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NO BOMBING

MORE than a year ago Mr Robert McNamara stated that the bombing of North Vietnam had not "in any significant way affected their war-making capability". But even the official U.S. admission that Hanoi could not be bombed to the negotiating table did not lead Mr Johnson to stop the bombing. Washington went on saying that it would be stopped if it could be sure that peace talks would follow, but indications that they would were dismissed as undependable. As early as September last year, Mr Pham Van Dong, the North Vietnamese Prime Minister, told an American correspondent : "You have to stop bombing unconditionally. If you want peace talks, they can follow." That was exactly how Mr Gromyko had interpreted Hanoi's position even earlier, in explaining the North Vietnamese statement of January 28, 1967. But all this was ignored. On December 30, the North Vietnamese Foreign Minister stated unequivocally that his Government would enter into peace negotiations if the bombing and other acts of war were unconditionally stopped. But not only was there no immediate response, Washington also chose to see in the statement—in spite of the earlier contrary assessment by Mr McNamara—an indication that the North Vietnamese and the Vietcong war effort was on the point of collapse. Exactly a month later came the Tet offensive ; an end to the bombing exactly another nine months later.

What has happened to justify in American eyes the reversal of the bombing policy ? If peace talks were all that Washington wanted, it could have stopped the bombing after December 30, if not after January 28 last year. For about a year the savage operations have been continued with increasing ferocity—for no purpose that can now be seen to be valid even on American calculations. At the Paris talks, the Americans went on demanding reciprocal restraint, and lately there have been many carefully contrived suggestions from American sources that North Vietnam has in fact, though in private, agreed to make certain reciprocal concessions. Not only has Hanoi officially denied all such suggestions, but their falsity has also become clear from its formal response to the American decision to stop the bombing. In its very first comment, Hanoi Radio declared that North Vietnam would go on fighting until South Vietnam was completely liberated. The more detailed statement issued by the

North Vietnam Government should leave nobody in doubt about Hanoi's unchanged and unchangeable position.

Two things have now been achieved: an end to the bombing of North Vietnam and representation of the National Liberation Front at peace negotiations. There is no question of stopping, suspending or slowing down the struggle of the Vietnamese people until their fundamental objectives are attained. The Americans know it too; hence the intensified attacks in South Vietnam, the heavy bombing of supply routes through Laos and the diversionary madness in North Korea by those whom Moscow has chosen to describe as forces of political realism.

Why then the bombing halt over Vietnam? That the strategy had failed and could never succeed should have been clear long ago. It was indeed clear, but the bombing was kept up, according to one American argument, in order to increase "the price" North Vietnam was paying for its aid to the National Liberation Front in the South. The world has some idea of the kind of price North Vietnam has paid. Washington has not cared, but it had to care about the price that the Americans were also paying at an increasing rate. It would of course be comical to attempt any kind of comparison between American losses and what the Vietnamese, in the North and the South, have suffered, but even the loss of some hundreds or thousands of all-American boys may seem too heavy a price to pay for the righteous murder and maiming of an entire population. More so when the people whom the brave Americans were determined to wipe out seem invincible even in death; still more so when American frustration and humiliation increases with the failure of every new military move, making it increasingly difficult to show anything for losses that may never end. No, the game has long been lost, and all the Americans could do was to try and save as much of their face as possible; they had little else to salvage. And in trying to save his ugly face Mr

Johnson did not hesitate to ravage an entire Asian nation with a larger quantity of explosives than the Americans needed in the whole Second World War. And now there is little of the American face to be saved. Messrs Thieu and Ky may bark or whine, relying on Mr Nixon but the future of the people of Vietnam is going to be decided by themselves. The struggle may still be long and painful, but its outcome is already clear.

Indonesia For Sale

'The year's best news for the West' was how *Time* magazine described the killings in Indonesia following the abortive coup in October 1965. However macabre it may sound the comment was and is true in more ways than one. For seldom in history has a colony been acquired so easily and at so little cost to the owners as was Indonesia. After killing nearly half a million people and throwing into concentration camps several thousands more, the Suharto-Nasution junta has handed over the country to the West lock, stock and barrel. So the Indonesian Minister for Economy, Finance and Industry was not guilty of exaggeration when he introduced McNamara, President of the World Bank, to the Press by saying that "he came, he saw and he won our administration". The only point that needs to be mentioned is that the sell-out had started with the October massacre, the final touches to which were given by the strategist-turned-banker.

Immediately after the counter-coup in 1965 firms and plantations nationalised by Sukarno were handed back to the foreign owners and appeals went out to Washington for help. PL480 consignments of rice and cotton worth about \$45.1 million were rushed to Jakarta. The Law on Foreign Capital Investment passed in January 1967 formally ushered in the era of untrammelled plunder. Among other things the law offered foreign investors 5 to 10 years' tax holiday, right of repatriating profit,

duty-free importation of fixed assets, raw materials and semi-finished goods and freedom from bothersome insistence on joint ventures. Banker McNamara's visit last June was celebrated by passing another Bill to "protect foreign investment." The country's resources have been parcelled out to Western firms—industries sector-wise, and mines and forests area-wise. For example half of the country's timber resources has been distributed among 60 foreign firms. Petroleum fields and nickel and copper mines have likewise been parcelled out, and so have been the rubber, fertiliser, chemical, electrical and engineering industries. Come one come all is the slogan and the entire capitalist world has joined the plunder. Even Marshal Tito has not lagged behind. Right of exploiting copper reserves in Celebes has been acquired by a Yugoslav enterprise. The lion's share obviously goes to the United States. By late March U.S. investment in Indonesia reached \$101.7 million, representing 70 per cent of the total foreign investment. American Caltex and Stanvac pumped out last year 80 per cent of the crude oil produced in Indonesia. Of the 12 foreign banks invited to Indonesia five giants controlling the finance of the country are from the United States.

That McNamara would make his first official visit as President of the World Bank to Indonesia was quite in the fitness of things. But although he expressed his "profound confidence in Indonesia's dedicated, strong leadership and sound economic policies" he was not obviously content to leave things in Indonesian hands. He announced the establishment of the World Bank's first overseas staff in Indonesia. They are to "assist and advise" in planning and execution of the country's 'development' and co-ordinate utilisation of different technical and financial assistance programmes.

After Indonesia, India. Mr McNamara is expected to descend on New Delhi on November 17. Results of his visit to New Delhi might not be any less interesting.

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Everybody's Business

The Tourist Development Council, after its 3-day deliberations which concluded on November 2 in New Delhi, has put upon us some grave responsibilities. It expects that by 1973, when the Jumbo jets go in operation, the flow of tourist traffic will go up to 600,000 a year but then the Council is not too sure that it will. In spite of its best and imaginative efforts, tourist offices, lodges and buses, liquor permits, railway concessions and priority, frequent requests that historic monuments may please be kept from crumbling down, the Council apprehends that the task set for it is too big for one Department. It has urged us, therefore, to offer our fullest cooperation when we find a tourist around. It also wants us to 'protest vehemently against sub-standard conditions of travel, or stay in tourist lodges.

To start with, who is a tourist? As defined by the Tourist Department, a tourist is one who enters the country and stays more than 24 hours and less than 6 months. Domestic tourists therefore do not exist as far as the Department is concerned. Among foreigners, the hitchhikers, hippies or those who look like hippies do not count, because they are not known to be quite good in spending money. The Department is concerned with those foreigners who can stay in three, four or five starred hotels. For them the Department proposes to build nine hotels during the Fourth Plan.

The Council is afraid however that without public cooperation, it cannot induce affluent tourists to give up their abominable habit of doing India in four days. So many forces are working at cross purposes in this country that it is quite conceivable why the Council wants complete co-operation from all other government departments and people. To take an instance; tourists in India do not get so drunk as to forget to travel to other countries, as they are heard to do when in Japan. The Department cannot be blamed if the Finance Department, prohibition-mongers, and

barmen do not behave. Wisely therefore the Tourist Development Council has adopted this year the slogan, "Tourism is everybody's business."

From now on, if we want foreigners to come to us and spend for our benefit, every one of us has to offer our own individual cooperation. When the early morning wind caresses the locks and beards of the tourists coming by the VIP Road in Calcutta, the suburban people may not squat on either side of the road; our villagers may not use the same pond for washing, cattle-bathing and drinking when a rich tourist is around; aerated water and tinned food and unrotten fruits may please be kept in plenty in villages liable to be visited by a stray tourist. This may seem a tall order but it is absolutely necessary for a taller supply of tourists, 600,000 a year, no less.

Apart from looking hygienic and bearers of ancient Indian culture, we have one more responsibility, we have to protest vehemently. This may be somewhat difficult. We are so much used to the Indian conditions of travel and stay in hotels that we do not consider them, as the outsiders would say, beastly. But then we should detach ourselves from our own notions, use the faculty of negative capacity and study the nature of amenities offered to foreigners, so that we can protest, vehemently.

We have however a question or two about the Department's assessment of the situation. Is the Department sure, as it states, that 70% of the foreigners who come to travel in this country belong to the rich class and can afford to stay in starred hotels? The 3-day deliberations of the Council appear to have boiled down to a single exhortation to the private sector: to provide at least twenty thousand beds in posh hotels. The Union Government has declared during the last two years a number of incentives for the hotel industry, which is recognised now as a priority industry. It is surprising that the Rs. 5-crore loan scheme, tax reliefs, cheap land provision and all that have failed to inspire the private sector. Is it because municipal fa-

thers are not cooperating by foregoing their quota of...? Be that as it may, we have the impression that India can offer to outsiders not a gay and glittering life, not the luxury for the jet set, but a slow-paced life that really attracts the foreigners; for example, Varanasi. We have also an impression that cheap youth hostels would be more convenient and useful to tourists, who by themselves may not be rich, but as a group far exceeds, in spending, the stray millionaires, who are, any way, not very excited to do India.

