

frontier

Vol. 1: No. 48

MARCH 8, 1969

PRICE 35 PAISE

On Other Pages

COMMENTS ..	2
VIEW FROM DELHI OH, TO BE A GOVERNOR! FROM A POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT ..	4
MAHARASHTRA WHY DID BOMBAY BURN? SHAHUL ..	6
KERALA YOUTH CONGRESS REVOLT RAMJI ..	9
ASSAM WHAT THE DISSIDENTS THINK A. C. ..	9
LETTER FROM AMERICA THE RHETORIC OF STATUS QUO ROBI CHAKRAVORTI ..	11
STALIN'S FUNERAL K. C. ..	12
THE PRESS SPOTLIGHT ON WEST BENGAL ..	13
PAKISTAN TWO TACTICS BADRUDDIN UMAR ..	15
SAUBHANIK'S ANTIGONE BY OUR DRAMA CRITIC ..	15
LETTERS ..	16

Editor : Samar Sen

PRINTED AT MODERN INDIA PRESS,
7, RAJA SUBODH MULLICK SQUARE,
CALCUTTA-13 AND PUBLISHED WEEKLY
BY SAMAR SEN FROM 61, MOTT LANE,
CALCUTTA-13

DESAI'S BUDGET

BUDGET day has come and gone, and the country is where it was. The proposals to levy an excise duty on fertilisers and power-driven pumps and to have an agricultural wealth tax—on which Mr Desai is having second thoughts—are so much of a red herring. In his basic responsibilities as Finance Minister of the country, Mr Morarji Desai is exhibiting an ineptness which is truly horrendous. The levity which interspersed his budget speech can perhaps provide occasional relief to the tired and listless souls in Parliament, but it contributes no clue at all about the direction which the economy is going to take, or be taken.

Perhaps the Government wants to stand still, despite the recession. On Mr. Desai's own reckoning, national income has moved up by at least 3 per cent over the year, but the tax effort he is mounting will amount to less than one-third of one per cent of the national income. Capital receipts are also left to take their own course, and in the aggregate Central revenues will therefore move only marginally upwards over the year. This suits the Finance Minister and his colleagues wonderfully well. The paucity of resources can now be used as alibi to kill off, in the very first year of resurrection, the ill-fated Fourth Plan. Why have a Plan at all when the private sector is there, ever ready in the wings to assume the responsibilities of the economy, lock, stock and barrel?

But the Union Government has its uses, to bail out the private sector now and then from inconvenient jams. This year Mr. Desai has done the manipulations on behalf of such assorted industries as tea, jute, cotton textiles and nylon yarn. Most of these industries are in difficulties either because of their lack of initiative or because of sheer inefficiency; in some instances, they are in trouble because of their extra avarice. But they have the resources to mount expensive advertising campaigns on the eve of the budget; other types of wire-pulling are not altogether unknown either. Mr. Desai has decided to be generous—at the expense of the long suffering general taxpayer. He has not even asked for any *quid pro quo* for the jute and cotton textile industries—for example, in regard to reinstatement of laid off labour or a minimum volume of exports—before granting valuable tax concessions.

What comes down for some has to go up for others. Impost on cigarettes and petrol and kerosene and electrical goods is thus up; so too is

The New Strategy

direct tax on the middle income ranges. The corporate sector is however jealously protected; Mr Desai, after all, cannot ignore his class roots; no wonder all shares, Dodsell included, got a boost over the weekend in the Calcutta and Bombay markets.

The same class bias shows up in the proposed pattern of current and capital expenditure. No qualitative change is discernible over the form that was laid down last year: a number of routine re-alignments of expenditure, but the majesty of the defence outlay continues. Only Rs. 44 crores could be spared additionally for development; for defence, however, funds are never short: expenditure on the navy, for example, is to jump nearly a hundred per cent between the year that is ending and the one that is coming. Other heads of expenditure might abide Mr Desai's question; defence is free.

This is for the second year running that he has presented a budget which is devoid of social goals, and without any intent for rapid economic development. Unless it be that the overriding social purpose is to constrict progressively the role of the public sector in the process of economic growth and to use the budget surreptitiously to create the conditions for guaranteed private growth. Mr Desai has not found it possible to spare even five words about the Plan in his budget speech; there may be four, we are not altogether sure. He would appear to be totally oblivious of his responsibilities as Finance Minister to initiate measures which could lift the veil of recession. The growing unemployment, it would seem, is not his concern. In fact, the way the budget has been drawn up and presented, Mr Desai gives the impression of being merely an arithmetic-arranging Minister of Finance, but who is altogether ignorant of his obligations and functions as Minister of Economic Affairs. Or maybe this is the first half-step towards a total fade-out; the only trouble, howsoever minor, is that, in the process, the economy too might fade out. That would be a rather costly price to pay for the luxury of having, for a time, Mr Desai as Finance Minister.

The number of organisations and newspapers eager to co-operate with the United Front Government in West Bengal has proliferated so much that it looks like it has been resolved to kill it with kindness. The realisation has dawned on many diehard people—though, perhaps, not on the Centre—that, defections being no longer profitable, the Ministry has come to stay for five years. So a new strategy has to be devised for peaceful co-existence. And we know what peaceful co-existence means. It serves to blunt whatever residual sharpness and militancy the leaders still possess. Perhaps the hitherto openly hostile camp hopes that without firm action in decisive fields the Ministry will be reduced to offering Ramakrishna Mission type relief to those who are restless for radical change and get itself bogged in the administrative morass. At the outset there is, and will be, an attitude of sweet reasonableness on the part of vested interests. There would be no outcry for Central intervention. Far better it would be to let the UF go in for shadow-boxing—and in-fighting. As the days pass into weeks and weeks into months, a process of disillusionment will set in. Time is a great splitter. What is five years to those who make millions? This is the new strategy.

There is at the moment a lot of beaming satisfaction on all sides and the siren song of success is quite loud. The voters want to relax. We have had a victory holiday on the eve of Holi. Those who call for hard work and higher production to reduce unemployment—can it be in the given circumstances?—had no hesitation in ordering a work stoppage on Monday. One too many.

However this is no great matter. To millions who have little scope for relaxation a paid holiday is a paid holiday. And being, not Leninists, but a petty bourgeois group prone to swim with the tide, we are grateful for small mercies. That 30 Ministers could endorse a number of rapid decisions on the first day they met is

quite something. The IG has to retire this month (what about others?); cases in connection with the September 19 strike of last year are to be withdrawn; prisoners have been released; the brave Kanu Sanyal and others who have been on hunger-strike for god knows how many days have been given the status of political undertrials and may be released (when?); tram fares are going to be reduced; and Mr Dharma Vira must go. Mr Jyoti Basu and the Labour Minister are having an arduous time meeting representatives of trade unions and big business. There is the expectation that something will be done to reopen the 66 or so factories still closed, involving over 19,000 workers. College teachers have been offered a uniform grade. All sorts of schemes are in the air and suggestions are being heard that a Red Guard movement should be begun to fight corruption at all levels and some States should refuse to fall in with the reactionary Central budget.

On the debit side are the police lathi charge on Kidderpore dock workers, complaints of impromptu policy statements by individual Ministers and the mock-heroics of Comrade Promode Das Gupta. Also the fact that some four or five Ministers have flown to Delhi. Haven't we been here before? Will these flights to Delhi become a habit, in the name of confrontation? The ground for confrontation is here: according to those who look forward in anger, under the seeming soft earth, there is simmering fire.

