

# frontier

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## A USEFUL EXERCISE

SHEIKH Abdullah has turned the table on those who saw red at his move for a convention of the people of Kashmir to consider the State's future. There is nothing on record about the conference which could be considered exceptionable, despite the scare raised by some incorrigible bigots who would just wish away the Kashmir problem. They tried to incite the Government to impose fresh restrictions on the Sheikh for his efforts to find a way out of the impasse. Obviously, it passed over these overzealous defenders of democracy that the continuous incarceration of Sheikh Abdullah from 1953 is a denial of democratic principles and makes the professions of the Government suspect. Others would have found it easier to accept that Kashmir's accession to India was the result of a free choice had the Sheikh been allowed to live and function in liberty all these years. An individual's acquiescence may not be of much importance in such matters, but when the suppression of an individual becomes an imperative for the free exercise of their option by the people, doubts are bound to arise about the nature of that freedom. Had the Sheikh been given the opportunity to express himself when Kashmir acceded to India, the claim that the accession was full and final would have been strengthened immeasurably.

The Government has made some amends for the blunder by allowing the Sheikh to hold the convention. He has shown that in spite of the bitterness he may legitimately have over the treatment he has received in free India from friends who once would not tire of lionising him, the trust in him was not misplaced. He did not allow the convention to go off the rails and be reduced to a forum for projecting any particular point of view. On the contrary, it was a sort of free-for-all, and no views, however unpalatable they might be to some others, were barred. It would have been well if delegates from "Azad Kashmir" were allowed to participate, for that would have made the convention fully representative of the people of Kashmir and furthered its aim of evolving a solution "acceptable to the people belonging to all regions". It is unlikely that the delegates from "Azad Kashmir", whoever they might have been, would have had anything to say which has not been put at the convention; on the other hand, they would have exposed themselves to views they

cannot hear on their side of the cease-fire line. An opportunity to open a dialogue at the non-official level between the two parts of Kashmir has been thrown away, though that remains the only recourse when governments refuse to talk. There will be an occasion to correct the mistake when the convention meets again, possibly some six months hence.

Sheikh Abdullah has not tried to provide an instant solution of the Kashmir problem. He has set down certain criteria of the solution, which have to be democratic, secular, realistic and acceptable to all. Such a solution would necessarily have to synthesise the various and, at times, contradictory points of view of the delegates. The Kashmir problem has become so complicated over the years that a great deal of optimism will be required to believe that it may be possible to evolve such a common denominator. It will require patience, perseverance, and, above all, understanding, all of them in good

measure. Rigidity of approach, from which neither of the governments nor many of the political parties can be exonerated, has led us nowhere. For long the problem has been allowed to remain a monopoly of politicians and bureaucrats who seem to be more interested in scoring a debating point than in the welfare of the people. This has already exacted a heavy price without making the problem in any way tractable. The convention, however irritating it may have been to some, has let in some fresh air, a certain boldness of thinking and approach in a musty situation. The problem has been lifted out of the groove, and a beginning has been made. Perhaps it is not time yet to contend that this is a big advance. A solution of the kind the Sheikh has in mind still appears utopian, and the effort may ultimately prove futile. It is, however, worth making, for the alternative is the prolongation of the uneasy present with an unpredictable future.

nine months ago close to 1.5 billion dollars worth of foreign aid have been diverted for the financing of maintenance imports; contrary to what the community is told from time to time, the impact of this on the rate of industrial growth has been negligible, if not negative. But the prescription continues to be more of the same medicine: after all, it helps fatten some private cats, so why not? And let nobody dare question the moral uprightness of whatever Mr Morarji Desai does, Mr Desai, by definition, can never be wrong.

Whatever individual Ministry one wants to discuss, it is only the *personae* who change, the pattern of the game remains the same. Mr Jagjivan Ram would not care less if the Americans do not now come through with the 2.5 million tonnes of wheat earlier promised. This loss will not however goad him to urge for a renewal of national will and other such jazz. It is furthest from his intention to make up for the non-receipt of American wheat by an intensified programme of domestic procurement. The Chief Ministers, the same species who are reluctant to raise taxes, are equally reluctant to raise the target of procurement; no aspirant for the Prime Minister's post will therefore dare to suggest larger collection of grains. No, Mr Jagjivan Ram will simply reduce the quantum of grain for distribution through the ration and fair price shops; let people buy the remainder of their requirements at high prices from the open market. The traders and the mulcters will be allowed to take over the foodgrains trade. The only vulnerable section whom the Food and Agriculture Minister will perhaps want to take care of are his special constituents spread across the entire country, who have sent up eighty-odd representatives to the Congress Parliamentary Party. Beyond them, let there be deluge.

Mrs Indira Gandhi, the non-ministering Prime Minister, presides over all this. Perhaps she too could not care less. After all, she continues as Prime Minister. Doesn't she?

## More Of The Same

Mr Morarji Desai has no doubts in his mind. If—as is now confirmed—very little of foreign economic aid is going to come in from this year onwards, the Plan will be chopped down to size. The outlay on defence is inviolate, development will therefore have got to give in. There is nobody bold enough to think of raising additional *internal* resources: the State Chief Ministers, in all seasons a law unto themselves, will never agree to touch the rural rich, and the prospects of tapping the other possible sources are equally bleak. With 2.5 million tonnes of PL480 wheat too not coming in, the Government of India's budget will in any case be deprived of the bounty of counterpart funds to the extent of almost Rs 175 crores. Obviously, so much less then is available for the Plan. As the Americans would say, the Plan has to be the 'fall guy'.

Not that Mr Desai wants it to be any different. His address to the

World Bank and the International Monetary Fund annual meeting last month revived the familiar plea for aid; but the emphasis very definitely was on non-project aid. In other words, while the total volume of aid will in any case shrink to laughable proportions, India's Finance Minister has gone on record that the bulk of the truncated aid should be not for Plan projects, but for covering the general maintenance needs of the economy. That is to say, the official Government view is to use up the major portion of whatever foreign exchange is made available for importing spares and components, raw materials and intermediate goods. A project aid would mean flow of resources to an approved, socially desired direction. Non-project aid, in contrast, would imply a glut of importables to service the whims and fancies of private manufacturers. Mr Desai surely knows what he is talking about. Since the devaluation of the rupee twenty-

## 'Act Of Grace'

The leaders of the Joint Council of Action of Central Government employees have welcomed "the act of grace" announced by the Union Cabinet. Mr S. M. Joshi thinks that it will pave the way for an overall settlement of the dispute. What is muted, almost silenced, is the demand for whose settlement the disorganised token strike was staged—a demand which is nowhere near fulfilment. Not only that, the withdrawal of recognition of many old unions stands. The employees who did not attend office on September 19 will be subject to indignities for three to five years. They will have to be on their best behaviour, which means that no resort to action over their demands will be tolerated. And the fate of 19,000 employees, dismissed, suspended or arrested is uncertain. Whatever the union leaders might say, the employees have retained their jobs on rather humiliating terms. But it is no use blaming them. It is the leadership which is to blame. The peon in New Delhi who was thrown down by the police from the second or third floor, the people who were killed at Pathankot and elsewhere—all seem to have died in vain. Perhaps not altogether. But for the unity and perseverance which their courage brought among sections of employees, victimisation would have been much more brutal.

'The act of grace' which the Union Government has announced may be extended to the Kerala Government which is being charged with not enforcing the Essential Services Maintenance Order. Is the power of the Centre to issue directions, under Articles 256 and 257, to the States absolute? Under the blessed and much amended Constitution that we have, it is only when a proclamation of emergency is in force that Article 353 gives the Centre absolute power to issue directions about the exercise of the executive authority of State Governments irrespective of whether or not the subject matter of the directions is included in the Union List. But let us not quote the Constitution.

The Centre would not have tried to be so tough in mid-1967 when the Congress writ did not run in large areas of the country. That it is flexing its muscles so blatantly now is a constant reminder of the failure of the left.

## Sabah

The Philippine-Malaysian talks over Sabah scheduled to be held this ed off by Kuala Lumpur. Now politics week in Tokyo have finally been call-will surely be continued by other means. Already the Philippine navy is reported to be cruising uncomfortably close to Sabah. Kuala Lumpur has also sent reinforcements to fight imaginary Filipino commandos sneaking into Sabah. Early this month came the report of 70 deaths in a clash between Sabah forces and "unidentified armed groups". Filipinos and Malaysians have been marching upon each other's embassy, holding mock trials and giving death sentences freely. In spite of this sabre-rattling, however, the Philippine-Malaysian confrontation seems a bizarre combination of melodrama and farce.

Although the Philippines became independent in 1946 it was not until 1962 that the first mutterings about a claim on Sabah were heard. Apart from some dubious legal claim (See *Frontier*, No. 15) the then President Macapagal pointed to the problem of security. "It is vital", he said, "to the security of the Philippines that North Borneo be not placed under the sovereignty and jurisdiction of another State. In the event, God forbid, that Malaya succumbs to the potent communist threat on the Asian mainland, with North Borneo under Malaya, there would be created a situation in which a communist territory would be the immediate southern frontier of the Philippines, which would pose a grave and intolerable threat to our country". Now with a mounting guerilla offensive in the north and leftist activities in the south, Malaysia may be nearing the "disaster" apprehended by Macapagal. But the argument could also be turned on the Philippines with greater

force for, her Huk guerillas pose a far more serious threat. Marcos, however, does not even care to put forward such a profound argument. The issue has been revived this time simply as a vote catching device. By projecting himself as a supernationalist Marcos is out to steal the thunder of his opponents. Only militancy over Sabah can ensure him three million Muslim votes, particularly of the Sulu island (allegedly the owner of Sabah). Sabah, moreover, offers a useful distraction from the growing discontent at home.

