

frontier

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OFF THE RAILS

THE supplementary railway budget presented last week bears all the marks of the Centre's confused thinking on current economic problems. The Railway Minister, Mr L. N. Mishra, has tried to justify the second budget within the first five months of the financial year on the ground that both passenger and goods traffic has not risen according to the projections. This has necessitated the imposition of a whopping Rs. 140-crore additional burden on the customers of this monopoly service. But the really marvellous part of his enlightening speech is the revelation that even with this latest massive bite, the railways will continue to be in the red. The biggest government undertaking in the country, which even six years ago was contributing a sizable amount to the national knitty with its surpluses, is likely to end the year with a deficit of about Rs. 109 crores. This is of course perfectly in tune with what is happening in the rest of the economy. The Finance Minister, Mr Y. B. Chavan, has now come out with the disclosure that even after the additional revenue earning from the supplementary budget, the deficit in the current year might come to something like Rs. 268 crores. New Delhi obviously feels that figures of projected deficits like these do not look too grotesque. But more than that, it obviously thinks that the people would not then say that the Government's mismanagement of its own finance has let the country down. And what a price the nation has to bear just because some people wanted to have a reasonably good cover-up for their dismal failure in running the show with even a semblance of efficiency or imagination!

A passenger travelling from Howrah to Bombay on an ordinary train by third (now called second class will have to pay Rs. 49.20 against Rs. 41 till the other day. If he prefers to travel by a mail or an express train, his fare will be Rs. 67.45 against Rs. 56.20 (it was something like Rs. 45 before the February railway budget). For Delhi-Howrah, similarly, the second class mail or express fare will now be Rs. 53.80 compared to Rs. 44.85 before the budget. The increases since February are staggering and do not conform to the "soaking the rich" policy that our government is said to be pursuing. One of the obvious consequences of all this will be that the number of people travelling without tickets will now jump leading to an even bigger revenue leakage. Will Mr Mishra again come up with a budget after a few months when he finds that traffic is not behaving the way he projected? New Delhi can do anything nowadays, and it often does. As to whether the latest

railway budget which has increased the freight rates will add to the inflationary pressure, that question be better left out of the discussion, for price rise appears to be a subject in which the powers that be seem to have the least interest. The important thing is to show the people that the Government is doing so much for them. And so, just tax them, more and more.

The President

The new President, Mr Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed, is different in two ways: he is rich and is a Cambridge tripos. Inconvenient questions were raised by a Congress M.P. about his assets before the election and Mr Ahmed had to make a declaration. His assessment of the value of his property may not be accepted by everyone—his land statement in 1958 was found factually incorrect by an enquiry committee in 1971—but some people are titillated to see a rich president for a change. Some of the former presidents were well-known scholars—though none or them was an Oxbridge product—and one or two wrote autobiographies before they became head of State. Still now without any such pretensions, Mr Ahmed may yet yield the pen and wield it well—his wife is said to be a descendant of Mirza Ghalib.

The President of India, it is said, is above or should be above suspicion. One newspaper warned that journalists (would they or their masters have the guts?) should not pursue him as their American counterparts did Nixon. The President of India is not the Chief Executive and, therefore, not responsible for the follies and crimes of the Government. But his position is elevated, even if it be without power. As the Supreme Court in a lyrical passage in a recent judgment stated, he is not a glorified cipher. "He represents the majesty of the State, is at the apex... and has rapport with the people and parties, being above politics". But at the same time he exercises his formal constitutional powers only upon and in accordance with the advisors of the ministers. So do the governors of States who, if

one comes to think of what happened in many States which got out of the Congress clutches for a while, played a more useful role for the Central Government.

The trouble is, there is not much majesty attached to a State which is pockmarked with all the vices of a cunning but inefficient and corrupt ruling class. The fact is, the President can have little rapport with the exploited people because of the awful distance which Rashtrapati Bhavan places between him and the 'people'; and the security measures are so extensive and costly that the people, who because of their immense poverty care a lot about tamasha, can have a glimpse of the President only when he rides out on solemn occasions. As for being above politics, Mr Ahmed himself will blush at the idea. The king or queen of England can afford to be above politics because monarchs do not have to get themselves elected, but Mr Ahmed cannot. He need not worry, however, because he has the closest possible rapport with the Prime Minister, which is what matters, but isn't the Prime Minister a very shrewd and ruthless politician?

One need not go into the past, into what distinguished Mr Ahmed as a politician-minister in Assam or as a Central Minister in Delhi. One need not rake up the ugly 'Drive the Bengalis Out' riots that rocked Assam in 1960. Each day now is so difficult to live for millions of common people all over the country that the role, past, present or future, of a President, even if he was a Minister of Agriculture till the other day, can be a matter of debate and judgment for only august bodies like the Supreme Court.

The Turks

When the Turks landed in Cyprus on July 20 even some Greek Cypriots felt relieved that the massacre of the Turkish Cypriots and the supporters, including Communists, of President Makarios by the Sampson regime would be curbed, if not stopped. Besides, Turkey acted under the 1960 agreement to pro-

tect the 'independence' of the island from the pro-Enosis men who carried out the coup in collusion with the military junta ruling in Greece and, it was suspected, with U.S. encouragement. Makarios is not liked by the CIA. The collapse of the Sampson government and of the military junta in Greece were welcome. It almost looked as if Turkey was a liberating force—though it murders leftists without any scruples at home—and the Russians queried whether the Turkish landing could be called an intervention.

What began to unfold after the Turkish action was unexpected. First, the retaliatory massacre, arson and rape on a mass scale. Second, the cruel determination with which the Turkish hordes behaved, using even napalm. Third, the duplicity at Geneva where the Turks used the negotiations as a smokescreen for rapid military advance in Cyprus in repeated violation of the cease-fire. It is generally believed that without tacit U.S. support, Turkey cannot be behaving as it is. If the Greek Cypriots supporting Makarios lose, the U.S. would be most pleased. In NATO, Turkey, bordering Russia, is more welcome as an ally. The Americans can put up with a large dose of Greek chagrin in the knowledge that it is a temporary phase.