Unreal City

The hullabaloo over Bonn's right to hold the presidential election in West Berlin's Ostpreussen Halle has been a sort of exercise in legality. Unlike the Berlin blockade of 1948 and the Berlin crisis of 1961, no important international issue was involved this time and the snarling at each other over the divided city does not have the portent of a major crisis. Bonn had

made use of West Berlin earlier in 1954, 1959 and 1964 as a symbolic capital without provoking protest from the Democratic Republic of Germany. The Government of Kurt Georg Kiesinger took it for granted that the precedents had lent "common law" justification for holding the election in West Berlin. Moreover, the USA, the UK and France had assured Bonn, though in a reserved manner, of maintaining the security of West Berlin. But the GDR rejects the "common law" concept and upholds the Four-Power agreement on West Berlin, which does not provide any scope for Bonn to operate in the city 110 miles inside East Germany. West Berlin is also left out of the protective umbrella of the Atlantic Pact. Notwithstanding Ivan Yakubovsky's—commander of the Warsaw Pact Powers,—presence in the GDR for a while and routine blasts at Bonn, the communist States are divided over the status of West Berlin. While East Germany maintains that West Berlin "belongs" to its territory, the Russian stand that the city is an enclave within the territory of East Germany conforms to its well-known pragmatic approach to foreign affairs.

The British Prime Minister, Mr Wilson, told Mr Kiesinger that "we shall continue—you can count on this—to do all that is in our power to ensure that your freedom is preserved." The Americans, however, seemed not much worried over the hatched-up Berlin problem since they knew that Russia would not challenge their stake in Western Europe. The Russians are also keen on starting a dialogue with America on arms control and other major issues of common interest. It matters little whether America will be bargaining from a position of strength with her sentinel anti-ballistic missile system—originally conceived as an anti-Chinese system at a cost of \$10 billion. Before President Nixon set off for the European "study tour" Mr Anatoly Dobrynin, Soviet Ambassador to the US, promised him all precautionary measures for a pleasant Berlin trip. In spite of all Russian good wishes, President Nixon was jeered by the Berlin students and

had to hear some uncomplimentary remarks. With Bonn Russia is busy in sorting out a number of political and economic issues. Recently, the Russian Ambassador, Mr Semyon K. Tsarapkin, presented a conciliatory note on the non-proliferation treaty to the West German Foreign Minister,

Mr Willy Brandt. But then why does Russia give her consent to the fuss over the presidential election? Is it to shift the world's attention from Czechoslovakia or to allow Walter Ulbricht's regime what little gain it could make without risking a conflict with the Western Powers?

Vietnam And Biafra

American hypocrisy is at times tinged with touching sadness. The other day, referring to Vietcong rocket and mortar attacks on bases and towns, the chief American negotiator in Paris spoke of the "tragedy" created by the offensive against populous centres—"women and children have been killed and maimed—these people have done no wrong". This, from the representative of a government whose genocide has finished off over a million civilians so far!

The cessation of bombing of North Vietnam has helped the Americans to use many more of their planes in devastating raids in the South. The B52s drop their massive loads day in and day out on populous centres. Reports from South Vietnam are scarce these days, but *The Times* of London carried on February 28 a story of how Bien Hoa village, once a thriving community of 1000 people, was wiped out by war planes in an attempt to dislodge the "North Vietnamese". One U.S. official said, "we wanted to avoid blowing up the village, but finally we had no choice". The stench of death hung over the streets and people made their way through the rubble with handkerchiefs tied over their heads. The dead were North Vietnamese; it is said that the villagers had been warned to move out earlier.

No one knows how long the Paris talks will continue and what the outcome would be. But it seems that in going to Paris both the NLF and Hanoi have lost the propaganda edge they had. World opinion, fickle as it is, tends to forget the continuing blood-bath in South Vietnam. Even Mr Jyoti Basu forgot to mention Vietnam

when he referred to the movement in Pakistan at the Maidan rally. However, the Vietnamese know how to make the Yanks run.

In another part of the world, supplied with planes and arms by the Russians and the British, the Nigerian Air force is hitting out savagely at the Biafran populace. On February 24 in five raids one Red Cross headquarters, a hospital, a market place and a clinic for convalescents were hit. On March 2 Umuahia was attacked. Earlier on February 26, the first day of a 48-hour truce announced by Lagos, an Ilyushin bomber of the NAF attacked the defenceless village of Ozu Abam, killing at least 120 (later reports say 509) people, the majority of them women and children. The target, as usual, was the market place, the day being market day. A correspondent wrote in *The Times* that what he saw when he arrived on the scene some four hours after the bombing was a sight he would never forget. On every side lay the charred bodies of women and children. The bodies of children of every age lay in the ruins of the market stalls. Not far away was the headless body of a pregnant woman, the local midwife. An 11-year-old girl, arriving from a village some ten miles away, shrieked as she saw the body of her dead father lying face up in a ditch. Her hysterical wailing could be heard throughout the village.

Such wailing is also heard sometimes in Nagaland and in Mizoland where a village pacification drive is still on. It was heard in Naxalbari in 1967. With a new diplomacy of collaboration taking shape in this part of Asia, pacification methods will no

doubt be developed further. The Burmese are lending a helping hand. Indonesia's Suhartos and Maliks should be cultivated for their outstanding experience. Supply of arms will be no problem, Marshal Grechko of the Socialist Soviet Republic will see to it.

"Show Cause"

Jadavpur again. Two months after a demonstration in the University in which students and workers took part, 'show cause' notices were served on nine students accusing them of 'misconduct'. Among other things the students were accused of violating the 'sanctity' (by the way what does this shopworn word mean in this holy country?) of the institution by bringing in the workers of neighbouring industries. Considering the age we live in, this reference to the workers is breathtaking. The Czar shut down Russian universities because they were frequented by workers. But that was in 1905. Another charge that the students raised 'political' slogans is too funny to deserve comment.

Students have pointed out that the Governing Body of the University which has been so sensitive about the sanctity of the educational institution is composed mainly of elements farthest from things educational. About

two-thirds of the body are said to be packed with industrial tycoons and millowners. Does it explain why they saw a red rag in the worker-student demonstration? However much they might dislike the phenomenon, it has been happening the world over, from Columbia, Sorbonne and Rome to Japanese universities and is likely to spread to many others.

Last week in protest against the show-cause notice the students staged a strike that brought the university to a standstill. While the students seemed determined to carry on their movement until the notices were withdrawn the authorities turned it into a prestige issue. By the time we go to press the decision of the authorities may be known. Meanwhile the Jadavpur University Teachers' Council has reportedly in a resolution dissociated itself from the business of issuing 'show-cause' notices and charged the authorities with taking crucial decisions like the present one behind the back of the teachers.

The latest trouble may blow off, but something is wrong with Jadavpur. Some time ago there was disruption of studies when some students were refused promotion though they had passed the required examination and the University was closed sine die. There have been complaints about the hobby clubs, World University Service, Film Club etc. functioning inside the campus. The 'puritans' have grumbled about "gambling" and "hard drinks" at a fete and about a suggested mixed moonlit Holi. A few days ago some students demonstrated against the Film Club which showed a film in which a boy stamps on the posterior of a naked girl. Perhaps they are not mature enough, like Film Club members, to appreciate the New Wave. However, it would not do to dismiss student agitators as Naxalites bent on mischief. With a new Education Minister who is supposed to know what is what among teachers and students, the time has come for an inquiry into Jadavpur University, the darling institution of American foundations.