What Price Jute ?

There should be a limit to chicanery. The Indian Jute Mills' Association has been demanding the Government's concurrence for the block closure of mills consequent on the current scarcity of raw jute in the market. About this time last year, the price of the fibre in both Calcutta and the 'upcountry' markets was much below the stipulated minimum support price. The support price for Assam Bottoms in Calcutta had been fixed at Rs. 40 per maund; for the larger part of the season, prices ruled closer to Rs. 36 to 37 per maund. In such a situation, the least the authorities could do was to come to the rescue of the growers, and purchase whatever quantities of raw jute were offered at the support level of price. The Government did no such thing. Certain funds were supposed to be advanced to the States for buying raw jute through the agency of the co-operative societies; the State Trading Corporation too was also asked to move in. But arrangements for the withdrawal of funds were chaotic; the STC did not have an organisation worth the name to do the actual buying either. The poor cultivators' jute were thus left high and dry.

What about the IJMA itself? It would have been elementary prudence on its part to ask the member mills to stock up in raw jute in a year when production was excellent and prices were low. The Jute Commissioner

too can suggest to the Jute Buffer Stock Association, a voluntary cartel of the mills, to buy each month a certain quota of raw jute so as to stabilise prices. In reality, however, the Commissioner's directives to the JBSA have no statutory force, and the latter decided to sit it out last year. An extremely short-period philosophy was at work. Why should the mills buy at support levels and thus boost the prices for raw jute? As users of the raw material, it was in the interest of the mills to buy at the lowest possible price, and let the growers be hanged. The Government was merely proving its naivete by expecting the mills to heed its request for more active purchases through the Jute Buffer Stock Association.

Several of the mills have direct links with the traders and *farias* who prowl the countryside and fleece the small farmers. The co-operative movement is as good as non-existent in the eastern part of the country; even where it exists, in any case it too has been taken over by the *farias* themselves. According to reports, last year some of the raw jute was smuggled to Pakistan since prices were marginally better there. This year there is a qualitative shift in the situation. Production of the fibre is down, and prices have shot up. The Indian Jute Mills Association however has no regrets for its failure to build an inventory last year. If there is shortage of raw jute in the country today, well, let somebody else, meaning the Government, tackle the problem; the Government should import additional quantities and fill the gap in supplies. If it does not, the mills will lay off workers and slow down output. This is breath-taking cynicism but what is going to be done about it and by whom? Even the high prices which the mills claim to be now paying for acquiring domestic supplies are, in the first instance, paid to the *farias*. What proportion of these prices reaches down to the small growers is an open question.

Some lexicons will describe the stance adopted by the IJMA as treason. Our Government does not obviously subscribe to such scurrilous

views. For all one can surmise, a sizable portion of the invisible equity in Mrs Gandhi's government is controlled by the IJMA itself. So it has got to be business as ever.

On Naxalbari

A correspondent writes:

Kanu Sanyal, the architect of the Naxalbari agitation, has been arrested at last. The police surprised him when he was asleep at a house in Birsinghjote under Phansidewa police station on the morning of October 31. The man around whom a legend had begun to grow was completely unarmed. For more than eighteen months he had eluded the police. Despite reports that he had fled to Pakistan or Nepal, he had been living all these days in the Naxalbari area among the people. The police knew this and yet were unable to get at him. Last week's raid was not the first organised by the police to capture him; at least on two previous occasions he had given the slip and the police had to return disappointed. Something must have gone wrong somewhere which enabled the police to arrest him ultimately.

Krishna Kumar (Kanu is an alias) will now face trial in 11 cases started against him by the police between March 4 and July 3 last year; that is, the three-month period of the agitation after which the UF Ministry authorised police action in Naxalbari. The charges against him range from participation in illegal assemblies to murder, charges which will tend to identify him with those who are known in officialdom as anti-social elements. Much of what has been said or written about him also shows him in similar colours. The neglected and unknown area of Naxalbari where people have lived in dire poverty for generations is now internationally known, but despite the acres of newspaper space that have been devoted to the Naxalbari agitation not much has come out of what the peasants there sought to achieve.

Only a week before his arrest Kanu

Sanyal wrote an article in *Deshabrati*, the Bengali organ of the Communist Revolutionaries, setting out the aims and lessons of the Naxalbari movement. The article is, in effect, a report on the movement of the peasants of the Terai who have been painted to the outside world as no better than bandits. The movement, he says, has led to a polarisation of the political forces in the State and showed up every political party professing allegiance to peasants, workers and Marxism, in its true colours and proved that the leaders of the 14 Left parties in the United Front Government were enemies of a democratic, that is, agrarian revolution in India.

The first task of the Naxalbari peasants was to organise armed guards in the villages. Almost all villages were organised in the short period of one month in March-April last year; the membership of the Kisan Sabha went up from a mere 5,000 to 40,000, of whom about 15,000 to 20,000 became activists. Within six weeks the revolutionary peasants had formed a peasants' committee in every village and trained up armed village guards. In fact, 50 per cent of the peasants were organised behind the movement. Kanu Sanyal has listed the measures taken by the revolutionary peasants to implement the decisions of the peasants' committees. Among them were: (1) Nationalisation of land in the Terai region and redistribution of all lands, except those of owner-cultivators, through the committees, (2) Bonfire of all land records, which are based on laws inimical to the peasants, (3) Cancellation of all mortgages and remission of loans taken by poor villagers from usurers and jotedars, (4) Confiscation of hoarded grains of village moneylenders and jotedars and distribution of confiscated foodgrains and movable property of jotedars among the peasants, (5) Public trial of jotedars known for tyranny and opposition to the peasants' movement and passing of death sentence on them, (6) Public trial of village roughs and parasites who sided with the jotedars and co-operated with the police and humiliating

them in public, (7) Raising of village guards armed with bows, arrows, spears, and guns looted from jotedars in preparation for the inevitable armed repression by the State, (8) Arrangements for night watch in villages, smooth running of schools, and deterrent punishment for theft and robbery, (9) Creation of regional revolutionary committees under a central revolutionary committee, and (10) Invalidation of bourgeois laws and courts and proclamation of the verdicts of the revolutionary committees as the law of the area.

The initiative in this agitation was in the hands of the landless peasants who form 70 per cent of the peasant population of the area. The middle peasants, who constitute another 20 per cent, had responded to the call for agitation with suspicion. In the first phase of the struggle they were not active participants, but they came forward when they realised that the struggle was in their interest and against the landlords, jotedars, and moneylenders. The remaining 10 per cent, who were rich peasants, had, in the beginning, opposed the movement. But when the jotedars fled and the small and middle peasants united, they gave up the path of opposition and criticism and began to ask for justice from the peasant committees. The committees considered every case thoroughly and did justice to them. As a result, the rich peasants were generally neutral but in many cases active participants in the struggle.

Kanu Sanyal says that the Terai peasants by arming themselves and accomplishing their ten-point programme had ended the age-old feudalism in the area and ushered in the "rule of revolutionary peasant committees". Their struggle was not an armed struggle for land but for State power. The Marxist Communists characterised this struggle against feudalism as a struggle for redistribution of land and, like all "bourgeois and petty bourgeois parties", they also looked at the question from the point of view of justice to peasants. That is why they staged a "farce" in the name of land redistribution through pro-jotedar bu-

reaucracy. But the peasants of the Terai did not waver, for they knew that their struggle was not for land alone.

Setback

Discussing the reasons for the setback, "though temporary", in the struggle he says one of the inadequacies was the lack of a powerful party organisation thoroughly armed with Maoism, completely identified with the people, unshamed of self-criticism, and skilled in Marxist-Leninist tactics. They had not accepted Maoism unconditionally; though the peasants and workers of the Terai were in a majority in the party, they were under petty bourgeois leadership. In the beginning of the struggle the party members were active, but when it developed into a mass movement they were unable to play their role. Opportunism and escapism stalked the members and even the militant among them began to vacillate.

Another reason was their lack of abiding faith in the people and their failure to give the movement a powerful mass base. The leaders did not realise that the people were the makers of history; in spite of what the revolutionary peasant masses had accomplished, the leaders had no faith in them. The petty bourgeois leadership became a drag on the people and resisted whenever the "heroic peasant masses" tried to do something on their own. Accustomed as they were as members of a revisionist party to bourgeois laws and ways, the leaders tried to lecture the peasants on what was right and wrong. As a result class conflict was blunted and it was not possible to create a mass base for the movement which more than 40,000 peasants had supported actively.

The third reason, according to Kanu Sanyal, was their ignorance of tactics of struggle and habit of antiquated thinking. In the first phase of the struggle the leaders indulged in idle dreams, a legacy of their association with a revisionist party. On the one hand, they thought that the UF would not go this far, and, on the other, they minimised the strength of the "enemy" and kept the people unprepared to

face the enemy. This is nothing but revisionist attitude. Again, when the people had prepared themselves for an attack on the enemy after assessing his strength, they thought of the consequences. As a result, in the face of widespread terrorism the people became disorganised and militancy yielded place to escapism.

After the people had been armed and jotedars and vested interests had fled the villages, the leaders took it for granted that base areas had been created. They mistook armed people for a people's militia. Only in a few cases armed bands were created to loot the guns of jotedars, but this was never accepted as one of the main tactics of the struggle; on the contrary, they thought that guerilla bands would grow out of the masses spontaneously; in many cases the responsibility of forming armed bands was entrusted to tramps because of their rebellious attitude. Again, when a section of rich peasants and small jotedars sided with the poor and middle peasants, the leaders thought the peasants were all united, forgetting that in the time of terror the former might desert to the enemy camp and strike at the latter.