Since March this year angry notes have been flying between Manila and Kuala Lumpur. The only tangible result, apart from mounting tension, was the agreement about meeting in Bangkok to discuss the mode of settlement of the claim. But the five-week-long Bangkok talks ending in July turned out to be a low comedy, the actors often forgetting their badly written script. After wrangling over the method of recording the talks for several days the representatives settled down only to indulge in lavatorial phrases and calling each other names. Filipino representatives were required to establish their claim on Sabah. But apart from mechanically repeating their proposal to refer the case to the World Court they threw light on precious little. The aftermath of the talks was no less comical. Following the breakdown of the talks the Philippines withdrew all but one diplomatic staff from Kuala Lumpur and passed a Bill declaring Sabah to be an integral part of the Philippines. Kuala Lumpur in turn suspended diplomatic relations and in an emergency session of the Malaysian Parliament the Philippine Bill was declared "null and void"!

Although Marcos is more interested in the political fall-out of the dispute than in the territory itself (which, in any case, he knows he cannot get), agitation, once sparked off and enthusiastically joined by the people often gets out of hand. Between now and election time the agitation may drift further than originally envisaged. If only Malaysia would agree to refer the case to the World Court the agitation could be frozen for some time

and in the meantime Marcos could get himself re-elected. That prospect being closed after the Bangkok talks, one may expect more violent demonstrations in Manila and Kuala Lumpur and even a make-believe war. The Tunku has been quick to take advantage of this 'electoral' confrontation to divert his people's attention from more pressing issues at home. He has already given civil servants half days off to enable them to join protest rallies. A small-scale war might also strengthen the position of Tunku and Marcos vis-a-vis their respective countries. Lal Bahadur's skyrocketing prestige after the Indo-Pak war is a very recent example. The only deterrent seems to be the realization that, as pointed out by the Tunku, Filipino-Malaysian hostility would only benefit the communists. The wily Tunku did not fail to note that the demonstrations in Manila of late have been increasingly anti-imperialist, particularly anti-U.S. (apparently because of U.S. "neutrality" in the dispute but really because of the growing hatred against U.S. imperialist exploitation of the Philippines). Notwithstanding the immediate political benefit they might reap out of it, this development is hardly welcome to the rulers of Manila and Kuala Lumpur.

*View from Delhi*

## The Thousand-Day Wonder

FROM A POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

SOMEBODY up in the Press Information Bureau was just being smart. So much pulp on Mrs Indira Gandhi's triumphant thousand days was packed into the special correspondents' daily staple package of handouts. The Arthur Schlesingers in the tribe were supposed to lap it up and go ga-ga over the thousand-day wonder. It is just pettifoggery here all round. The External Affairs Ministry is sore that her Latin American tour did not get its due acreage of newsprint at home despite all the Press relations so laboriously built up. The commissars of the Indian Federation of Working Journalists are sore that the martyrdom of a certain editor in whose exit they are elements of class struggle, has gone virtually unnoticed. The Syndicate is worried about ferrying Mr Kamaraj into Parliament via Nagercoil and inducting him into the Cabinet as a counterweight to Mrs Gandhi. The Gandhi Centenary Celebrations have degenerated into a laboured official ritual, robbed of any content. It is a fatuous industry now. Mr Chavan is now the darling of the Left Establishment if only because Moscow sees the next Prime Minister in him if Mrs Gandhi were to be toppled by some mischance. And where are the issues in Indian politics today?

The Fourth Plan looks as good as scuttled. The order of priorities worked out by the Planning Commission is about to be jettisoned because the Congress Working Committee has worked out its own, all of them innocuous and eminently laudable—drinking water where it is necessary, irrigation and fertiliser and what not. It was indeed great to listen to Mr Morarji Desai, homing from Washington with nothing to declare, talk of making do with our own resources for the Fourth Plan. But the fact is Western aid is drying up and India

looks so soulfully to Moscow for all. Moscow's neo-colonialism thus gains a new foothold in India. The CPI has ceased to be a movement and lapsed into a lobby, content to exert pressure on the Government to go in for TU-134s. The most vital sectors of the economy like steel and oil are in the Soviet grip. Prof. D. Gadgil's team is believed to have been told in Moscow that the Soviets would buy up all the surpluses of our public sector projects. This is technical aid in reverse. There could not have been a better instance of a socialist country exploiting a developing country. First, build a lot of surplus into the public sector projects and then make us part with the surplus to even up the lop-sided rupee payment trade with all the items we import in return so artificially priced out. One kind of dependence is being replaced by another. The Government's equivocation on Czechoslovakia may pay off in terms of greater manoeuvrability for the Indian bourgeoisie and even private British capital in India. The wayward Press can always rationalise it because even the CPI(M) has begun doing it: Soviet aid is helping the Indian bourgeoisie to face up to the U.S. economic blackmail!

Fact is New Delhi has no options now—on anything. After the "strongman" stance on the Central employees' strike, the Cabinet's face-saving decision was a tame end to the episode, bailing out of the mess the political adventurers who have usurped leadership of Central employees' unions.

The Centre has to pipe down on Kerala too because it has no options left. Mr Chavan should be content to keep Mr Namboodiripad on a short leash until the Congress is prepared to take the risk of toppling the Government there. Mr Chavan would



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have to leave it to Mr Panampili Govinda Menon (who has been relentlessly sputniking his home State) to talk incoherently of marching the army into Kerala and such arrant nonsense.

### Kashmir

It is ditto on Kashmir because there cannot be any solution to it. Sheikh Abdullah's convention was a damp squib according to the Government-inspired reports. But it might not have been one. All the same, the Sheikh is not sure what he exactly wants. Theoretically he might have all the options open but would he be in a position to exercise any of them? The solution suggested at the convention ranged from plebiscite and secession to just increased autonomy for the State.

Mr G. M Sadiq and the Congress leadership in Kashmir have a vested interest in keeping the issue alive. Even the Centre is. You can always rally support for the Government in the name of Kashmir or the threat to the borders from China. The State is being pampered with Central aid out of all proportion to what it deserves and the premium is on political blackmail.

Twenty years ago, neither China nor the Jana Sangh were factors in the Kashmir issue. Now they are. At home, the Jana Sangh would not countenance any move for greater autonomy for Kashmir because this is one party which consistently demands a unitary set-up for the country and instant military solutions to problems like Assam and the North-East Frontier.

The Government hopes to wear the Sheikh out by playing him down and ignoring him. But if the secessionist sentiment grows among the people of Kashmir, it would have to look to elements as diverse as the Jana Sangh and the CPI to back the corrupt regime in Srinagar. In sum it is just non-policy.

### Nagaland

Either the Government has been oblivious to the situation building up in Nagaland or just wants to suppress

the truth. The Defence of India Rules are extinct but the inhibitions it imposed on truthful reporting persist. No one knows the truth about the reported Naga uprising on either side of the Indo-Burma border together with a communist insurrection on the China-Burma border. Fierce clashes between Nagas and Burmese troops have been reported and there are similar clashes with Indian forces across the border. In New Delhi news is still "managed", as happened in connection with the September 19 strike. What in fact was a "strike breaking cell" (whatever its euphemistic equivalent in Government parlance) was set up to feed AIR and the Press with fiction just to break the strike. Some officials of the Central Information Service have raised the question of the officials' obligation to spread untruth and to what extent they could be involved in the job. The association of CIS officials has set up a committee to report on it.

Something is cooking on the strategic North-Eastern Frontier and particularly in Nagaland. Nobody would seriously believe all the claims of the operational success in Mizo Hills and the alleged mass surrenders. It is said that the Naga army chief Angama is already back in action but we wouldn't know much about what really is happening in Nagaland. Ask no questions of the Government and no lies will be told!

### Down South

## Muslim Politics In Kerala

M. R.

TO the communalist of the North with his blinkers on, everything in the South has a sinister import. For instance, he cannot believe that in Kerala, where the Hindus, Muslims and Christians are evenly balanced population-wise, there is no communal tension in the sense the North would understand it.

The Kerala Government's proposal for creating a new administrative district which, accidenatly, would have a Muslim majority, is viewed by the Jana Sangh as something diabolical, next only to the partition of 1947. But in Kerala itself, the case for the Malappuram district (to be carved) out of Calicut and Palghat districts) is heard with sympathy by every one, ranging from Marxists to veteran Congressmen. "What is the harm? All that the Muslims would get is a District Collector." To be sure there is no guarantee that the Collector would be a Muslim.

Muslim politics in Kerala have eluded sophisticated analysis. The League's politics were undergoing a measure of secularisation on the eve of the 1967 elections. The patriarchs of the League realised that the younger generation was looking to the Marxist communists and the only alternative to immediate liquidation of the League as a political force would be an alliance with the Marxists which meant slow emasculation. In Malabar the Muslim League is a strategic force but amidst a swing in favour of the Marxists (as evident from the 1965 mid-term election trends) its leadership was convinced that it should come to terms with the Marxists.

It was a Congressman, Mr V. K. Krishna Menon, who coined that charlatan phrase "the extension of Sino-Pak collusion" to describe the tacit Marxist Communist-League understanding in the 1965 polls in which there was no formal pact between the two parties.

But the League's months in office after the 1967 elections seem to have made for a change in its politics qualitatively. For the first time since independence Muslims as an organised party shared political power. In 1959 the Congress took the League into an anti-communist front but ditched it once the communists were defeated and the Congress could form a Ministry with PSP participation.

Muslim League leaders as well as their following are conscious of their political leverage in the State. And they have high stakes in the

# Seven Days Of A Flood

NITYAPRIYA GHOSH

United Front Ministry. When the CPI and the CPI(M) were flying at each other's throats a few months ago the Muslim League played the role of an umpire. The League leadership knows what it is to be in power. And the League's leadership comprises the trading class who have tonnes of money to make through the State Government's inept food policy. Secondly, the League following knows that democratisation of education now fast extending to Muslims means a lot, something which they never got in the past.