View From Delhi

Oh, To Be A Governor!

FROM A POLITICAL
CORRESPONDENT

THE Centre's main concern, at the time of writing, is how gracefully it could ease Governor Dharma Vira out of the Raj Bhavan in Calcutta. The Governor might have asked to be relieved as early as October 1968, as inspired stories would have it. But the Centre indeed has to reckon with the possibility of an unsavoury "untold story" of the famous "Operation Hooghly" spilling over sooner or later. Memoirs by retired bureaucrats are the current fashion and the Centre has reason to be apprehensive when the Governor who carried out its diktats wants to retire. It might well be in the Centre's interest to keep Mr Dharma Vira in office somewhere or the other outside Calcutta at least until his memoirs lose their relevance.

But what beats one is the superficiality of the approach to the whole issue. From either side that is. The United Front's objection could not certainly be limited to the individual Governor alone. After all the United Front Chief Minister and his colleagues did not mind being sworn in by the same Governor who dismissed them once. The objection should relate to issues more fundamental. The Centre thought it was setting a pattern, sending bureaucrats to Left Communist dominated States. It is perhaps an accident that Mr E. M. S. Namboodiripad was hitting off well with Mr Viswanathan while the United Front in West Bengal found Mr Dharma Vira too much of the Home Ministry's Viceroy in Calcutta. Both these Governors belong to the distinguished genre called the Indian Civil Service and could be relied upon by the Centre to stretch the Constitution to absurd limits to establish that the citizen's absolute loyalty like that of the State officials, was to the Centre and not to the State. The Centre might have also thought that the bureaucracy

For reliability and

Prompt Service

in

General Order Supplies

Remember

ANWAR HOSSAIN

13, Marsden Street,
Calcutta-16.

Phone :— 44-6122

everywhere was the same and the problem was no different from organising an all-India power grid or an oil grid.

The basic issues of Governor's powers need to be clearly defined. If Mr Dharma Vira is replaced by a political Governor like Mr Gopala Reddy or a military governor like General Kumaramangalam (whom the Right Communists are promoting for the post), that is no answer to the basic question. What exactly is Mr Jyoti Basu's or Mr Namboodiripad's attitude to the Centre's interpretation of the Governor's power? The whole controversy should not be allowed to degenerate into sloganeering at this crucial juncture. States like West Bengal and Kerala should seek a more positive answer from the Centre because the problem does not end with the Centre consulting the States as a courtesy before appointing the next Governor. What is unfortunate is that the non-Congress Governments were content to demand that they be consulted before a Governor was appointed. The objections did not relate to the weird interpretation of the Governor's powers.

The Home Ministry does not fear any confrontation from Madras though there are vague misgivings about a hard-liner like Mr Karunanidhi. The confrontation might come from West Bengal, not even from Kerala. Kerala's adjustment is held out as a model for West Bengal just as Mr Annadurai's adjustment was held out as a model for Mr Namboodiripad by patronising correspondents in New Delhi. It does not after all require a Left Communist-led Government to withdraw cases against Central Government employees for the September 19 strike. Even an Akali-Jana Sangh combine in Punjab could do it. This is not confrontation. It has to come in some other form else.

Last week's debate in Parliament underlined the possibilities. It was not merely the question of Hindi, which a member from the South inevitably had to raise. Even Mr Hem Barua of Assam could not help reminding the Centre grimly that if his State did not get its share of Central attention in economic development, it

might well force it to leave the Indian Union. Centre-State tensions are building up though Mrs Indira Gandhi could appeal for co-operation of all and in the same breath turn down the demand for an Inter-State Council as provided by the Constitution.

One possibility never imagined by the Centre, for example, is that the Bengali is not yet reconciled to the partition of his State. The secessionist movement in East Bengal and West Bengal's search for its own identity, might converge into a powerful movement for an independent Bengal some day. This is more than a theoretical possibility New Delhi has to take note of, whatever the scope of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act.

The Centre might well head off a confrontation with West Bengal or Kerala for the present because the leadership prefers a short-term adjustment if only to ensure the survival of the power structure that obtains today. But has the Left thought of the ultimate possibilities?

For instance, would Mr Ajoy Mukherjee and Mr Jyoti Basu be content to demand the withdrawal of Governor Dharma Vira when they are in New Delhi on March 6? Aren't there bigger issues at stake? Mrs Indira Gandhi might like to sweep everything under the carpet and point to the bright idea of the National Development Council solving every problem of Centre-State relations. Even Mr Namboodiripad is not satisfied with this. It needs a more basic assessment, a more basic attitude. The United Front in West Bengal should not become a party to a crude power adjustment with the Centre. But this is exactly what the Centre hopes it can achieve very easily through a skilful manipulation. What else does one surmise from the talk one hears in New Delhi's parlours, of a certain Minister at the Centre commanding the loyalty of a good chunk of the United Front legislators? Even if it is the familiar feeler trick to demoralise the United Front, how did the whole talk originate?

* * *

Last week, about 50 Congress MPs met at the instance of Mr G. L. Nanda

for a bit of heart-searching. To be sure all of them were political have-nots and to go by the political grapevine, the whole show was inspired by Mrs Indira Gandhi to discredit Mr Nijalingappa and Mr Kamaraj. It is now sought to be made out that if Mrs Indira Gandhi's pet plan of an ad hoc West Bengal PCC had gone through without a hitch, the pattern of politics in the State would have been different. The mea culpa session in Vithalbhai Patel House might be a counter-blast to the campaign by Mr Atulya Ghosh's public relations machinery in New Delhi. But the Congress is not the only power factor in West Bengal. If anything, the rival exercises now on are matters of Congress concern, of fixing blame for the Congress debacle and it should not interest the people at large.

Kulak Politics

The agricultural wealth tax and the levies on fertilisers and power-driven pumps is bound to put all the political parties at odds with the affluent peasantry which has been their mainstay in the elections. It is the era of kulak politics, of the so-called gentlemen farmers (the percentage of those representing this particular class in the Lok Sabha is roughly the same as in the Swatantra Party or the Marxist CPI). Every political party looks to the kulak for electoral support. The solicitude of the parties for those with a landed property of Rs. 1 lakh (which is the exemption limit for the wealth tax) is bizarre because it is even argued that the small farmer's holdings amount to Rs. 1 lakh in value! The States are sure to join issue with the Centre on the agricultural wealth tax and even the Congress cannot write off a strategic class in rural areas whatever the nature of its hostility to the Congress. The Cabinet was sharply divided on the whole range of levies on the farmer, including the fertiliser levy. Farming has become a status symbol among the new rich. But the so-called new leadership that has emerged in the rural areas represents a most strategic class interest. The State Governments have been reluctant to go ahead with

agricultural income tax and their wail over the loss of their autonomy or the threat to it in the form of the agricultural wealth tax sounds absurd. Every United Front government has displayed a kulak character. If some of them had gone ahead with agricultural wealth tax in some form or the other, they would have forestalled Mr Morarji Desai. But that exactly sums up the class dilemma of both the Right and Left parties.

The tussle inside the Cabinet might ultimately lead to scrapping of the levies mooted by Mr Morarji Desai. The merits of the particular levies aside, one cannot help noticing the loss of the development perspective amidst the comfortable settlement for a low growth rate and a low-level political equilibrium. The autonomy argument should not be invoked to cover up any political party's dependence on the modern kulaks. There could be better arguments against such levies.

Tailpiece: The budget allocation for the Central Intelligence Bureau is up by Rs. 14 lakhs though external intelligence is diverted from it and its functions are now limited.

