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SEASON OF MISTS

DO newspapers have anything to do with creating the events they report ? This is not the familiar doubt about the veracity or accuracy of newspaper reports. But even if newspapers do not invent news, they seem to stimulate the generation of newsworthy events; fewer things, it appears, happen when the daily Press ceases functioning. It is difficult to explain otherwise why so little of any consequence has happened hereabouts in the past few weeks. Now that Parliament has adjourned, even some inconsequential news routine has disappeared from the few newspapers whose publication has not been suspended. One might be tempted to suggest that the apparent absence of any significant happening is due to these newspapers' failure to see and report what has been happening. Or they may not even be willing to report all that has been happening. But this cannot be an adequate explanation, not in the light of one's direct experience of one's immediate environment. What is happening in West Bengal, or even in Calcutta ? Remarkably little indeed; amazingly little considering that the State is due to go to the polls in less than two months' time.

Elections in November are, of course, not altogether certain as yet; the Election Commissioner may well change his mind after touring the flooded districts. But he is no longer under any major political pressure to change the date. The Congress party, which had been so concerned over the possibility of floods making it difficult for people to go to vote, has shed all its anxiety now that floods have really made conditions difficult to an extent it could not have foreseen. Mr Atulya Ghosh has not failed to see that money spent in the name of flood relief can also buy votes. Now he does not mind if the elections are held in November, and he can always say: "I told you, but you wouldn't agree. Now let's have the contest when you wanted it." Even if the United Front leaders are a little concerned about the floods proving a boon to the Congress, they dare not admit it in public. Indeed, the Left CPI has hastened to announce that it will launch a protest campaign if the election date is postponed. The protest is unlikely to ruin the prospects of the Congress which has already had time to change its tune.

But what kind of a fight does the blessed United Front hope or plan

to put up in November? With less than two months to go, it has succeeded in generating little popular interest in the contest, let alone enthusiasm for an outcome in its favour. True, the people have not forgotten the black record of Congress rule, nor has life been exactly easy under the rule of an agent of the Congress Government at the Centre. The brief experience of United Front administration might not have been one people would be particularly anxious to re-live, but leftist parties could still retain substantial goodwill and inspire faith and muster active support if they had shown some capacity to act and courage to lead—in the right direction. But do they know the direction? Will they ever have the capacity? They have not done much in recent weeks. What are they doing now? Puja shopping? And many of the young revolutionaries have perhaps already enrolled themselves as Barwari volunteers. Good training for our mythical guerillas.

Sabotage In Durgapur

Despite their pious horror, the authorities of the Durgapur steel plant cannot escape a fair share of the blame for the act of sabotage in the plant last week. For years they have fostered the Workers' Union which has a microscopic following among the plant's twenty-two thousand workers to please some local Congress leaders who are trusted lieutenants of the big boss of the party, Mr Atulya Ghosh. The Employees' Union, which can claim no such distinguished association, has been persistently refused recognition, though in successive elections to works and other commitees it has captured all the elective seats and proved beyond doubt that it enjoys the support of an overwhelming majority of the steel plant workers. The *entente cordiale* between the management and the minority union worked to the advantage of both; a roaring racket was set up by career-seeking officers and power-crazy Congressmen. The local boss of the Congress, who is also a big shot in the minority union, became a super-general manager whose wishes were law in the plant. Those who were supposed to run the plant had to cringe to him; those who would not had to take the consequence. Contracts and other favours flowed through devious channels in the expectation that, in return, a word would be put in proper quarters at approriate time. In this general scramble for collecting personal gains what became of the plant was nobody's concern. The servility of the management and the high-handedness of a handful of pampered persons constantly trying to cash in on their connection with the Congress made Durgapur the sick child of Hindustan Steel.

What made the Congress union turn on the management is not known. The set-up at Durgapur is going through a process of reorganisation at the top for some time. Maybe, the racket felt insecure, for a clean-up appeared to be in the offing; it wanted to thwart the reorganisation plan. The imminence of the mid-term poll may be another reason; in last year's election the local Congress leaders who guide the minority union were routed; perhaps they thought some militant action would facilitate their political comeback. Any mass action was beyond the minority union, and the majority of the workers would not respond to its strike call; so it chose sabotage which would cost the company nearly one crore of rupees in repair and replacement and probably a much larger amount in the shape of loss of production of finished steel. There is a report that frantic appeals by the plant management to the local Congress leaders to intervene went unheeded. When the plant was threatened with a major catastrophe, they insisted that the demand of the minority union for the upgrading of a category of workers loyal to it must be conceded before they would move in the matter. The Government, which is accustomed to see the hands of saboteurs and foreign instigators even in simple cases of breakdown and accident, is completely silent over this crime. What a furore there would have been if it was possible to connect somehow any of the Left parties with the sabotage! It would not be surprising if some ingenious intelligence man is able to furnish the Government with "proof" that the act was really of the Communist-led union.

Already victimisation of the innocent has started. According to the management's own admission, four thousand workers have been laid off; the Employees' Union would put it at seven thousand, including temporary and casual labour. Among the laid-off are a large number of workers who had nothing to do with the decision to strike, far less with the sabotage; yet they have been forced into indefinite suffering. How long the lay-off will continue remains anybody's guess; but even the most optimistic estimates would put it at ten days in some shops and a month in some others, provided the replacements are available within the country. On the other hand, apart from routine disciplinary proceedings, no action has been initiated by the plant management against the saboteurs. The plant authorities have openly held the minority union responsible for the entire episode, but there is no indication that they propose to de-recognise the union. Even this gross misdemeanour of the union does not appear to them as sufficient ground for righting a wrong that has lasted many years. The chairman of Hindustan Steel has talked of difficulties of withdrawing recognition; the nature of some of these difficulties can be guessed from the instant interviews that some of the union leaders are being granted in New Delhi by top Central leaders. It would appear that the Central leaders are prepared to risk a steel plant rather than deal sternly with a few Congressmen of Durgapur. The offer of the Employees' Union to run the closed shops so that the lay-off may be terminated immediately has naturally not met with any response. The plant authorities have

now reasons to be more circumspect, and the sabotage may ultimately bring them closer to the minority union and its leaders.

Empty Berths

As rumour mangles competing rumour, the three empty berths in Mrs Indira Gandhi's Cabinet continue to remain empty. There was no particular pattern in the manner of departure of the three who have parted company with Mrs Gandhi since she re-installed herself following the fourth general election. Mr Chagla's chagrin was ostensibly on account of the linguistic antics of Dr Triguna Sen, even though the grapevine interpretation was in terms of a possible hiatus of views over the timing of a fresh approach to China; Mr Chenna Reddy left because the judicial strictures left him—and the Prime Minister—with no alternative; and now Mr Asoka Mehta has used the opportunity of Czechoslovakia to fade away into the *de jure* wilderness where he had already been perambulating *de facto* for the last several months : in his case certainly, the beginning and the end are technical identities. Ideology as such played no part in any of these exits ; Mrs Gandhi in any case either does not believe in ideology or is incapable of having one. The company she keeps—or even occasionally discards—cannot have a different hue.

But the arithmetic of support in the Congress Parliamentary Party is a different matter altogether. While considering names for filling the empty slots, the Prime Minister's confidantes and advisers cannot possibly ignore the kaleidoscope of intra-party alignments. The Syndicate had never quite ceased prowling. Czechoslovakia has come at a rather inconvenient moment—raising bouts of fresh hope among the Masani-minded in the party—, Mr Morarji Desai's paternal excursions have left an indeterminable trail behind, the Chhatrapati from Karad keeps on indulging in dangerous multiple liaisons. The exits of Messrs Chagla and Mehta mean that, technically, Maharashtra's representation in the Cabinet has come down by fifty per cent, but then, both of them will perhaps pass for marginal Maharashtrians. Whether either Mr Chavan or Mr Naik would subscribe to this concept of marginalism or would insist on full compensation is yet to be seen. Meanwhile, a footloose Chenna Reddy could scarcely spell a tranquil existence for Mr Brahmananda Reddy. At the other end, a resumption of activities on the part of Mr C. B. Gupta in Uttar Pradesh is near to an ill wind so far as Mrs Gandhi is concerned. To buy peace on the domestic front through the offer of a Cabinet post might indeed appear, as a policy, good for the very short term, but the Prime Minister, according to all indications, has no predilection for a short term. Almost simultaneously, Bihar, which already has four seats in the Cabinet, is demanding more : the mid-term elections, after all, are as much around the corner in Bihar as in Uttar Pradesh. Mr Baliram Bhagat, a pliable enough quantity, would do fine in case a fifth name for Bihar has to be passed, particularly since such a move would also quieten the scheduled castes rumpus. However, in this matter, the deciding voice is Mr Jagjivan Ram's. And Babuji, as everybody knows, has his own very private dreams . . .

None of these goings-on affect—or will affect—the sombre pattern of living of the common people in this country. What permutation of quasi-leaders presides over their destiny is a query which needs scarcely detain them, for the quality of the destiny will remain unaltered whatever the permutation finally reached. Irrespective of the assorted games the leaders might play, the country will continue to move—or stagnate—by its own inertia. The Indian polity illustrates that the masses do not matter, and the super-structure is indeed super. Even the parties on the left merely confirm the notion : look at the way they have been going about over such vital issues of Indian existence as Czechoslovakia.

Why ASEAN ?

A correspondent writes :

When in August last year the moribund Association of South-East Asia (ASA) was replaced by the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) few expected the latter to fare any better than its predecessor. Except for one minor omission, the aims and objectives of ASEAN were hardly different from those of ASA. While ASA thought it necessary to declare its lack of commitment to any power bloc ASEAN chose to be silent on this point. With the passage of time this silence becomes more and more eloquent.