The theory that any party that joins a communist-dominated front stands to lose has been disproved in Kerala. Mr Nambudiripad was once the most acceptable leader among the Leaguers next only to Bafaki Thangal. But the communist expectation that the younger generation of Muslims would go over to their party is now disproved beyond doubt. The League is consolidating its hold among the youngsters who stand to gain by stressing their Muslim identity. The League leadership has a vested interest in keeping the party's Muslim identity intact and this is where the communist leadership has gone crazily wrong. This development underlines the communist failure at the grassroots resulting from the tendency to take the swing of the Muslims towards the CPI(M) for granted. The process which began around 1965 and was gaining momentum in 1967 has been arrested.

But by no means the Muslim problem in Kerala is a communal one. The creation of Malappuram district would have been a mere administrative act with no serious repercussions but for the bogey being raised by the Jana Sangh outside Kerala. If a Muslim-majority district is something to abhor, what about all the Hindu-majority districts in most parts of India? And a Christian majority Mizo Hills District or a Christian majority Nagaland?

In Kerala anti-communism was once the garb of Christian reaction. Now Hindu reaction is playing the anti-communist role.

AT 4 a.m., October 5, my wife thrust me out of sleep. "Come quick and see the fun, the Karala has come to our doorstep," she said, rather amused.

She must be a gas, waking up people to show some dubious fun at an unearthly hour, I muttered, but all the same, I had to lift the mosquito-net and come out, gathering the pyjama strings. Peering through the window, I saw furious looking water gushing past. I didn't know what to make of it, but with eyes still heavy with sleep, I attempted to crawl back to the bed. But I heard Mahua, my sister-in-law, commenting, "Geez, the Karala has at last come of age." What! She too awake? Not only she, all the inmates of the house were looking at the water with big curiosity. That the Karala had come of age, there was no doubt. She had dared to cross past Dinbazar, roll over the heart of Jalpauri, and reach Mohantapara, two miles inside.

Suddenly water entered the drawing room and was about to flow over into bed-rooms. We scurried to save our new Puja shoes. Water rose over our ankles. We began shifting books from the bottom shelves of almirahs. My father-in-law, a frustrated rice merchant, rushed towards the storeroom, tried to lift a heavy sack of rice all by himself and fell down. Till then none of us believed that water would rise any more. Babu, the brother-in-law, made a face, raised his hand Canute style and said, "This up and no upper." My four-year-old daughter suddenly screamed that water was wetting her feet. We were struck with wonder that the water had reached the beds. An almirah stacked with Tagore hardcovers and Penguins fell face down with a crash. We had to do something. We put the chairs on beds. My wife sat on some with the child but she appeared to be somewhat rocking. The bedstead was floating up. To help them go over to a higher

place, Babu and I tried to heave a heavy steel trunk on to a chest of drawers. But the trunk was much too heavy. In the cold of the moment we made what we thought a wise decision—we removed all the contents of the trunk, quilts and rugs, and raised it on to the chest.

Mahua, in another room, was indeed a funny sight, holding on to her dressing-table which rolled over to the door. Helpless I stood, watching the water rising up to my groin in no time. Suddenly Babu said, "This is no Karala, this is the Teesta herself, look at the muddy water." It occurred to us only then that the Teesta embankment must have burst. Till then, we were feeling amused at the capers of the Karala but the thought that the mighty Teesta had broken through shot panic through all of us. Within 26 minutes that passed like a twinkle the water in our rooms rose four feet and a half. "Let us go out," Babu said, but how? The doors were jammed. A few years ago I had a sort of civil defence training at Nagpur and so I wondered loudly, "what the hell is the Deputy Commissioner doing. Why doesn't he send us rescue boats?"

My mother-in-law was remonstrating, I heard, with the pater. "What do you do now? You want us to be suffocated in this blasted house?" She was wading frantically from one room to another, cursing the modern fashion of house-building that dispenses with ventilators. The huge grilled windows were being swallowed up by gushing water.

Suddenly I heard a few voices from above. Through the skylight of the drawing room, somebody was shouting, "where is everybody? Is anybody here?" I was the only person present at that time in that room. The faces first appeared to me to belong to rescue operators, then to dacoits and finally to a few known ruffians of the neighbourhood. They saw me clutching my child to keep it above the

water. They shouted, "Don't be afraid, give us a hammer, we have to break open the glass." Mahua rushed up and shouted, "Mother, what are they doing? They have gone mad, breaking the glass of the skylight. You creeps, don't break the glass."

But there was no other way out. With naked hands they broke down the glass, bent the wooden panes and extended their bleeding hands. We pushed the women up, who furiously objected to such rough treatment, from below and the boys dragged them up through the skylight, ten feet high. I didn't know how I scampered up (but suddenly we all found ourselves standing on the sunshade, two feet wide, running in a circle all around the house. It was faintly dark outside, water on all sides but not a soul to be seen. Have they all fled? Did they get the alarm beforehand? The water was still rising. With sinking hearts we gazed at the building opposite us as brick after brick went under the water.

The next two hours we stood on the sunshade, the ruffians, the in-laws and all, our teeth chattering, clothes dripping wet, watching dark slimy water rising inch by inch till it was about 10 inches below our feet. We grew jealous of a huddled crowd, very comfortably gathered on the roof of a distant office building. Faint sounds of tin-breaking reached us. People were breaking open their tin roofs, they must have been so long hanging on to ceilings.

#### What Next?

What would happen next? What would we do if water reached the sunshade? The terrible current would certainly sweep us along. No rescue boats in sight. The father-in-law didn't know if I was all the time joking about rescue boats. Exasperated, he said, "Where would the D.C. get boats to rescue sixty thousand people? Even if he gets any, that won't certainly reach us here in the interior. They must be rescuing people at the Race Course." That was where the government officers lived. We decided, our next venture

would be to climb the asbestos roof that rose at a sharp 45° angle. Could the child and women manage? They would have to. Who ever thought that they would be able to climb the sunshade?

Fortunately by 7 o'clock the water showed signs of steadying. By 8 it began to recede. One foot an hour. The railway embankment must have been broken, that was the only outlet for the water. We felt sorry for Pandopara, the low land beyond the embankment, which was now being certainly washed away. But at least we were being spared death by water. If it continued to recede at the same speed, we calculated, we would be able to climb down by 4 o'clock and take shelter on our cots which would be by then above water.

Our spirits revived and we began to look around to see what was happening to whom. What was the punk doing there? A strange sight came in view. A young man holding a child on his shoulder was suavely sitting on a bunch of water-hyacinth. Muddy water swirled round him. How did he come there, at the first place? And why wasn't he trying to move? All others of his family, we could see, had taken shelter on a neighbouring roof. A clown by nature, wasn't he trying to show off? But what would happen if the hyacinths disintegrated? We hollered, "You idiot, why don't you swim across?" But the thing was really not so funny. Eventually we came to know that the man was trying to carry his nephew but such was the force of the current, he was swept off his feet, rolled over the water and when he was being carried along the current he got hold of a goalpost, which lay totally submerged. The hyacinth merely gathered round him. He did not pay any attention to our shouts because with all his energies he clung on to the post. By two o'clock he fainted. By then, somebody swam across and carried both of them to safety.

As we stood on the sunshade, details of the havoc trickled down to us. A young ruffian who had taken shelter on our sunshade swam into the town. When he got back he related

a story. He named a certain old woman who was swimming past houses, asking one and everybody within hearing range, 'Can you give me a shaving blade?' 'What would you do with a shaving blade, old ma, aren't you too old for that?' cackled somebody. Calmly she went on swimming. 'Give me a new blade, if you can, anybody. My niece has given birth to a baby, it is almost four hours now. I have got to cut the placenta.' Hearing this Sibū, a goonda known all over the town, plunged into the water, swam to his hut, broke open the windows and somehow got his shaving blades intact. Another woman whom even I had come to know during my seven days of stay in the town was helping her tottering father-in-law towards a safe house. They waded a short distance but the current was difficult to cut through. The old man violently shook himself off and directed the woman, "Go and take shelter. I can't go. Let me die here, but you go. I can't let you drown, what shall I tell my son? Go woman go. Leave me alone." But the woman dragged him. When they almost reached a double-storeyed house, the inmates came down to lift the old man up. Nobody offered a helping hand to the woman who was swept away, yet to be found.

Another old man, familiar to all of us, was unceasingly wading to and fro, inquiring about his two sons. Both of them were found two days later when the drainwater receded, dashed against a wall. We learned later that the twenty-one-year old boy, feeling suffocated within the house, took his eight-year-old brother in his arms, used a cot as a sort of buoy and tried to float. Float they did for some time until they struck a boundary wall.

We didn't know how we passed the whole day on the slender sunshade which might have given away under our pressure any moment. The shock of the situation, anxious faces swimming endlessly around us for the lost ones, the terribly slow down-climb of the water, the spectre of the sunshade cracking down, horrid tales reaching our ears must have put us in a sort of paralysis. Nobody felt the urge for

food or even a drink of water. The child who from nowhere got hold of a lump of sugar and was sucking it, said, "I am drawing water out of my sugar-lump. You take some."

### Unbolted Windows

By afternoon started another trouble. My mother-in-law was taking the servant to task for not bolting the windows of the kitchen. Down went the spoons, the kettle, the saucepan—all substantial stainless steel, merrily juggling along the current. But her rebukes lost weight when Mahua took the cue, "There goes my Medea, my Sophocles, my class notes. What would I do without them? Why don't you two do something?" she said addressing Babu and me. "Take it easy, lady, take it easy," I said, "Your Sophocles may go to the Hades, but what about the four one-hundred-rupee notes that are lying loose in my suitcase? Do you think I would have sat here gawking at you if I knew the swimming know-how?"