March 2, 1969

PLACE A REGULAR ORDER
FOR YOUR

FRONTIER

Subscription Rates

INLAND

Six Months	..	Rs.	8.25
One year	..	Rs.	16.50
Five Years	..	Rs.	75.00
Seven years	..	Rs.	100.00

Foreign AIR MAIL Rates (One Year)

Europe:	Rs. 120 or 15 dollars
Asia:	Rs. 88 or 11 dollars
America:	Rs. 168 or 21 dollars

By Surface Mail

All countries: Rs. 40 or 5 dollars

Long-term Subscriptions will
help the new weekly

Maharashtra

Why Did Bombay Burn?

SHAHUL

BOMBAY.— Border agitation? Hundreds of miles away from the border? The vast majority of people in Bombay City are indifferent as to where the provincial border runs. Mischief of Naxalites or some sort of Communism? Hard to believe, because it has been a rare commodity in Bombay since the Shiv Sena came on the scene. The best explanation seems to be that the Shiv Sena boys wanted to show who is boss here. It may well be that the boys were asked to make the show a little more impressive for some people in Delhi. Newspapers had ceased to take note of their "routine exercise" and something more spectacular was needed and the Shiv Sena, which is a non-political organisation, is not likely to have bothered to find out the reasons or purposes. It was in any case a nightmarish time in Bombay, from the 8th to the 11th of February. Earlier there was talk of border agitation and of a plan to demonstrate before Central Ministers coming this way. The ritual of a demonstration passed without incident when Mr Yashwantrao Chavan, the Home Minister, came, but the crowd that went to meet the Gujarathi leader, Mr Morarji Desai, at Mahim was not all that polite; moreover, Morarji was in no mood to share the understanding the local Police Commissioner had with the SS leaders. It seems he had asked the driver not to stop the car, and a few of the Sainiks who were trying to stop it got hurt. That, we are told, was provocation enough for all the orgy of violence, looting, burning and destruction of property which followed on a scale Bombay had not seen. The value of property looted and destroyed is estimated at Rs. 6 crores. A remarkable feature of the whole episode was the suddenness with which the bus-burning, stone-throwing crowds appeared in all parts

of the City on Saturday evening and the promptness with which they disappeared on Tuesday evening. It was obviously a well planned and organised affair.

During the last twenty years there have been strikes, stone-throwings and bandhs which did paralyse the City but this one was different. This was supposed to be, and was in fact, Maharashtrian against non-Maharashtrian. Let nobody try to gloss over the communal character of the riots by saying that some Maharashtrians also have suffered. There were instances of some shopkeepers saving their wares by shouting loud that they were Maharashtrian! There was a haunting sense of insecurity among non-Maharashtrians in the central and north Bombay areas, the police being wholly Maharashtrian and partial. And not a single Maharashtrian leader came forward to condemn the Shiv Sena during those days of curfew and terror. The Chief Minister, Mr Naik's statements disapproved of violence and of course condemned "anti-social elements", but never one word against the Shiv Sena. Did Mr Chavan or anybody from the Maharashtra Congress, or for that matter any Maharashtrian leader come forward with a statement condemning this fascist Sena? Not at the time when the goondas were ruling the streets of Bombay. Instead we had news on the front page of the *Bharat Jyoti* of 9th February that "for the first time, the CPI of Bombay (Rightist) offered support to the agitation of the Shiv Sena on the border issue". Nor was the SSP of Bombay left behind in climbing the SS bandwagon, and as for the PSP it has been quite indistinguishable from the SS in the City.

By Monday February 10 in non-Maharashtrian residential areas people had begun to organise self-defence groups, and at some places the Sainiks who had gone to raid got a severe licking. In Dharavi, Santa Cruz and Andheri where organised resistance was offered, the brave Sainiks ran for life. The atmosphere was tense all the time and wild rumours were coming up frequently. It was said that in Dadar the police demanded Rs.

5000 from a Gujarathi shopkeeper who had approached them for protection, and it appears, a compromise was at last struck at half the price, some fair-minded gentlemen intervening. In the beginning the police, as was indeed expected, were merely amused spectators when buses and cars were set on fire. There was a change in their attitude in some areas after the ceremonial arrest of Mr Thakre. Some firing and lathi charges took place and these had a salutary effect. The general impression here is that Mr Thakre was persuaded to issue an "appeal" to his followers from the jail, so that the credit for restoring peace will not go to the Army.

Many of the happenings in the streets have already been reported in the Press, of course with due circumspection by journalists not eager to offend the local bosses. There is a less tangible, unreportable and abiding aspect which affects the daily lives of millions in this city of polyglot population. It is the suspicion, distrust, prejudice, ill-will and hatred generated among neighbours, co-workers and others who have been living in amity. One section of the population appears more privileged than the rest, a vertical division on communal lines. In the beginning only the South Indian job-seekers were treated as interlopers, but all non-Maharashtrians are now looked upon as "outsiders". This was no doubt anticipated and the charmed circle of "real Maharashtrians" is going to be smaller and smaller. This unhealthy psychology introduced by the non-political Shiv Sena and its political supporters of all shades has made life less pleasant for the working people. Thousands and thousands of men and women earning their livelihood labouring in offices, restaurants, hospitals, shops, factories and other places have to suffer silently the consequences of the ill-will and prejudice engendered by a few shortsighted, self-seeking men. What made it possible for linguistic chauvinism to grow to such monstrous proportions? Who have been feeding it?

Can we say that the Samyukta (later Sampoorna) Maharashtra Sami-

thi (reduced to a paper organisation with the advent of the Shiv Sena) led by the Leftists had nothing to do with the growth of linguistic chauvinism? For a time the communists of Bombay seemed to have forgotten all about class struggle and everything came to be subordinated to the linguistic cause. Some tortuous logic explaining the "struggle of the Maharashtrian nationality against the oppressive Gujarathi monopoly capital" etc. was brought out, and the left-minded South Indians and others seemed to think that Maharashtrians being mostly working people could be expected to introduce progressive legislation to help the working masses of Bombay. The Samithi was thus able to gain support from a large section of non-Maharashtrian people also, not to mention the all-class backing from Maharashtra. Protestations to the contrary notwithstanding, there was an anti-Gujarathi edge to the whole movement, since opposition to the inclusion of the City in Maharashtra came mainly from Gujarathis. The Gujarathi Press had reported many incidents of threat, looting, molestations and clashes, and for some time there was panic among the Gujarathis of Bombay. It was a big popular movement led by Maharashtrians, but then it did not take on a communal character on the whole, owing to a number of factors present then. Maharashtra province was formed including the much disputed City of Bombay but the men who had sacrificed everything to accomplish it had some surprise in store. The new Chief Minister of Maharashtra had on his head a lily-white cap! It was the Congress party ruling again, not the Samithi. And Mr Chavan became quite emotional about men shot down during the agitation and made a theatrical move to the Hutatma Memorial at the Flora Fountain and garlanded it when all the Press photographers were ready. Great were the sentiments on all sides, so much so that it became quite irrelevant to recall as to which party had ordered firing on those Hutatmas. It was soon found out that Mr Chavan was the "real Maharashtrian leader" who had forced

