 1969-1971. The senior partner, Mr Ashesh Mitra, is a lecturer in the Government Art College.

The exhibition had a breath of freshness, a flexibility of movement, charming dreams—things with which the gods bless only the young. They belong to the new generation who are trying hard to establish their distinctive identities. There is even bold promise of greater things to come.

Gita Bhattacharjee's paintings reflect her joy in being able to express herself freely. She has chosen to avoid figures and sees certain shapes and shadows in houses and walls, in arches and columns. She is fascinated by lines as they interweave and colours as they fade in and out and create unexpected relationships. Her *Twilight on the Port* (1), *Beyond the Land* (4), *Beyond the Wall* (8) and *Winter Morning* (9) had a rare purity. Her development will be of interest to watch and it remains an open question whether she will chose entirely the world of abstraction or struggle to bring figures into her composition.

Benode Das is interested in using generally a single human figure and semi-abstract patches of colour to work out a harmonious relationship between them. He knows how to handle colour and let the scene arrange itself spontaneously. His *Fishing Net* (8), *Harbour* (2) and *Malini* (4) where space, colour and figures were used effectively showed signs of maturity.

Biswapaty Maity has used colours as a basic unit to reveal the nuances of his moods. His figures remind one of the stylizations that children make. He sees the world as a wonderland, as a happy child would see it. It is a world of charming fan-

tasy where even trees have eyes and carts are pulled by fairy-tale animals. Colours are pressed out from the tube and the back of the brush used to build up texture. There is no anxiety in this world, no lurking fear. One suspects that Maity is deliberately suppressing the conflicting and tormented part of himself. He is convincing for the most part, but it is evident that he works hard to make the canvas pretty. He works with small strokes and painstakingly keeps the canvas neat. There are no bold brush strokes. In *Devastated Life* (9), *Summer Wind* (4), *Fruit* (6) he shows a rare sense of composition.

Ananda Ray has a sensitive brush but he hovers between the real and the imaginative world. In *Spring* (1) and *Fantasy on Pathos* (6) he showed promise.

Ashesh Mitra is very skilful and confident. In his *Youth and Autumn* (9) and *Storm Comes* (3) he showed restrained power in creating certain moods. His use of red, green and blue in juxtaposition evokes an atmosphere.

This exhibition was like a cool wind after a hot sultry day.

Letters

Travesty Of Truth

We express our deepest sense of shock and indignation at the remarks (*The Statesman*, 27. 2. 73) passed by the Prison Minister and Congress members of the Assembly during the Assembly session on February 26 regarding the status of political prisoners detained in different jails of this State.

The statement that all prisoners have been detained in connection with specific cases against them is a complete travesty of truth. A large number of these prisoners are detained without trial (under MISA) only on the basis of apprehension expressed by the administration.

Many of the charge-sheets (in case of specific charges) and the grounds

of detention (in case of MISA etc.) served against the accused describe them as "Naxalites" or active members of the CPI(ML). So, according to the administration's own admission, these prisoners belong to some political organisation.

In deciding the status of the prisoners, existence or otherwise of any specific charge should be of no consideration at all. What is to be considered is the motivation behind the alleged illegal act. If the motivation is some social ideal and not any individual interest then the accused must be regarded as a political prisoner.

The fact that the so-called Naxalites were inspired by some such noble social ideal was recognised even by Sri Chandrasekhar, a member of the Congress Working Committee, in a recent statement (*Hindustan Standard*, 10.2.73). While demanding the release of political prisoners, he said they "are inspired by high ideals of establishing a new social order based on equality and free from exploitation". At a public meeting (*The Statesman*, 24.1.73) held on 23.1.73 at Delhi, demanding the release of the "Naxalite" prisoners, leaders of different political parties including two from the ruling party, MPs and eminent lawyers expressed the same opinion. In another statement a number of eminent lawyers and intellectuals of West Bengal also spoke in the same vein.

In view of these opinions expressed by eminent individuals of the country, the Jail Minister's statement denying due recognition to political prisoners and the Congress members' ridicule ("They are murderers and their place is only in jails") is not only discourteous, it also reveals deep disrespect towards public opinion.

The Prison Minister's statement that the CPI(ML) is not a recognised political party obviously refers to recognition bestowed by the Election Commission. The Indian Constitution does not contain any stipulation that participation in elections is a must for any organisation to be considered as a political one. So, to encroach on the fundamental right

of Indian citizens to form associations. The detained political prisoners also include people belonging to "recognised" parties (like the CPM etc.). So the statement that there were no political prisoners in West Bengal prisons on the one hand contradicts his own definition of political organisation and on the other, suggests a dangerous meaning that workers of no oppositional parties will be considered as political prisoners. That is, the present government wants to paint all voices of dissent as those of criminals.

We appeal to all sections of our people irrespective of their political opinion to protest against the stand of the government regarding political prisoners so that their due recognition and release can be secured.