While we were busy watching the outward mail, the pater and the child were deeply absorbed in checking the inward mail—he with a long bamboo pole that once supported the radio aerial and she animatedly pointing towards the carcasses that were floating down towards our house. He was giving them a slight push and thus directing the carcasses on a deviated route, lest they got deposited in our kitchen. The child was the director, she claimed at the end of the day, of nine such deviation operations.

Food or drink was one thing, nature's call was quite a different matter. Towards evening my bladders were bursting. With the full bunch of in-laws around me, I adopted a strategy. Feigning to have discovered something I crawled on the sunshade that curved towards where the latrine lay, I urinated over its roof. After all, a gentleman should not piss anywhere and everywhere. But the strategy was useless, the splashing sound must have given me away. For the next three days, I did not have any other nature's call, except emitting urine, beer's colour, now and then. On the fourth day, thank the Railways, I found a

first-class compartment marooned near the station and made a comfortable shithouse out of it. I didn't dare ask the women how they were managing things. The day after, the three of us, the pater, Babu and myself, cleansed the lavatory, using bare hands inside the commode, inspection chamber and the siphon. But I am getting ahead of the time.

Throughout the evening we were having catnaps till Babu announced at twelve midnight that the water had receded below the fireplace in the drawing room. I jumped through the skylight only to be bogged down in knee-deep mire. I again clambered up and reported the hopeless situation. We would have to spend the whole night in the open air. It was a full moon night, the *kojagari purnima*, green blossoming trees, a clear sky, silent mud below, a mild bite of the cold air. Salvaging an umbrella, we made a sort of tent and covered the child. Sitting on the damp sunshade we were wetting our behinds. The women were wearing thin saris, evidently with no underclothes. Thank God, it didn't rain that day or night or we would have died of pneumonia. Throughout the night I went on cursing the D.C. for not giving us a warning against the flood and for not sending us a rescue boat, so much so that the old boy himself caught on.

### The Second Day

Somehow the night did pass. A bright sun came up. We began the salvage operations. Everything had gone under the mud, the furniture topsy-turvey, mattresses, quilts, pillows beyond recognition. All the wardrobes were open, the saris—Benarasi, Murshidabadi, cotton, all dishrags. Woollen suits, pullovers, shawls would have shamed doormats. Everybody, except the child, got down to remove the silt. But soon it occurred to me, it was something like cleansing the Augean stable. So I gave up. Somebody outside was talking of biscuits and at once the mater flared up, "What do you eat today? Nothing in the kitchen is fit to be eaten. Do something about food, will you?" But nobody heeded,

all absorbed in the mud, Mahua with her books and frequent screams, my wife with the saris, Babu with the radio, the pater with his garden, and the child hunting for her pussy cat.

With striped pyjamas and an orange bush shirt on—my tunic for the rest of my stay in Jalpaiguri—I became about the best-dressed man on Jalpaiguri roads. The others were mostly wearing striped underwear and a cotton vest. The roads were absolutely desolate. All the shops were closed. Trudging for over two hours, I swooped down on a roaming hawk and got two packets of more or less dry biscuits. Patiently searching for something more, I eventually secured a dozen bananas, a box of matches and a pack of No 10. Putting off the shirt and making a bag out of it—a thing I had to do on several occasions over the next few days—I came back elated. But a surprise awaited me. The mater had done a miracle. She gave me a hot cup of raw tea and promised *khichuri* for a meal! She salvaged a tin full of *murki* and we had a brilliant, though skimpy, breakfast—*murki*, banana and tea at 11-30 a.m. With redoubled zest we concentrated on cleaning at least one room. By two o'clock we made it habitable, dragging a few cane chairs, the dining table, and a cot into it. From a tubewell about five hundred yards away, Babu and I drew a bucket of water, after queuing up for forty-five minutes. The tubewell, being continuously worked, stopped working and with a premonition we came back, sharing the bucketful of water with another old man.

After the meal of *khichuri*, I had a mad itch to wash my mouth. The *khichuri* had a doubtful taste and colour and full of grit. But it was no time for the luxury of a mouth-wash. I sacrificed my share of drinking water and washed my mouth with it instead. The old man wailed that his false teeth—the whole set—had been washed away. The mater had her thumb almost torn off by pieces of glass which got mixed up with the silt. With an air of a specialist I said, "Don't be scared. This alluvial soil is very antiseptic. You will heal

up quickly." But I could see that she thought I was cracking a joke. Before she could say anything I slipped out of the room.

There was no peace outside either. Women of the next house were madly washing their clothes in drain-water, while ours lay under the mud. Beautiful saris, untouched by mud, even though a bit wet, were hung up on their roof. How was it that their saris were unscathed? It appeared that they had all their saris in steel trunks, tightly closed, which only floated in the water, without yielding to silt. The moral was swiftly drawn, Mahua and my wife resolved to dispense with fashionable wardrobes in future. Damn fashion, the good old trunks are infinitely safer. Noticing me and Babu basking in the sun after the hearty meal, they swooped down on us. "Why couldn't you keep your heads cool? You could have at least shut the wardrobes tightly." I howled back, "At least you shouldn't bark at me. What about the ornament? Shouldn't you have saved those?" That unfortunately reminded my wife of the currency notes. "Pray, how do you go to Calcutta and join your precious office? Don't think Dad would lend you any dough, he has lost all his bank papers. Better start walking right now if you intend to join the office."

It was a full-fledged quarrel no doubt but I was secretly enjoying it. We had quarrelled a lot during our five years of marriage, but had never resorted to a verbal battle. She was much too reserved and I always felt tongue-tied when angry. The water that broke the Teesta dam broke many things else too. (To be concluded)

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## Calcutta Diary

CHARAN GUPTA

**M**Y political and social views have nothing in common with those held by the sacked Editor of *The Statesman*, but that as neither here nor there. It will be altogether outrageous if the business tycoons who now control the equity of the newspaper can get away with what they have done. It is hardly a matter of whether due financial compensation is paid or not to the gentleman who has been sacked. Much more is involved. When the Editor of this journal was unceremoniously shoved out, earlier this year, from a weekly magazine which he had nurtured from birth, there was not a squeak from the Indian Newspaper Editors' Conference or from the Indian Federation of Working Journalists. The former body is of course controlled by the proprietors themselves; its silence was therefore only natural. But the IFWJ could not be bothered either. There was not a squeak of protest from the great columnists who strut on the editorial page of the so-called national newspapers. The cashiering of the Editor of *The Statesman* might perhaps now suddenly make them aware of the peril that is very much on them. In this world of snobs, the early warning signal from a little magazine does not register: the beep-beep has to be followed by the thud-thud.

\* \* \*  
What the tycoons are trying to convey is crystal clear. It is not a question of whether you deviate by a centimetre or a kilometre, you must not deviate at all, and, as the Americans say, period. You are a hired employee; in other words a hack. It is your job to write according to the orders of your employers, and to defend their class interests all along the line. Yours is not to reason why. This is the Swatantra way of looking at things, and the Swatantraites are gradually moving in to take effective charge of the commanding heights of

power. Mrs Indira Gandhi can continue to loll in the satisfaction that she is still nominally the Prime Minister of the country, but she does not control the events. A police-military-industrial-kulak complex is gradually taking shape, and some of its early manoeuvres are as much intended to browbeat the masses as to discipline the Government into subservience. The strike of the newspaper employees provided some sort of a trial balloon; the owner-proprietors decided to play it rough, and the Government, awe in its heart, simply watched from the sidelines. From now on, the chances are that we will be witnessing a fast revival of the jungle laws of *laissez faire*. Mrs Gandhi's will be a non-interventionist regime, and the kulaks and the capitalists will do pretty much what they like. And it will perhaps not do to ascribe this kind of attitude on the part of a lawfully elected government to a peculiar death-wish. It is entirely possible that there is more than meets the eye. How does it matter to Mrs Indira Gandhi and her friends if the private sector takes over the country, lock, stock and barrel? For all one knows, assurances might have flown out that their individual interests will be taken care of. The package of assurances might even have included the proviso that, whatever the structural changes, she would be kept as figurehead Prime Minister; she might even return to Latin America next year.

\* \* \*  
For it is not just a case of turning the Nelson eye to the depredations of the private sector. The rot has proceeded much farther than that. This is the open season, and an invitation has gone out from the Government to the tycoons to come and take over the key sectors of economic decision-making. Somehow the notion has been fostered—and under public sponsorship—that management in the public sector is *sine qua non* for

efficiency; the current craze is therefore to plead with assorted prima donnas from the industrial world to take charge of the more important public enterprises: please, won't you, teach us to be a little more efficient? There could be no sillier myth than this supposed efficiency of India's private industry. When potential competition from outside is shut out through blanket import control, when the Tariff Commission is enjoyed to follow the cost plus principle in recommending the structure of industrial prices, and rampant inflation has created a vast reservoir of pent-up demand, almost any moron would be able to show high profits. There is thus nothing extraordinary in the figures of cushy dividends the private units have been able to offer year after year. Besides, as the experience of the last two years has shown, the private tycoons maintain their profits via a device which is nothing short of anti-national: in a period of stress, they would cut down production, lay off men, but *not* reduce prices; the

Government might cajole them by arranging for 'maintenance' imports, they would not budge, and output would remain restricted. It is also not often realised that, in several instances, the profit margin of the private sector is at the expense of the profit margin of the public enterprises: it is because a State electricity board is persuaded to supply power at cheap rates to a private aluminium plant that the latter is able to register a big return on capital; it is because the Food Corporation of India supplies foodgrains at low rates to the tea gardens that the latter are able to contain their labour costs and announce fat dividends.