There can be no settlement of the Cyprus problem in the near future. The Atilla line has blown up all hopes, for years to come, of any real conciliation. The line established by force has brought more than one-third of the area, including the major ports, and four-fifths of the resources under the control of the Turks—though the Turkish Cypriots are just 18 per cent of the total population. Over 200,000 Greeks are refugees and the damage to property has been immense. With markets closed and communications blocked, the population is facing starvation.

The Turks talk of a federal republic in which the Turkish Cypriots would have their own autonomous administration or cantons and much stronger representation at the centre. Mr Ecevit, the Prime Minister of Turkey, who is a poet, a Sanskrit scholar etc. thinks that the guns will force the Greeks to

accept his scheme. In any case, an exchange of population is on, and with most of the commanding heights in their possession, their word would prevail. A defacto partition is there.

The EOKA-B's coup flopped and the Greek Cypriots have paid for their misadventure. But the Turkish invasion has generated a bitterness on both sides which will be difficult to forget and forgive. The Greek Cypriots are adept in guerilla warfare. A long period of parleys at Geneva and elsewhere and active vengeance at home faces Cyprus.

Crime Catalogue

A correspondent writes:

Law and order in Congress-ruled West Bengal is fast deteriorating in pace with the worsening economic situation. According to official crime figures, 415 murders took place and 675 dacoities were committed during the first six months of 1974. Besides cases of snatching and car thefts were innumerable. Professional goondas in this State seem to have become so powerful under the present Congress regime that they can operate openly under the very nose of the police. At 12 in the night of June 14 a gang thrust itself into the house of Haripada Dasgupta at Purbanchal Road in Kasba under the Jadavpur Police Station on the southern outskirts of Calcutta. The group carried bombs and knives, revolvers, rifles and pipeguns. Dasgupta and his son Mrinal, were gunned to death on the spot. In the plunder that followed all the ornaments were taken off the person of Dasgupta's wife and two young daughters. Next morning the police took into custody one Bandan Acharya in connection with the murders and robbery. Immediately the rest of the alleged gang gheraoed the local police station. The police could not take any action against the gherao. After some time, Mr Subrata Mukherjee, State Minister and Youth Congress leader, and Mr Saugata Ray, General Secretary of the Pradesh Congress Committee, arrived on the scene and "mediated" between the police and the raiders.

This is one among a legion of inci-

dents in West Bengal under the Ray Ministry. Under a rule of terror and repression the law is what the Congress administration wants it to be. The goondas can move freely with arms because they are under the protection of the party in power, according to reliable sources of the State Home Department. They have a dragnet spread out in the city of Calcutta. Sudarsan Barua, hunted out of his residence in Kasba a month ago, was kidnapped and taken away in a car from Bhowanipur. The police were immediately informed. All the abductors were known to the police but none was arrested. Barua was tortured to death. In another incident, the same killer group of Kasba kidnapped Hrishikesh Chakravarty from a place in Central Calcutta and took him away in a taxi. Immediately the Police Commissioner, the Superintendent of Police, 24-Parganas, the local police station and other authorities were informed. But they could do nothing.

Here are some clippings from some Calcutta dailies.

In the Jorasanko area of Central Calcutta, an employee of a transport company was beaten to death and Jagdish Mitra, a local Congress leader, along with others were arrested for causing the death (*Jugantar*, June 11, 1974).

A gang of 25 to 30 armed dacoits raided the house of Panchanan Das in village Atmarampur under the Budge Budge Police Station, 24-Parganas, tied up the inmates and decamped with cash and ornaments worth over Rs 8,000 (*Jugantar*, July 4, 1974). *Ananda Bazar Patrika* of the following day reported that a man aged 50, Sibram Sadhukhan by name, was shot dead with a pipegun at Sankrail, Howrah. Sujit Banerjee, a young man of 25 was attacked on a crowded street of Tamluk town by three young men and knifed to death (*Ananda Bazar Patrika*, July 10, 1974).

All the passengers of some of the bogies of Kampur Express were robbed of their possessions worth Rs 6000 (*Jugantar*, July 17, 1974). Next day the passengers in a compartment of the Seoraphuli Local were similarly robbed. In both the cases the dacoits were armed with bombs, swords, rifles and revolvers. Raiding a third class

compartment of the Upper India Express moving towards Sealdah a gang of armed youth looted all the belongings of the passengers after the train left Dakshineswar station of the Dankuni section of the Eastern Railway (*Amrita Bazar Patrika*, August 20, 1974). A girl of 20 while waiting for a train with her elder brother at Ballygunje Railway Station on August 21 was physically lifted by a group of people and raped several times by them at a nearby place. Two of the culprits were arrested the next day but released later because "they had influence with the police station". (*Hindusthan Standard*, August 23, 1974). There has been a row in Parliament over the murder of an AITUC office-bearer in Durgapur.

Behind Bars : How Long ?

HARI P. SHARMA

IN August 15, on the 27th anniversary of India's independence, about 300 academics and intellectuals from many parts of the world joined to express their deep concern and protest (see page 11) over the way the Government of India has been suppressing political dissent in the country and depriving a large number of people of their basic human, political, and legal rights.

Between 30,000 and 40,000 political prisoners are languishing in Indian jails. It is impossible to arrive at the precise figure. The Government has persistently refused to treat these detainees as "political prisoners". Occasionally, though, a State government, under pressure, has released some figures. The Government of West Bengal, for example, announced on March 17, 1973 that the number of prisoners categorised as "Naxalites" in West Bengal was 17,787. This was in one State alone, more than a year ago. All-India figures for today are based upon estimates made by independent journalists and by such civic organisations in India as the Association for the Protection of Democratic Rights, and the Legal Aid Committee.