Association for the Protection of
Democratic Rights,
Calcutta

RWA & Andhra Pradesh

It was interesting, the heckling tone of Mr Krishnamurty in his letter (February 24). The Revolutionary Writers Association does not have any illusions about the obvious outcome of the current agitation for Andhra bifurcation. When the reactionary forces can hoodwink the masses for their vested interest, then why can't we just pay them back in their own coin? The RWA in its own humble capacity tried to direct the wrath of the masses towards the real enemy—of course, the tactical line may differ, which always leaves scope for rethinking in any changed situation.

Mr Murty should have carefully read the article of K.V.R. to understand the real spirit of the resolution adopted by 'Virasam'.

Contrary to the imagination of Mr Murty, the RWA has always condemned the white terror as well as worked vigorously for civil liberties. As a literary organisation it knows its stand and limitations and it does not need the pedagogic advice of anyone.

Mr Murty should know where he stands before he attempts to compare the RWA with M. N. Roy or Gandhi in vain.

Lastly, for his information, Sri Sri has already withdrawn his resignation from the presidentship of Virasam though he differed with the resolution.

NIKHILESWAR
Secretary, RWA, Hyderabad

Andhra Pradesh

We condemn the current atrocities of the Central Reserve Police and the army units now in occupation of the Andhra Region—Mrs Indira Gandhi's last weapon. The Internal Security Act has been employed to imprison mostly the non-Congress separatist leaders and workers including students. Darkness has descended on the land and the CRP and the army units are clamping down curfew just to "protect" themselves against the failure of electricity due to powermen's strike. Mostly unprovoked attacks on agitators with bullets and bayonets are taking place in all towns of the Andhra region and civil authority has almost disappeared. The Tenali, Anantapur, Nellore, Vijayawada, Visakhapatnam, Adoni, Amanavathi and Ongole incidents smack of Pak atrocities in East Pakistan and the Andhra region has been turned into a virtual military colony.

The sentiment of unity between the two regions of Andhra Pradesh was never strong enough to bring about total integration and the successive governments kept them apart. Regional disparities have all along been exploited by vested interests in both the regions to set one up against the other. Today what remains for the whole world to see is only the shell of an artificial administrative unity. Whatever might have been its beginnings and whatever the motives of its initiators, the present agitation for the bifurcation of the State has assumed the nature of a mass upsurge, drawing into its fold

thousands of men, women and young men. Separation may not be the real solution of the people's fundamental problems. But we stand with the students, unemployed youth who are taking a big part in the present movement and at the same time we caution them against the diabolical plans of the ruling class and its accomplices to make political capital out of the murders and maiming of our brave young men. Witness, for example, the pressure that has been brought to bear by the so-called leaders of the movement on the striking powermen.

We therefore warn the people against more treachery and betrayals by these vested interests. Remember Telengana of 1969. We call upon the people never to rest until their fight against the Government over partial demands like the present one merges into a protracted people's struggle for the very overthrow of the present social order.

President : Sri Sri
VICE-PRESIDENT : K. KUTUMBARAO
Revolutionary Writers Association
Hyderabad

'False Brother'

I do not like the idea of dragging on the controversy between Mr Majumder and myself only to satisfy our own egos. The controversy is no longer our property; it has already become the property of the readers. It would be better if the readers themselves came forward and took active part in the discussion.

However a few words are necessary. Mr Majumder castigates my "declared vanity about his understanding of dialectics". I must apologise to him and to my readers if any such immodest vanity was demonstrated in my polemics. At the same time, I must hasten to add that revolutionary vanity and petty bourgeois vaingloriousness are not the same thing.

MONI GUHA
Calcutta

Whose English ?

If "A Reader, Calcutta" is surprised to read my letter, I, on my part, am extremely surprised by his letter (March 3). I do not defend 'bad English'. I only object to the misuse of precious newsprint allotted to *Frontier*. I suppose the problem of good or bad English does not fall within the purview of this journal which takes up the socio-economic problems of the people. The problems of grammar, usage, semantics fall under the domain of literary magazines.

Reader tries to ridicule me by saying, "he has failed to understand the author's (R.B.S.) English". I am a regular reader of the journal and fully follow its contents. If an article happens to be so abstruse as to be unintelligible to readers like me, its best place is the wastepaper basket. A popular journal like *Frontier* is meant for the people. And I can confidently say that I belong to the people.

The usage of the word 'danger' in my letter refers to the question of subjectivism of an editor. The learned editor preferred to omit that portion. I hope he will bear me out.

SANGH SEN SINGH
New Delhi

Medical Care

In our country the poor in cities as also in villages have no adequate medical facilities. In a semi-colonial and semi-feudal country, this is a normal situation. Here the bourgeois-minded bureaucrats are all in all. They keep themselves isolated from the people, and this aloofness causes great distress to the people.