But, as I was saying, this is not the season for such home truths. The economic philosophy which is currently inspiring New Delhi is the one imported from Taiwan and South Korea: develop key enterprises in the public sector through taxpayers' money: once developed, hand them over to the private tycoons, they are there to do the mulcting. These gentlemen are now being called in to take charge of State trading of imports and exports as well as of foodgrains, public airline corporations, public steel and fertiliser plant, and what have you; they are invited to exercise a veto over the size and shape of the to-be-resumed Fourth Plan; they are invited even to take over educational planning—already the supervision of several institutes of technology and management, financed exclusively through public funds, has been handed over to the tycoons. Their kingdom has come. It has been truly a bloodless revolution—except for the blood of the workers and peasants who are shot down now and then.

The tycoons know that they have arrived; they now feel perfectly safe to bare their fangs. It is going to be total compliance or liquidation; the days of editorial prerogative are going to be ended. Any kind of 'objective' reporting, if it injures the interests of the ruling class, is to be

taboo. I am merely speculating: perhaps the situation could still be saved if the editors of the more important newspapers in the country—and the other senior journalists—could show some guts even at this stage. Since the Chief Election Commissioner has been reduced to a hackneyed quotation from John Donne, I might as well do the same thing. The editors who have not yet been sacked will be committing a grave error by thinking that they might sit this crisis out, that *The Statesman* bell does not toll for them. The tycoons owning the structure at Chowringhee Square are now on the market for a pliable Editor; they could yet be taught a lesson if the journalists—each one of them—refuse to oblige; that is the only way they could ensure their collective security. But I know it is a wild prayer on my part. The world—particularly the world of journalism—is only too full of rats.

\* \*

Two questions still keep nagging me. The re-arrangement of *The Statesman's* equity took place, if I am not mistaken, as early as 1963. For at least four years following that, the newspaper continued to have a British editor. If anything, the ideological waywardness of both reporting and editorial opinion was an even more frequent occurrence during his regime than during that of his successor, the first Indian editor, who has now been given the boot. Could it be that *The Statesman* management, given their traditional role of lackeys of imperialism, didn't dare dismiss a British editor, but recovered enough of their moral courage now that the editor was an Indian?

My second query is with respect to the part played in this whole murky affair by the former Chief Justice of the country, who has been installed as Chairman of the newspaper's Board of Directors. What satisfaction has he been able to draw from being a party to the grisly business? Or will it be his contention that his sole endeavour has been to prove the point that justice is blind?

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## Non-Event ?

A COMMENTATOR

THE union of newspaper employers is strong and the recent strike by their employees has furthered the spirit of fraternity among the proprietors. Take, for instance, the case of Mr Pran Chopra, editor of *The Statesman* until October 12. When the editor retires, a complimentary notice is permitted. When an editor resigns for policy differences, that is news. And the news value is greater when he is dismissed for policy differences.

On the evening of October 12 most reporters in Calcutta knew that Mr Chopra's services had been terminated abruptly. The Sunday edition of the paper carried the name of the acting editor. But the news did not appear in the major dailies of this city. Sooterkin Street—*Anandabazar Patrika* and *Hindusthan Standard*—has continued to maintain a superb silence, while *Amritabazar Patrika* and *Jugantar*—which were not affected by the two-month-old strike—took two or three days to report the event. The other national dailies kept quiet.

On October 18 Mr Chopra met local reporters and editors separately and gave them an account of the high-handed way his services had been terminated and of his dispute with the management. At the time of writing not one paper in Calcutta has carried a line.

It may be some consolation to the ex-editor that the dispute has received publicity in some famous overseas papers like *The Times* and the *Guardian* of London and also in the U.S. A Reuter news item that appeared in *The Times* on August 31 prompted the Managing Director of *The Statesman*, Mr Irani—ex-Swatantra—to send in a contradiction which *The Times* published on October 11. Mr Irani contends that the now dissolved Board of Trustees was set up, not by the previous all-British owners, but

by the Indian firms which took *The Statesman* over. In fact, he says, Tatas, who were asked to buy up the paper, did not want to do so and instead organised a sort of consortium to acquire it and it was the new set-up which appointed the Board of Trustees. People familiar with the affairs of *The Statesman* tend to accept this contention with a big pinch of salt.

Mr Irani says that it became extremely difficult to get together in Calcutta the five trustees who resided in different parts of the country and so, they were invited to join the Board of Directors for prompter decision and action. It appears that the management thought that, on being elevated to the rank of directors, the trustees would set up a chummy in Calcutta and cease to reside in different parts of the country. That the difficulties of distance and other factors persist is evident from the fact that the two trustees-turned-directors were not present at the meeting which asked Mr Chopra to quit. Another nagging doubt persists: was the Board of Trustees dissolved first and then, as an afterthought, invited to become directors or was it an almost simultaneous process? Only the trustees can tell.

There are men of talent who put up with policy vagaries in their paper and yet somehow preserve their personal integrity and charm. The set-up in most countries is such that they have to compromise—and suffer the convulsions of conscience. It is these convulsions that help them to preserve their basic honesty. Of course this proposition will not be accepted by dogmatists—but those who knew Mr Saroj Acharya, who died last week, will not tend to be dogmatic. A quiet, retiring but brilliant journalist, and a fine scholar, Mr Acharya sometimes had a haunted look, but persevered to maintain his liberal Marxist faith. His contributions in many fields and his encouragement to the young will be remembered with admiration. Such scholar-journalists are rare in this go-getting age.

## Our Demons

R. N. DEBBARMA

THE Scripture has it that Ramchandra worshipped Durga untimely during the autumn so that with the Goddess on his side he could kill the demon, Ravana. In other words, the invocation of Durga was motivated by the practical consideration of victory in the war with Ravana. So, even in that mythical time this religious or cultural occasion or event of celebration or observance was not without a utilitarian purpose or motive behind it. Naturally, the untimely invocation by us too of Durga a la Ramchandra should have an identical motivation relevant to contemporary society. If there is no such motivation, then the hollowness and pointlessness of it all would be difficult to defend even on the plea of religion or culture.

An analysis of the religious programme of these celebrations would reveal that many features have been modified, annulled or added since the time of Ramchandra. One contemporary touch is the community character of the festival. This makes unavoidable the services of the fund-raisers who arrange the wherewithal for the festival. Their campaign is an unforgettable annual operation. The fund-raisers generally come from the local army of the unemployed churned out by every Five Year Plan. Upon their efficiency and determination depends the collection of the resources for the festival. Their strategy and tactics include cajolery, bullying, brow-beating—and sometimes stabbing. After the collection the stage is set for the celebration.

Then begins the worry about the image of Durga and her retinue. In image-making the stamp of the ruling tastes and passions of the organizers prevails: to the images is imparted the likeness of the buxom and bewitching film-stars.

After the installation of the image comes the function proper—the invocation of the gods and goddesses through the agency of the priest, and

observance of various religious rites and rituals. The amount of expenditure on this head invariably turns out to be ridiculously small when compared with the expenditure on other heads of account like microphones, decorations, entertainment. Amplifiers—headache for those who live near the pandal—have been gradually replacing the traditional dhakis. Cheap and popular discs of exotic music are played at top pitch; the ceremonial rite of burning incense in the evening is accompanied by 'twists', 'shake' and other nondescript dances and leg-shaking with indecent motions and postures in front of Durga.

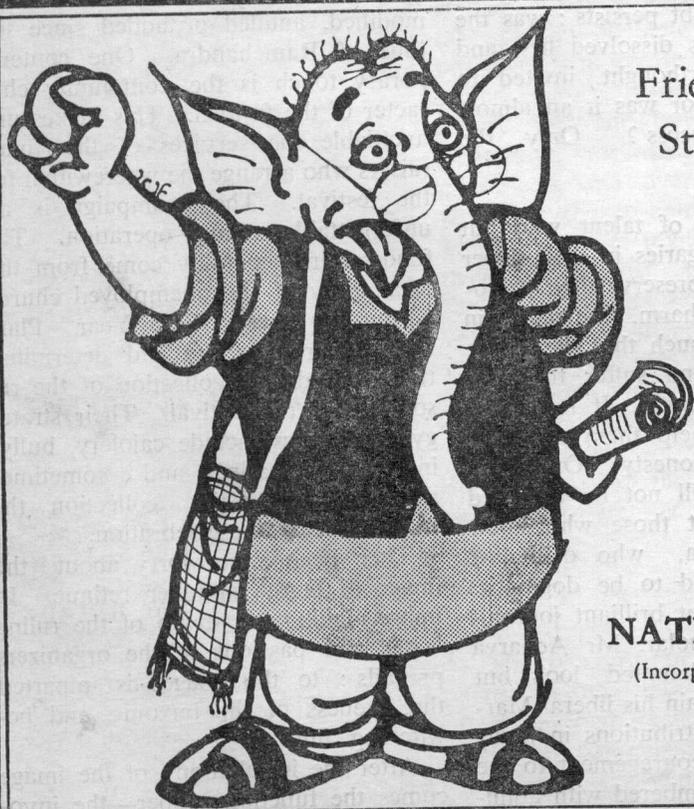
The sort of carnival that takes place during the four days of celebrations provide interesting socio-psychological data. There is the impression of a safety-valve releasing the passions and propensities bottled up round the year under what may be termed as the 'cultural discipline'. The demonstrative craze of people to visit and revisit the

pandals, muscling their way through the crush of the visitors, would have been difficult to justify in the cases of young boys and girls as well as elderly and matronly women only on the basis of an upsurge of their religious feelings. Does not this occasion provide to the young an opportunity to relish a forbidden intimacy with the opposite sex, and to the elderly to parade either their provocative modernity in dresslessness or their weakness for dressiness? Purchases of new clothes—an obligation to keep pace with the current social fashion—are made by both the poor and the rich, as a result of which a socialism of sorts appears so far as new clothes are concerned. Then follow the agony and the hardship of the poor parents—the burden of the para-compulsory debts and loans and repayment of recoverable advances made on the eve of the festival.