Nehru to include Bombay in Maharashtra, in the teeth of opposition from Morarji and other Gujarathis. Naturally he became "the one and only leader of Maharashtra" as Mr Naik later described him. And where was the Samithi, and its leaders? Not much was heard of them after that. The Hindu Mahasabha, Jana Sangh, the PSP and other assorted parties had left it after accusing and abusing the "anti-national Reds" to their heart's content and the communists looked somewhat forlorn. Riding the crest of the Samithi movement many of them had imagined that they had found a short-cut to the Sachivalaya. What next? Habituated to the linguistic agitation and having associated with all and sundry political opinions in Maharashtra for so long, they were in no mood to return to the "conventional ideas of class struggle politics." Another valiant effort was made, and it was found that there was an unfinished job at the provincial border. Some discrepancies in the border adjustments were detected, some injustice done to Maharashtra by the State Reorganisation Committee which was incidentally partial to Mysore, Belgaum, Karwar and many other places rightly belonged to Maharashtra, but were given to Mysore. It was necessary to get them included in Maharashtra, and moreover, Goa also should find its place inside this State or else Maharashtra will not be "sampoorna". The clamour for linguistic justice was taken up by other parties also, all the reactionary elements of Maharashtra supporting the Cause. In the case of Goa, the long entrenched Catholic communalism was in no hurry to be enveloped by the Hindu communalism of Maharashtra or Mysore. So when a referendum was held the majority of the Goan people preferred to remain separate. After that the Sampoorna Maharashtra Samithi concentrated its fire on the southern border, to get Belgaum and Karwar from Mysore. Since both the States and the Centre were controlled by the Congress party it was possible to say for some time that the Congress was neglecting the interests of Maharashtra but the Congressmen of Maha-

rashtra declared that they had no difference at all with the Samithi on the border dispute with Mysore. The trouble was that the Congressmen and others in Mysore had started a counter-agitation. Moreover, the Communist Party of Mysore State did not agree with its counterpart in Maharashtra. In Bombay one could hear of the "grievances" of the "children of Maharashtra" having to learn a "Madrasi" language in Belgaum! Mr Chavan and Mr Naik were no doubt trying to do their best to get justice for Maharashtra but the South Indians were resisting! The agitation on the southern linguistic border was against South Indians.

After Nehru the authority of the Central Government diminished, Mr Chavan became the Home Minister, and the Congress Party wrote off the two southern States, Kerala and Madras. South Indians in Bombay had neither political nor property backing and what is more, a large section of them was suspected to be left-minded. The situation in the City had changed since the previous Samithi agitation; the Government had become wholly Maharashtrian and so were the city police, and the municipal administration although Maharashtrians constituted only 34 per cent of the city's population. The young Congress Ministers who have come to Bombay's Sachivalaya from upcountry towns had no particular love for "cosmopolitanism" and they seemed to be determined to provincialise this great city of polyglot population. A new generation of Maharashtrians who had had secondary education had come up from up-country towns seeking employment in Bombay, the largest industrial centre in western India, and they were meeting competition from others, mainly from the south. Many South Indian communities long entrenched in the commercial offices of Bombay were helping applicants from their own respective linguistic groups and keeping others out. A large section of the newly educated Maharashtrian youth who had come to Bombay must have sensed discrimination and naturally there was resentment and an outcry against all

"lungiwallahs", meaning South Indians. This was the time and climate in Bombay when Mr V. K. Krishna Menon thought of contesting the election from the north Bombay constituency from where he had won twice in the past. His constituency also had undergone a change. It included wholly Maharashtrian areas like Thana and Kalyan and excluded some parts. Both the BPCC and the MPCC leaders were united on the need to "finish him off" and big business was ready to spend any amount. It was then that Bombaymen heard of "a non-political, cultural organisation to look after the interests of Maharashtrians" called Shiv Sena which had an earlier clandestine beginning, collecting secret pledges from Maharashtrian volunteers. In fairness it must be admitted that it did an efficient and absolutely non-political campaign for the Congress candidate who had nobody else to work in the field. Menon-supporters were beaten up in Chembur, Kurla and Bhandup and the Samithi workers could do nothing to protect them. The Samithi was by now reduced to its original communist cadres and they made very little impression. Maharashtrian voters were told that Menon was the representative of "Madrasis" and non-Maharashtrian voters were effectively intimidated; colonies of hutment-dwellers went up in flames, and those who resisted the SS were arrested and beaten up by the police. The Shiv Sena was the sword-arm of the Congress, and it was this first victory which boosted this organisation.

Then followed a period of intimidation and stray attacks on South Indians, raids on middle-class eating houses (Udipi hotels), looting small shops, attacks on street hawkers, insulting working women like nurses and stenographers, and such other activities which were certainly "non-political". Trade unions in which South Indians were holding important positions were compelled to replace them by Maharashtrians. South Indians suffering assaults dared not go to police stations for fear of becoming the accused. Many who were injured

did not even go to hospitals because hospitals report to the Police! Newspapers were told to "exercise restraint". Did the Communist Party of Bombay think of arranging some public meetings to demand protection for the linguistic minorities? Did any of their leaders boldly speak of the rights of the minorities? Unfortunately none was heard speaking with courage except Mr S. S. Mirajkar whom they do not count as an "intellectual". Their intellectuals, clever men and orators, preferred to be busy with the "border issue".

Later at the municipal election in Thana the Congress party showed its gratitude by not contesting, and helping Shiv Sena candidates to win. Shiv Sena men swept the poll, the Samithi was nowhere, and the corporation was captured by the Sainiks. Recently the Sena repeated the performance in the Bombay municipal elections by defeating Samithi candidates even in labour areas where the communists had laboured for decades. The PSP had joined hands with the SS from its inception in the name of anti-communism, and after its demonstrated strength in the municipal elections the Sena found admirers and friends in the SSP also. Lions Clubs and Rotary Clubs were inviting the Sena Chief Mr Thakre to address their meetings, and at important cultural gatherings of Maharashtrians he was treated as "Chief Guest". His importance seemed to be next only to that of the Chief Minister. Criticism in Parliament and the shocked reaction to the riots from all parts of the nation seem to have given courage to a lot of people and newspapers here who were willing to blame only "anti-social elements" until lately. Current expressions of disapproval should not mislead the linguistic minorities into any degree of complacency. It may not be safe for the non-Maharashtrian communities here who together constitute 66% of the population to rely on the sense of fairness of the local Congress. They must seek full representation in the city police organisation and municipal offices, if they are not to be treated like the Hindus in Pakistan.

Kerala

Youth Congress Revolt

RAMJI

THE sweeping United Front victory in West Bengal has caused great frustration in a section of the Congress camp which represents the old guard of the Pradesh set-up. But it has put new muscle into the Youth Congress wing and the majority of the Congress following, which are thoroughly sick of the unprincipled antics of the Pradesh leaders. The mid-term election in West Bengal had additional import and local significance. It has staved off imminent Central intervention and given a new lease of life to the UF Government in Kerala.

With a well-primed propaganda build-up about breakdown of law and order and insecurity of life and property, re-echoed and bolstered up by such worthies as the Union Minister for Law and the Congress President, the Pradesh Congress leadership, out to grab power by any means, has been waiting for a take-over through Central dispensation after an anticipated U.F. debacle in West Bengal.

But the Youth Congress wing had never aligned itself to the 'insecurity' angle. Its stance was that the UF in Kerala should be allowed an uninterrupted rule for the full term. It feels that the Congress debacle in West Bengal was primarily caused by the precipitate Central intervention and the intrigues of the old guard led by Mr. Atulya Ghosh. The Youth Congress leaders state that their stand has been vindicated by the fact that most of the old guard have been routed in the West Bengal election and the Congress victories are mostly confined to the younger section of the party.