This, of course, does not mean that ASEAN has overtly joined any power bloc. That is hardly necessary when the alignments and sympathies of the member nations are well known. Their collective character need not be different from their individual ones. What is really disturbing is the news that comes in from the capitals of different ASEAN countries. ASEAN, it seems, is up to something more than the lofty mission of promoting regional cooperation in economic and cultural matters, about whose success people have been sceptical from the beginning. For, members of ASEAN (Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia and the Philippines) have very little to sell to each other, and given their present social system they will have to depend for a long time on the West and Japan. Rather, a British journal sounded reasonable when it commented early this year, "The ultimate purpose of ASEAN is of a US-inspired military nature, to create a defence ring against China." Asians hardly need be told what this 'defence' means.

Ever since Indonesia's entry into ASEAN the "ultimate purpose" be-

came more and more evident. Thanks to the US effort over the years, Thailand and the Philippines have been provided with a military infrastructure —air and naval bases and a modernized military machine. But Indonesia with her 400,000 well-trained army and reasonably modern armament has a decisive importance in any military pact in South-East Asia. SEATO's lack of success was due not a little to the anti-imperialist stand of the then Indonesia. When Suharto's Indonesia at last joined ASEAN, Hubert Humphrey, the US Vice-President, lost no time in advising the members to devote their energy to transfoming it into a purely military organisation. This piece of advice was followed by an agreement between Indonesia and the United States for supplying the former with large quantities of spare parts and equipment. From then on Djakarta began to figure constantly in the itinerary of the generals of the US and allied armies. The US general, James Edmundson, the British general, John Andersen, the special adviser of the British C-in-C in the Far East, Duncan Watson, and the Australian Secretary for the Navy, Donald Chipp, visited Djakarta one after another.

Then followed a second phase involving visits and counter-visits by military delegations to ASEAN capitals. A 50-man Indonesian delegation led by Vice-Admiral K. Djelani flew to Bangkok with the express purpose of "strengthening relations between members of ASEAN." One might wonder how some generals could strengthen the economic bonds. Well, hasn't Mao said, a people without an army has nothing? Messrs Thanom, Suharto, Tunku and others must have their own before they can usher in a millennium of economic and cultural cooperation. So Admiral Muljadi C-in-C of the Indonesian Navy, visited Manila to finalise the arrangement for closer cooperation between Indonesian and the Philippine navies. A 51-man delegation of Thailand's Forces College headed by General P. Amatyakul and another from Malaysia led by the chief of her armed forces staff, Gen Tunku Osman, visited Indonesia. Contents of the talks these delegations held may never be known. But one thing is unmistakably clear. Under the convenient cover of ASEAN a military alliance is taking shape, filling what President Marcos calls "a security gap in South-East Asia." After the beating the US received in Vietnam she is badly in need of one such Asian organisation manned by the Asians themselves.

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View from Delhi

CPI's Dead End

FROM A POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

MR Dandekar of the Swatantra Party was crediting the CPI with too much when he said in Parliament that the Press strike was the result of a communist conspiracy to black out news from Czechoslovakia. If Moscow had wanted the strike, it would have been timed for the worst in Prague. Mr Dandekar surely could not have known that long before the Soviet aggression began, the CPI's agit-prop commandos holding key positions in the Indian Federation of Working Journalists had begun sabotaging the strike to oblige the Government and the employers. But as it turned out, the very strike the CPI was trying to break proved beneficial to itself and to the Government. The party was spared adverse publicity to the most serious convulsion since 1965 that is rocking it at the moment. The Prime Minister and her Cabinet were spared the Big Press attacks over Czechoslovakia.

There is little doubt that so much politics is mixed up with the Press strike and someone has been taking the strikers for a ride. The upshot of the strike would be a severe setback to the trade union movement in the newspaper industry. Working journalists have always been for a non-political trade union organisation for themselves. But with the communist infiltration into the IFWJ, it became an appendage of the Government in the wake of the Sino-Indian border war. The question that has often been asked in the IFWJ but never convincingly answered is who financed the IFWJ's delegation to the Afro-Asian Journalists Conference in Indonesia where the Indian journalists played a clownish role attempting to put across the Government of India's line against China? The effective control of the IFWJ since then has been with the CPI's agit-prop commandos backed by the Soviet bloc countries. The resentment at this among the journalists might find expression in the form of a parallel federation. As for the non-journalist employees, the CPI(M) has played them for a sucker. The accidental fact that Mr S. Y. Kolhatkar is the President of the All-India Newspaper Employees Federation is being exploited by his party for political ends. And how can one take exception to Mr Nath Pai of the PSP or Mr George Fernandes of the SSP or even Mr R. K. Khadilkar of the Congress trying to mediate under the pretext of "depoliticalising" the strike?

It was clear from the beginning that the IFWJ would betray the strike because its leadership looked askance at the militancy of the non-journalist staff. It was also clear that the employers were united for the first time and were out to fight it to the finish. When the strike was complete and successful and the employers were getting belligerent amidst their frustration, the strike leaders began showing signs of cold feet because they did not know how they were going to end the strike. Amidst the endless negotiations, the leaders have been feeding the strikers with half-truths and untruths even as they looked pathetically to the Government to save their face. The Government which once talked of intervention to settle the strike has gradually moved to the employers' position and is now anxious to wear the strikers down. It is well to assail the Government but then who gave the Government the impression that the leaders were dying for a settlement? One of the leaders pleaded with the Prime Minister to issue a statement appealing to the strikers to return to work and promising a fair deal. But the Home Minister, Mr Chavan, advised the Prime Minister against pulling the CPI(M)'s chestnuts out of the fire. Any Government backing the employers and afraid of the Big Press would welcome anything that would lead to the break-up of the unions. The employers are set on smashing the unions and the Government is abetting their game.

When things reached a stalemate the leadership lost nerve and dared not widen the strike by drawing the papers not involved in it at present. The only way out was to expand the front so that the pressure of medium and small newspaper employers would be felt on the big employers. Just as Mr Kolhatkar's personal prestige stood in the way of a unit-level settlement in some of the strike-bound papers, the adamant attitude of one of the big chain employers has hampered settlement in some other papers. Anything short of a 100 per cent implementation of the wage board recommendations would amount to the failure of the strike. One only hopes that the CPI(M) would not disown the strike if it ends in failure by any mischance!

The CPI's ill-concealed glee at the CPI(M) split has turned out to be short-lived. Now it is the CPI(M) Politbureau's turn to laugh in its shirtsleeves at the CPI rift over Czechoslovakia. The Politbureau members spoke in cacophonic voices first but a consensus was hammered out in Calcutta last week. The CPI, on the other hand, was getting drawn deeper and deeper into a crisis. Its hopes that disillusioned ranks of the CPI(M) would now defect back to the ye olde party have been belied.

Last week's National Council session of the CPI was a stormy affair. It was a virtual revolt against the party's establishment leadership which still considers any criticism of the Soviet Union blasphemous. The high priest, Mr Dange, angry and frustrated at the revolt building against his leadership, spoke sarcastically of the "great CPI" correcting "the Party of Lenin" and called the Czechoslovak Communist Party's programme "trash."

A cable from the Australian Communist Party, for a long time a straggling camp follower of Moscow, caused a flutter in the party's dovecotes.

The Australian party has suggested a world conference of communist parties to denounce Soviet aggression and has appealed for CPI's initiative in the matter. This must have been too much for Mr Dange to swallow and perhaps a blatant act of interference in the CPI's affairs !

Three documents read out at the council session, of course with General Secretary Rajeswar Rao's permission, together with Mr Somnath Lahiri's impassioned speech, turned the tide against Mr Dange and isolated the supporters of Soviet action. One of the documents was the appeal from the World Federation of Trade Unions (of which Mr Dange is one of the vice-presidents) to the trade unions in the Soviet Union and other Warsaw Pact countries to demand the withdrawal of occupation forces from Czechoslovakia. As was to be expected, trade unions in these countries ignored the appeal. The second document was the diary of Mr C Unni Raja, a National Council member from Kerala, who happened to witness the events in Prague. This was corroborated by the diary of Mr S. Chatterji, Indian representative at the WFTU headquarters in Prague, and Mrs Chatterji. Then came Mr Somnath Lahiri's account of the Prague events and the 'drama" of his quiet escape across the Austrian border to be able to reach India in time for the National Council meeting.

The Soviet occupation forces came ready with the names, addresses and car numbers of important Czechoslovak Communist Party functionaries but before they could swoop on the leaders, the clandestine Free Prague Radio, run by the party, appealed to the people to remove all street signs and erase all the numbers on the houses.

When Mr H. K. Vyas, of Rajasthan, made his points, Mr Dange lost his temper and called him names but that did not deter the members from choosing Mr Vyas to prepare the draft resolution in the place of other drafts which by now had become obsolete. The National Council dispersed so that the Central Executive could meet again to prepare an acceptable resolution but rival groups of Council members were holding parallel meetings, in Mr Dange's residence and in Mr Yogindra Sharma's residence.