In the name of religion the whole

nation is drifting away from its moorings. It is clear that celebration of the festival as observed nowadays is against religion, ethics, tradition, in other words, against the very culture by which a nation is distinguished from others.

It is not being suggested that none of the Durga Puja celebrations this year has been according to the spirit in which Ramchandra had observed it. For instance, the worship of Durga this year in front of Ilaco House by the employees of the Life Insurance Corporation. An economic or social motivation behind this celebration lent a contemporary relevance to the festival. The motive was to mobilise and keep ready during the festival days their forces to frustrate the attempt of the bureaucracy of the LIC to install an electronic computer. The organizers of Durga Puja in front of Ilaco House are closer to Ramchandra in their fighting spirit.



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## Wasted Material

MRIGANKA SEKHAR RAY

THE Bengali films now running in the city are clear examples of how exciting material for screen adaptations can be wasted by a sheer lack of technical command. The word technique here has a wide implication, it is not the mere mechanical knowledge of focus and exposure, it is the inner technique of building up the scenario, of creating atmosphere and mood in terms of visual images. The basic situations are all interesting; the set-ups have a semblance of modernity, the protagonists at least look different from the run-of-the-mill family drama of Bengali screen. But the appearances are deceptive; scratch a little and the old wounds begin to show up, the whole thing becomes the usual sentimental gibberish which our screen has been spilling for years together. The literary origin of the stories (of the five films four are derived from published novels) has been followed blindly in all cases, with the result that the digressions permissible in a novel have crippled the narrative structure of the films.

*Chowringhee* (directed by Pinaki Mukherjee) is set in a big Calcutta hotel full of weird characters. The fads and foibles of the people housed in it almost turn the hotel into a bedlam and although much shooting is done on actual location, the film fails to impart authenticity to the setting. It is because the characters and their problems are thoroughly unconvincing. A society hostess falls for a rich man's son, an air-hostess is madly in love with the chief receptionist, an alcoholic hotel-manager pines for god-knows-what and a casual observer watches all these with a cool callousness. Everybody is always in a confessing mood. The milieu of a busy hotel with its feeling of mobility is never present in the film. There are at least five stories running concurrently without having a common meeting point. Despite the profuse talk about modern urban society in the film, the director is still in the grip of the half-

baked sociological ideas of the thirties' dressing-gown cinema.

*Baghini* (directed by Bijoy Basu) is a welcome step forward for a maker of text-book biographies inasmuch as it leads the camera into an unknown region focussing the attention on the bootlegging scene. The topography of the village is beautifully defined and for the first fifteen minutes, the film indeed holds out promises of better things. But that hope is only a mirage. As the inevitable Baul appears on the scene and sings about a love-lorn belle, one feels sure that the film would founder on the routine formula. The dark world of sin so excellently explored in the novel, the film never cares to probe; the hero's drift from politics to the underworld is never given a thought and the principal characters become an array of reluctant sinners. Thus this moving tale of the agony and conflicts of the sinner is reduced to an insipid cop-and-robber game.

*Tin Adhyaya* (directed by Mangal Chakrabarty) shows us Uttamkumar as a big industrialist who has lost his sister in a car accident and the world has no meaning to him. It takes almost two hours for the audience to discover that the hero's sister is dead. All along the build-up is so wrong that we are led to believe that it is his fiance or wife who is dead. He fancies a girl who looks exactly like his sister (the girl in question of course does not know that) and after a series of meaningless misunderstandings the girl is happily married to her lover with the pet twin-trick serving as the climax. The film is spoiled by picking up the wrong thread in the story. The real good thing would have been to deal with the sub-plot of a glamour girl who has to work as a cabaret dancer to pay for the abortion of her sister. But perhaps that is a tall order for mediocrities.

*Adwitiya* (directed by Naveyendu Chatterjee), a screen debut for the director, is a variation on the theme of Yama the Pit with a penitent prostitute as the central character. Here also everything is half-hearted. The director has picked up a daring theme but does not dare go the whole hog

with it. The result is a patched-up melodrama with the usual dose of songs and dances.

*Baluchari* (directed by Ajit Ganguly) tells the story of a sister's affection for her family leading to the sacrifice of her own happiness. The treatment is uncinematic, the script a bundle of false intrigues by the wicked aunts and the malevolent in-laws, with all the characters lining up in the final scene as the curtain falls on everybody's happiness. But still the story has a genuine emotional content, and Sabitri and Anil Chatterjee do infuse a real force into their characters as waiting lovers.

### "Memory Play"

*Two for The Road* (directed by Stanley Donen) is a case of an old-time trying hopelessly to catch up with the new, committing the fatal error of writing a Noel Coward plot with Joycean technique. In his craze to copy the Resnais method of memory-play Donen has ruined the possibilities of a wonderful marital comedy and the whole film has become a clumsy jigsaw of automobile jaunts by Hepburn and Finney. We hope that Donen would soon give up the fashion of being in the run and return to the simple elegance of his early musicals.

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# Marxism And Parliamentarism-II

## The British Experience

ABDUL GAFAR

THE British Labour Party has always boasted that it does not believe in Marxism and revolution and that it can bring about socialism peacefully through Parliament. Before World War II, Clement Attlee, leader of the Labour Party, again declared: "It is my belief that with the (parliamentary) machinery we can bring about the fundamental changes which we desire." (*The Labour Party in Perspective*, p. 169).

During the 1945 general election, the Labour Party had an extraordinarily favourable situation. Its programme of socialism was announced in "*Let Us Face the Future*". Expressing the desire of the workers and the general mass of the people, it called for a radical reconstruction of the social and economic order. Moreover, it promised to effect this reconstruction rapidly, and not by any process of "gradualism" as the right-wing elements of the party had proposed in earlier days. While advocating the establishment of a socialist State by peaceful means, i.e., without revolution or violence, Labour leaders made it clear that they will not make any compromise with capitalism in achieving that end. In fact, the Labour leaders were so determined to introduce socialism immediately that Sir Stafford Cripps went as far as to proclaim that if the monopolists and reactionaries opposed Labour's socialist measures, the Labour Government would not hesitate to operate through emergency decrees!

On the eve of the election Prof Laski said that "it is a straight fight between private enterprise now expressed as monopoly capitalism and socialism that realises that the new age is born"—the age of socialist commonwealth.

In the 1945 elections Labour won 393 seats; the Conservatives and Liberals together won 213 seats, Labour had an overall majority of 146. Hard-

ly any party had ever won such a tremendous victory in a parliamentary election. Sir Hartley Shawcross proudly declared: "We are the masters now." People also had the same feeling. Countless men and women found in this Labour victory the vindication of their faith and the fulfilment of their hopes and ardently believed that now at last was to begin the transformation of Britain into a socialist commonwealth.

With such an overwhelming majority in Parliament Labour ruled, for five years. And during this period—a period which was entirely favourable for Labour both nationally and internationally—what did the Labour Government achieve?

Labour leaders had been claiming that nationalisation was synonymous with socialism. They believed that socialistic nationalisation can be brought about constitutionally, through Parliament, and without expropriating the vested interests by revolutionary means.

Now, at last, they got the chance to put through their programme. But what was the result? The measures the Labour Government adopted—they had hardly anything socialistic about them—the orderly transition from wartime mobilisation to peacetime reconstruction, nationalisation of the coal industry, transport, some public utility services, National Health Service, reforms in education, in housing, in welfare etc—all these could have been brought about by the Liberals or even by the Conservatives as was actually done by them in France, West Germany, Japan and many other countries. Actually, coal and other nationalised industries were operated by faithful representatives of capitalist interests.

Regarding nationalisation of the key iron and steel industry, the Government's plan was completely frustrated. All it could do was to adopt certain

half-hearted measures which were neither here nor there.

### "Achievements"

Examining the socialist achievements of the Labour Government, Prof Brady, a shrewd observer of social development, said: "What has been substituted for private capitalism in this sphere is State capitalism with the result that Labour tends to find itself in a relationship with its new employer—the Government and its representatives—much similar to that with which it had long been familiar before the change-over was made." (*Crisis in Britain*, p. 659).

Sir Ivor Jennings, a British constitutional authority, points out that by "nationalising the coal mining industry, the transport system, the production of gas, electricity, water, by taking wide powers of control over agriculture, and by enlarging social services, the Labour Party did nothing new, nothing revolutionary or socialistic, it merely gave a broader interpretation to a policy which had been followed by all parties since 1919." (*Cabinet Government*, p. 86).

The important thing to remember in this respect is, who does this nationalisation—the capitalist State or the socialist State? In a capitalist State no nationalisation can be socialistic. Long ago, when Bismarck was adopting State ownership and claiming it to be socialistic, Engels wrote in his *Socialism, Utopian and Scientific*:

"The modern State, whatever its form, is an essentially capitalist machine... The more productive forces it takes over, the more it becomes the real collective body of all the capitalists, the more citizens it exploits. The workers remain wage-earners, proletarians. The capitalist relations are not abolished; it is rather pushed to an extreme."

History has repeatedly proved the correctness of what Engels said.

When within a year it became clear to everyone that the Labour Government had failed to deliver the goods, the leaders blamed the workers. In October 1946 Sir Stafford Cripps said: "There is not yet a large number of workers in Britain capable of

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taking over large enterprises . . . until there has been more experience by the workers of the managerial side of industry, I think it will be almost impossible to have worker-controlled industry in Britain, even if it were on the whole desirable."

Labour's failure was not limited to the capitalist system alone. The army, navy, air force, police, law courts—none of these powerful props of bureaucracy was touched; they remained and were strengthened to guard the interests of British imperialism. Labour Ministers boasted that service chiefs wholeheartedly co-operated with them. Quite so, but that was not because these chiefs had become socialists, but because the socialist Ministers did not do any "damage" to their authority or question their traditional conservative views on principal matters.