The simmering discontent against the short-sighted, self-centred and reactionary policy of the Pradesh leadership almost boiled over when the Pradesh leadership gave the Congress ticket to that ridiculous breed in the Congress political lexicon, the so-called Nationalist Muslim, for the by-

election in Malapuram constituency. This is an impregnable stronghold of the Muslim League. The seat fell vacant on the death of the Muslim League member of the UF Cabinet, Mr. Ahmed Kurikal. The Pradesh Congress has offered the ticket to an old ex-Rajya Sabha Muslim member, Mr. Palat Kunhikoya. The calculation is communal. The candidate, the bosses feel, would bag communal Muslim as well as the solid Congress votes. Over this the Youth Congress is highly incensed. In the last election, one Youth Congress leader, Mr. A. C. Shanmugas, was the Congress candidate and though he lost he had the distinction of securing double the number of votes secured by the Congress candidate in the previous election in this constituency. He had strong claims to this constituency by virtue of his local standing and the hard work he has put in there at the grass-roots level.

Although it is well known that no party other than the Muslim League has any chance of success in Malapuram, the diehard, Pradesh leaders are reluctant to make even a token concession to the younger elements. The communal angle and calculations of the Congress are not likely to prevail against the super-communalism of the Muslim League in this constituency. It is a futile endeavour. The old guard could have easily made a gift of this seat to youth. But even this empty concession the old leaders are unwilling to make. Their greed and their reliance on dirty tactics still encourage them to hope for the impossible.

This step has overtaxed the patience of the Youth Congress, which has protested vehemently to the Central Parliamentary Board. In addition, the Youth Congress is seriously thinking of breaking away from the Pradesh Congress. The first State conference of the Youth Congress falls on March 7 and 8. The youth cadres are all worked up over this and several other issues and the indications are that they will break away. That would write finis to the Pradesh set-up, which would be left with a pack of discredited leaders and nothing else.

Assam

What The Dissidents Think

A. C.

A three-man delegation headed by Mr H. Lyngdoh went to New Delhi last time to meet the Prime Minister to acquaint her with the views of the erstwhile dissident members of the APHLC (who have formed a parallel party—Hill State Peoples' Democratic Party) about the autonomous State scheme of the Government of India. As soon as their decision to meet the Prime Minister was announced some prominent members of the APHLC, aided by certain other rightwing political leaders, became very active in Delhi to sabotage the proposed meeting. The delegation managed to see Mrs Gandhi at her residence after a good deal of exhaustion. But the meeting ended in a fiasco. All through the five or six minutes of discussion Mrs Gandhi seemed to have heard the leaders just for the fun of hearing but when it appeared to her that they were saying something significant she made a brusque and arrogant exit from the scene.

In the meantime, in a memorandum issued to the National Forum and the Governments of the States of India, the HSPDP says that the autonomous State plan is not consistent with the basic needs of the hill people in that it is going to be implemented merely as a tranquillizer rather than as an effective measure to meet their genuine grievances. The leaders of the HSPDP contend that the APHLC, while agreeing to the scheme, did not think it necessary to examine its workability let alone the great hiatus between the January 13, 1967 declaration by New Delhi and the scheme now evolved. On the one hand, the Government of India seemed to have admitted the justness of the hill people's demands, on the other, it could not but give in to the unjust reasoning of the Assam Government, to which, curiously enough, APHLC too has cringed. It

MARCH 8, 1969

was the pressure of popular demand by the hill people and the moral support it had won from progressive forces that compelled the Centre to make its January 13, 1967 declaration, according to which the hill areas were to be constituted as a separate unit having a status not subordinate to any other unit. But as things emerge now, the whole question has taken a different course changing the hopes and aspirations of the hill people into frustration, and the autonomous State scheme, if implemented, will complicate matters rather than solve any. The HSPDP argues that the Government of India should immediately revise its decision or leave the matter to the vote of the hill people, because the APHLC can no longer be said to represent the will of the hill people."

The HSPDP thinks that to accept the autonomous State scheme in order to give it a trial, as suggested by the APHLC, would virtually mean conceding the hegemony of the Assam Government in all important matters connected with the all-round development of hill areas. In that case, the Assam Government will have its final say in vital issues like law and order, police, all the higher categories of administration, revenue-bearing schemes and items like hydel projects, big industries, roads and communication. The scheme will not confer on the hill areas the status of the 18th State of India, but that of a sub-State of Assam. This apart, it would appear from List A of the White Paper that as many as 59 items in List C and almost all the concurrent items in List III of the Constitution along with other items only peculiar to the autonomous State plan will vest the State of Assam with power to decide all important matters arbitrarily. And it is the grant of all this prerogative that has persuaded the Assam Government and other vested interests of the Assam Valley to accept the plan, though with a show of mild reluctance, because they have practically nothing to lose by this patchwork arrangement. The HSPDP leaders further argue that no amendment to the Constitution is required to create a full-fledged Hill

State, but to implement the autonomous State scheme the Constitution has to be amended and another elaborate reorganisation Act introduced to give birth to this diarchy. That the Constitution has to be amended to create the proposed autonomous State clearly points to the fact that this scheme is not in harmony with the provisions for the creation of new States as embodied in it. Therefore, on this ground alone, the proposal should be rejected as it offends Articles 2, 3 and 4 of the Constitution.

The HSPDP has raised another pertinent question in the memorandum regarding APHLC's commitments to the hill people. They allege that APHLC's swing in favour of the autonomous State scheme has been a drastic shift from where it originally stood. Between the period of APHLC's birth in 1960 and to date its leaders have conducted the whole affair behind the facade of a fake show of resoluteness without taking the people into confidence. Despite all the demerits and inherent unworkability of the autonomous State scheme a few leaders of APHLC accepted it because willy-nilly they had been a party to its evolution. Contrary to what the January 13, 1967 declaration promised to bestow upon the hill people, the September 11, 1968 announcement of the autonomous State plan has left the hill people in a state of despondency. Seeing that the hill people were not favourably disposed to this scheme, certain leaders of APHLC laboured hard to explain away their about-turn in small meetings and started selling the plan in a hush-hush manner. Later at a meeting at Tura attended by only those who still held the APHLC tail and other ignorant followers, the autonomous State scheme was formally accepted on condition that: (a) it should be given only a fair trial; (b) it would be only a stepping stone towards a full-fledged Hill State; (c) the programme of non-violent direct action would only be kept in abeyance and (d) the recruitment and training of volunteers would go on as usual. The HSPDP holds the view that these

conditions were put forward to pacify and hoodwink the taciturn hill people or to put yet another sword of Damocles over the head of the Government; that fair trial is only a legal fiction and conditional acceptance cannot be included either in the Constitution Amendment Bill or in the proposed Assam Reorganisation Bill. They oppose the conveniently derived idea that both the hill people and the plains people of Assam have accepted the scheme. They think, "sweeping assumptions are dangerous for so big and varied a country as India and it is wishful thinking to imagine that an imposed set-up within the broad framework evolved either in Delhi or at Gauhati with strong men in control will end all impulses at seeking their own identity and cultural homogeneity by the hill people." The HSPDP is, therefore, an alternative to APHLC which is committed to the 'attainment of a separate Hill State within the Indian Union by constitutional means.'