The CPI cannot really split now because there have already been two splits in the movement. But if the Czechoslovak issue results in the isolation of the crusted leadership and marks the party's decisive break with Moscow, the party could still save itself from liquidation. Whether the present crisis will lead to a new party congress is anybody's guess. The party had taunted the CPI(M)'s opportunism at its foundation Congress in Calcutta when it did not adopt any resolution on the ideological issues of the international communist movement. The CPI patted itself on the back for the resolution it had passed at its Bombay Congress. Perhaps the CPI was right when it said the CPI(M) would have split at its foundation conference itself had it attempted a discussion of these issues. But what beats one now is why the CPI should reach the dead end despite its oft-paraded clarity of thinking on the "Great Debate." All the resolutions of the past were of no avail when the question was posed: can Moscow sustain its ideology with the help of bayonets?

Letter from America

"Fort Daley"

ROBI CHAKRAVORTI

The Democratic Party convention at Chicago was quite a show, not in the sense the Republican Party convention at Miami Beach had been. There was no balloon-showering after seconding speeches; there were no marching bands raising ruckus as the names of the candidates were announced. Professional entertainers did not deck themselves out in colourful dresses dancing and prancing. There were no mini-skirted Nixonettes or Rocky girls mixing politics with sex.

It was a show in the sense that the Democratic Party establishment took over the entire organization of the convention in a way that reminded one of exercising democratic rights in an occupied territory. Jules Pfeiffer, the famous cartoonist, was not exactly exaggerating when he told a television reporter that the vast security arrangements at Chicago gave the picture of a garrison State come alive. Walter Cronkite of the CBS said in course of his television coverage of the convention, "There are so many troops in Chicago that some one said Bob Hope might visit Chicago to entertain troops." And the bloody action the forces engaged in has made Chicago stink.

It was obvious that Johnson and his henchman, Richard Daley, the Mayor of Chicago, ran the party convention. There were about 40,000 troops, National Guardsmen, policemen, FBI and other security agents massed in Chicago for the occasion. Seven-foot high barbed wire fenced the Amphitheatre. Inside, security guards—at the rate of one per three delegates—roamed the aisles and the catwalks above the floor. Daley went so far as even to seal up the manholes of the city near the convention hall. A Chicago reporter appropriately called the convention hall Fort Daley.

Daley's organization men played other tricks as well, such as packing

the galleries with his supporters who carried signs reading : "We love-Mayor Daley". He wanted to show his strength to the delegates after a rough night of demonstrations in the streets had marred his image to millions of television viewers of the nation. A number of delegates were manhandled, such as the Chairman of the New Hampshire delegation who was taken to the police station handcuffed; Daley had to directly intervene for his release. A number of prominent delegates openly criticised his strong-arm tactics to suppress dissent. Senator Ribicoff, a McGovern supporter, criticised Daley's "Gestapo" tactics from on the podium, looking at Daley below, seated among the Illinois delegates, direct in the eye. Next day, Daley brought in hundreds of people into the galleries who carried signs: "We love Mayor Daley" !

The problem in America today and the problem that Hubert Humphrey and his Democratic Party has to face is that a considerable number of Americans do love Daley and his strong-arm tactics to suppress dissent by the young and the disaffected. George Wallace and Lester Maddox praised Daley, and there are little bits of Wallace and Maddox in the secret recesses of the minds of millions of white Americans. They live on farms, in the South, in the suburbia, in ethnic pockets of blue-collar and white-collar neighbourhoods. They have made it good in America by following what they consider to be the Christian ethic of hard work and God's will and they are distressed and angry at the godless, long-haired youth and the uppity black people's conduct in the streets. As Robert Scammon, the statistician has pointed out, a minority of the voters—only about 15 per cent—consists of the young and even if we add another 5 percent to the total, they cannot constitute a majority against what is often called the centre of the American voting public.

Nixon aims his appeal directly to the conservative core of American voters who constitute the majority. It does not matter if they are reactionary and wrong; they are the people who are going to elect the next President. Humphrey's problem is that he knows that he is carrying the burden of Johnson's unpopularity and that he has alienated himself from a large segment of conservative voters who would like to see some of the Wallace policies enforced without the forthright offensive rhetoric that the former Alabama Governor employs. The various polls say that Wallace supporters constitute 15 to 20 percent of the total voters. If someone promises Wallace policies without his outspoken racist ideology, he is likely to have a broader appeal to the basic conservative core of the American voting public. Nixon is the one to do this.

Humphrey's problem is that the so-called minority protest votes are crucial to his election strategy. The conservates will be wooed by Republicans, and HHH is at a disadvantage because of his guilt by association with the unpopular President who did not dare face even his partymen at Chicago. On the other hand, the protesters, who want a change from LBJ policies, are alienated from the onetime liberal who, they think, betrayed them by selling himself to Johnson. McCarthy, their hero, has refused to endorse Humphrey, and Daley's strong-arm tactics in the streets of Chicago have merely exacerbated the situation. In short, HHH is under a cross-fire : he is being shot at by the conservatives who want a change in Washington and by the young and the poor, the intellectuals and the disaffected, who want a major break from the past.

While HHH has to set the Democratic house in order and fashion his election strategy, Nixon is moving ahead with his campaign. It was announced that Nixon's first campaign blast will be sounded in Chicago. This was a shrewd move. Millions of Americans saw the split in the Democratic party which represented, in a way, the split in the public opinion in the country. They also saw the demonstrations in the streets of Chicago and watched the Democratic stalwart, Richard Daley's name smeared. Daley may have warmed the hearts of extremists, but the way he met the dissent inside and outside the convention hall did not raise his reputation as a cool, astute politician. Many, who would otherwise are conservatives, thought Daley overplayed his hands.

The fact that the Democratic President did not show up at the convention must also have appeared significant to millions of voters in the country. This fact would certainly figure prominently in the campaign speeches of Nixon who would like to tell the American public that in contrast with Democrats, his party exudes sweetness and light. This is going to be the 'image' of his campaign and Humphrey, facing the pressure of criticism from the young and the scowls of inspection from LBJ and his henchmen in the Democratic Party, would find it hard to present consensus politics which Nixon is so obviously going to play right down the line.

This is a strange election year, and predictions are risky. But at this stage it looks that the Republican campaign slogan may very well come true : "Nixon's the one". Johnson who rode to spectacular victory against Goldwater four years ago has, to all indications, destroyed the chances of the Democratic Party. Marquis Childs hinted that LBJ is so much fanatically righteous about his Vietnam policies that perhaps there is a secret axis between him and Nixon. This may be wild speculation. But it is true that while the Democratic Party convention four years ago marked the zenith of Johnson's political career, the Chicago convention marked its nadir. No wonder that he chose not to attend the convention.

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Student Politics In The West

BIPLAB DAS GUPTA

London

FOR a long time in England "student politics" was considered a phenomenon of the poor countries. It was identified with the frustration of the middle class, from which most of the students came, and the fearful prospect of unemployment facing the students in those countries. In comparison, the students of Britain, it was contended, were well fed and adequately looked after by "society", the employment condition was still favourable to the university students, and the "stable and democratic" political system was considered flexible enough to allow for changes, if there was at all any need for them, without the intervention of the students. There were, true, some sociological problems, such as drug addiction, pre-marital relationships, or homosexuality in the boarding houses, but none of these was going to subvert the political order. Students' movement was restricted to debates and symposia, and campaigns for increased financial grants and educational reforms, under the auspices of that "highly responsible" students' body, The National Union of Students. Of course some students also took part in demonstrations and signature campaigns conducted by organisations like Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, Movement for Colonial Freedom, and Vietnam Solidarity Front, but their number was few, and virtually no notice was taken of their activities either by the Press or by the public. And the interesting stories about the students of Calcutta, their expertise in burning cars and throwing back tear-gas shells at the police line, were a constant source of amusement, from a distance, for many Londoners.

This picture of a quiet and conformist student community is changing very rapidly over the past two years, and it is instructive to know how it is changing, why it is changing, who are leading this change, and how student politics in Britain today compares with student politics in India. The object of this article is to suggest answers to some of these questions.

The first signs of change were detected in 1966, when the students of the London School of Economics protested against the appointment of Dr Adams as the Director of the School, because of his alleged inability to protect the students and teachers of the Rhodesia College, where he was the Principal, from the oppression of the police force employed by the racialist Smith regime. They staged sit-ins for several days in the following year when some of their leaders were disciplined by the authorities. That was just the beginning of militant student activities, to be followed by a series of events in the next few months. One of the brightest sides of their movement is their preoccupation with the race problem, despite the prejudices of the vast majority of the people. Time and again they have held meetings and demonstrations against the racialist policies of the Government — the discriminatory increase in the overseas students' fees, the prejudices of the vast majority of Asians of British citizenship, and the recent outbursts of Powellite activities. But more important than race, and the rallying slogan of radical students of all descriptions, is the war in Vietnam. While their friends in the United States are burning draft cards and emigrating to avoid conscription, the British students are protesting against the slavish support of their Government to President Johnson's Vietnam policy by organising a series of teach-ins, and vigils outside the U.S. Embassy. The increasing strength of the radical student movement is being matched by the show of strength of the police authorities. This led to a serious clash between the students and the police on March 10 this year, when a demonstration of 20,000 was charged with batons by a massive force of policemen mounted on horseback, in front of the U.S. Embassy at Grosvenor Square. This incident, fully covered by television cameras, was not only unprecedented in the history of this island, it marked a turning point in the politics of this country.

Third Stage

A third stage was reached only a few weeks later, when the students of the newly founded Essex University, as a protest against research on germ warfare at Porton, interrupted one of the meetings to be addressed by a scientist from Porton. When the authorities took disciplinary action against three students, the students "took over" the University buildings and, with the support of the younger members of the teaching staff, worked out their own courses, which were run until the authorities quashed the disciplinary proceedings against the students. A few weeks after this incident, the students of two arts colleges also "took over" their colleges and conducted their own courses for several weeks, as a protest against the out-of-date teaching programmes of their institutions.