Most of these detainees have already spent over five years —without any judicial trial—in jails. Nor do they have a hope that they would ever be tried. Prisoners in India can be indefinitely detained under the peculiar category of "undertrials", namely those who have been put up for trial or are awaiting trial. Often, it is a never-ending wait. The Government can take its own time for investigating alleged offences and the courts cannot compel it to put up the accused for trial within a time-limit. If and when someone is put up for trial, the court hearings can be put off at the request of the prosecution, based on the flimsiest of pretexts. A non-trial could thus drag on endlessly. There have also been numerous cases when prisoners ordered released because the charges against them failed, were rearrested on the very premises of the court, under new charges. Often a charge is not even necessary because under one or the other emergency regulation a person can be detained without the benefit of a trial. The Government has passed a whole series of emergency laws and India has been under declared emergency continuously since 1962 —except for a brief interlude in the late sixties when the Congress suffered serious electoral defeats.

Lengthy detention of these thousands of people is not simply a convenient attempt on the part of Government to put disconcerting elements behind bars. It is rather a part of a massive, calculated and ruthless effort to eliminate any threat to the status quo. Such a threat came in the late sixties when after twenty years of slumber the masses finally began to stir. And the Congress Party received its first severe beating in twenty years when it lost majority in half of the States in the 1967 elections. With a new sense of confidence and defiance people's movements began to rise and spread. What started as an isolated peasant rebellion against the tyranny of landlords in the north-eastern district of Naxalbari, soon became a new political symbol in the country as a whole—a symbol of people's initiative, of organised militant resistance against the oppression of the landlords and the State. "Naxalbari", "Naxalism", "Naxalites"

became new terms in the Indian political vocabulary. Naxalbari-type peasant rebellions began to spread in other parts of the country. Landlords began to flee the countryside. In the urban-industrial sector, the working class militancy took new turns. Strike after strike, followed by lock-outs and shut-downs.

Soon the crack-down came in full force—with police, military and para-military forces. Vast stretches of land were declared "disturbed areas" where no outsider could possibly enter. Mopping-up with Vietnam type search and destroy missions began. It was a reign of terror—a systematic, ruthless process of examination. If a person went in hiding to escape arrest and torture, the whole family was rounded up—father, mother, wife, brothers, sisters, all subjected to severe torture and/or detention. Numerous cases of mass murders in broad daylight by hired mobs occurred. In the summer of 1971 whole groups were killed publicly at Beliaghata, Barasat, Noapara and Howrah. In Howrah 12 "Naxalites" were murdered and their houses and shops destroyed, after which the civilian mob which did the killings dutifully turned in its arms at the local police station. The worst massacre occurred in the Cossipore-Baranagar area of Calcutta on August 12-13, 1971. An armed mob of 1,000 rampaged over two square miles, dragging pre-planned targets from their homes and killing them brutally in public. This went on for 17 long hours during which more than 150 young people were butchered and their names recorded on a list nailed up on a pole in the street. For all this time there was no police force on the scene, and nothing happened afterwards to the killers.

Those arrested have not had a better treatment either. Dozens of parents and relatives described to me, earlier this year, the agony of not knowing whether or not their sons and daughters are still alive, or of seeing them in custody with obvious marks of severe torture. A recent report published by a women's association (one among many examples one could cite) and based upon on-the-spot investigations, describes how young women during investigations are stripped

naked, made to lie on a table, tortured, burned with a cigarette, and repeatedly raped. Iron rulers are inserted into their rectums, bursting them to a point when vagina and rectum become one. All the sophisticated tools of torture have become parts of the police interrogative process (see, Amnesty International's Report on Torture, published in 1973).

During the last few years, at least twenty documented cases have been reported where police and jails guards have engaged in mass killings within the jails—often accompanied by some kind of a provoked incident. By Government's own account close to a hundred inmates have been killed in the police shoot-out, and several hundred injured. The unofficial estimates run several times higher. These incidents of mass-killings are of course on top of the countless number of isolated and inadequately reported killings which have been going in the jails.

There are areas in India today where villages have been turned into Vietnam-type strategic hamlets. Residents can go past the armed guards only with a permit and have to return to the village before sun-down.

All these facts have to be seen in the context of the highly repressive climate in the country as a whole. Opposition of any kind is beyond the level of tolerance of the present-day rulers. Striking workers are physically beaten up and forced to return to work (a recent example being the railway workers' strike). Agricultural labourers, who are organised and demand higher wages have been subjected to harassment. A who take up cases of political detainees have been subjected to harassment. A magistrate was reportedly beaten up because he reprimanded the police for bringing up flimsy charges. Organisations like the Association for the Protection of Democratic Rights and the Legal Aid Committee are being continuously harassed by the police. Their mail is being tampered with. Newspapers cannot take a strong stand because they depend for their newsprint on government quota, and for much of their revenue on government ads. Despite all these odds voices of protest are rising in many parts of the country.

AUGUST 31, 1974

Stirring Times On The Campus

ANNAPOORNA DEBI

GAUHATI University has passed through some stirring times in the past few weeks; and as these lines are being written, it is yet uncertain what shape the future course of events might take. The past few weeks have seen so many twists and turns, so many unexpected developments, so many true and false alarms, and the whole situation is so murky with so many individual egos in full action, that it would be rash to make any predictions. But let me begin at the beginning.