#### Shameful betrayal

The most shameful betrayal of socialism was in the field of foreign policy. This was the most vital point, for it involved Britain's traditional imperialist interests. It was the Labour Foreign Minister, Ernest Bevin, who was one of the main architects of the cold war, and of NATO. In his anti-Soviet and anti-communist campaign Bevin could beat any American imperialist or the most diehard British Tory.

At the 1946 Labour Party Annual Conference, the Left attacked the Government's foreign policy in a resolution for the "apparent continuance of a traditionally Conservative Party policy of power politics abroad" and it urged the Government to support the socialist and anti-imperialist forces throughout the world." When Bevin threatened the Left for their disruptionist tactics, the Left withdrew the resolution.

Instead of helping anti-imperialist struggles, the Labour Government waged a fierce colonial war in Malaya, Kenya etc. The independence on the basis of partition that was given to India was in no way different from Dominion Status. In this respect too the Labour Government did not do anything very radical.

In April 1948, 21 Labour MPs sent

a telegram wishing success to the Italian Nenni socialists in their general election. The Labour Party Parliamentary Report of that year took strong exception to the telegram on the grounds that it was sent to the "communist-dominated Nenni socialists." The signatories were summoned by the party executive to undertake individually that they would cease 'acting as a group in organised opposition to party policy', failing which they would be expelled from the Party. All the 21 MPs docilely submitted to the executive. Since the left opposition in the Labour Party was very weak and there was hardly any inner-party democracy, this episode and the subsequent expulsion of Konni Zilliacus were sufficient to discourage the expression of dissent on any fundamental question of Labour policy or on the conduct of the Labour leaders.

By the time the next general election came the general mass of the people, particularly the Labour ranks, were thoroughly demoralised and had lost their faith in their leaders. In fact, the Labour Party during its five years in office ceased to serve any distinctive political purpose. (Ralph Millband: *Parliamentary Socialism*, p 349).

In the general election of 1950 the Labour Party lost 78 seats but with a total of 315 seats had still an overall majority of 6. Exhausted politically and ideologically, the Labour Government could only spin out on invalid existence until the next election and could hardly do anything useful except improve the chances of its opponents.

Another general election had to be held in 1951 when the Conservatives won a clear majority of 17. In the next two elections also, in 1955 and 1959 the Conservatives won. During the Labour Ministry of 1945-50 the British people got so much socialism from their Labour leaders that they could gladly wait for nearly 15 years to receive the next dose!

Parliamentary socialism as practised by the British Labour Party reduced socialism to a meaningless activity, void of substance, heedless of principle and only rich in election auc-

tioning not because the Labour leaders lacked honesty and courage but because Parliament was created to protect—and not to violate—the sacred rights of private property. Parliamentary socialism is a contradiction in terms, for socialism denies the rights of property.

#### Communist Programme

But just at the moment when parliamentary socialism of the Labour Party had so dismally failed, a new advocate of parliamentary socialism appeared on the scene—the Communist Party of Great Britain. In the general election of 1945 the CPGB had won 2 seats; it lost both the seats in 1950. In 1951, the CPGB came out with a new programme and set up a large number of candidates. This new programme declared:

"The enemies of communism accuse the Communist Party of aiming to introduce Soviet power in Britain and abolish Parliament. This is a slanderous misrepresentation of our policy. Experience has shown that in present conditions the advance to socialism can be made just as well by a different road; for example, through People's Democracy, without establishing Soviet power, as in People's Democracies of Eastern Europe.

"Britain will reach socialism by her own road . . . the British communists declare that the people of Britain can transform capitalist democracy into a real People's Democracy, transforming Parliament, the product of Britain's historic struggle for democracy, into the democratic instrument of the will of the vast majority of her people.

"The path forward for the British people will be to establish a People's Government on the basis of a parliament truly representative of the people." (*British Road to Socialism*, p. 12).

Such a People's Government, the Programme states, will break the power of the millionaire monopolists by "socialist nationalisation" of large-scale industries, banks, insurance etc. It will also bring about "democratic transformation" of the Civil Service, Foreign Office, armed forces, police and law courts.

How will such a People's Government be established? By organising all sections of the Labour movement and its allies "for decisive action to win a parliamentary majority and form a People's Government."

What will happen if the monopolists and reactionaries resist the People's Government? They will be defeated by the mobilisation of the people—answers John Gollan, Secretary of the CPGB. Gollan further assures us: "The source of strength of the People's Parliament will be continuous mass movement, organisation and work of the people led by the working class. For the first time people will legislate in Parliament, for the first time people will govern and administer the country, for the first time Britain will have a Cabinet truly representative of the people, the domination of Parliament and the Cabinet by big business will be finished for ever". (*The British Political system*, p. 182).

Not even the worst type of revisionist social democrat could surpass such opportunistic and deceitful ideology of the "communists," who have now completely eliminated from their vocabulary such fundamental tenets of Marxism as "proletarian revolution", "seizure of power," "destruction of the capitalist state machine," "dictatorship of the proletariat" etc.

When years later Khrushchev announced his faith in the possibility of attaining socialism by peaceful parliamentary means at the 20th Congress of the CPSU in 1956, R. P. Dutt boastfully wrote: "this conception .. had already been very explicitly elaborated in the programme of the British Communist Party adopted at its Congress in 1951. (*The Internationale*, 1964, p. 348). (Resumed from the issue of September 21).

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## Book Review

### Politics Of Liberation

SAM CLARK

Black Power : The Politics of Liberation in America

By Stokely Carmichael and Charles Hamilton,  
New York : Vintage, 1967.

THE dominant and publicly legitimate ideology in the United States has been liberalism. This is liberalism in the European sense, in the tradition of Locke, Bentham and Mill. It can be distinguished from non-liberal ideologies in the emphasis it places on the individual and in its refusal to recognize the importance of collectives such as communities or nations. Liberals do not believe, as do non-liberals, that the betterment of a social group should be used as means to the betterment of individuals. In the United States the term liberalism has been used to refer to left liberals, while the term conservatism has been used to refer to right liberals. Adlai Stevenson was representative of the former; Barry Goldwater is representative of the latter. But in European terms both are liberals. Non-liberal philosophies such as conservatism and socialism have not had legitimate status in the United States. They have never been able to gain a recognized place within the ideological structure.

American liberal ideology has at no time recognized the rights of ethnic or racial groups. Hypocritical as it may be, the American attitude toward race and ethnicity has been that a society could be built in which, whether ethnic groups remained separate or became assimilated, ethnicity would simply not be important. The term "integration" (distinct from assimilation) has been used to describe a situation of this kind. The American dream has been that individuals from numerous ethnic backgrounds would be free to live their lives as they chose without reference to ethnic or racial identities.

This idealistic liberal attitude toward race and ethnicity has dominated black leadership organizations. The National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People has worked for integration in the use of public facilities and in education, while the Urban League has worked for integration in jobs along with improved economic welfare in the black ghettos. The Southern Christian Leadership Conference has been one of the strongest organizations trying to integrate public facilities in the South. Even more radical organizations, such as the Student Non-violent Co-ordinating Committee and the Congress of Racial Equality were originally devoted to integrating lunch counters and interstate buses in the South.

Black Power, on the other hand, is non-liberal. The tenets of this new faith have been spelled out by Stokely Carmichael and Charles Hamilton in their recent book, *Black Power : The Politics of Liberation in America*. They do not believe that America has ever come close to the American dream. They claim that European ethnic groups have achieved their place in American society by acting, not as individuals, but as groups. They write: "Traditionally, each new ethnic group in this society has found the route to social and political viability through the organization of its own institutions with which to represent its needs within the larger society." (P. 44)

Carmichael and Hamilton reject integration as a sensible goal for the black minority. As far as they are concerned this minority will always be at the bottom of the heap unless it organizes itself politically, economically and culturally as a separate group. School integration, housing integration and even job integration are impossible. And even if possible, they would undermine their one source of strength: racial unity. What the black man must do, say Carmichael and Hamilton, is to organize his ghettos and use them to seize control of available organs of political power and available economic enterprises. They are vague on what is to be controlled and what is not, but municipal boards,

school boards, local industries and local retail outlets are primary targets.

They suggest that ultimately an alliance between blacks and lower-class whites may be possible. But in the foreseeable future, coalitions between whites and blacks can only be detrimental to the latter. The two races simply do not have common interests. Of course the authors condemn most of all coalitions between the so-called "black establishment" and white society. They attack the black establishment in Atlanta:

The black community of Atlanta is dominated by a black power structure... concerned primarily with protecting their own vested interests and their supposed influence with the white power structure, unresponsive to and unrepresentative of the black masses. (p. 70)

It was Carmichael who engineered the expulsion of whites from the Student Non-violent Co-ordinating Committee. His argument was that whites consciously or subconsciously feel blacks are inferior, and this is why whites want to run all the civil rights organizations. He claimed that blacks have never been allowed to organize themselves and, for this reason, must take over these organizations. (See the SNCC Position Paper reprinted in the *New York Times*, August 5, 1966.) Carmichael and Hamilton assert that this exclusion is no more racist than what other ethnic groups have been doing all along:

No other groups would submit to being led by others. Italians do not run the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith. Irish do not chair Christopher Columbus Societies. Yet when black people call for black-run and all-black organizations, they are immediately classed in a category with the Ku Klux Klan. (P. 49)

Carmichael and Hamilton are essentially concerned with two problems, alienation and exploitation. In the tradition of Karl Marx they see the two as closely linked. For Marx the source of alienation in a capitalist society lay in man's separation from his work—a separation brought about

and maintained by bourgeois exploitation. Marx thought that the working man could rediscover himself by doing two things: first, by identifying with his own class and, secondly, by overthrowing the capitalist system that was exploiting that class. The solution to alienation was, for Marx, identification with the proletariat community and termination of the exploitation of that community.