Apart from their participation in political activities, the radical student movement in Britain advocates many reforms in the educational system. Their picture of an ideal university makes no distinction between teachers and students, and treats every member of the university campus as equal, after allowing for the greater wisdom or wider knowledge of the senior members. They demand participation in decision-making at every stage of university life, including the preparation of syllabus ; and the abolition of the examination system, which, according to them, obstructs the process of acquisition of knowledge, and makes no allowance for the creative ability of the candidates. Their overall assessment of the present educational institutions is that these are oriented in such a way as to perpetuate the power structure of the present society and its values. Of these, the demand for participation has been accepted on principle by most universities of this country, including London, Oxford and Cambridge, and some of the universities even allow a representative of the students to sit in the

governing body. On the question of abolition of the examination system, many educationists, very few of them revolutionaries by any definition, are on the side of the students. But the other demands have not been well received by the authorities.

This recent upsurge of militancy among the British students is not an isolated phenomenon. The broad pattern of this movement, its objectives and the forms of protest, closely resemble the militant movements in the other countries of Western Europe, particularly France and West Germany. From what appears in the Press, it seems that various national student groups maintain very close contact with one another, discuss their common experiences, and, for many purposes, work as a unified international body of students, outside IUS and COSEC, the two old international student bodies with communist and pro-West affiliations. A large contingent of German students took part in the Grosvenor Square demonstration against the U.S. policy in Vietnam. There were also solidarity meetings in Britain during the occupation of the University of Sorbonne by the students in April-May. The names of Rudie Dutchske of Germany and Danny Cohn-Bendit of France are as well known and popular in Britain as they are in their own countries.

Ideologically, these militant bodies are not homogeneous except in a broad sense. In general they call for the destruction of the present capitalist order, emphasise their desire for a society whose ultimate goal is to make the individual free from coercion by the State, and believe that such transformation cannot be accomplished through the constitutional framework of the bourgeois State. But, given this very general ideological approach, this movement envelops a whole spectrum of leftists, from those who, however vaguely, describe themselves as Marxists, to the anarchists, and "revolutionaries" without commitment to any particular ideology. Although Mao Tse-tung is highly respected for his revolutionary thinking and practice, most of these militants draw their inspiration from Che Guevara—both as a person symbolising internationalism and revolutionary thinking, and also as an authority on guerilla warfare. But apart from Marxists of all descriptions, the leading ideological figure is one relatively unknown Professor of Philosophy at California, Henry Marcuse, who has provided the theoretical basis for "student power", which puts the students, instead of the workers, as the vanguard of revolution. In his essay "Repressive Tolerance" and his latest book *One Dimensional Man,* Marcuse portrays the picture of the modern industrial State which, through material incentives and information manipulation, creates a myth of freedom and tolerance, and, thereby, creates an authoritarian society. And only the students, in their role as vanguard, can make the workers aware of the oppressive nature of the State. The works of Marcuse are widely read by the "new left" of West Germany, and his ideological influence could also be detected during the occupation of Sorbonne in France. In many ways the dominant ideological trends in the movement are miles away from the orthodox Marxist position. The influence of Guevara has generally minimised the role of the party during revolution, and the followers of Marcuse have relegated the working class to a secondary role in the movement. Mao Tse-tung or Ho Chi Minh, are not so much respected for their leading role as Marxists, as for their success as 'revolutionary heroes' in destroying the established political order, through guerilla warfare. The element of "romanticism" was clearly present in their activities, when, during the Sorbonne occupation, the students of France relied almost exclusively on spontaneity, and consciously refused to outline a concrete programme of action. They hoped for a new society, which would replace capitalism after revolution, but there was no clear thinking about the shape which such a society would take to achieve its ultimate goal of emancipating individuals. Many of them were too preoccupied with their immediate task of removing de Gaulle from power, while not considering the possibility of a further right-wing or military take-over with his disappearance. They also grossly underestimated the strength of reactionary forces, and overestimated the enthusiasm of their supporters, most of which evaporated after the threat of military action by the regime.

However, despite its many imperfections, the militant movement in Britain and other countries in Western Europe is today playing an important role in the political arena of this region. First, it has shown very clearly the effectiveness of militant action in delivering the goods. The recent one-third increases in the minimum wage level, and the acceptance by the French Government of the principle of participation of individuals in the decision-making process at their working places are the direct consequence of the student-worker revolt. In Britain also the militant students have achieved—in terms of financial grants and participation in the university administration—more in the past few months than what were being demanded by the National Union of Students over so many years. This is independent of one's opinion about the propriety of their demands. It exposes the role of pressure groups in the power structure of present-day Western European society.

Secondly, it shows the unrepresentative character (or class) of the party system in Britain, as also in the other countries of this region. The principle of "consensus politics" has minimised the differences between the established parties in terms of policies, and there is hardly any scope for new and challenging policies being examined through the apparatus of the parliamentary system. In Britain, not only the Marxists, anarchists or Trotskyites, are unrepresented in Parliament, but also the young liberals or young socialists, who are constantly at loggerheads with their party authorities for their alleged Marxist sympathies. The doors of Parliament being closed to them, these militants are left with no option but to choose extra-parliamentary methods to air their views.

Thirdly, it also demonstrates the failure of the established communist

parties of West Europe to draw these militant students closer to themselves. To these students, the communist parties are as much part of the establishment as the other bourgeois parties are; they have virtually no interest in promoting the cause of revolution and socialist transformation and they are now much too preoccupied with economic demands like a few extra pounds of wages and the improvement of working conditions to give any thought to more fundamental issues. It is true that many of their criticisms against the communist parties follow from their "adventurist" and "romantic" conceptions about the strategy and tactics of revolution, but, nevertheless, the lack of initiative on the part of the French Communist Party during the peak of the student revolt also showed that the latter has lost the sort of militancy and zeal which one expects from a political party bearing that label. It is also remarkable the way the Press of the Western world contrasted the "responsible and conservative role" of the French Communist Party with the activities of the students during that period.

It may be asked why these militant groups are being formed almost everywhere in the Western world more or less at the same time. No clear and satisfactory reason can be offered by me to this question. Undoubtedly the war in Vietnam has played an extremely important part in the timing of these movements. Slogans like "Ho Ho-Ho-Chi-Minh", or "Hey Hey L.B. J., How many kids you kill a day", and their equivalents in various languages are to be heard almost everywhere. This war is not simply a war of aggression, it has put to trial all the liberal ideas loudly proclaimed by Western society and, so ardently believed by its middle class. Again, this is no longer a war which is being fought in a distant land out of the sight of the common people. The extensive coverage of the war by television has created a highly powerful visual impact and has brought the war right into the middle of the lounge of a man's home. It has forced those who are willing to think to take sides, and for many the choice could never have been simpler. They have not only condemned the war in all its aspects, but have also asked questions about the ideological basis of a society which has permitted such atrocities. Their distrust about all the institutions of Western society—social, economic and political—is total, which has led them to believe in the need for the destruction of the present order and for its substitution by something better. But, not being able to find any existing organisation or party through which they can express their views and implement their aim, they have formed themselves into independent groups.

Lastly, it would be interesting to compare these militant movements with the student movement of our country. First of all, these are independent political movements in their own right, whereas in our country, student politics is closely linked with the parties, and their mass movements. Secondly, student politics in India is generally based on a number of specific issues, whereas the movement of Europe raises more fundamental questions about the values propagated by their society. Thirdly, as the above account shows, the students of West Europe, in their demands and forms of protest, have gone much further than the students of our country. But what about the relative militancy of these movements, if it is measured not only by slogans but also by the strength of will, and the preparedness to make sacrifices, of the participants? One may argue about the desirability or otherwise of the participation by students in the political movements, but very few, I am sure, would doubt the bravery of the Indian students in the face of police brutality and bullets. The militancy of the students of Europe, on the other hand, has not yet been tested adequately. A student taking part in a political movement in Europe does not risk his life, starvation for himself or for his family, or imprisonment beyond a short period. The militants suffer, like the students of India, from discrimination in jobs, but beyond that the element of risk involved in their participation in politics is lower than that in India.

Left Youth In Canada

C. THURROTT

FOR the first time since the 1930s it is possible to speak of a genuine growth of radical consciousness amongst elements of youth in Canada.

This was manifested by the outbreak of bitterly contested strikes led by young trade unionists in summer, the slow growth of a syndicalist trend amongst students and the development of a mass-based anti-war movement.

These phenomena are not unique to Canada—the USA has also witnessed a resurgence of left youth—but in Canada there is greater interrelation between these aspects of radicalism, thanks to the existence of a labour party. Through its youth wing all these tendencies have an opportunity to unite—even if only in the formal context of belonging to the same political party.

The New Democratic Youth (NDY) is the largest organisation of young radicals in Canada. Its large membership, "socialist" programme, and its affiliation to the trade unions through the party of Canadian labour make it the most potentially powerful organisation of left youth in Canada.

However, there is a split in the ranks of the NDY which has sharpened with the increasing militancy of certain of its provincial sections and official repudiation of the right-wing orientation of the New Democratic Party. The socialist caucus within the NDY has been seeking to build a mass movement of labour and student youth which would operate on a non-exclusionist basis and allow all viable labour tendencies to participate freely in their organisation. The organisational question is linked to that of programme. The socialist caucus calls for nationalisation of basic industry, workers' control over the industrial process, and support for revolutionary movements of liberation. The latter demand is concretised through participation in the anti-war movement and others through educa-

tion of Canadian youth on all these demands.