For many months now, there has been a kind of muted protest against the Government's policies—you make the depressing list of grievances—and sometime ago, a very impressive 21-point charter of demands was put forward by the All Assam Students' Union, a body which has no precise political affiliations, including as it does student representatives from all over the State. If anything, one can say that the Congress Party and its youth and student wing probably has at least a dominant role in that organisation. The AASU cannot but be a microcosm of the existing political reality in the State. And yet, the AASU could not but reflect the growing discontent of the people; and to focus this discontent, the 21-point charter of demands was placed before the Government, and a phased programme of agitation was launched.

There have been many student agitations in the past, some of which not exactly the kind that could have been supported by one in all conscience. But over the years, there has been a gradual realisation among the student community that the problems facing the State cannot be solved by launching sectarian agitations. Naturally, the Government always tried, and often quite successfully, to divert any agitation along communal or chauvinistic paths. The vital question of the national identity of the Assamese people was often used to

disrupt and misdirect the anger of the students and the mass of people. But how long could the Government go on deceiving the people? One of the most heartening aspects of the present agitation has been that, despite the all-out effort of the Government to split the students on communal and even caste lines, by and large, the students have been united and have refused to be misled. Especially despicable have been the Government's attempts to rouse the dormant caste feelings. The north-eastern region has often been accused of not being well-integrated into the "national mainstream", and in some very welcome ways, Assam has certain unique features, one of which has been the comparative absence of acute caste awareness in political behaviour. The present "progressive" regime of Sarat Chandra Sinha promised to change all this and bring the Assamese people right into the national mainstream as it is found in Bihar, Karnataka and Tamilnadu. It has been desperately attempting to bring politics in Assam at par with the rest of the country. The student movement has, till now, more or less withstood all the blandishments of caste politics, though some sections have defected and have formed splinter groups. But now that 'alien' enemies of earlier times have been long taken care of, disrupters of united movements have had to search for the enemy among themselves; and in this, the dormant caste feelings have come to a great help.

But to return. As part of the continuing movement of the All Assam Students' Union, a call for an All Assam bandh was given for 25th June, 1974. Now, it is to be noted that a call for a bandh is not exactly a clarion call for revolution. Highly respectable organisations like the Indian National Congress have given calls for bandh, and in fact, the present Chief Minister of Assam,

during his tenure as the President of the Assam Pradesh Congress Committee, only the other day, had given calls for All Assam bandhs more than once. Off hand, I can think of at least three calls with which the APCC under S. C. Sinha was associated; the one in connection with the demand for an oil refinery at Bongaigaon in Sinha's home district of Goalpara; and two bandhs, in quick succession (April 28, 1969 and 18th July, 1969), in connection with the demand for a Railway Division at Rangia. That nothing has been done about the Railway Division at Rangia is of no concern to Sinha, now that he is the Chief Minister.

Force and Prejudice

By and large, bandhs have been uneventful, at least in Gauhati. The people just take a day off. But this time, there seem to have been concerted efforts on the part of the Government to defeat the bandh call. In pursuance of this aim, splinter student organisations with explicit sectarian identifications were encouraged; sub-regional nationalisms were roused. The students of Upper Assam, the official propaganda went, had nothing to gain from the All Assam bandh call. The result was that the 25th June call for the bandh did not receive as enthusiastic a response in the Upper Assam districts as in other areas. But the Government was not satisfied merely with disrupting the student movement. For the first time, there were concerted efforts to break the bandh. Undoubtedly the 'successful' tackling of the railway strike had given the Government a lot of self-confidence. The result was that on the morning of the bandh day, the police was out in full force, and the feeble attempts of a small section of students to persuade the few vehicles that plied on the highway—which passes right through the University campus—to observe the bandh, were met with a kind of response for which the students were obviously unprepared. While the few vehicles that had been parked on the University campus were all 'rescued' by the police in the morning, they (the police) returned in force later in the afternoon and invaded practically all the residential

halls and beat up the students and arrested anyone they could seize. The bandh, which like all the earlier bandhs, had been expected to be a gentle, family affair, with 'our dear boys' merely having a sort of picnic, suddenly turned out to be a bloody affair, with smashed kneecaps and broken ribs and split heads. Ironically, the inmates of Gopinath Bardoloi Hall, many of whom had fondly hoped to be some kind of a strike-breaking brigade during the railway strike, having enthusiastically responded to blandishing advertisements issued by the railway authorities promising easy, quick jobs, were the most severely beaten. It was nothing short of a reign of terror during the afternoon of 25th June, and after the beatings and arrests, the demoralisation was such that many inmates are reported to have sought shelter away from the hostels for the following few nights.

The response of the University community to the police repression has taken a variety of shapes, has passed through various phases ranging from the initial righteous indignation and united opposition to a mood of helpless despair and defeatism to cunning attempts on the part of a section of the community to rationalise and justify the police action. This vacillation and rank opportunism of a section of the University community has been due to the fact that once the immediate terror of police presence was absent, the ever-present rivalries and dog-eat-dog policy of the community, especially of the teachers, has had a wonderful opportunity to come into full play. Linked to this dog-eat-dog policy has been the arrest of a teacher of the University, Dr D. P. Barooah, who is also the President of the University Teachers' Association and of the University Workmen's Union. Barooah was arrested under MISA on 6th July, ten days after the police invasion of the campus. Nobody believes that his arrest is unrelated to the events of 25th June and their aftermath. Indeed, the immediate response to the arrest was a most united and powerful expression of the University community's indignation. But it is only since 6th July that certain indications have appeared which suggest

that his arrest has come as a very convenient opportunity for the University authority to 'teach a lesson', once and for all, to the University teachers and workmen who had been able to rally successfully under the banner of fairly influential organisations in the University community.