The emergence of the Hill State Peoples' Democratic Party seems to have thrown the leaders of APHLC in a quandary. The popularity they once enjoyed is obviously on the wane now. All that they now want is to speed up the passage of the Constitution Amendment Bill on the Autonomous State Plan. Bye-elections to the nine Assam Assembly seats are due, but the leaders of APHLC cannot perhaps face them until the passage of the Amendment Bill. They are not sure if they would be able to salvage the position they once consolidated by resigning from the assembly seats. One only expects APHLC to face it bravely and to show on whose side the balance is tilting.

For FRONTIER readers in

West India can contact

S. D. CHANDAVARKAR

10, Kanara House

Mogal Lane, Mahim

Bombay-16

MARCH 8, 1969

The Rhetoric Of Status Quo

ROBI CHAKRAVORTI

SAN Francisco, February 24.— Shortly before I sat down to write this despatch, my television set showed Nixon at Brussels. Radio stations periodically mentioned his trip to Europe, and of course, newspapers were full of reports and pictures of it. Later, in the week, when newspapers had ended up in the garbage cans, weeklies and magazines would pick up the theme, appropriate with pictures and commentaries. Yes, Nixon stands to gain from his European trip, taken only after a month of his inauguration. But would West Europe or the world gain as much from this trip?

The political urgency of Nixon's European trip is questionable. There was little that he could not have achieved through his emissaries. There is no new element in the European situation which demanded his immediate attention. De Gaulle's recent move to lure Britain into a new European system was made long after Nixon had settled his European itinerary. In any case, there was no change in de Gaulle's policy. The West German situation was not any more critical for world peace now than it had been before. And, the good old British lion had been ailing for such a long time that no trip by the American President could save it from the *pinjrapole*.

Even assuming that the European problem demanded greater attention of the new American President than the problem of the Middle East or Vietnam, let alone the domestic problem of unrest in the ghettos, one may question what could be accomplished in a week's tour of five capitals. As Drew Pearson, with a mischievous twinkle, pointed out in his column published on the day of Nixon's departure, "he will be only half a day in Brussels, the capital of NATO, one day in Bonn, overnight only in Rome,

a little longer in London and Paris." Besides, if the new Administration were interested in a *detente* with Russia, what was the point of visiting West Berlin at a moment when East Germany was protesting the holding of the presidential election there?

When you ask these questions, the show and the panoply of the tour appear more important than anything substantive that may or may not have been achieved. It seems that Nixon, perhaps the most image-conscious President in history, is still on a campaign trail to establish his image among American voters. While "task forces" use academic language to obscure domestic and international issues rather than illuminate them to their bare essentials, Nixon the organization man and his little coterie of aides may have discovered that the best way to glamourize the new Administration is to take a Presidential junket to Europe, certainly the least troublesome and the most tractable area in the world today. By focussing attention on the relatively inessential and harmless, the "new" Nixon can be projected anew in the mind of the American voters at little cost.

This analysis recognizes that there are European problems and that Nixon's trip particularly to Bonn, Paris and London may have consequences which would affect other areas of international policy. The problem of the Middle East, for instance, was worthy of discussion with de Gaulle and Wilson. Likewise, the problem of the signing of a non-proliferation treaty was tied up with Bonn's stalling on the issue and Russia's suspicion of West Germany. But these problems did not require a Presidential trip and certainly not so soon after the assumption of power. Since a part of the so-called European problem is the relationship between the White House and the Kremlin, it is worth

pointing out that Nixon had vetoed President Johnson's plan to visit Europe to meet Premier Kosygin. Johnson had even invited President-elect Nixon to come along. Nixon was reported not only to have declined the offer but also told the Russians privately that he was against a Johnson-Kosygin meeting.

Nixon's visit, therefore, does not contain much more importance than meets the eye—literally speaking. Millions of American television viewers' eyes watched their minority President meeting European statesmen for a week. Image-conscious Nixon could not have asked for more.

"Healing The Wound"

One of the statements often used to describe the Nixon administration is that it is cautious in its approach, that it wants to conserve rather than destroy, it wants to "heal the wound" in the nation. A part of this vocabulary is the oftquoted claim that the Nixon administration does not want to promise what it cannot deliver.

A paradox is that the rhetoric of cautious pragmatism's parallels claims of new directions in foreign policies. Nixon, for instance, claimed that his European trip would foster "a new spirit of consultation which will result in a new spirit of confidence." While he was making these claims of novelty in European policy (he had earlier talked of the "new team" in Paris with "new" directions, but so far the changing of the guard has not meant any major change in Vietnam policy) a Cabinet member of his was expressing caution on a matter of domestic urgency, namely the housing for the poor.

There has been a proposal for wiping out slum housing in ten years by building 26 million new housing units of which six million would be for low-income families. This means the construction of 600,000 units for the poor every year, certainly not a difficult target for a country which is spending billions in Vietnam and billions more on sophisticated weaponry. Romney, the Secretary for Housing and Urban Development, in his first Press conference as a Cabinet

member in early February accepted the dire need for housing for the poor, but argued that the targeted amount of houses could not be built "given our present capacity and organization of resources." The language used for his admission of failure in advance is interesting. Note the words: "capacity" and "resources". Is it not ridiculous for a Cabinet official of a country that has recently agreed to spend over five billion dollars on the controversial "thin" anti-ballistic missile system to say that "we" do not have the "capacity" or "resources" to build 600,000 housing units per year?

From this it follows that Romney will ask Congress to reduce the annual housing goals to what he considered a more "realistic" level of achievement.

Romney admitted failure to meet the challenge in housing but at the same time glossed this over with the political rhetoric of realism and pragmatism while Nixon is pursuing virtually the same foreign policy as his predecessor and yet gives the impression of "new directions." If politicians of other countries, particularly underdeveloped countries, show reluctance to make major social or political changes, American scholars and commentators would condemn them as typical of their values or culture which are supposed to be unrealistic or irrational. When American leaders display the same philistinism and insensitivity, this is explained away as realism and rationality. If, as the saying goes, a rose is a rose in whatever name you call it, so is cow-dung.

West Bengal Elections

I recently went through a frustrating experience. The news items of West Bengal elections in local newspapers and broadcasts were scrappy and even with my constant contact with news from Calcutta, I was unable to figure out the political pattern in West Bengal. The news in the so-called national newspapers, such as the *New York Times*, were not illuminating either. The news items would give such rare glimpses as the defeat of the "State Congress-party chief, P. C. Chunder" or the total number elec-

ted from the "Pro-Peking Communist dominated" United Front and "Indira Gandhi's Congress party", but the picture was never clear until airmailed copies of Calcutta newspapers were sent to me by the Indian Consulate at San Francisco. Several days later

and thousands of miles away from the political excitement in my hometown, as I finished devouring the election news in Calcutta newspapers, I had, to quote from the headline of a West Bengal despatch in the *New York Times*, a feeling of morning after.

Stalin's Funeral

K. C.

(An adaptation of the last passage of the novel *Citizen Tom Paine* by Howard Fast).

SUCH was the funeral procession which accompanied Stalin's body to the Lenin Mausoleum at the Red Square on March 9, 1953: leading members of the Government and party from all over the country, foreign communist diplomats and delegates, some Latin Americans, several Africans, numerous Asians; those and many more. But it was enough; it was the whole world.

At one point during their journey from the House of Trade Unions up to the Red Square the pall-bearers stopped to rest awhile, and a dollar-earning bystander called out to a mourner:

"Whose funeral?"

"Stalin's."

"Well", Ditto grinned, "if there is such a business as purgatory, he'll get his share before the devil lets go of him."

"On that score", Enver mused, "I would sooner take my chance with Stalin than with any man of Belgrade."