The programme of the Left within the NDY is supported by another Left youth organisation—the Young Socialists.

The Young Socialists is the Canadian youth section of the Fourth International (founded by Leon Trotsky) and has a growing membership of students and young workers. Expulsions from the NDP-NDY have added to their effectiveness and, while not as numerically strong as the NDY (though fast bridging the gap), this organistaion of militant socialists plays a large role in all aspects of the Canadian Left youth. The anti-war and student power movements are both key arenas for their members and their influence.

The decline of the traditional communist party in the West is paralleled by the minimal strength of the Young Communist League. Frustrated by attempts to forge an even mildly independent line from the Party, many of its youth have either quietly drifted into cynicism or have broken discipline by publicly criticising the Party—much to the glee of the bourgeois Press. Youth elements in the Party now appear to be oriented towards the NDY. This trend has been strengthened by the integration of the 'communist' Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers Union into the NDP Steel Workers Union. The Communist Party youth attempted to resurrect itself by calling for a national organisation patterned on the faltering Du Bois clubs in the USA. The failure to attract more than two dozen party members sealed the fate—for the present—of the YCL.

The direction of the radicalism generated amongst Canadian youth is one of consolidation into the existing socialist organisations. Much has been heard of the 'New Left' as a radical trend which rejects the traditional social democratic and communist parties. While this is true, one can not conclude that socialism and Marxism are irrelevant to the 'New Left'. The Canadian example suggests that, similar to the Black Power movement and SDS in the USA, the earlier attempts at community organising, participatory democracy, and the building of a peace movement have been frustrating enough to lead 'New Leftists to vigorous self-criticism and the gradual adoption of a Marxian perspective.

Typical Example

A typical example of this tendency in Canada is found in the development of the Student Union for Peace Action (SUPA). This well publicised group which centred on community organising and radical pacifism has dissolved to reappear as an independent socialist group searching for a method of organising workers and students against monopoly capitalism.

This move has benefited the Young Socialists, members of an International with a well experienced cadre and necessary transitional programme. The taint of the Second and Third International does not besmirch their policy nor dull their critique of established socialist States.

Canadian capitalist society is in no way at present conducive to the building of a mass revolutionary party. The stirrings of radicalism are often most dramatically seen in the middle-class student population, but consistent with the analysis of those socialist elements rooted in the working class, the middle-class radical is increasingly aware of the limitations of political effort based upon a petty bourgeois outlook and following. The frustrations of seeking short-term solutions to the problems of capitalism and imperialism have given rise to a recognition of the necessity of patiently building the base for a genuine socialist movement.

The student anti-war movement in Canada provides the major vehicle for the radicalisation of the student. It has reached a critical turn in its development—both qualitatively and quantitatively. It is on the verge of breaking out of local groups to that of a movement capable of calling for a national week of protest and receiving coast-to-coast support. The militancy of the movement was made evident last summer when, for the first time in years, students and police battled in the streets of Montreal.

The politicalisation of youth has also manifested itself in the existence of certain peripheral sectarian groups, the most notable of which is the Progressive Workers Movement. These pro-Peking individuals are active in several larger centres but are generally isolated from the trade unions and the anti-war movement.

Inflation, impatience with the union bureaucracy, and the real threat of lay-offs in the face of automation are some of the factors which lead to the militancy of sectors of trade unionists. For the first time in years questions of foreign policy,—support for the anti-war movement—and the fight against government-forced halt to the process of collective bargaining have been fully discussed in the ranks of workers. An indication of this new consciousness occurred during the last national railway strike when one of the largest railworker unions defied both their own bureaucracy and the Government in continuing strike action. Among the leaders of the rank and file were recognised revolutionary socialists. While this is not the general pattern, it does point to the impatience of young workers and their trust in the leadership ability of militant socialists in times when such direction is most necessary.

The resurgence of the Left amongst youth in Canada is not a sign of the revolutionary condition in our society, but symptomatic of currents which will lead to these conditions. The dollar crisis, inflation due to the American oppression in Asia, the repressive apparatus of a monopoly capitalist society and the example of the Cuban and Vietnamese peoples have all played a part in the radicalisation of Canadian youth. And as history has made clear, the tremors of social earthquakes in a society based upon exploitation are often first felt by the students and working youth of that bankrupt society. Canada should be no exception.

Revisiting East Africa—1

Harsh Realities

ANIRUDHA GUPTA

THE connecting plane for Dares-Salaam was inconsolably late; in Nairobi's posh international airport I waited and watched the crowd — black, white, yellow and brown — a wild assortment of pigments of the human race. The Indians looked rather harassed, bewildered. Where will they go now that Africans would not have them ? Britain debars them and India would not like to swell her population any more. In one corner a group of Europeans drank riotously to the health of their chief African guest — they must have secured a business deal from this African who from his looks appeared every bit an important politician. An irate Afrikaner woman berated the airport staff in a shrill guttural voice — she had lost her luggage during transit. 'The same exasperating experience', she will write home in Johnnesburg', 'these Africans will never learn anything'.

Independence has come to Africans, but the attitude of the white man —the modern version of Tarzan in the form of teachers, advisers, technicians — to Africa has not changed much. But one must go deep to find the truth. 'These Africans", as one of them confided to me, "are the greatest racialists on earth. Look at what they want to do with Rhodesia or South Africa, the only remaining civilized parts of Africa ?" This was a crude expression, but the more dangerous ones are those which adopt a liberal, patronizing attitude : 'Oh they will learn, but give them time. After all they got independence only the other day'. Or worse, 'Africa will move and we are here to help them'.

It is a new matrix of civilization, but to be incubated and matured by the white man. "Tarzan lives ! He is still the King of the Jungle." In Kampala I met Paul Therouj, the writer of these lines. With the penetrating eyes of a novelist he describes the scene further :

> The expatriate has all these rewards together with a distinct knowledge that no one will bother him ; he will be helped by the Africans and overrated by friends who stayed in England or the United States. He is Tarzan, the King of the Jungle. He will come to expect a degree of adulation as a matter of course. He is no longer hurrying down a filthy subway escalator, strewn with ads for girdles, to a crowded train in which he will be breathed upon by dozens of sweating over-dressed people ; he is no longer stumbling up another escalator to his home where his children are croaking and shrieking on the floor, wallowing unattended in rubbish like frogs. Tarzan had his vine, the expatriate has his car and, very likely, driver. The idea of using public transportation does not occur to the expatriate ; it exists for the public, not him. Africans will wave to him as he drives by in his car ; some, in up-country places, will fall to their knees as he passes. He will have few enemies, but even if he had many, none would matter. Everyone else is on his side. He is Tarzan.

(*Transition,* August|September 1967)

It is not that the white man enjoys his jungle life in a vacuum. It is a whole gamut of relationship that ties up independent Africans to the West. Their political kingdom was bestowed on them by metropolitan Powers according to the arrangements dictated by the latter. Their trade and commerce depend on old colonial links ; aid, investment and technical skill come to them from the West on which their development plans depend.

It was, perhaps, an easy affair to win independence ; but to preserve and transform independence into a reality, to bring about the promised millennium, is going to be incalculably harder.

Inheritance

Most independent African States face the problem ; the problem of inheritance. How can they change the old pattern so that sovereignty can be exercised in full and not in doles handed out by outside Powers ? How can they become strong enough to preserve and defend themselves without depending much on one Power or another ? How can the living conditions of people improve without creating violence and disorder ? And so on. Some nations have taken the easy path of depending wholly on the support of metropolitan Powers ; and to the extent such support has brought funds to start educational programmes, new ventures and industries, they have achieved relative success. But how long will this success last ? Aid may decrease ; investment may dry up and the priorities of development may completely be controlled by the givers. In turn, a political choice in domestic and foreign affairs may become strictly limited and, what is more, tensions in society may reach a point when the entire political structure may collapse. Besides, modernization may not mean anything beyond the assertion of African greatness, use of high rhetoric and continuous blandishment to people to make sacrifices while politicians and top men make most of independence.

It is not true that all independent States choose the easy path ; some chose the more hazardous radical path to make independence more substantial. This posture brought them into conflict with the metropolitan Powers on one side and the moderate African States on the other. Guinea faced the full blast of French economic sanctions the day she became independent ; Ghana began losing allies both in Africa and the West as Nkrumah's voice against neo-colonialism became more strident. The limited resources of these States and the joint pressures of external and domestic factors created further problems. Factions arose ; traditional elements reared their ugly heads and the newly rising *élite,* who enjoyed material benefits at the dawn of independence, asked whether the

sacrifices demanded of them were not artificially manufactured. I have noted this process in Egypt and the result of it showed during the Arab-Israeli war of June 1967. The trial of Egypt's top army officers showed to what extent comfort and laxity in public life could prove disastrous to a country's defence. This happened also in Ghana where the lax morals of an ease-loving *élite* infected the conduct of the Convention Peoples' Party and the army. Thus, it seems that the radically-oriented States reach, sometime or other, a stage when they must either abandon their radical nationalist path or else unleash a new onslaught on both external and internal elements, root out corruption in public life and reorganize the top echelons of party and government. Up to a point it is easy to talk of socialism and adopt an anti-colonialist posture and preach revolutionary zeal to the people, but the political path alone is not enough. Unless leadership itself makes new sacrifices, becomes more practical than idealist, shares the sufferings of the people, and makes an effort for the building of a new and better life, it may get isolated and even face the danger of being thrown out. In Ghana, the CPP got reduced to a band of conspirators who gave bad advice to Nkrumah. The latter, in turn, because of his own personal failings, became more and more involved with this group. The result was that even CPP ranks joined the crowd to rejoice over the fall of Nkrumah. Short of political overthrow, the leadership may try to save itself by making compromises : the experience of Guinea since 1958 shows that increasing ties with the Soviet Union, China or other socialist States alone cannot build socialism. Sooner or later, the brake comes when leadership seeks renewal of contact with those very "imperialist capitalist countries" which it had earlier condemned.