Four Demands

The events of June 25th evoked universal condemnation from the academic community and the general public of Assam. Even now, weeks after the event, the events continue to be condemned by organisations in far-flung corners of the State. The University community too was roused to action, and on 2nd July 1974, the Court of the Gauhati University unanimously passed a resolution condemning the Government's action and made four demands upon the Government. These were (1) Immediate and unconditional release of all the arrested students and employees; (2) Immediate withdrawal of police and CRP pickets from the vicinity of the University campus; (3) Compensation to the University and the injured persons for property and limbs damaged during the police raids; (4) An assurance that there would be no further police invasion of the campus. The Court set July 5th as the deadline for the fulfilment of Point One of the demands; the rest of the demands were to be fulfilled by July 10th; failing which the whole Court would meet again on July 14th and resign, collectively. This was indeed throwing of the gauntlet to the Government, and public opinion was very favourably impressed at the courage and dignity showed by such a staid body as the University Court. This resolution was moved, among others, by D. P. Barooah, but the whole Court, consisting of all the University professors and such other dignitaries, unanimously voted for it. But the Government did not give a shit for the resolution of the Court and in fact maintained its aggressive posture. Not merely that, just as the deadline set for the release of the arrested students and employees passed, the Government proceeded to arrest D. P. Barooah, one of the authors of the

2nd July resolution, under MISA. The events since July 6th have cast grave doubts about the role of the University authority, and whether it really and seriously sought a confrontation with the State authority. For, no sooner was Barooah, a well-known thorn-in-the-flesh of the University authority—safely in jail than the University authority set out on a path of vacillation and compromise with the State authority. First, the University Court met on 14th July (under an acting Vice-Chancellor, the permanent Vice-Chancellor having in the meantime resigned out of disgust at the lack of courtesy shown to him by the State administration, and hurt by the lack of respect shown to him by a group of excited students on the evening of 25th June), only to postpone its decision to collectively resign. This was clearly interpreted by the students and the general public as an act of gross betrayal. In the meantime, feverish efforts were afoot to seek a 'compromise' formula with the Government. But the Government's response to those laughable and cowardly actions of the Court was predictable; it was more obdurate than ever and it refused to consider any of the demands in its letter of 24th July. So, the Court was left with no alternative but to resign 'en masse', which it duly did on 25th July.

One would have thought that the lines were drawn fairly clear now. On the one side, an arrogant Government armed with State power, determined to snub and humiliate a helpless academic community; and on the other side, the University, helpless no doubt, but still possessed of a moral courage and dignity, refusing to succumb to the Government's dictates, and preferring to quit instead. In effect, the Court said to the Government: If you can't respect the autonomy of the University, if you insist on your right to enter the campus and beat up the residents, we will resign and you better run the University as a Department of the Government. Everyone expected that the Government would indeed 'take over' the University, in which case the issues in conflict would have become sharper and more clear. But the

events, or rather, the non-events, since 25th July have shown the fantastic opportunism the 'intellectuals' are capable of, and how willing they can be to serve as the handmaids of a Government in power. Almost the very first thing the acting Vice-Chancellor did after resigning, and acting as an acting lameduck Vice-Chancellor, was to issue an order of suspension upon his colleague who is in jail. Barooah was arrested on July 6th and duly informed the University of his arrest; but he was not suspended till three weeks later, till the Authority presumably received assurances that indeed Barooah would be in jail for some time to come. This suspension was rationalised as a mere 'administrative measure'. Further 'administrative measures' are not unlikely. It is indeed widely suspected that the whole arrest has been engineered by the University authorities, to put away for a while and if possible, to get rid of one who has been for long a most inconvenient critic of the University administration's lapses. (Way back in 1962, D. P. Barooah as a young lecturer was mainly instrumental in getting the Pavate Enquiry Commission appointed, which revealed a lot of corrupt practices by senior employees in the University). In the meantime, the brave words of July 2nd and the brave actions of July 25th seem to have been forgotten. The lameduck Vice-Chancellor goes on acting as if he was really the authority. The teaching community is hopelessly divided, with many opportunists toading to authority. Only the students seem to be carrying on despite the limited strength they have, single-handed against the authority. The struggle has really become an uphill struggle, for they have now to fight against both the University authority, which is surreptitiously seeking to victimise and if possible, even engineer a future dismissal of Barooah, and the State Government which, for no apparent reason, continues to detain him. It is indeed astonishing that while all the students arrested in connection with the incidents of 25th June have been released, Barooah, arrested in the aftermath of 25th June continues to be in jail. Such are the ways of our democracy.

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Lessons

What could be the consequences of these stirring events since 25th June? What lessons can be drawn? First, the kind of marginal politicisation that has taken place among the general body of the students cannot but have a beneficial impact upon student movements in general in the days to come. The confrontations with State power, till now, have been generally of a benevolent kind. It needed the regime of a progressive Chief Minister—a well-known favourite of the CPI—to reveal the bloody potentialities of police might. Moreover, the initial demands were all-bread-and-butter demands. This was no call for action against anybody but blackmarketeers and hoarders, a most respectable call repeatedly endorsed by the Indian National Congress. Secondly, the utter hypocrisy of the liberal intellectual establishment stands truly revealed in the past few weeks. The University Court was enthusiastically ready to applaud the resolution of July 2nd. Clapping hands and nodding eyes does not require much courage, if at the same time, steps have been surreptitiously initiated to shut away vocal critics. If the Liberal of earlier times said, 'I don't agree with what you say, but I'll fight to my death for your right to say it', his modern counterpart, far more sophisticated, says: 'I agree with everything you say, but I'd rather die than march in the streets with you.' Our Liberals have gone even a step further; while they most heroically agreed to resign en masse on July 2 and indeed did so on July 25 they have at the same time initiated a series of actions which will completely nullify the so-called resignation. Even before the resignations were offered, the impression was created that being mostly ex-officio members, they after all could not resign, even if they wanted to. And now, the Government has most conveniently come forward with a 'clarification' which makes all the resignations invalid. Indeed, words don't break bones, especially so when they are initially loaded with double meanings and saving clauses. But whether the hypocritical face of the liberal intellectual is really going to be exposed to the public at large, and whether they

will get what has been long coming to them, or whether they will again get away with their liberal platitudes and expressions of 'deep sympathy and anguish', only the future will tell. For the present, anyway, the University administration is paralysed, the students are picketing in the blazing sun, and one sweats and waits.