For Carmichael and Hamilton the source of black man's alienation lies in his inferior social and economic status maintained by white exploitation. They compare this exploitation to the colonial exploitation of non-white nations throughout the world. Years of subjugation has made the black man feel inferior. He has no respect for himself because he has no respect for his race. According to Carmichael and Hamilton, it is thus alienation plus poor education that is responsible for the high rates of crime and family disorganization among blacks. They believe that the Afro-American must put an end to this exploitation and subjugation by means of Black Power. He must also rediscover himself by identifying with the black community. They write:

The racial and cultural personality of the black community must be preserved and that community must win its freedom while preserving its cultural integrity. Integrity includes pride—in the sense of self-acceptance not chauvinism—in being black, in the historical attainments and contributions of the black people. No person can be healthy, complete and mature if he must deny a part of himself; this is what "integration" has required thus far. This is the essential difference between integration as it is currently practiced and the concept of Black Power. (P. 55)

This emphasis on "community" runs through the entire book. For example: "The concept of Black Power... is a call for black people in this country to recognize their heritage, to build a sense of community." (P. 44).

While it is clear that Black Power more accurately reflects the realities of

American society than does the dominant liberal ideology, it nevertheless does not have legitimate status. There have been non-liberal black movements in the past (such as the Garvey movement). They failed. They failed for several reasons, but primarily because they were non-liberal. And because it is non-liberal the Black Power movement has been regarded with overt suspicion, sometimes paranoia, by American politicians, journalists and even intellectuals. Well before Carmichael began to advise blacks to resort to violence, even left liberals in America had branded the Black Power movement as illegitimate. It was illegitimate because it emphasized community in a way that a liberal society will not accept.

However there is no doubt that a non-liberal approach to the racial problem is necessary. The failure of liberals to do anything to date is proof of this. Community organization on a racial basis is the only sane course for blacks to take. For a hundred years all but a few black leaders have been seduced by sentimental liberal slop. White America has discouraged, indeed forbidden, non-liberalism because White America has a vested interest in liberalism. Liberal romanticism has kept black leaders running hither and thither pursuing some utopia known as integration. It has denied blacks their basic right of political and economic organization. It has served to do nothing more than preserve the status quo: A status quo that consists of exploitation of a black minority by a white bourgeoisie.

## Letters

### Black Revolution

I wish to make a belated reply to the letters of V. Nandy, A. K. Roy, and J. Kundu, respectively (May 4) in response to my notes on "The Black Revolution" (April 14). My tardiness in replying is due to the fact that I was away for several months and did not see the issue of May 4 until very recently.

Mr Nandy labels my article "superficial and incomplete", no doubt be-

cause I failed to keep the idea of a *minority* Black movement within the proper context of a *majority*, Black and White, proletarian revolution. I agree totally with that criticism. Upon re-reading my own words I immediately realized just how misleading they were. Indeed, at one point I go so far as to say "The fact that the American Blacks represent a minority does not in the least preclude the possibility of winning the revolution." And Mr Nandy adds, "... in his thesis Mr Greenberg finds no occasion to discuss the role of white proletarians, even though he recognizes that the black revolution is class war and requires for its success the combined action of the oppressed all over the world." Mr Nandy mentions this because it is his view "that the liberation of black proletarians is tied up completely with the liberation of the white proletariat in the U.S.," and that all Marxists in the U.S. must "look to the black and white masses for their base." Again I agree completely; true Marxists must necessarily begin with this position.

My intent in writing about the Black revolution in the United States was not to undermine this basic Marxist truth but rather to emphasize that the class struggle in our time has been thoroughly internationalized. The days of a proletarian revolution occurring solely within the borders of the U.S. or in any "advanced" country have long since passed. If a socialist revolution is to take place in the United States, it will receive its impetus from the dialectics of the *international* class struggle. That the Black revolution is a part of that struggle was *not* intended to mean that therefore the Black masses *alone* will overthrow U.S. capitalism. White workers form an integral part of that task. My failure to emphasize either of these important facts has been pointed out.

Mr Kundu writes in response to my article: "It is left adventurism to reject the idea that the success of revolution is impossible without a nationwide crisis affecting both the exploiters and the exploited." That is correct. In the course of the international struggle, U.S. imperialism will suffer defeats which will inevitably force it to turn on its own proletariat, to increase the rate of exploitation of its own

workers. Cutting wages, prohibiting strikes, suppressing criticism, and so on, will be one facet of the capitalists' effort to preserve the high profits it derives from a permanent military economy and imperialist exploitation abroad. Students, intellectuals, and professionals will likewise be driven to the side of workers when their criticisms meet with police clubs and jails. It is the duty of American Marxists to prepare the *entire* working class for this struggle against imperialism and for socialism. If this is not done, U.S. capitalism, to use Mr Nandy's words, "can surely be expected to take care of the situation". The pervasiveness of rampant racism in American society will be exploited by the ruling class who will use racism's divisive nature to turn white worker against black worker in a crisis; thereby negating any working-class solidarity. This is another reason why it is crucial that working class vanguards in the U.S. meet the need for patient organizational work among both black and white proletarians.

Also in response to my article, Mr A. K. Roy asks, "Is it not going too far to say that ... the capitalist system of the U.S.A. is doomed? ... I wonder how the writer is so sure. Even today the U.S. capitalist system is strong." To be sure, the U.S. capitalist system *is* strong. We would not be facing reality if we said otherwise. However, its strength (military and financial) is maintained not only within the United States, but all over the "underdeveloped" world. U.S. capitalism is international and a defeat in Vietnam or in Guatemala is a defeat within the borders of U.S. imperialism itself. The revolutionary initiative against capitalism has passed into the hands of the impoverished masses in those same exploited, underdeveloped countries. Are not the examples of China, of Cuba, and of heroic Vietnam significant? Do they not signify the focal point and reveal the initiators of revolutionary struggle against U.S. imperialism, both now and in the future? In this respect I say again that "the capitalist system is doomed". I would not be a Marxist if I did not believe this.

The letters in response to my article have made me realize that I not only

failed in my attempt to picture the Black revolution as *part* of an international struggle against U.S. imperialism, but that I also misled the readers of *Frontier* as to the significance of the Black movement *within the framework of a U.S. Black and White proletarian revolution*. I therefore thank the above mentioned comrades for their invaluable criticisms which pointed out the misleading nature of my article.

MARC GREENBERG  
Boston, Massachusetts, U.S.A.

## Communists ?

I was deeply moved on reading a few days ago excerpts from the final speech of the Indonesian communist leader Sudisman, before he received the death sentence from the tribunal set up to try him. With different feelings I read almost simultaneously excerpts from a report in the Soviet Press, slandering and abusing those brave men who are today keeping alive in Indonesia the cause for which Sudisman suffered and more than three hundred thousand members of the PKI laid down their lives three years ago.

This report reveals precious little about Indonesia, but it does reveal what type of people the Soviet leaders are. Is it possible that they should still be paid the courtesy of being called communists ?

IRFAN HABIB, Aligarh

## China And Cuba

"France : A Beginning" (September 28) has one glaring omission. It does not say anything about the impact of Maoism on the French revolutionary movement.

The same can be said about Monitor's "The Cubans". He has dealt with various aspects of Cuba except her relations with China. It is a well-known fact that they are anything but cordial. I expected him to say something about it. This is essential because both are playing an important part in the anti-imperialist struggles that are taking place in the world today. But unfortunately the relations between the two are not at all cordial, let alone fraternal.

D. N. OZA, Bombay

SOME FACTS

THEY SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES

PROGRESS IN PURCHASE OPERATIONS

Crop year	Domestic (lakh tonnes)	Imported	Percentage of Domestic Grain Purchases	Value of Grain Acquired (In Rs crores)
* 1964-65	4.0	7.9	34	72
1965-66	11.7	12.8	48	156.80
1966-67	18.7	23.5	44	311.00
** 1967-68	46.3	24.5	65	564.03

\* From April to October, 1965.

\*\* From October 1967 to August 1968.

PROGRESS IN SALES :

1965-66	Rs. 130	crores
1966-67	Rs. 251.19	crores
1967-68	Rs. 375	crores (Provisional)

STORAGE CAPACITY (in lakh tonnes)

1964-65	1965-66	1966-67	1967-68	1968-69
5.02	7.03	16.54	15.08	38.46 (as on 31.8.1968)

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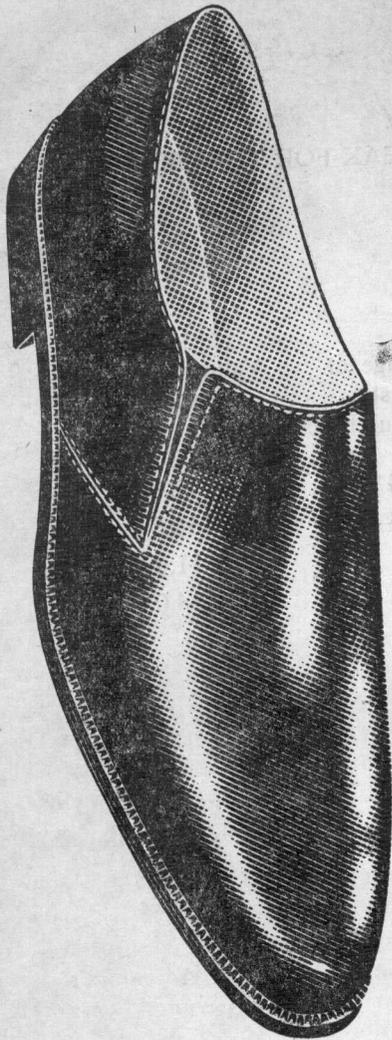
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