The lesson Kanu Sanyal learnt from the experience of the struggle is that the people in the villages would have to be politically awakened and armed; they would then become village guards. The effort for a people's militia will have to be supplemented by armed uprising of peasants in some areas. The greatest achievements of the mass movement in the Terai were formation of revolutionary peasant committees, centrally and regionally, and land redistribution. But the far-reaching implications of these two acts were not realised by the leaders. In future, Kanu Sanyal said, they would place the greatest emphasis on this programme of wresting political power and revolutionary land reform.

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Mr. Chavan's Parallel Government

FROM A POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

CHHATRAPATI Chavan has always been an enigma, even to his Cabinet colleagues. But one has reasons to be very circumspect about the carefully planned leakage of the story that the Prime Minister has written to Mr Morarji Desai and Mr Chavan pointing out that the Central staff strike could have been averted. Mrs Gandhi was very much in Delhi until the day after the strike and if she had thought the pre-strike talks with the staff leaders were not properly handled, there is no reason why she should have abdicated her own role in the situation in favour of others. Is it scapegoats in the Government that she is trying to find now for the muddle the Government is in? The Prime Minister wants to be everything without any particular responsibility for anything. Nobody really knows where the Cabinet begins and the Prime Minister ends. For instance, on the eve of the September 19 strike, several army units were moved into Delhi and round it and it is still not known who gave the instructions.

Amidst all the confusion, Mr Chavan has been functioning in his own

fashion, handling things his own way. Neither the Central Government officials nor the State Government in Kerala knew about an assurance to the Postmaster-General of Kerala on the eve of the strike that the CRP would be moving into the State! When the story leaked out in Trivandrum, both the State Government and the Centre denied it promptly but it is a fact that the CRP units had reached the State even before the State Government had received the Centre's directive on the implementation of the Ordinance.

Now again, no one knows whether there was any Cabinet clearance for the Bill the Home Ministry is drafting to create a parallel police force in the States by amending the Central Reserve Police Act and giving the CRP powers to launch prosecutions. The Attorney-General and the Law Ministry are yet to okay the idea but the Bill is being got ready. The Centre will make its own presence "felt" in the States through its own police units though law and order is admittedly a State subject. Such powers for the CRP would be an open act of subversion of the Constitution but the legal and constitutional alibi can always be found.

Chavanism is the new brand of Central Government functioning now, at once mysterious, enigmatic and confounding. They say here if Mr Chavan's plan on anything is vetoed by the Cabinet, the Cabinet goes and not the plan. Amen.

AICC

A whole day's AICC discussion on prohibition (of all subjects) in dripping-wet Goa (of all places) is something of a joke. The amorphous quantity (about 100 members including Dr Sushila Nayyar) who

had requisitioned the discussion constitutes what it proudly calls itself the prohibition lobby. But it does not know that there is another lobby, of boot-leggers dedicated to the same end.

To believe the political grapevine, the signatures for the requisition were collected at the requisitioned AICC session in New Delhi in July under the direction of some of the old guard leaders who wanted to forestall the Young Turk demand for a serious discussion on economic policies. This is credible because very few among the "prohibition" requisitionists sound serious about their impossible demand, that is total prohibition in the country on Mahatma Gandhi's 100th birthday on October 2, 1969. Secondly, the only other subject announced for discussion at Goa is the tasks of Congressmen in the Gandhi Centenary Year. Gandhism is a fatuous industry in the country and an omnibus one at that, covering everything from prohibition to family planning through abstinence. The discussion on prohibition could have been part of the discussion in the Gandhi Centenary Year.

Mr Nijalingappa has no time for issues though he has been talking his head off on subjects like the desirability of a unitary set-up for the country to ward off a threat of disintegration. A discussion on basic political and economic issues is to be foreclosed at any cost.

The prohibition lobby in the AICC is certain to be countered by a powerful lobby of the Chief Ministers on November 5. (We hope it would not be a dry day in Goa, the home of India's finest indigenous brew, *feni*, which is perhaps the last legacy of Portuguese colonialism in this part of the world). Now it is an axis of the State governments and the distillers behind the pragmatic attempts to "rationalise" prohibition. Rationalisation, in other words, is making liquor available in a tortuously roundabout way—that is what the Maharashtra Government is doing—light beer, liberal health permits for hard liquor, phased abolition and the like.

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State governments have been going about it in a systematic way. Those lukewarm to the prohibition idea in the past are positively hostile to it. The wet States are invoking the revenue arguments to license more and more distilleries or even to enter the distilling business directly. The dry States are either for rationalisation or for scrapping prohibition.

So much for the country going dry. As for the Congress, it is finding itself left high and dry by its leadership. The organisation men are yet to establish a measure of control over the governmental wing at the Centre and their sheer frustration is pushing them over the brink. The sickening talk of a coup has been there all the time but the promised coup is yet to be.

Topplers At Work

The only consensus to date among the Syndicate bosses is on the dispensability of Mrs Gandhi as a vote-getter at the polls. Mrs Gandhi's supra-party status is under question and her usefulness as an election mascot is in serious doubt. Perhaps Mr Atulya Ghosh wanted to indicate this to Mrs Gandhi through the Jalpaiguri demonstrations which, we are assured by Government spokesmen, never took place.



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Mr Nijalingappa's ingenuous plan to farm the country out into several zones, each under a member of the Congress Parliamentary Board, is an attempt to cut Mrs Gandhi to size in the party. Organisational control will pass on to each of the party bosses in the zone assigned to him. Through such control over the organisation, a vertical interlocking of State-level factions is to be attempted to create a new-look Syndicate at the apex to topple the Prime Minister. We hope they do it soon because we have been hearing these busybodies cry "wolf" too often.

The cynics among us are even prepared to bet that the mid-term elections in February will not come off at all. According to the most careful Congress assessments, Bihar is lost to it while in West Bengal it is just touch and go. In Uttar Pradesh, the Congress is not too sure of a swing-back. So the alliance that would topple Mrs Gandhi, if it does before February, should have reason to put off the mid-term elections indefinitely and let the President (that is Mr Chavan and Mr Dharma Vira or whoever is there) rule the States for some more time.

The Hyderabad session provided the chance for a conspiracy to declare war on non-Congress ministries. When the game failed, the Congress tried supporting minority ministries. This phase too is over but three major non-Congress ministries—in Orissa, Madras and Kerala—were left untouched. But it is extremely unlikely that the High Command would venture to go on another toppling spree before it had got even with Mrs Gandhi at the Centre. If the coup against Mrs Gandhi is pulled off in good time, the February mid-term elections are as good as off. But if it is not, the Syndicate would have to wait till a new pattern of power emerges after the February polls before it makes any bid for control of the Government.

The have-nots at the Congress top are something like political hippies, content with psychedelic pleasures for the moment. Congress politics, no wonder, has an LSD quality to it.

November 3, 1968

Cheddi Jagan : An Active Fatalist

ROBI CHAKRAVORTI

THE way we met Jagan in Georgetown makes a better copy than the meeting itself. In a sense, the interview was an anti-climax after the little row we had with the Guyana Government's Press Liaison Officer, a timid bungling bureaucrat with a Bengali name, Halder. He took us from the Prime Minister, Mr Forbes Burnham's office where a huge crowd had assembled for a reception given in honour of Mrs Indira Gandhi, to Jagan's house. I was a member of Mrs Gandhi's Press party.

Five of us—Raghavan of PTI, Krishna Bhatia of *Hindustan Times*, Eswar Sagar of *Hindu*, Parasuram of *Indian Express* and myself—had decided earlier that it would be more exciting to talk to Jagan than to drink scotch at the reception and see the fireworks and the cultural show. One of us had called up Jagan for the interview and he had agreed to see us before the reception. We were, however, chaperoned by the Press Officer Halder and it seemed he and his boss, Forsythe, did not relish the idea of our skipping the reception and meeting Jagan. It was assumed, of course, that Jagan would not attend the reception.

The Government Publicity Department agreed to set up another time for the interview. It was to be held at 10-30 p.m. at Jagan's house. We left the reception at around 10-15 and a reluctant Halder instructed the driver to take us to Jagan's house. Jagan lives in an area on the outskirts of Georgetown which reminded me of New Alipore of the early fifties. Houses were spaced out, and you can see that the land is still being developed. The roads were not macadamized and for long stretches our bus bounced along like a boat. It was an upper-middle class neighbourhood. The Indian High Commissioner, as Jagan later said driving us back to our hotels, lives in the area.

Jagan was there at the door to receive us as our mini-bus entered

through the outer gate opened by a *durwan*. He was wearing a saffron-coloured sport shirt with contrasting slacks. He took us to the living room upstairs and as we took our seats on the sofa, his wife Janet joined us. Halder, we noted with surprise and some annoyance, also took a seat, and after all of us had been introduced to Cheddi and Janet, Halder asked Jagan to give him a piece of paper and pencil with the calm air of an official stenographer ready to take down notes. At this point one of us blew up. Earlier, we had politely suggested to Halder that he should leave with the car after dropping us, for Jagan had agreed to drive us back to our hotels. This hint apparently did not enter his skull. So, one of us, with some temper in his tone, had to request him in plain English to leave so that we can talk to Jagan without a recording angel representing the Government.

Halder was eventually 'evicted' from the living room but not before we made it clear that his presence in our midst was unacceptable. He left and apparently did not relish his exit. This, however, was not the end of the story of the Government Press Department's unholy curiosity in our meeting with Jagan. Half an hour later, Halder's boss, Forsythe—he is of African descent as Halder is of Indian ancestry—suddenly showed up, pulled up a chair, casually joining us in our conversation with Jagan as if he did not know anything of Halder's previous attempt to muscle in. We told him what we had told his underling before: please leave us alone. He stalled a little bit. "What about the ride back to our hotels? We're responsible for your welfare, you know". We had to repeat what we had told Halder earlier. Forsythe left.