August 14, 1974

What A Party !

GAUTAM SEN

IN 1972 the British Labour Party, then in opposition, criticised the Conservative Government for what it described as "extraordinary and ill-judged haste" in deporting a Moroccan Air Force officer who had been involved in an attempted coup against the oppressive King Hassan. The Conservative Government not only denied political asylum but also compelled the unfortunate officer's return to Morocco, and certain death. The repatriation of a political refugee to the country from which he has fled is in violation of the European Convention of Human Rights, and in this case the officer's death resulted in a suit before the European Court.

Earlier this year the same Labour Party, in government, permitted the deportation of over a hundred Vietnamese refugees aged between five and seventy who had entered Hong Kong illegally, to South Vietnam despite offers of asylum from a number of countries. The Saigon Government's assurances that only a technical offence had been committed did not, however, prevent the detention of the refugees in the notorious "tiger-cage" prison of Con Son, "in serenity while they await trial", as the South Vietnamese Ambassador in London put it. Some of the detainees have already died in prison and many others have been sent to the front line unarmed and untrained—the usual punishment for deserters. The normally shrewd British Foreign Office quotes the South Vietnamese authorities to justify its extraordinary faith. It is rather a coincidence that since these events occurred two

British companies, British Petroleum and Rio Tinto Zinc, have been awarded offshore oil rights (ironically off Con Son) by the Saigon regime. It is disclosed that the negotiations had been going on for some time. The infamous Rio Tinto Zinc company has been the grateful recipient of government patronage on other occasions. When the Labour Party was in power the last time its reputedly militant left-wing Minister of Industry and Trade and arch enemy of apartheid, Mr Wedgwood Benn, sanctioned a Rio Tinto Zinc project to mine in Namibia (formerly South West Africa). Quite apart from the moral turpitude involved, this was in violation of several United Nations General Assembly resolutions condemning South Africa's continued presence in Namibia and its racist policies in a Mandate territory.

Last month when the British Lions rugby team decided to proceed with its proposed tour of South Africa disregarding the Labour Government's advice, British embassies in South Africa were instructed not to extend the usual welcome accorded to visiting teams. It was consequently staggering to see the Labour Minister for Sport sipping champagne with the team (and the Conservative leader who had supported the tour) on their return, at Heathrow airport, to celebrate the sporting achievements of the Lions. The celebration had nothing to do with the Labour Party's aversion to apartheid, the Minister cheerfully explained!

And finally to complete the distinguished record of socialists in Britain: the British delegation has just vetoed a joint Common Market resolution which would have enabled member countries to admit Chileans condemned to death or sentenced to life imprisonment by the military junta automatically, on the grounds that it would limit the Home Secretary's discretion! Perhaps the Labour Government feels that some of the prisoners should be allowed to die.

Our sole agent in Bangladesh
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Blessed Are They

By A CORRESPONDENT

SOMETHING dazzles like a pearl under the dark blue water. Yes, the sides of the depth are dark, brownish dark. It moves rhythmically with a shallow respiration. Of the passers-by some hurry past, some spend a few seconds to look and a few bustee dwellers form a small crowd around. The fellow is dying on a Calcutta footpath. His pearl-white eyes testify to his long vitamin deficiency, the wasted body to the deficiency in calories. Paradoxically, the depth of the eye socket shows deficiency of even water in the body. The fellow is dying. But nobody would touch him. He has messed and it stinks. A very common story in this country of gods:

An uncommon woman stops near the dying. The ends of her blue-bordered white sari touch the muck and as she stoops down to feel the pulse the cross hanging from her neck touches the near-dead body, just on his heart. An ambulance follows the sister of mercy and stops near the man. He is carried to the home for the dying.

It is a strange place. Hundreds of men and women picked up from the streets are sheltered there. They are cleaned, bathed, dressed and fed. They get medical treatment also. But quite a few are beyond redemption. They die. What do they die of? Well that is a riddle. Do they die of starvation? Or disease? Or the diseases due to starvation? Or the starvation due to diseases? That is the riddle of the sphinx. But they die peacefully under a roof and plenty of watchful eyes. The cremation or burial is also done free. Sisters pray to God for the sins done by them on earth and pray to holy Mary, Mother of God, to pray for them also after their death.

Some survive. They are fed well, helped to recover and given a new suit of dress, but unfortunately they have to go back to the streets again. The sisters cannot help. There are thousands, maybe millions. What shelter is possible for them? Employment? Gainful employ-

ment? Well that is a pipe-dream. At least a permanent shelter and arrangement for two square meals a day? Impossible. The road is their ultimate shelter. But if they stay in Calcutta and approach the gates of death again and if they are fortunate to attract the attention of a sister of mercy they are sure to get shelter in the home for the dying. But they must approach the ultimate from a street under the open sky. If they begin to die under a thatched roof in a slum, then they do not qualify for a shelter in a home for the dying.

This may sound strange, maybe a little cruel, but imagine the relief the dying men get in the home for the dying. In this cruel world where a full stomach and a roof over the head are the ultimate in luxury for the majority of the population, this must be the peak of mercy. The fellow who leaves the world with a smile on his lips, with sympathy for him all around and with a full stomach and with a roof over his head does it with thanks. The men and women of mercy become world famous for what they are doing. Money and help pour in from all over the Christian world—paradoxically not to remove the barriers which make life impossible for the majority in this country, not to help prevent men from taking to the street ultimately but only to provide a home for the dying. But does it serve the dying? If they had been left to die, would that not have been euthanasia? Well, euthanasia is not legal. It is not supported either by the law or the morals of Christianity. So the sister of mercy serves the dying.