Thus political rhetoric, commitment to socialism, and even initial steps towards industrialization under State control are not enough ; for a real change of the existing structure it is necessary to revolutionize the character, the morals and values of leadership itself. To recreate society it is necessary to create a new man ; in short, to have a *cultural revolution* of one's own. This is not my thesis ; this is what the coming generation of African radicals say. Tanzania's President Julius Nyerere stated this in a speech at a farewell banquet in Peking on June 21, 1968 :

> ...There is a danger in Africa for some of us to believe that independence is enough. If we really want to move from national independence to the real independence of the people, and if we really want to make sure that the African revolution will ever move forward, and not degenerate into neo-colonialism, then I say that we should learn from you. Indeed, from what I have seen of China in 1965, I must say that if you find it necessary to begin a cultural revolution, in order to make sure that the new generation would carry forward the banner of your revolution, then certainly we need one. We have seen in Tanzania how easy it is to pay lip service to the importance of socialism and people, while in fact we behave like capitalists and petty dictators.

Nyerere did not stop by saying that. In early February 1967, at Arusha, he made his party, government and people take the vow of self-reliance — to bring about a revolution which would ensure that Tanzanians would not again be "oppressed, exploited and disrespected." In Tanzania's short history Arusha represents a turning point, but how has the country fared since the declaration ? In what way her experience differs from those of Ghana, Mali, Guinea and Egypt ? Has Tanzania begun a cultural revolution of its own ?

These thoughts crowded my mind as I paced up and down the crowded hall. The plane was inconsolably late but I could still reach Dar-es-Salaam before dawn.

The Press

The Unending Strike

COMMENTATOR

THE air is thick with the rumour that the Prime Minister is about to intervene in the one a half month old newspaper strike. Whether she really intends to do so will be known soon, earlier perhaps than this piece appears. There are indications, however, that the Prime Minister is no longer leaving the matter entirely in the hands of her colleagues, Mr Jaisukhlal Hathi and Mr K. K. Shah. The Deputy Speaker of the Lok Sabha, Mr. R. K. Khadilkar, who tried to mediate in the dispute, was keeping the Prime Minister informed; so is another go-between, Mr Nath Pai, a PSP member of the Lok Sabha. From West Bengal Mr Jyoti Basu is reported to have written a letter to the Prime Minister requesting her to intervene. All these together may have induced the Prime Minister to cast off her apathy ; or there may be some other reason. It is stated that the Prime Minister would like the strike to end before she leaves on her Latin American tour on September 21. With almost all the major newspapers on strike, she cannot expect "satisfactory" coverage of the tour in this country. After all, she is venturing in an area which her predecessors had carefully excluded from their itinerary. All India Radio would no doubt do its best to keep the people informed of the rapturous welcome the Prime Minister would receive everywhere, the deep appreciation in Latin America of India's policy of non-alignment, and the close understanding that will develop between these countries and India as a result of the visit. But not many people have radios—a recent report states that fewer radios are selling now for the simple reason that the people do not have money. Besides, the written word has not yet lost all its magic. AIR remains a suspect, a vehicle of government propaganda in the public eye; the credi-

bility gap in the case of dispatches by very special correspondents of "independent" newspapers is less, though what they write may not differ basically from what All India Radio says. In any event, it would appear that the Prime Minister would have interested herself in the matter much earlier had she been moved by any consideration for the three parties to the dispute—a handful of employers, several thousand newspaper workers and millions of readers.

Meanwhile, the managements of some of the newspapers on strike have clashed with *National Herald* with which the Prime Minister's relation is said to be close. In a letter to the paper Mr P. K. Roy of *The Times of India,* Mr Kedar Ghosh of *The Statesman,* Mr A. K. Sarkar of *Ananda Bazar Patrika* and Mr S. B. Swamy of *The Indian Express* have said they were surprised to read in the paper a news item "insinuating" that the discussions between the newspaper managements and some of their unions came to a deadlock because of the employers pretending ignorance of the proposal of the Prime Minister arbitrating for an overall settlement. To set the records straight they have affirmed that up to the night of August 31, at no stage during the discussions at different levels, was it mentioned that the Prime Minister would arbitrate in the matter of an overall settlement. They have alleged that the reporter of the paper did not even care to check up the facts with the publishers which he could have very easily done before giving wrong information to the public. "It is strange that the elementary principle of objective reporting is so casually ignored in your paper". In a rejoinder the staff reporter of the paper has maintained that the report "was based on facts". He said he had it from "unimpeachable sources" that the employers had later admitted that the matter had been mentioned to them only "informally". It was then that they were told by a certain leader that a senior secretary in the Union Labour Ministry would "formally" inform them about the understanding with the leaders of the All-India Newspaper Employees' Federation that the Prime Minister would intervene in the issues which concerned the entire newspaper industry. "*National Herald*", the reporter said, "has nothing to learn from these gentlemen or their newspapers about objective reporting".

The board of directors of The Statesman Ltd has issued a statement explaining that the recent changes in the set-up of the company have been with a view to enhancing the reputation of *The Statesman* as a "non-party, independent newspaper". The statement was first circulated through a news agency, but whatever little publicity it got was evidently not to the satisfaction of the board. It had to be reissued in the form of an advertisement to ensure its publication in full. It appears that the board of directors went wrong in assuming that the newspaper owners would be as much interested in what was happening in *The Statesman* as its innumerable readers were. Contrary to the intention of the board, the statement has confirmed some of the worst fears that were expressed about the paper recently. The board of trustees has indeed been dissolved; it matters little if the formal dissolution took place on August 29 or earlier. Had the board some elementary idea of what is news, it would have realised that the "premature" publication of the decision to do away with the board of trustees adds to the credit of the reporter concerned. The board of directors has not only not been able to prove him wrong by taking a contrary decision but also felt compelled to clarify its position.

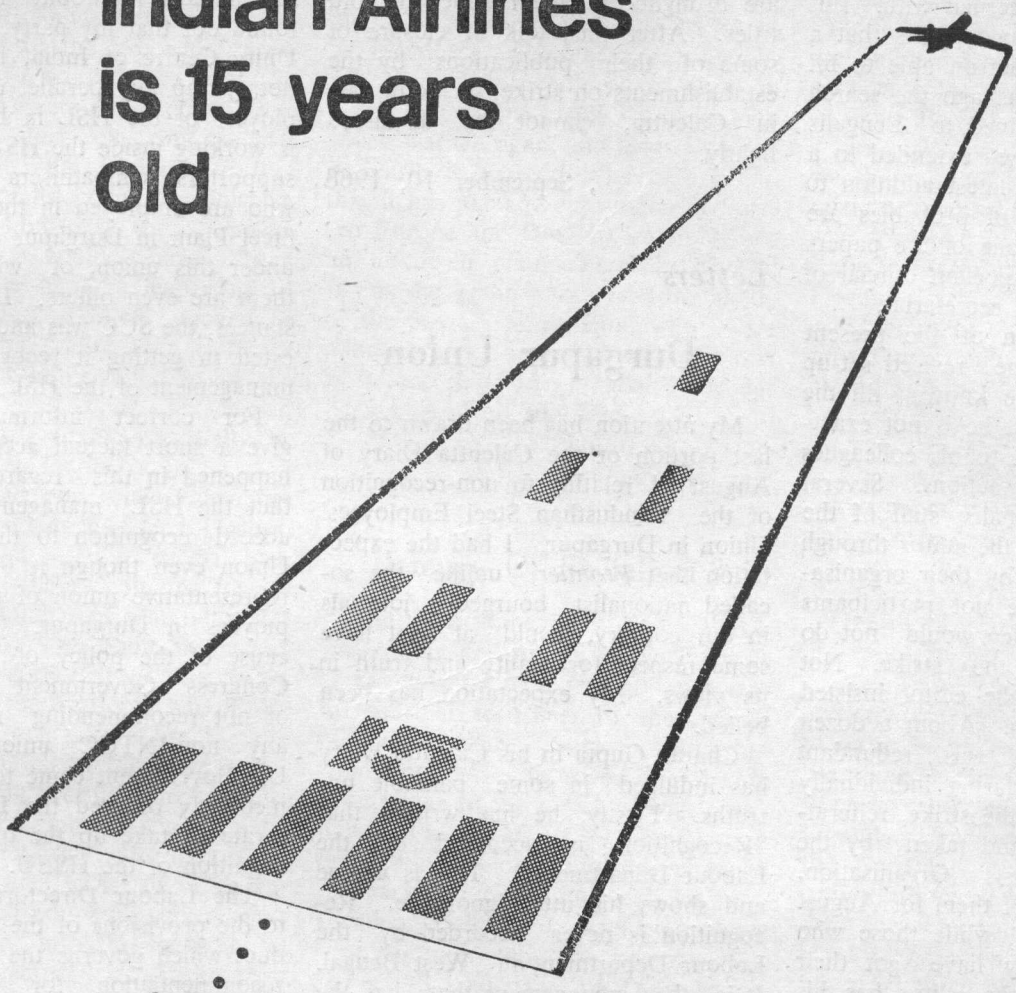
One should have thought that statements by the board of directors of *The Statesman* are drafted carefully. The grammatical errors are perhaps due to oversight, or haste, or both. But why should the board confess what it set out to contradict? The board has admitted that the fundamental policy and objectives of the paper were being frustrated under the three-tier system consisting of the editor, the board of trustees and the board of directors. If as a remedy the board of trustees is dissolved by amending the articles of association of the company, the responsibility for the failure of the paper to live up to its ideals devolves by implication on the trustees. An invitation to them to join the board of directors is poor recompense for such a severe censure. No wonder some of the trustees have turned down the invitation. The statement is strangely silent about the reaction of the reluctant trustees to the changes in the set-up of the company. Their views should not be unknown to the board; some of them are reported to have expressed themselves quite frankly and forcefully on this point. It would be interesting to know from the board why some of the "eminent men" who had acted as trustees refused to have "a much closer and continuous contact with the paper".