Drinks were served, and then we asked Jagan if he foresaw victory in the elections to be held sometime around March next year. Jagan did not answer the question directly, but heaped a litany of charges of election rigging on Burnham. He charged that Burnham was taking undue advantage of his governmental machinery to register voters who were below the voting age. Another method, he alleged,

was to inflate the list of voters who can mail their ballots. They are called "proxy" voters in Guyana. According to Jagan, the preliminary voters' list published in August 1968 gives a total of 366,000 voters of which 300,000 are resident in Guyana and 66,000 are Guyanans living overseas. Jagan claims that the number of proxy voters (of which overseas voters form part) had risen from 300 in the 1961 general election to over 7,000 in 1964. This year the number has soared to 66,000. In the 1964 election, Jagan's party, PPP (People's Progressive Party), had polled 46% of the total vote, but secured only 8.6% of the "proxy" votes. Forbes Burnham's party PNC (People's National Congress) won 40% of the votes but joined hands with the rightist UF (standing for United Force, not United Front!) which won 12% of the votes to form a coalition government.

"Doctrinaire"

Jagan also accused Burnham of being an agent of the CIA and the British Foreign Office and cited the Schlesinger memoirs and a *New York Times* report in support of his accusation. Moral indignation, however, is no substitute for tackling immediate political problems. So, we asked him after having listened to his long criticism of Burnham: Why don't you play his game of realpolitik to come to power? After you've won power, you can bring about changes in the society according to your ideology. Why are you so doctrinaire about your political ideology?

The question arose not only because he was criticising Burnham for "unfair" political practices but also because he was talking of "educating" the people in terms of Marxian analysis of society.

Jagan's answer was typical of a Marxist revolutionary who had tasted power once but failed to hold on to it under the parliamentary system of government. One of us even reminded Jagan of the "pragmatism" of Namboodiripad in Kerala, of how he tries to keep doctrines away from the exigencies of the political situation.

In Guyana, Jagan argued, the choice

is simple: You play "their game" and gain power and find yourself entrapped into a situation which does not permit you to bring about major changes in society. Bureaucracy is too strong, the pressure of foreign Powers is too much. The alternative, according to Jagan, is to educate the people in each step of the struggle and then capture power on the basis of people's strength.

Jagan refused to answer whether he is waiting for a revolutionary uprising in Guyana, but nonetheless admitted that he saw the situation in Guyana as part of the see-saw battle between revolutionary forces and reaction taking place all over the world. When we pointed out that what he describes as reaction is gaining in strength all over the world, he gave a view of the world in Spenglerian terms. In the fifties, he said, we saw a similar rise of reaction: the Arbenz regime in Guatemala was overthrown and coincidentally Joseph McCarthy became a leading force in the U.S. A few years later, Cuba under Castro led a successful revolution and in the sixties, we have a big confrontation in Vietnam. Vietnam, Jagan said gesturing with his hand as he gave us a sweeping view of contemporary, history, is a key point in the worldwide dialectic between "revolution" and "reaction". If reaction is gaining in strength, you've to remember that it is also rapidly reaching the end of its tether.

Soon, he argued, another cycle of revolutionary upsurge will set in and Guyana is likely to be caught in it. He did not specify any date nor did he advocate armed uprising as the only solution open for him and his party. But there were a number of cues in his statements and political behaviour which shows that Jagan would like nothing better than a Castro-type revolution in Guyana. Castro is clearly Jagan's hero. Recently, Jagan and some leaders of his party celebrated the first death anniversary of Che Guevara. The attendance was reported to have been small.

Jagan's admiration for Castro was evident in his statement comparing the Cuban leader with Nkrumah. The difference between Castro and Nkrum-

Seven Days Of A Flood

III

NITYAPRIYA GHOSH

THE Strong Man from New Delhi descended on Jalpaiguri on the sixth day. The big news did not cause any stir in the town, except among the Congressites who got busy making plans to prevent the UF people from going too near the Deputy Prime Minister. Others went on minding their own business, wondering in the morning what to eat at noon. Only those who had lost their wives and children or parents or everybody, strayed into roads with a vacant look. Nearly fifteen thousand had left the town. Hundreds sat huddled at road corners hoping for a lift to relief camps at Siliguri. Those who had friends or relations in tea gardens were the happiest lot, they had trucks and men came to their help. Hundreds of coolies had come to the town, eager to cleanse houses for five rupees a day and one meal. They were offered eight rupees a day and no meal—the house owners were themselves going without meals, where would they get meals for outsiders? The coolies said, nothing doing, it was not possible to remove mountains of silt on empty stomach. Most people gave up, but those who got sick of the muck mixed up with dead snakes, yellowish slime and god knows what, offered them the meagre food they procured for themselves.

About fifty people gathered at the house of Mr B. C. Ghosh where Mr Desai would come for a conference. People wondered what the conference meant to do. Some political leaders and government officers were invited to attend. Couldn't Mr Desai conduct that sort of conference in Calcutta or New Delhi or even at Siliguri? Why was he taking so much trouble to come up to Raikhatpara? A military bulldozer had to work a whole day to clear the track from the Engineering College to Mr Ghosh's home. The hospital was given a fine polish, no sign existed that the

mah was, Jagan argued, that while Castro took the people into confidence all the time, explaining each step of his political moves and the philosophy behind them, Nkrumah did not do so. The conclusion, obviously, is that Nkrumah failed simply because he did not have any popular base for his political activities. This conclusion may not be questioned, but the interpretation made of this conclusion is open to challenge. It may be argued that Nkrumah, like Soekarno, simply degenerated, and the problem was not so much their ideology as their failure as a leader. A leader espousing an ideology other than Marxism can very well lead people in his lifetime without necessarily "degenerating" into the stage that Soekarno and Nkrumah reached.

Jagan who is a Marxist will not agree with this simple "secular" analysis. Somehow the "people" has to be brought into the equation. In the present equation of the political situation in Guyana, the "people" do not seem to be of much help to Jagan. Jagan, as an Indian, used to enjoy the undivided loyalty of the Indian community, but there are indications that a section of this community may have chosen to side with the coalition government led by Burnham out of sheer self-interest. Their feeling is perhaps: 'If we cannot have a revolution, which we do not exactly understand, let us find some way of surviving'. Jagan argues that the economic situation is becoming acute, but could not convince us that it has reached a revolutionary impasse.

Race Feelings

In the short range, Jagan has an

additional problem and he was frank enough to admit it: race feelings cutting across class consciousness. There is tension between the two major communities in Guyana—the East Indians and the Negroes. There were racial riots in 1962 that destroyed whole sections of Georgetown. Riots again ravaged Guyana in 1964 in course of which over 170 people were killed and thousands were injured and made homeless. Jagan himself admitted that the situation was "really bad" in 1964. Jagan, it is interesting to note, lost the elections held in the wake of the 1964 race riots, but still his share of the poll was 46%, not a bad show.

Forbes Burnham, Jagan's rival, a tall impressive-looking Negro lawyer who speaks in a British accent while the Guyanese accent, including Jagan's, is distinctly different, is a shrewd politician. We met him at a press conference shortly before we left Georgetown on our way back to New York. He looked like a hard-headed practical politician relatively free from doctrinaire constraints. His answers to questions were crisp, direct and forthright. We asked him if he foresaw co-operation with Jagan in future; after all, they were friends and political allies once.

His answer was a clear and unequivocal no, and in good measure, he added, keeping in view the Indian audience: "You cannot work in harness together with a person who supports China in its conflict with India and Russia when Russian troops invaded Czechoslovakia."

After having met both Jagan and Burnham one feels that the forces against Jagan are so strong that he is not going to win a majority over the combined power of the PNC and UF in the next elections. You may or may not like Burnham, but he knows where he is going and knows how to get there and when. Jagan, the charming revolutionary idealist, knows where he is going but does not know how to get there nor does he know when, if ever, he will get there. He reminded me of Camus' description of a Marxist revolutionary as an "active fatalist".

(This despatch was written before the Cabinet crisis in Guyana.)

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ground floor and patients perhaps lay merged under water for thirty-six hours—bleaching powder was generously sprayed to make the empty building look hospitalish. There was nothing in sight, the army people ensured, to give away what the concerted attack of floating logs and fierce current had made of what used to be villages—Balpara, Paharpur, Kachua, Bowalmari, Bowmari, Taltalia, Premganj, Kacharihat, not to speak of bigger villages and towns like Domohani, Mainaguri, Malbazar, Mandalghat. Nearly twenty-five miles, of which Jalpaiguri town was merely an epicentre, lay totally wrecked. The tiniest stretch over which Mr Desai condescended to go by jeep wore the appearance of a reasonably decent road after a decently devastating flood.

Mr Desai would come, it was learnt, confer with leaders for half an hour, go back to Siliguri for his lunch and take off for New Delhi. People were becoming jittery. They heard that it was the biggest flood in living memory. They heard, it far surpassed the Contai flood of 1942. They heard that some such flood made Mohenjodaro a ruin—my god, whoever wanted to belong to historical ruins, but would the Deputy Prime Minister please tell us what the conference was for? If he wanted to know about the distress at close range if only to report to his colleagues, why wouldn't he come into the town, why wouldn't he see how the Governor, the President's very own, was taking care of three lakhs of destitutes, why wouldn't he see with his own eyes what had happened as a result of his government's sitting tight over the North Bengal river projects plan? Let him come and see how the Bharat Sevaram was working day and night with its puny resources while his officers were hovering in helicopters to make up their minds about the magnitude of the flood. People wanted to know from Mr Desai whether the D.C. had handed over the administrative powers to the Army. The D.C. had said that he had done so, and the Army said he had not. Mr Desai had got to admit, they said, that Jalpaiguri had become a no man's land. They

wanted all the district officers, supposed to be adept in relief work, shunted to other districts where they could preach service before self at prize distribution ceremonies.