Long, long ago, there was a city called Shanghai where drugs and wine, gambling and prostitution were the best and the most famous in the world. Boats coming from other lands and approaching the harbours would be met by hundreds of floating bodies of Chinese who had died of hunger. The sympathetic Kuomintang Government had a squad of vans. They would collect the bodies from the streets of Shanghai and throw them in the sea.

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No use wasting valuable resources in land for the bodies of a few beggars. They thought it best to dump the lot in the sea. But even the bodies of the beggars formed perhaps a part of the powder keg that blew off the KMT, lock stock and barrel. The dead bodies of the hungry are not always safe.

The sisters are doubly blessed. Firstly, by the dying, and secondly by the men who do not want to be blown off by that powder keg sky high.

Amen.

Music In The Rains

BY OUR MUSIC CRITIC

A charity programme in aid of a free bed at the Sarada Hospital for ailing women musicians was organised by the Suresh Sangit Sangsad on August 15 at Kalamandir. The day, marked by continual rain as it was, could have been an ideal occasion for presenting some of the numerous melodies and songs of the season. But three out of four performers steered clear of a raga having the remotest semblance to mallar.

Mr Dinanath Mishra, a disciple of Mr Chinmoy Lahiri, gave a rendition of Puriya-Kalyan, a modern hybrid combining Puriya and Iman. The *adagio* composition in *ektal* and the *allegro* in *trital* were well sung but some of his *presto* tans were not quite in tune.

The sarod playing of Miss Shri Ganguly, daughter of Mr Shyam Ganguli, in Madhuvanti was both efficiently performed and aesthetically enjoyed. The vocal performance of Mrs Srila Banerji in Abhogi-Kanara was efficient but at times she appeared almost shrill. She should lower her scale by at least one full note.

The only rain melody was presented by Mr Amjad Ali Khan who chose Mia-ki-mallar, a raga said to have been created by Mia Tansen. The rendition of the *alap* was fairly done although it could hardly be termed a masterly one. Particularly in employing the chromatic glissando of the flat and natural sevenths Mr Khan betrayed his

lack of artistic perception. The compositions in Dhamar and trital were well done but in no way unique. It requires an Amir Khan, or Ali Akbar or Ravi Shankar to bring out the majestic pathos, the bitter-sweetness of Mia-ki-mallar. Still one must thank Mr Khan for playing a broad raga which he seldom does. Mr Swapan Choudhury gave a good account of himself as a competent percussionist. Mr Sanjoy Mukherji, another tabaliya of the J. Ghosh school, acquitted himself creditably.

Letter

On Unification

It is not pleasant to enter into an open controversy with comrades who are today behind bars. But when the issues raised are political, one can hardly avoid it and one expects readers to treat this letter in the spirit in which it is written—not as an attempt at counter-accusation but as an attempt at putting certain things in the correct perspective.

It is wrong to say, as Comrade Santosh Rana and some other comrades lodged in West Bengal jails do (Frontier, August 10, 1974), that it was after the Party Congress that "placing himself high above the Party and the CC and without calling any CC meeting, he (Comrade Charu Mazumdar) issued left-sectarian calls one after another". When was the 'left' tactical line introduced? This line, the main aspects of which were annihilation of class enemies and abandonment of the mass line, was adopted in both theory and practice from about the middle of 1969. This line gradually became systematised and embraced all fronts — worker, peasant, student and youth. Comrade Charu Mazumdar's "March forward by Summing up the Experience of the Revolutionary Peasant Struggle of India", "A Few Words about Guerilla Actions", "Our Party's Tasks among the Workers", "A Few Words to the Revolutionary Youths and Students" etc., in which this line was developed, had all been written by the end of 1969 or the beginning of 1970. In fact, the Political-Organisational Re-

port of the Central Organising Committee to the Party Congress held in May, 1970, unanimously adopted by it, contained all the "left" formulations and betrayed extreme "left" sectarianism. Thus the entire leadership represented at the Party Congress gave its approval to this "left" line. So, any suggestion that "left" organisational matters arose only after the Party Congress is contrary to facts.

How could Comrade Charu Mazumdar "place himself high above the Party and the CC"? Did many leaders and cadres not help him do so? Did not the Bengal-Bihar-Orissa Border Regional Committee quote in more than one report of theirs (the last one written as late as November 1970) a poor peasant calling Comrade C.M. "a god?" Did the Secretary of this Committee not declare at the Party Congress, while speaking in favour of the revolutionary authority of Comrade C.M., that if Comrade C.M. went in one direction and the entire CC in another, he would follow Comrade C.M.? While rightly criticising Comrade C.M. for placing himself high above the Party and the CC, it would be less one-sided if comrades did not forget their own role in helping him to do so.

The truth is, at one stage the entire leadership and almost the entire Party under the influence of the leadership were infected with sectarianism. Take, for instance, the Bihar State Committee's document submitted to the Party centre in October, 1970. While it pointed out certain things correctly, it was basically a "left" opportunist document. How did it initiate an inner-party struggle on issues raised by it? It did so by giving the highly sectarian call to Party comrades to liquidate the central leadership that had been unanimously elected at the Party Congress about four months before. The contradiction between comrades immediately turned into an antagonistic contradiction—a contradiction between enemies. This paved the way for the split with those who supported the Bihar State Committee and led to the formation of a State leading team in Bihar. At that time the Bengal-Bihar-Orissa Border Regional Committee was entirely, whole-heartedly, on the side of Comrade C.M.

When this Committee differed with the

leadership on certain questions, they too insisted both in theory and in practice on their right to form a parallel centre and to implement their own line. The organisational norms of a Marxist-Leninist party were respected by none.