"Editorial Independence"

The board has assured that the editor will continue to enjoy "the customary and reasonable degree of editorial independence". Yet the board has decided to appoint a managing director, who would be the only director in the full-time employment of the company and who, as representing and on behalf of the board, would manage the affairs of the company and, "inter alia, safeguard the policy of the papers" as laid down in the articles of association. Obviously, one of the duties of the Big Brother will be to prevent editorial delinquency. Since the paper never had a managing director to breathe down the neck of the editor it is difficult to understand how in the new set-up the customary and reasonable degree of editorial independence would not be impaired. The board has, in effect, expressed greater confidence in the managing director than it had in the eminent men who constituted the board of trustees, for it expects the former to ensure what the latter were unable to do. And when the incumbent was, until a few months ago, a leading light of the Swatantra party it can be guessed what he is most suited to ensure.

Whether the managing director will require some new blood to restore the "independent, impartial, and non-party" character of the paper and

Indian Airlines is 15 years old



Set up as a domestic air service linking a few major cities in India and flying piston-engined aircraft, Indian Airlines has progressively modernized its fleet with pure jets and jet-props. Its operations have trebled and now there is an IA plane landing or taking off every three minutes. The 70s will see still higher capacity jets for swifter and more comfortable flights.

Other improvements in the pipeline are: more efficient handling of passengers; improved communications at airports; more telephones at our offices; increased seating capacity; airconditioning of passenger lounges; mechanisation of baggage handling; covered step ladders; passenger tenders at airports; swifter reservation system; improvements in in-flight service; and intensive training and refresher courses for all our staff to serve you better.

Already one of the largest domestic carriers in the world, Indian Airlines links our country with four of our neighbours-AFGHANISTAN, BURMA, CEYLON and NEPAL. Its contributions to the Central Exchequer in rupees and foreign exchange are sizeable.

MEMBER IATA QUALITY IN AIR TRANSPORT

Indian Airlines

hold in leash the condemned staff is not clear from the statement. Perhaps that is too trivial a matter for the board to be concerned with. But there are persistent reports that a search is on for a person able to fill the bill. Some weeks ago the search was said to be confined to Bengalis only, but it has now extended to a far wider field. The latest addition to the lengthening list of probables are a former editor of one of the papers on strike and an important official of the Prime Minister's secretariat.

What the position of the present editor will be in the revised set-up will perhaps not be known till the paper re-opens. But he is not exactly endearing himself to his colleagues by some of his actions. Several weeks ago the journalist staff of the paper had informed the editor through a resolution passed by their organisation that they were not participants in the strike but they would not do anything to break the strike. Not satisfied with this, the editor insisted on individual replies. About a dozen journalists thought this redundant and instead of declaring individually that he was not in the strike, reiterated the united stand taken by the Statesman Journalists' Organisation. The salaries of all of them for August have been withheld, while those who replied individually have got their salaries. Perhaps the editor has his reasons for such actions; but it will need a lot of explaining to convince anyone that he was not in a position to prevent this discrimination.

The management of *The Hindu,* which declared a lock-out forestalling a strike notice given by the union, have cracked down on the employees again. The weekly edition of the paper and *Sport and Pastime,* a widely circulated weekly, have been closed down suddenly, and about one hundred employees, some of them with years of service, have been thrown out of employment. *The Hindu* is one of the richest newspaper organisations in the country, and the closure cannot be on financial grounds. It is stated that the objective is to get rid of certain militant workers most of whom happen to be employed in departments required exclusively for the two weeklies. It seems the law does not provide for any remedy unless the papers are brought out again under the old titles. After this, talk of closure of some of their publications by the establishments on strike, including one in Calcutta, cannot be dismissed lightly.

, September 10, 1968

Letters

Durgapur Union

My attention has been drawn to the last portion of the Calcutta Diary of August 31 relating to non-recognition of the Hindusthan Steel Employees' Union in Durgapur. I had the expectation that *Frontier,* unlike the so-called nationalist bourgeois journals in our country, would at least have some respect for reality and truth in its views. My expectation has been belied.

Charan Gupta in his Calcutta Diary has indulged in some palpable untruths. Firstly, he has written that "Recognition is accorded by the Labour Department." This is untrue and shows his utter ignorance. Recognition is never accorded by the Labour Department in West Bengal. It is the management that has the prerogative of according or not according recognition to any trade union. The Labour Directorate only recommends recognition. There being no law in West Bengal to compel the management to recognise a trade union, this recommendation by the Labour Directorate is not lawfully binding on the management which is free to accept or reject it. So if the HSEU had not been recognised by the HSL management in Durgapur, it was no fault of mine as Labour Minister.

Secondly, Charan Gupta has, by oblique reference to me, stated that since "Mr Banerjee's party happens to have set up another union which is nothing but a paper organisation in Durgapur", inevitably, "the issue of recognition became rather sticky." If Mr Gupta in deference to truth and reality had taken a little trouble to verify the correctness or otherwise of his information, he would have at once found out that my party, the Socialist Unity Centre of India, had not only not set up any parallel union of employees of the HSL in Durgapur but is working inside the HSEU. All our supporters, sympathisers and workers who are employed in the Hindusthan Steel Plant in Durgapur are organised under this union, of which some of them are even offiers. In the circumstances, the SUC was and still is interested in getting it recognised by the management of the HSL.

For correct information let me give a short factual account of what happened in this regard. It is true that the HSL management did not accord recognition to the Emplyees' Union even though it was the most representative union of the HSL employees in Durgapur. This was because of the policy of the previous Congress Government in this State of not recommending recognition of any non-INTUC union. When the UF Government came to office, I immediately ordered the Labour Directorate to take up the question of recognition of the HSEU.

The Labour Directorate, according to the provisions of the Code of Conduct which governs the procedure for recommendation for recognition of any trade union by the Directorate, asked the unions concerned to submit lists of their respective memberships. The leadership of the HSEU made much delay in filing the final list. The INTUC-controlled Workers' Union filed its list on the last date fixed for the purpose. If my memory does not fail me, it was towards the end of September 1967. During the Congress regime it used to take about a year to check the lists and verify the membership strength claimed by the unions. During the UF regime it was reduced to two to three months. The Labour Directorate started the work of verification as soon as it got the lists. At one stage, before it got the list submitted by the INTUC-controlled Workers' Union, the Labour Directorate even recommended to the

HSL management in Durgapur recognition of the HSEU. But this recommendation was challenged by the INTUC-controlled Workers' Union on the ground of denial of natural justice and violation of the procedure prescribed in the Code of Conduct. So the Labour Directorate had no alternative but to start checking the lists submitted by the unions. Before the scrutiny of lists could be finished, the UF Ministry was toppled. The matter could have been finalised earlier had the leadership of the Employees' Union moved a little bit faster. How then can the charge of non-implementation of the 32-point UF programme be levelled against my party or me personally, as done by Charan Gupta?

Lastly, about our claim for more seats in the coming mid-term election in West Bengal. If "a special plea was made in these columns for increasing the number of seats allotted" to the SUC by your Calcutta Diarist a few weeks earlier, it was certainly made not out of irrational and illogical love for our party but for the justness of our claim for more seats. Will a just thing overnight become unjust because of some wrong assumption based on wrong information on the part of the writer of Calcutta Diary? Indeed bourgeois inconsistencies have crept into the attitudes of so-called intellectuals, as is observed by your Calcutta Diarist.

SUBODH BANERJEE
Calcutta.

Views And Postures

I enjoyed reading A correspondent's note Views And Postures in your September 7 issue, if only because his clever work of demolition may do something to redress the critical balance. Yet at the end I was left unsatisfied by his deflationary tactics. He sprays his whole writing with an attitude so patronising that it turned my stomach. There are motives and motives. To equate the Chinese motive with the American motive, in other words to condemn motives in general is to obliterate the difference between the right and the wrong. The correspondent inwardly flatters himself that he is impartial and has found the right equilibrium which claims to be something different from mediocrity. In reality he only serves reaction.

It was China and China alone which warned again and again that imperialism is aggressive by nature and that it has planned subversion in Eastern Europe and that restoration is not an unknown phenomenon in history. It was she, again who stayed the hands of the Soviet leadership who were about to enact another Czechoslovakia in Poland in 1956. China's warnings have proved all too true.

PROBODH C. DUTTA.
Dankuni, Hooghly

Defence Of Socialism ?

The invasion of Czechoslovakia was simply and purely in the interests of the Soviet Union and not of socialist aims. Had it been for the defence of socialism, the Soviet leadership would not have approved the Action Programme of the Czechoslovak Communist Party and its Government, a programme which completely changed the basic principles and policies of a socialist country; it would not have compromised with "the counter-revolutionary" leadership of Dubcek etc. since Marxism-Leninism rules out any compromise with a counter-revolutionary.