The Arrival

Mr Desai reached Raikatpara in full military splendour. As he alighted from the car, jawans formed a sort of guard of honour or possibly a barricade. Expecting a deputy prime ministerial reception Mr Desai flicked on a Gandhi smile which however withered when a local professor, his frail limbs quivering in rage, jumped almost upon his face. The professor said, before he was whisked off, that Mr Desai had no business to hold a conference, he had got to come inside the town and stand by the distressed people. What was the big idea, the Strong Man wondered. Didn't he know what a flood was like? He firmly refused to budge an inch. The perverts were complaining against his government too! 'Don't be silly', he said, 'don't you know that a flood is caused by Nature?' But those people went on asking silly questions, they wanted to know the meaning of 'emergency relief on war footing', they wanted to know the whereabouts of the Governor, they must talk some gibberish about flood warnings.

Mr Desai couldn't help feeling sorry for the Bahes and Rajbanshis of Jalpaiguri. Any sane newspaper-reading fellow would have known, he thought, that it was a mere courtesy call, a prelude to releasing funds from the Central exchequer, a humanitarian gesture usually shown by any deputy prime minister in the absence of the Prime Minister. He was no actor like Nehru either to come down and walk through muck. What possible good would it do if he just waded through corpses, he wondered. He couldn't resist voicing an impulsive thought, "You Bengalis have a very bad habit of complaining against the government. You should have seen how the Gujaratis are braving the floods there."

The crowd considered the comparison odious. The situation was taking a bad turn. The Governor watched the tactlessness of the Deputy Prime

Minister but could not shrug his shoulders which at that particular moment were being shaken by an oldish man, saying hoarsely, "Tell us, Governor, what took you six days to come here from Darjeeling?"

Peace was considered threatened, bayonets were raised, that tiny crowd raised hell. Mr Nani Bhattacharya, ex-Minister, wanted to talk about the flood-riven villages but he was pulled down. Mr B. C. Ghosh rose to talk about Jalpaiguri town and, poor fellow, began to weep and babble. Utterly vexed, the Strong Man said, "Look at him, he talks like a mad man. Have I come here to listen to tales?" That was the limit. Bedlam broke loose till the Strong Man got back a Nehru touch, "Let us go and see the town." The jeep moved, advanced a little and then making a spectacular about-turn sped off towards the improvised helipad at the Engineering College. The women and children of Jalpaiguri, seeing their leader going to Siliguri for his lunch, helped him to have a mud-bath on his way and made of his khaddar *galabandh* a sort of black dinner suit.

The Seventh Day

The novelty of the situation was slowly wearing off. We had ceased to wonder about what the Mother would bring off as a meal. We thought nothing of walking a mile to bring a bucket of drinking water but it was not exciting as before. The dirty clothes were no more fascinating to wear. Unbrushed teeth, uncombed hair, unwashed and more or less un-fed body made all of us a bit jumpy. Even the child was becoming increasingly bothersome, she wouldn't stay within the room, she wouldn't wear mud-splattered shoes. One day, we procured a couple of eggs, and eagerly waited for meal time. But the child insisted on having an omelette, made of a whole egg, all by herself. We were shocked, we protested, we howled but the child screamed so much that the seven of us had to share the only other egg.

Babu and I decided to stay out as much as possible. That was the first day we had a glimpse into a news-

paper. I borrowed it but gave it back after reading a few lines. Babu, looking for a good picture, was surprised. But I felt irritated. Mr Jyoti Basu, I read, had said that he was having "second thoughts on the feasibility of holding the mid-term election in Jalpaiguri because "it will be difficult to conduct election campaign there." Mr M. M. Basu, the Chief Secretary, according to another report, had said that he did not know if the system of flood-warning still existed. Why didn't he consult his BDOs before opening his mouth?

While roaming aimlessly, we bumped into a newspaper photographer. He looked very dejected. He couldn't come to Jalpaiguri earlier, it took time to persuade his chief. When he came, all the water had gone down! He couldn't get a single dead human body within the town, not to talk of the 15-foot high water. However, he warmed up to say that he had captured some very good pictures from outside the town. He showed us a few samples. "Look how sweet she looks!" he said, pointing to a child lying dead in the midst of a heap of dead cows.

Jalpaiguri boys were however becoming too tense to take a lenient view of such people. A reporter got himself mauled, because he was walking with a handkerchief wrapped over his nose to avoid the powdery dust and stink of the roads. Another had been asking everybody he met about the casualties of the flood. Possibly he was a reporter, unable to make up his mind whether to write in terms of hundreds or thousands. The radio had put it at 43 in Jalpaiguri. A party worker said it would be around 5,000 in the town itself. The reporter was stupid enough to doubt the number openly, commented on the demerits of exaggeration and got his moustache, in the process, torn a little.

A number of people had come into the town, horrified to read about Jalpaiguri in newspapers, to enquire about the safety of their relations and friends. Those who were fortunate to find the flood-stricken relations physically unhurt looked a bit disappointed and eagerly enquired how many things had

been washed out, how many days their relations had to go without food or water.

That was the day when we for the first time get government relief. It was announced with great aplomb that a consumer's store had been opened at the P. D. College. Having no clear idea about such relief we first thought we would get every essential thing there. At the end of the day, after a labour of seven hours, we got half a kilo of rice per head, we didn't know for what period. The distribution of the relief was a funny affair. The officer in charge said he had the stock of rice alright but he had no 'machinery' to distribute it. Some of us volunteered to serve as the machinery for our respective *paras*. There were some ward commissioners who guaranteed the distribution in their localities. Those *paras* which had no such commissioners present there had some known, dependable men who gave personal bonds assuring fair distribution. People of most areas did not get any relief at all because they were not represented, although some stray people waited the whole day expecting a handful of rice. People of distant localities and villages got their quota alright but they did not know how to carry it over five or ten miles. They were sitting on sacks of rice, the whole evening, jealously looking at boys of the nearby localities who carried their ration by handcarts, procured and driven all by themselves.

The distribution within the *para* was another uproarious affair. Nobody knew how many people lived in one locality, how many had left the town, how many houses were there, how many members in which house. But a list was swiftly drawn up because the relief had got to be swiftly distributed, otherwise there was the risk of a loot. Fights ensued, verbal and physical, because somebody said that there were ten members in his family whereas he got relief for two while some got away with three times the amount to which he was entitled. In our *para* an old woman was grumbling about her being disowned by all the *paras*. Would somebody tell her which *para* she belonged to? It appeared she

lived on a marginal site and so was denied the benefit of living in either *para*. Eventually when she made herself heard, the 'relief' had been exhausted.

We came home to find a gentleman waiting for me. He had come from Calcutta with a note, from the husband of my sister, which said that arrangements had been made for us to go over to Dum Dum by any IAC flight I wanted.

"Are these free trips?" I enquired, considering myself one of the flood-stricken people.

"Free trips?" the gentleman looked surprised, "Why should the IAC allow free trips?"

"But how do I pay now?"

"You don't have to think about that. Your brother-in-law will see about it. How many are you?"

The father, listening to our conversation, firmly said, "Two and one half."

Knowing it would be fruitless to argue, I let the matter drop there. I was glad that I would be able to leave that filthy town at last but at the same time felt that I was sort of fleeing, leaving others in a hopeless condition. My departure assured, I felt also sorry that I would be missing the immense excitement that we had been experiencing during the Restoration. But I wasn't allowed to indulge in the luxury of feeling sorry for long, for the gentleman soon proved himself more a journalist than I thought myself to be.

"How many died, you say, in Jalpaiguri?"

"How do I know?"

The gentleman looked dumbfounded. However, getting back his composure, he embarked on his next question, "How many did you rescue?"

"None."

"What?"

"I employed all my wits to save myself. How could I rescue others?"

"Don't you think they should employ maturer D.C.s in districts? In our times only the most experienced officers were put in districts."

"You may be right. But in this case the Divisional Commissioner

himself was present during the flood. Considering his age, you can't call him exactly a fledgeling. Moreover, he was in the Army too, a military cross or something. You can say he combines the military dash, civilian wisdom and all that—"

The presence of the Father prevented a fuller expression.

"How is the relief work going on here?"

"You mean government relief? It started today and you have to ask people what they think of it."

"It seems you are not happy about it. Have you done something about it?"

"Yes, I criticised a lot. But of course I confined my criticism to Babu."

"When you go back to Calcutta, won't you try to portray the devastation, the magnitude of the flood? You have been in the thick of it, you should do it."

"Yes, I know what you mean. But unfortunately I am not competent. I was too busy to fend for ourselves. Think of that, I haven't gone even to see the most affected areas. I can imagine how they are living right now, but sorry."

"You seem to have done pretty well for yourself. Think of the poor villagers who lost their lives."

"You may be right. After all, we are all cityfolk, we know how to employ the machinery to make our complaints heard. A good thing though, you won't have to bother about the villagers. They haven't left any trace behind them."

"It seems you haven't gained a bit from this terrible experience."

"Absolutely right. I am as I was before, sans my suitcase."