It is far from correct to say that the Party's stand on the Pakistan issue was national-chauvinist. The Party took the only correct stand that should have been taken—that of supporting the Communist Party of East Pakistan (Marxist-Leninist), their policy of building the people's army and base areas. It was our Party that systematically exposed the conspiracy of the Soviet social imperialists, the U.S. imperialists, the Indian expansionists and their East Pakistan stooges and carried on war against national-chauvinism. Those who opposed the Party line and went out of the Party to do so made far from correct formulations in respect of the class character of Yahya and Bhutto and their government.

The claim that a "requisition meeting" of the elected members of the CC was

held on November 7, 1971 is not warranted by facts. A section of the CC (not more than four members—three from Bihar and one from Uttar Pradesh) which split away from the Party held a meeting of its own without the knowledge of four other elected members then alive and outside prison—the General Secretary, a comrade from Tamil Nadu, Comrade Sharma and Comrade Soumya. To call this a revival of the CC is an astounding claim. It actually represented an attempt at reorganising those who formed a small section of the Party that had left it and at setting up a centre of their own.

It is a very bold claim that this section "formulated a correct Marxist-Leninist line", "led the Party in implementing it and re-integrating the Party with the masses" and that "the achievement in carrying forward the revolution by implementing the mass line is remarkable". As readers can themselves judge whether this claim has any relation to truth, no comment is necessary.

Why was the COC formed? When

Comrade Charu Mazumdar was arrested and became a martyr and the Party centre was disrupted, Comrade Soumya and others tried to reorganise it. The two CC members who alone were outside prison at the time reorganised the CC by co-opting some other comrades. But in February 1974 the CC was reconstituted as the COC in conformity with its actual character and tasks. The COC aimed at uniting all those who belonged to the Party at the time of Comrade C.M.'s death but, as the COC statement declared, one of its tasks is to unite with all other genuine Marxist-Leninists. Why should it be regrettable to try to overcome disruption and disorganisation and to rebuild the Party on the basis of a correct line?

One is yet to be convinced that the section represented by Comrade Rana is really pursuing a correct Marxist-Leninist line. Last year there were reports that Sm. Jayashree Rana had attended a convention for the Release of Naxalite(!) Prisoners in Delhi organised by the Dangeites and put her signature together with prominent Dangeites to a manifesto or appeal that was a revisionist Dangeite document. It would be worthwhile to know whether she did all this in her individual capacity.

The letter from Comrade Rana and others seems burdened with the old legacy of "left" sectarianism, subjectivism and one-sidedness, which disrupted our Party and our struggle despite all their positive aspects. To serve the people and the cause of revolution, one must get rid of these shortcomings and sum up the experiences of the past truthfully, honestly and in the light of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought. The foremost task before us is to rebuild the Party so that it can integrate itself with the masses and provide a leadership to the people to end this long nightmare of tyranny and exploitation. Not bitter polemics but a sober appraisal of the present situation, a sense of responsibility to the people and correct steps to unite the different sections of the Party and all the genuine revolutionaries are the need of the hour.

Patriot

AUGUST 31, 1974

IMPERIALISM AND REVOLUTION IN SOUTH ASIA

Edited by

**Kathleen Gough and
Hari P. Sharma**

The book begins with an analysis of the impact of imperialism and capitalism on India, Pakistan, Ceylon and Bangladesh before and after 1947, and examines their effects on the social, economic and political institutions of the Indian subcontinent.

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The fourth section discusses the repression and subsequent resistance struggle in Bangladesh leading to the Indo-Pakistan war and the creation of Bangladesh.

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Political Prisoners In India : An Appeal

"We, the undersigned, deeply deplore that tens of thousands of political suspects have been kept rotting in Indian jails for several years without proper trials, and subjected there to the most inhuman conditions as well as to physical torture. We were also anguished to know that many of these detainees were forced to go on a hunger strike from May 17 to June 14 to press their demand that they be recognized as 'political prisoners'. Most of these detainees are young people who are merely suspected of being 'Naxalites'. We are aware that the Defence of India Rules, Preventive Detention Act, Maintenance of Internal Security Act, and a continual series of trumped up charges are among the means used to keep these people in custody in spite of the Indian legal framework. We are horrified that in a democracy such flagrant violation of people's fundamental rights could go on. We urge the Government of India to recognize these detainees as political prisoners and to bring them to fair and speedy trials. We also ask our fellow academics and intellectuals in India to do their utmost for the same end."

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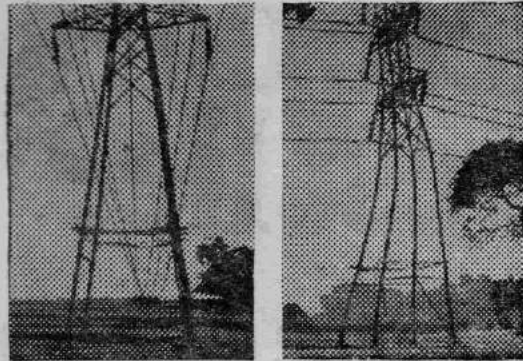
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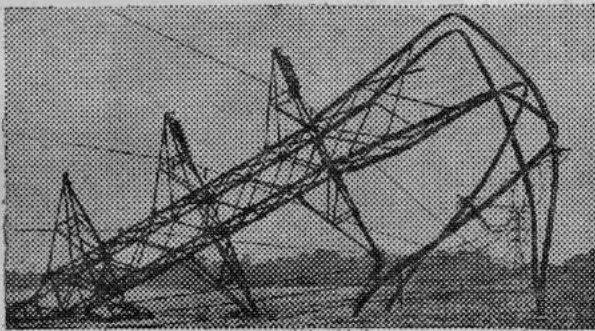
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