Recently, Mr H. B. Ghose, Director-General of Mines Safety, expressed concern over the increasing incidence of eye-diseases, particularly cataract, among young colliery workers. On December 2, laying the foundation stone of the outdoor ward

of Sree Krishna Medical College in Muzaffarpur, the Union Health Minister, Mr Umasankar Dixit, said that his ministry would advise State governments to obtain "bonds" from medical students that they would serve in rural areas for at least two years after leaving college. He also said that as medical graduates were reluctant to serve in rural areas, many of the 25,000 health centres in the country were without doctors.

On December 3, the Vice-President, Dr G. S. Pathak, said in Patna (at an inauguration ceremony) that out of 15 million tuberculosis patients in the whole world, 8 million were in India. Moreover 80% of these T.B. patients in our country were concentrated in rural areas where medical facilities were totally inadequate.

Anyway, it is a fact that the rural and urban workers are neglected, thanks to our bureaucratic administration.

In contrast the People's Republic of China has had great and unprecedented achievements in the medical field, as also in others, since 1949. Noted Western physicians have been compelled to admit these achievements.

According to the British Office of Health Economics, Western medicine is bad medicine for poor countries. The office advised developing countries to copy China, not British or the USA in organising medical care.

It said in a booklet that China's system of "barefoot doctors" would be far more effective in spreading medical care to whole populations than expensive prestige hospitals in major cities.

For the cost of one major hospital, it said, 100 local medical centres could be built to spread basic and cheap medical care to the people. In China, medical practitioners are trained "to serve the people and to love the people". They always make close contact with the people, go to communes to help the peasants to grow more grain and live a simple life. People have been benefited by the combination of old

herbalism with modern scientific treatment.

SIBAJI BHATTACHARYA
Calcutta

Whither Manipur ?

Law and order has broken down in Manipur. Not a single day passes without something gruesome happening somewhere in the State. The ever-vigilant watchdogs of democracy, the police, never consider it proper to arrest the criminals because they are "local" rogues. The Alimuddin Government is actively instigating and encouraging crime by stretching its helping hand to the anti-social elements. Bureaucratic connivance is an open secret.

Only the other day some notorious local goondas attacked a Punjabi cloth shop and looted it in broad daylight, hundreds watching and the policemen refusing to arrest anybody. This is the general pattern.

The following day, i.e. on January 16, a bunch of well-known goondas attacked Prof I. K. Shukla and his wife. Prof Shukla was earlier arrested for the simple reason that he had written an article in a Delhi weekly on Manipur which pointed to the alarming nature of Manipur politics. He is, though now on bail, under virtual house-arrest, without the police admitting it. He is not even permitted to leave Imphal to arrange transfer of his case to some other State. His subsistence allowance has been denied for the last four months.

The ruling Manipur People's Party is determined to wipe the intellectuals having a leftist bent out of the State. It forced the director of the JNU centre to leave Imphal for offering to bail out Prof Shukla from jail.

Men in power are monkeying with law. To kill or misbehave with 'outsiders' (the non-Manipuris) is the order of the day.

The Government of India agencies are turning a blind eye to the gross violence and villainy which is rampant.

K. CHATTORAJ
Calcutta

MARCH 17, 1973

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Defend Prisoners

The Legal Aid Committee has been organised to defend all those who are being victimised for holding political beliefs dissimilar to those of the party in power. Our object is to defend such cases irrespective of the political ideology of the victims.

Following publicity in newspapers we have been receiving donations from different parts of India. We thank all the donors, most of whom have preferred to remain anonymous. With the assistance of these donations as well as sincere co-operation from a number of lawyers we have been able to take up some cases.

There are about six thousand detenus and undertrial prisoners in West Bengal only. Innumerable cases have been pending since 1968-69. Despite reminders the police are reluctant to submit chargesheets and bail is being opposed stubbornly. If one is granted bail he is tagged to some other cases. Thus the prisoners are virtually denied any defence.

There is great need to expand our work and the task before us is huge. We can hope to tackle it adequately only if greater co-operation is forthcoming from all democratically-minded people not only in this State but in the whole of India.

We appeal to all democratic people :

To contribute generously to this Committee ;

To communicate to us all cases of political victimization in need of legal aid.

Cheques (drawn in favour of Bina Banerjee) may be sent to either of the addresses given below; money orders, cash and communications to the office (2).

1. Bina Banerjee
Account No. 10816
United Bank of India,
Sealdah Branch,
28, Acharya Prafulla Chandra
Roy Road,
Calcutta-9.
2. Jayasree Rana
Legal Aid Committee
11, Old Post Office Street,
Third Floor,
Calcutta-1.
Visiting hours: 4-30 p.m. to
6-30 p.m. on week days (bar-
ring holidays).
Sd. Srimati Bina Banerjee,
President, Legal Aid Committee.
Srimati Jayasree Rana, Secretary,
Legal Aid Committee.