(Concluded)

Calcutta Diary

CHARAN GUPTA

IT is literally true that West Bengal is being governed by the army and the police—at least, by the army-types and the police. Take a census of the Commissioners and Secretaries installed in Writers' Building, and of those Commissioners manning the divisions. Certainly half, or more, are persons who were commissioned into the defence services during World War II and subsequently inducted into the Indian Administrative Service. They were the earliest to join the Service, and, through a series of promotions have now reached the top-most positions in the State. The notion that bright university men, after passing through the sieve of competitive examinations, thronged the service and now adorn the key administrative posts is just another myth. Some 'scholars' indeed got into the service in the late 1940's but they certainly have not flourished in this State. The ex-army junta was very much better organised, was infinitely more brazen, and Dr B. C. Roy took to it 'as duck takes to water'. The virtue of being able to cut corners, to be adequately sycophantic, to be brusque while dealing with the public, counted a great deal during Dr Roy's long regime. A variant of Gresham's Law therefore was set at work: the slightly timid, the slightly conscientious members of the Indian Administrative Service fell by the wayside—or of their own volition sought refuge in New Delhi. The loud ones, the rough ones, stayed behind. They took over the administration of the State under the benign eyes of, initially, Dr B. C. Roy and, later Mr P. C. Sen. During the British days, the brunt of the administration was of course being borne by the same species of Collectors and Commissioners. But by and large they were a hard-working group, did not spare themselves, and were anything but corrupt; besides, most of them were products of British universities, and had a sound scholastic

background. The contrast with the present state of affairs could not be more glaring. Most of these service men-turned-administrators assumed that the Congress regime was forever, and, therefore, their own suzerainty too was forever. The Congress leadership was corrupt, and some of these administrators did not know to be any better; in any case it was a mutual protection racket. Immortality—or at least the assurance of immortality—breeds contempt for ordinary men and women. Normal administrative processes therefore came to be ignored. There was no need to be efficient; survival merely indicated that priority be given to fulfilling the chores set by the Congress party; these latter were meticulously taken care of, and the rest of the duties and obligations forgotten. What was worse, given the army background of these upstart civil servants, culture went out of administration. It will be difficult to carry on a conversation with these men beyond five minutes. And yet, they are in almost total charge of this State's destiny. They were in effective control during the twenty years of Congress rule; pace nine months' rude nightmare of the United Front, they are back on the saddle, firmly, under Shri Dharma Vira's majestic reign.

They and the police. The Vigilance Commissioner may write rude reports about their demeanour and activities, their assets—hidden or revealed—may far exceed the probabilistic limit of what could be acquired during twenty or twenty-five years of correct, frugal living; they may not even contest the assertion that they are corrupt. But what can you do about it? Nothing can be proved in a court of law, and, in this corrupt society, they have enough pulls to ensure an appropriate burial of the Vigilance Commissioner's diverse allegations. The United Front Government, if it had dared,

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could have, during the first couple of months following its installation last year, got rid, at once fell sweep, of this dubious set of senior administrators and police officials. Either it did not want to do any such thing, or it lacked the courage. The rest is history—or history degenerating into farce.

A friend of mine, who has by now accumulated, by reason of his occupying a vantage position in New Delhi, quite some experience about how the different State governments conduct the affairs, has made an ordinal ranking of the States in terms of the quality of administration. He puts Madras right at the top, followed by Gujarat. At the other end, Bihar takes the prize as the worst administered State, next comes West Bengal, flanked by Madhya Pradesh. Surprisingly, some of the small, relatively backward States, like Assam and Orissa, are much better managed—if my friend is to be believed—than West Bengal. One possible explanation for this puzzle could be that while the average civil servant in the small States is less smart than his counterpart in West Bengal, he is generally more conscientious; in the words of that famous American advertisement for the car rental agency, he tries harder. My friend has also come up with a second explanation. Corruption in a State like, for example, Orissa will be confined within the political orbit; even while managing things for themselves of their friends or their party, the politicians would tend to maintain a firm reign over the top echelon of the bureaucracy, and the latter would not be allowed to take too many liberties with the apparatus for taking and executing decisions. In contrast, in West Bengal and Madhya Pradesh, the vital task of decision-making itself has been usurped by the civil servants—and this was so even during the nine months' wonder of the UF. There may be a bloody minister, but I decide about my department's things: such hauteur is infectious, besides setting one up firmly on the road to corruption and personal aggrandizement.

It is an extraordinary situation. If newspaper reports are to be believed

—and since no contradictions have been issued, they have to be believed—this State's food policy for the current year was decided by a majority of votes cast by the District Collectors and Divisional Commissioners. Food policy is a matter of life and death for the people of this State; issues with deep economic and social implications are involved in the formulation and administration of food policy. Whether there should be producer levy or not, whether there should be one per cent levy on millers or not, what should be the target of procurement: these questions are not to be casually tackled by a branch of ordinary bureaucrats. Some of the bureaucrats who voted this way or that are having their past conduct currently being investigated by the Vigilance Commission and the Central Bureau of Investigations. It is intolerable that they will exercise the prerogative of deciding the contours of the State policy for public procurement and distribution of foodgrains. No politician has stirred to lodge a protest to the Governor, but there should be no doubt about the constitutional position. Since West Bengal is under President's Rule, the Governor is administering the State on behalf of the President as advised by his Council of Ministers. In this period of interregnum, therefore, what should be the food policy of the State will be determined by the Union Ministry for Food and Agriculture, and the Governor can only instruct his bureaucrats to carry out the intent of policy. It is time the illusions of sovereignty from which West Bengal's civil servants are suffering are brought to an end, and rudely.

* * *

I am not tilting at imaginary windmills. Take a look at the amount of space set aside every day in most Calcutta newspapers to narrate the toings and froings of top civil servants, police officials and their wives. A cult is abuilding. For favours rendered or anticipated, space can be had in the newspapers; therefore use the space to print your wife's picture, or to print the news that you said such-and-such banality on such-and-

such topic. The real danger is that administrative and police officers have entrenched themselves in a position where they can be dispensers of favour, and thus keep the newspapers on leash. The seizure of power is in fact complete. It is the confidence stemming from the capture of power which allows senior officers to have the courage to abandon the flood-ravaged population of Jalpaiguri behind and leave for another town.

And it is the same spirit of nonchalance which enables the Inspector-General of Police to propound a new variant of *mayavada*. On the day of the Prime Minister's visit, he asserted last week, no formal order for a *lathi* charge was given by any police officer; therefore there could have taken place no *lathi* charge on that day; the story is a concoction.

The Press

Gesture From Pakistan

COMMENTATOR

PRESIDENT Ayub Khan's conditional acceptance of the Indian offer of a no-war pact has provoked a variety of reactions in the Press. It is perhaps a symptom of the state of relations between the two countries that the official inclination in New Delhi in the beginning was to dismiss the Pakistan President's speech as a propaganda gimmick. Wisdom appeared to prevail later when it was acknowledged that the gesture merited careful studying and should not be rejected out of hand. Presumably the Government was caught unawares; it has grown so accustomed to making the same gesture and receive the same response that it has developed certain permanent reflexes. It took the Government some time to realise that the Pakistan President had struck a different note which called for an approach different from the customary. Even now it is not widely appreciated that the Pakistani acceptance, though conditional, opens the possibility of resumption of a dialogue between the two

countries. Obviously, a no-war pact cannot be finalised by public speeches or even exchange of aide memoires. It would require discussion at official and higher levels. Nor can the pact be concluded in isolation; the outstanding disputes between the two countries would inevitably come in, and a procedure would have to be evolved for settling these disputes.

A no-war pact to be of any value must reduce tension and relieve the enormous defence burden of the two countries, at least to an extent. Neither of these will be possible as long as Indo-Pakistan relations continue to be vitiated by unresolved problems. Some of the newspapers have acknowledged belatedly that a no-war pact by itself will not commit either Government to anything to which it is not already pledged, say, under the UN Charter or the Tashkent Declaration. But these commitments have become meaningless as the points of friction persist. Whether it will be possible for the two Governments to reach an agreement on the procedure to settle outstanding disputes is a different matter; but there is no doubt that without such an agreement a no-war pact will fail in its purpose. It could not have been the suggestion of the Government of India that a no-war pact should be discussed in vacuum; President Ayub Khan has gone only a little further and laid down what should be discussed. If an agreement can be reached on the procedure of settlement of disputes, the no-war pact will not be much more than a formality; and if the effort fails, the situation will not worsen.

Some papers are, however, in favour of summary dismissal of the Pakistan President's "counter-offer". Among them is *The Times of India*, which maintains that it is not going to benefit either country if both are tied down to a particular mode of settlement and denied all other peaceful means. The paper says there is little doubt that when the Pakistan President is speaking of settling all disputes between the two countries, he is thinking of only one particular dispute. Not long ago Mr Ayub Khan had in effect said that as long as there was no settle-

ment on Kashmir which he could regard as "just" he would not close the option to go to war if necessary to settle the question. Since, in India's view, Kashmir is something with which Pakistan has no concern and there cannot be a dispute between the two countries over it, President Ayub's counter-offer is in substance a covert threat that unless means are found to reach an agreement on Kashmir he reserves the right to go to war in order to force a settlement. That it is not an empty threat is obvious from Pakistan's frantic shopping for arms and equipment in various countries. No one is likely to be deceived by the cynical effrontery with which Pakistan is trying to cover up these war preparations by pointing an accusing finger at India. In the eyes of an unprejudiced observer, this country's repeated offer of a no-war pact with Pakistan should be sufficient to absolve it of any such aggressive intention.