Had the revisionist leadership of the Soviet Union been so worried about socialism and its international duty towards socialism, it would not have continued the military aid to Indonesia even after the indiscriminate massacre of the communists there. The Soviet leadership would not have sent arms and ammunition to the fascist governments of Latin American countries where the liberation struggle is being fought by communists.

To say that the invasion was in defence of socialism is to falsify facts and hoodwink the people of the world.

VED PARKASH GUPTA
Bhatinda (Punjab).

Dismissed

Allow me to congratulate C. R. on his article "Educational Go-As-You Like" (August) in which he mentions me and condemns my dismissal from service. I had served the Government of West Bengal faithfully for the last 2 yrs. 10½ months—three years and was hoping that I would be made permanent when the order of dismissal was delivered. In a letter to his Excellency the Governor of West Bengal, I requested him to consider my case with sympathy. I have not yet received any reply. I am now unemployed and in need of money. I shall be most grateful to the Government College Teachers' Association if it requests the Governor to treat my case with sympathy so that I can be reinstated in future.

RANJIT KR. GAYEN
Hasnabad, 24-Parganas

Character Rolls

The practice of maintaining character rolls of employees may have been introduced in the interests of efficiency and morale of government servants. But those serving under the Andaman and Nicobar Administration are aggrieved over the fact that their character rolls are generally written up by persons who do not realise the importance of the reports and the impact they have on the employees. Some officers never bother to follow the procedures and rules formulated by the Union Home Ministry. As a result, many employees have become victims of whimsical actions. Representations and appeals to the higher authorities are of little avail ; the practice of superior officers is to approve the action of other officers, whether the action is justified or not.

A study of such cases under the Administration would reveal that character rolls are not a good index of the worth of a government servant. The annual confidential reports are laconic or vague and there is no positive assessment of intelligence and other qualities of employees. The solution is not to do away with the

system but to ensure that the reports are not vitiated by prejudice and malice.

Writing a biased and unfounded adverse report against any subordinate should be made a criminal offence as it amounts to the infliction of a personal injury. The least the Government can do is to take stern action against those officers who misuse their power and write adverse reports without following the procedures. Some action even in a few cases will have salutary effect.

A SUFFERER
Port Blair

Snubbed

Mr M. L. Sondhi, the super-M.P. from New Delhi (whose only qualification is that he defeated Mr Mehr Chand Khanna in last year's general elections), held a public meeting in New Delhi a few days ago to "SUPPORT TIBET AT THE UNITED NATIONS".

As usual an extraordinary poster was pasted on the walls of the Capital which announced that Mr Sondhi and other MPs will speak at the meeting. To get prominence as the saviour of Tibet, Mr Sondhi blacked out the names of Acharya Kripalani, Balraj Madhok and S. M. Joshi from the poster. After Mr Madhok and Mr Joshi had given their typical sermons on Tibet, Acharya Kripalani was asked to give his views. Contrary to the expectations of Mr Sondhi, the Acharya lashed out at the organisers of the meeting. Mr Sondhi's romantic face grew pale when the Acharya advised him to forget about Tibet and look after the affairs of his constituency, New Delhi, where goondas have taken over the administration and a murder takes place everyday, with the police helping the murderers to go scot free. Mr Sondhi was advised to worry more about the people who die on the footpaths of the Capital than about the comforts of the American playboy named Dalai Lama.

As for Mr Balraj Madhok, I should like to inform him that there is no organisation named UNO. The name of the international body was changed from United Nations Organisation (UNO) to United Nations (UN) quite a long time ago.

J. S. CHOPRA
New Delhi.

The Special Number
of Frontier
will be out on September
24 or 25.
Price One Rupee.

(Free for Subscribers.)
As the Press will be
Closed during the
Puja Holidays
the subsequent issue
of Frontier
will appear on
October 19

Bombay—Much Too Passive

I have been staying in Bombay for about a year and I am tired of the passive men here and their surroundings. From the transport system to living conditions—everywhere men and things seem to be inert.

The transport system looks well organised. With two complementary wings—the suburban railway and the municipal bus service, the outward show is maintained. No passenger is seen travelling on footboards. But take a close look, you see a long queue waiting, sometimes even for an hour. The bus conductor, if he is kind, may allow some extra standing passengers, but if he is not, he may even refuse to allow the seating accommodation to be filled up. No protest, but utter resignation to the prevailing system.

The suburban trains often do not follow any schedule. The passengers stay patiently on the platforms. Sometimes they are shuttled from one platform to another at the whim of the announcer. But never mind. Patience is all, in this city.

Culturally you feel you are dead. Dress is an imitation of the West. You hardly see a middle-class office-goer in his community dress. Looks as though it is a crime to wear your community dress in office. Language. You hardly get an opportunity to speak in Marathi, even though you are keen to pick up the regional language. But how can you? While you are in European dress how dare you speak Marathi? Never mind even if two Marathis speak no other language except English. Frequently one hears some Indian language called Hindi which has got a Bombayised version of its own. The pronunciation is such as though a European is being forced to speak an Indian language. Speaking good English is still a criterion of being a respectable man.

An average Bombayite hardly bothers about anything except himself. A pickpocket robs your fellow passenger of some costly thing. Don't react. Let him suffer. Check up your own purse and keep mum. Nobody bothers even if a man meets with an accident. Pass on—you have no time. Daily passengers travel in trains—many for about an hour. Most of them pass the time in lonely brooding. You are fortunate if you are in a group. A card group. Go on playing—money is an essential component. Otherwise no fun.

Living. Many posh flats, but more numerous are the slums. One in every four is a slum-dweller, according to authoritative estimates. This does not include the multi-storeyed slums created by the city fathers. The middle-class housing problem is more acute than one can imagine in any other city. It is terrifying for those who are not heavily subsidised for housing.

These are but some of the many problems which a Bombayite has to bear patiently—and inertly—in his day-to-day existence.

C. R. K. P.
Bombay.

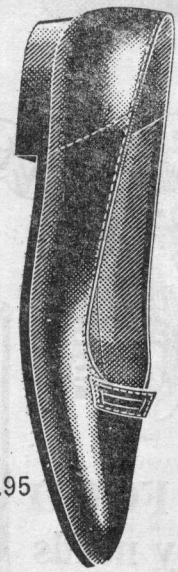
Lively styles to wear now... Crafted of soft supple leather

You'll see sandals and casuals wherever smart girls gather this season, but none prettier than these. You can tell by the trim, friendly styling that they were designed to keep you smartly and comfortably at ease. They fit beautifully, they go with everything you'll wear. Supple leather upper, you'll love the feel of it. Soft-walking sole cushions every step you take. We invite you to come in and be fitted in a pair.

Mira 12.50-14.50

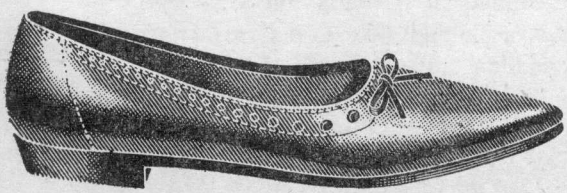
Playday 12.50-16.50

Bata



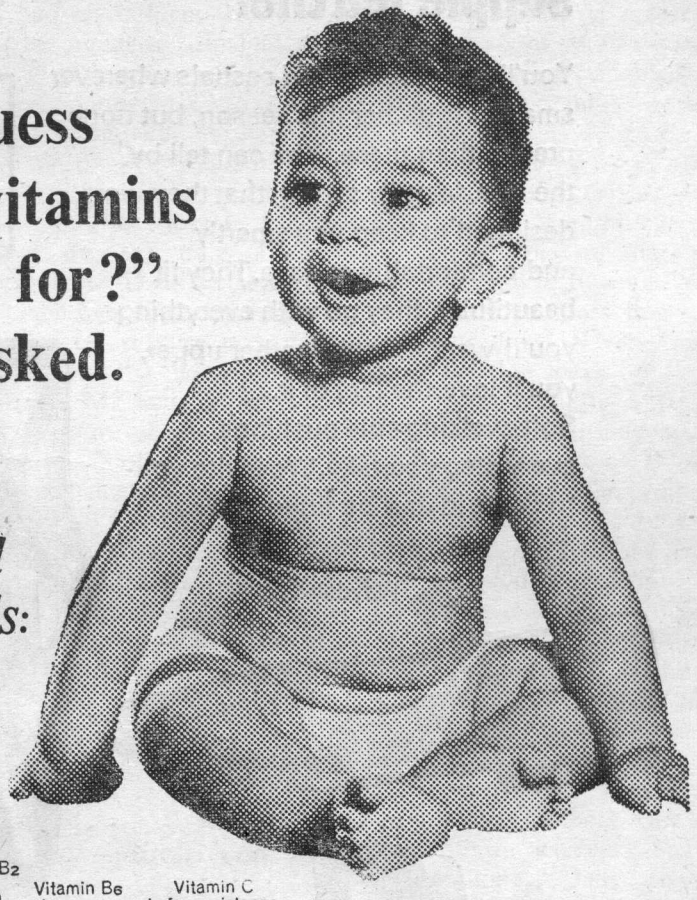
Diana 13.95-18.95

Supriya 16.95



Ballerina 20.95

"Can you guess what the vitamins in Amul are for?" baby asked.



"Yes," chorused the little animals:

Amul MILK FOOD
contains the 7 vitamins your baby needs

ASP/ABF-54/67A