The Statesman has been unable to find any reason for the "resounding reservation" with which President Ayub has declared his willingness to sign a no-war pact with India. It says that the President of Pakistan should know that, if precise procedures can be laid down for the solution of each and every dispute between India and Pakistan, then nothing will be more redundant than a no-war pact between the two countries. A no-war declaration between India and Pakistan has some meaning precisely because numerous problems exist between them which are not easy of solution and over which Pakistan has plunged the subcontinent into dangerous and futile armed conflict at least twice. Notwithstanding the Tashkent Declaration, India and Pakistan continue to be frozen into positions of mutual hostility; they are more isolated from each other now than they were ever before. To the extent President Ayub's latest position marks a departure from the present sterile stance, it is to be welcomed and encouraged in spite of the reservations and qualifications. New Delhi has already extended a qualified welcome to it; this may profitably be follow-

ed by an Indian initiative to convince Rawalpindi that, instead of putting the cart before the horse, earnest and energetic attempts to find solutions of Indo-Pakistan problems should follow rather than precede the no-war pact and establishment of normal relations between the two neighbours. India rightly holds that only if the present bitterness and hostility disappear and other peripheral problems are solved can an atmosphere conducive to a profitable dialogue on Kashmir be created. A no-war declaration, accompanied by a determination to solve all problems peacefully and amicably, can be of great help towards that objective, especially if renunciation of force is followed by an agreement between the two countries on reduction of expenditure on arms.

The Hindustan Times is less reserved in its appreciation of President Ayub's gesture. It says that regardless of its admittedly limited nature in more than one sense, President Ayub Khan's willingness to regard a no-war pact as a possible basis for efforts to break the dangerous deadlock between our two countries should be as welcome as it is noteworthy. It seems to offer a glimmer of hope in the murky atmosphere of mutual suspicions and seemingly wilful misunderstandings. Even the "conditions" he has attached would, on a sober and objective analysis, look to be less forbidding than at first glance. Essentially these boiled down to a call for a mutually agreed procedure and also perhaps a machinery for resolving peacefully the existing Indo-Pakistan problems and "those that might arise in the future". If the Tashkent Declaration has in effect been a pious futility, the reason seems principally to have been the absence of a continuing trustworthy agency to oversee its implementation. One need not be told that in its operative part the declaration was indeed a no-war commitment by both India and Pakistan. Statesmanship demands not an impulsive rejection of the Pakistan President's counter-offer, however hedged, but a painstaking exploration of "the meaning of the agreement on

the substance of such a pact" that he has asked for as a precondition of its acceptance. President Ayub Khan's familiar refrain on this country's alleged arms build-up should be no insurmountable discouragement to such an explanation. India does not have to conceal any skeleton in its cupboard for the simple reason that it has none. In any case, it is not difficult for it to explain and justify the various steps taken so far to strengthen its defence.

At the opposite extreme is *Patriot* which characterises President Ayub's offer as a "rigmarole" which does not mean anything to India. Intelligent people here will regard it as being addressed to the USA which may have told the President that it will be easier for it to pass on the notorious Patton tanks to him provided he makes some pacific noises, and the Soviet Union which is being desperately wooed by the President's heir, Gen. Musa. The no-war pact offered to Pakistan by Jawaharlal Nehru was an opportunity for that country to release itself from the shameful American military yoke it was about to drag on itself then. It might have helped it later not to send hypocritical ambassadors to the court of the modern Kublai Khan in Peking to sing the glories of Chinese tanks and guns. But Pakistan rejected it then because its rulers thought that Indian determination to maintain the country's territorial integrity would be worn out and that with American and Chinese help threats could be brandished that would demoralise the Indian people. The paper says that President Ayub is presently confronted with a resurgence of blind totemic Mullahism in West Pakistan, increasing secessionist fervour in the Eastern wing, open declaration of rebellious intentions by the Paktoons and growing uncertainties about American and Chinese help. It is against this background that anything that the President says about relations with India has to be weighed. This caution is necessary because we have busybodies within the country and friends abroad who would have us assume optimistic stances immedi-

tely any word that is not a curse or a threat comes out of Pakistan. President Ayub has been playing the game of double-talk with India for nine years now, and every effort by us to introduce any element of normalcy in the relationship between the two countries has been deliberately and mischievously queered by him.

The Statesman Again

The Statesman is among the few newspapers to report that Mr Pran Nath Chopra has secured an interim injunction from the Calcutta High Court restraining *The Statesman Ltd.* from giving effect to or acting upon the notice of dismissal served on him. Since the matter is now sub judice, comments are barred; but it is possible to put on record the case. Mr Chopra has filed a suit against *The Statesman Ltd.* alleging that he was appointed Editor of the paper till 31 March 1971, but he was dismissed by a notice on 12 October last. He has submitted that the notice was "illegal, invalid, void, and inoperative". In the suit he has claimed damages (reportedly to the tune of Rs. 10 lakhs) against the respondents and prayed for perpetual injunction against them from giving effect to the impugned notice. Mr Chopra has given an undertaking not to attend the office of *The Statesman Ltd.*, not to interfere in any way with the publication of the daily newspapers of *The Statesman Ltd.*, and not to interfere with the management and administration of its affairs.

Book Review

West Bengal and the Federalising Process in India.

By Marcus F. Franda
Princeton. \$ 7.50.

THE Centre-State relationship in India is in the crucible. The experience of the working of our so-called federal Constitution for nearly two decades cannot be any guide in the situation that has emerged from the general election of 1967. In the first seventeen years of the Republic,

federalism was largely a question of adjustments within the Congress party, of evolving an agreed arrangement between its central and State leaders. The solitary exception was Kerala, but the Congress leaders thought it more urgent to topple the Ministry there that to test if the lengthiest written constitution in the world was commodious enough for a State Government whose professed political and economic goals were at variance with those of the Government at the Centre.

Even after 1967 when half a dozen States voted non-Congress governments to power, the Congress Government at the Centre refused to give the Constitution a fair trial. Instead it used the Constitution as a tool to topple non-Congress ministries. As a result, our Constitution, which is said to contain the pick of American, British, Canadian, Australian, and Irish constitutions, stands discredited; its inadequacy in the emerging political pattern in India has been proved. The unitary bias in our federal Constitution has been so exploited by the Congress since the last general election to impose its will on non-Congress States that the federal form of the Constitution has lost all meaning. Not surprisingly, a demand has already been made for a second constituent assembly to draw up a new constitution to meet the changing needs of the times; a constitution which would make for coexistence of governments with conflicting ideologies at the Centre and in the States.

Franda's study of federalism in India, based on West Bengal's relations with the Centre during the Congress regime, has been overtaken by the double-march of events since the last general election. The defeat of the Congress has been briefly mentioned in the book; it seems Franda did not think it important enough to require reconsideration of his conclusions. He says the Central Government has not been as strong or as forceful in its relationships with West Bengal as the thrust of the Constitution and the dependence of the State on the Centre would seem to make possible. Whether the Centre has

Mock History

MRIGANKA SEKHAR RAY

been softer to West Bengal than to other States is a matter of opinion; but whatever tolerance it showed in the past to the West Bengal Government was not out of any loyalty to the concept of cooperative federation. The Congress behaved as if it had been granted a permanent lease of the governments at the Centre and in the States and decisions were taken to subserve the interest of the Congress party. The dismissal of the United Front Ministry was in continuation of that policy; neither the Constitution nor the federalizing process of seventeen years was allowed to come in the way of that peremptory action.

Of the three case studies selected by Franda for the purpose of the book, one at least was a hoax. The proposal to merge West Bengal and Bihar into one State had never been made in seriousness. It was a ruse to divert the attention of the people of West Bengal from what the Central Government had already decided about the States Reorganisation Commission's recommendations regarding the West Bengal-Bihar boundary. The Central leaders knew that the merger proposal was not feasible and it would not be acceptable to the people or, what they were more concerned with, the Congress parties of the two States. In spite of the Congress, the States were being reorganised then mainly on the basis of language, and it would not have been possible for the Congress party in either State to go against the current. The Centre's decision to modify the SRC recommendations in favour of Bihar was also in violation of the principle of linguistic redistribution of States. Knowing that the proposed modification would be resented in West Bengal the Central leaders confronted the State with the merger proposal so that they might opt for the modified recommendations of the SRC as the lesser of two evils. The strategy was conceived by one of the top leaders of the party, who was also largely responsible for the modification of the SRC recommendations.

The late Dr B. C. Roy could not have been unaware of this design, for he was present at the meeting of the Congress Working Committee which

hatched the plan. Whether he came to believe in the merger proposal and worked sincerely for it at any stage is more than one can say. But certainly the wily Mr Atulya Ghosh was never taken in. Mr Asoke Sen's defeat in the parliamentary by-election in a Calcutta constituency provided the pretext it was looking for to drop the proposal. For by then the left parties and the people of West Bengal had walked into the Congress trap and resigned themselves to the modified recommendations of the SRC. Mr Ghosh was doubly glad; for not only had the strategy succeeded in eliminating the prospects of a Statewide agitation led by the left, but a non-conformist of sorts in his party ranks had also been trounced. There is no doubt that some other plea would have been found to drop the merger proposal had the Congress won the parliamentary by-election in Calcutta.

Franda has erred in the matter of land reforms also because of his faith in the sincerity of the Congress. Radical land reforms still remain a distant goal not only in West Bengal but all over the country. The Centre can talk glibly of land reforms and complain constantly of inadequacy of legislation in the States, because under the Constitution it is for the State governments to decide the policy and implement it. The Centre's lament is meant merely to reassure the people that the Congress has not given up the "clear, fairly detailed, and almost irrevocable" policy of agrarian reform which was adopted by it long before independence. The Centre is not as helpless as it feigns to be; if it was really serious, it could pressurise the State governments into at least partial submission. But it knows that it cannot afford to alienate the rural landlords who constitute the rural base of the Congress. The assigned role of the State bosses of the party was, therefore, to ignore the Central directives.

There is one serious factual error in the book. The joint statement proposing the merger of West Bengal and Bihar was issued by Dr B. C. Roy and Mr Sri Krishna Sinha, not Mr Satya Narayan Sinha.

GARH *Nasimpur* (directed by Ajit Lahiri) repeats the same formula of the historical romance of his earlier film *Joradighir Chowdhury Paribar* sketched out solely with an eye on box-office returns. The film swarms with stars, and crude melodrama with a cheap mass appeal seems to be the director's stock-in-trade. The story is set in the turbulent period of the fratricidal scramble for the Mughal throne after the death of Shah Jahan. Against this stormy background, the film unfolds the triangle involving Uttara, the princess of Nasimpur, Debikanta, a runaway prince turned a sort of Robin Hood and Basudev, the villain with a lover's heart. But the film's concern with actual history ends with the couple of title-cards superimposed on the picture-postcard shots of castles and palaces, while a dull and emotionless voice reads out the contents of the cards. The beginning with the fireworks display which could have been visually impressive goes totally astray owing to the lack of a rhythmic cutting tempo and the absence of adequate sound and music. The rest of the film is, however, beyond redemption. The script is consistent cliché, drawing material from the stagey nonsense usually doled out by the conventional playhouses in Bengal. The heroine from a conservative Bengali noble family trots in gypsy costume, the knight-errant here is also a deft demonstrator of classical music and the bandits devote more time to mastering the art of ballet than to actual roughing-out operations. The Robin-Hood-Mariane story is soaked in puerile emotions and the director never misses an opportunity to ladle out sex liberally and thickly. Technically the film is too poor to merit serious discussion. The action is tortoise-paced, camera-work just amateurish, the lighting devoid of any sense of depth and mood and the sets emit the odious stench of studio-plaster. While the actresses

always try to communicate in a monotonous cuckoo-sweet lingo, the actors in a pathetic attempt to live up to the image of the historical heroes never stop blabbering in an irritating falsetto. The director's apprenticeship with Ritwik Ghatak appears to have been thoroughly unproductive.

From The Vietnam Record

I have never talked or corresponded with a person knowledgeable in Indo-Chinese affairs who did not agree that had elections been held (in 1956) ... possibly 80 per cent of the people would have voted for the communist Ho Chi Minh.

— Dwight D. Eisenhower in *Mandate for Change*

When President Diem took over in 1955 his authority did not extend beyond the Presidential Palace.

— Leland Burrows, Head of the U.S.O.M., Saigon.

The reason why the Vietcong will not suffer a political defeat is because ... they are still closer to the people, more aware of Vietnamese problems, more conscious of national dignity and independence than any regime to come out of Saigon.

— *The Times*, London, May 24, 1966.

There is little evidence that the Vietcong has any significant popular following in South Vietnam.

— Dean Rusk, April 1965.

Even Premier Ky told this reporter that the communists were closer to the people's yearnings for social justice and an independent life than his own government.

— James Reston, *New York Times*, September 1, 1966.

People ask me who my heroes are. I have only one: Adolf Hitler.

— Cao Ky, *Daily Mirror*, London, July 4, 1965

I would like to see American students develop as much fanaticism about the U.S. political system as young Nazis did about their political system during the war.

— L. B. Johnson, *New York Times*, February 6, 1965.

Anybody who commits the land power of the United States on the continent of Asia ought to have his head examined.

— General Douglas MacArthur

I would hate very much to see us involved in a land war in Asia. I think we would be fighting a wrong war at the wrong place against the wrong enemy.

— General Omar Bradley.

The war in Vietnam is going well.

— Robert McNamara, January 1963.

The major part of the U.S. military task can be completed by the end of 1965.

— McNamara, October 1963.

The U.S. still hopes to withdraw most of its troops from South Vietnam before the end of 1965.

— McNamara, February 1964.

We have stopped losing the war.

— McNamara, October 1965.

(The bombing of North Vietnam has not) in any significant way affected their war-making capability.

— McNamara, September 1967.

It would seem that, no matter how many Vietcong we claim to kill, through some miraculous effort of will, the enemy's strength remains the same.

— Robert Kennedy, February 1968.

The day-to-day communiqués give the impression that we win almost every encounter, but we somehow merely advance deeper into the bog.

— James Reston, *New York Times*, November 1965.

After a year of increasing (American) escalation, the area controlled by the Vietcong is larger today than it was a year ago.

— Walter Lippmann, *San Francisco Chronicle*, January, 1966.

Your attempt to pin the whole blame on the government of North Vietnam deceives no one except those whose wishful thinking originally committed us to our high-handed intervention.

— Lewis Mumford in an open letter to President Johnson.

The Americans have bombing planes, jeeps; they can move and fly very fast. But we can be faster than them, because we in South Vietnam are already there.

— Huynh Minh, member of the NLF forces.

Calamity has tempered and hardened me. And turned my mind into steel.

— from a poem by Ho Chi Minh.

Letters

About Frontier

Sometimes, even when one has successfully penetrated the usual verbal jugglery in your journal after consulting dictionaries, one is not sure about the role *Frontier* wants to play. One may not be mistaken in identifying the *Frontier* group with those petty-bourgeois people who prefer to suffer from the romanticism of calling a spade a spade only to use its wrong end for some wrong cause at the wrong time.

For instance, the issue of October 19, wherein a correspondent writing about *The Statesman* makes an un-called-for dig at the CPI(M) in the last paragraph. A brilliant example of how business tricks force the so-called intellectuals to make some saucy comment out of context in the name of wit! I do not know what made the clever correspondent waste so much space on a petty thing like the removal of this editor. It is not even a cause to fight for. It neither helps to expose the racket that these newspapers are, nor does it reflect by any stretch of imagination any polarisation anywhere. But then who knows, it may be a gainful affair for *Frontier* to initiate a movement of "all the sacked editors of the world unite". The correspondent did not stop there, he must make a dig at the CPI(M) which is now determined to correct all the past follies of the communist movement in India and has at last taken an independent stand without being a

lackey of either the CPSU or the CPC. By the way, after all the tall talk and the pseudo-polemics on Marxism that fill the pages of *Frontier* nowadays, it is really interesting to find a wise columnist like Gyan Kapur demanding an "impartial" enquiry by the State!

I can only pity these gentlemen who are unable to deny the magnitude of the intensifying class struggle in India and all over the capitalist world, but have neither sufficient courage nor a single-minded purposeful outlook to do away with the system. It is only natural that with a hundred per cent subjective outlook, least caring for objective reality, they will confine themselves to arm-chair politics. But when will they realise that even though well-meaning, their irresponsible unrealistic comments help only the class enemy and not the struggle?

NUPUR BASU
Durgapur

Czechoslovakia

It is unfortunate that your paper has also joined the right-wing reactionary elements in this country in the chorus of denouncing the military intervention by the Warsaw Pact countries in Czechoslovakia. The latest was the article by Mr K. N. Ramachandran in your issue dated September 28. He has tried to support the Chinese criticism of the intervention. The main plank of his argument is that since the Czech Communist Party was in full control of the situation and could control the moves of a reactionary minority the Chinese Government does not believe that the Czech situation warranted a military intervention. Secondly, even though the Czech party programme from the Chinese point of view had the strong odour (1) of revisionism, the Chinese have not said that it is either reactionary or counter-revolutionary.

To take the second argument first, it is strange consistency that while the revisionist policies of the CPSU are reactionary and counter-revolutionary,

the same is not true of the CPCZ, even though it was more pronounced in its revisionist character. The CPCZ went to the extent of declaring that the fundamental Marxist principle of the dictatorship of the proletariat is not valid during this period in Czechoslovakia. The working class will have only equal partnership in the direction and management of the country. (Cestmir Cisar, *New Age* dated 14th July, 1968).

Then again in the name of the creative development of Marxism as well as in the name of democratization and liberalisation conditions were being created in the country for the restoration of capitalism. Concession after concession were being given to the counter-revolutionary forces, ultimately leading to the notorious Two Thousand Words which called for the virtual overthrow of the socialist system and restoration of the capitalist system in collaboration with imperialist countries. If all these are not reactionary and counter-revolutionary in the estimation of the Chinese, as stated by Mr Ramachandran, then there must be something basically wrong with the CPC.

The trends in Czechoslovakia showed that the role of the party was being gradually downgraded. The action programme adopted in April was basically anti-Marxist in character. It was all for the subordination of the role of the Communist Party to the National Front. In the words of Cestmir Cisar, Secretary, CPCZ "..... we do not want the monopoly of power in running the country" Again, "gradually, the multi-party system is becoming a reality in our country". (*New Age*, July 14). Such gradual elimination of the role of the Communist Party was being done in the name of "pure democracy", "complete freedom" etc. and the assessment that the dictatorial state of the working class in Czechoslovakia had fulfilled all its historic missions.

The more the CPCZ leadership was compromising with the counter-revolutionary forces (withdrawal of State censorship over the Press, radio, TV etc.) the more these groups were surfacing.

It should be clear from the above that the objective condition in Czechoslovakia were more or less similar to those in Hungary in 1956 and if things were allowed to drift further, the imperialist Powers would have appeared directly on the scene. In the interest of the socialist system in Czechoslovakia as well as the neighbouring socialist countries it was essential to check it. It would have been better if this could have been done without military intervention, but as matters stood there was no alternative.

It is futile to argue that since the CPSU is the father of modern revisionism which led to the present mess, it should be a silent spectator of the abolition of the socialist system in Czechoslovakia. The CPC should have supported the Warsaw Powers' action as it did in the case of Hungary in 1956. But consistency possibly cannot be expected from the present leadership of the CPC.

B. B. G.
Tiruchirapalli.

Boycott Slogan

The timing of the election boycott slogan raised by a number of "extremists" is highly opportune. In India today, the economic crisis is fast deepening and it is just beyond the capacity of a handful of honest and competent (of course by bourgeois standards) socialist ministers to stem the process. The power-hungry UF leaders have gone mad and are making most fantastic promises of a better deal for the common people.

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