A good many people had gathered to watch the burial. They, including all the party leaders, wept at the words of sorrow Molotov, Malenkov and Beria said over the grave. Enver asked Dolores Ibarruri whether there was any provision in the Central Committee's resolution for a memorial, and she said, yes, a pantheon would be put up as soon as it could be erected. She now intended to plant some willows and cypresses around the

sarcophagus, it looked so bare. She showed Enver the slip of paper upon which was written Stalin's epitaph:

"Joseph Stalin, Author of Problems of Leninism."

"That's enough," Enver said. "That's enough for any communist. How old was he?"

"Seventy-three, I think."

It was the 9th of March 1953:

* * *

But it was not enough for the good people of the Central Committee that Stalin had been buried—over and over again—in the unhallowed ground of "personality cult" and "violation of socialist legality." After the party Congress in October 1961 they invaded the mausoleum and ripped the branches from the trees Ibarruri had planted, and sold them for their own benefit. They hacked pieces off the tombstone; they pulled up the few flowers that were planted or placed there by visitors.

Somewhere later, a man named Kurkuzni Karushov and his aide Meeko had a scheme. They dug up Stalin's bones, intending to exhibit them in various cities of Albania and China to further the cause of revisionism. But the governments of these two countries refused to permit this last, crowning infamy, and the bones disappeared somewhere in the battlefields of Cuba, Algeria and Vietnam.

So today no one knows just where Stalin lies, and that, perhaps, is best, for the world was his village.

Our agent at Varanasi
MANNALAL DAS
D-35/321A Jangambari

MARCH 8, 1969

Spotlight On West Bengal

COMMENTATOR

THE self-imposed silence of newspapers on West Bengal has been broken. All newspapers had something to say about the wrangling in the United Front over Chief Ministership and allocation of portfolios. The comments were uncomplimentary, and no paper failed to contend that this showed the inherent disunity of the Front. Of course, the papers could not seriously hope, however agreeable it might have been, that the Front would fall apart; but they have come to the conclusion that the fear of the smaller parties of the domination by Marxist Communists is growing. Perhaps they think that this might be the ultimate undoing of the Front, for, after all, the CPM by itself does not command more than 83 votes in the Assembly. With the Congress with its 55 members waiting in the wings, it is not altogether impossible for West Bengal to have a ministry without the communists. A coalition at the Centre may work miracles in the States also, West Bengal not excepted. Naturally, the papers do not want the Congress to go about this business in a hurry. They advised patience so that the in-fighting in the Front might channel things into this desirable course. In the mean time, the papers will go on doing their bits by delving the motives of the CPM in cornering the key portfolios and criticising Mr Jyoti Basu for his "heroics" at the Maidan rally, though from published reports it appears that he was exceedingly conciliatory. From all these developments most of the papers have drawn the comforting conclusion that those who ensured a massive majority to the Front must have been disappointed at the Front's performance after the electoral victory.

The Indian Express says that though the Marxists made an open bid for the Chief Ministership thus sparking a week-long crisis, it is possible to

suspect that this was essentially a bargaining tactic. What they really wanted was the Home portfolio which Mr. Ajoy Mukherjee held when he was Chief Minister of the last UF Government. The Marxists and some others felt at that time that Mr. Mukherjee was too amenable to advice and pressures from the Centre. They were therefore determined this time to make the allocation of the Home portfolio to a Marxist Communist an issue of confidence. The final compromise gives the Marxists the substance of their demand. The paper says that it would be a mistake for the Congress party in West Bengal or for the Central Government to derive any satisfaction from the in-fighting in the UF. The arithmetic of the new Assembly is such that the UF will remain in office till the next general election. It is in everyone's interest that the coalition should function as smoothly as possible. Conflicts within the coalition can only damage the administration as a whole and create an unfavourable climate for economic development and industrial harmony. The UF has obtained a mandate from the people of West Bengal, and it is possible to hope that the UF Government will this time show a greater sense of responsibility. The Centre for its part must also avoid "needless confrontations" with the Government of West Bengal.

The Hindustan Times recalls that the UF manifesto spoke of mass movements to change the present social order and bring about a new Centre-State relationship without the distracting impediment of police interference. This is all right as election rhetoric but if it is now to be translated into action under the "benign guidance" of Mr. Jyoti Basu then Bengal is in for another period of prolonged political agony. It could, however, be that Mr Basu intends to keep the police

department under his own supervision in order to prevent less responsible elements from committing the Government to the disrepute of barren extremism. The UF fortunately enjoys some advantages which it lacked during its previous term of office. It has a very considerable majority, preempting fears of defection. The leaders of the Front have acquired some experience of what political administration entails and know that decisions can be taken only in an atmosphere of calm and not under pressure of mobs brought on the streets either by the Government's supporters or by its political rivals. If these positive factors are exploited, the UF will find that it does not have to waste time in combating imaginary devils but instead can deploy its considerable legislative majority for the development and welfare of West Bengal proving thereby that the UF is a credible political organisation, not just a marriage of convenience. On the demand for removal of Mr Dharma Vira the paper says in a separate editorial that the Centre cannot, and cannot seem to, allow the West Bengal Government to exercise a veto on its power to appoint Governors. It is unfortunate that the United Front in West Bengal should give the impression that it wishes to challenge the Centre's authority rather than to try and work out new equation with the present Governor, which may not be difficult in the present circumstances. Yet it would be both appropriate and desirable for the Centre to make a serious effort to evolve a more acceptable procedure for the appointment of Governors. The office is not and must not be viewed as a sinecure for old or retired party warhorses or officials who may be less than independent in their judgment. Governors must enjoy both respect and public confidence.

"Uneasy Coalition"

Describing the UF as an uneasy coalition *The Times of India* says that the CPM is not only the largest but also the most dynamic constituent of the Front and it will try to dominate it by every possible means. The

Naxalites who constituted its lunatic fringe have left the organisation or have been expelled. But there are still many in its ranks who cherish romantic notions of social change and do not accept the limitations of the system under which they function. The leadership will be under constant pressure from them. The CPI, the Bangla Congress and the Forward Bloc know only too well that the CPM will carry on a ceaseless struggle against them both inside and outside the Government and do all it can to win over their followers. But they are prisoners of anti-Congressism and of their own slogans and have no choice but to stick it out. It can be taken for granted that some of the constituents of the UF will try hard to whip up an anti-Centre campaign partly to distract attention from their own disputes and partly to strengthen their respective positions against one another. The future of Mr Dharma Vira is a ready-made issue. But this need not embarrass New Delhi unduly. Mr Dharma Vira himself is said to have expressed the desire to retire and there is no good reason why New Delhi should force him to stay on. It will be a great pity, specially for him, if the issue gets blown out of all proportion. The Centre's relations with the West Bengal Government will be difficult in any case; they need not be made impossible at the very start. New Delhi will have to be tactful and patient if it does not wish to make a gift of the State to the CPM. The local forces should be allowed a free play in the hope that other parties will be able to exercise enough restraint on the CPM and that the members of the ruling alliance will realise soon enough that administrative confusion and arbitrariness will encourage the flight of capital and endanger the country's security. As a result of intense political struggle in the State, administrative efficiency and integrity may suffer gravely. But this is a risk which has to be accepted till the situation threatens to get out of hand.

The Economic Times has deplored the tinge of bitterness and some baton-waving at the huge rally on the Cal-

cutta Maidan where leaders of the UF unfolded their general approach and thinking. The amiable interludes which the UF enjoyed were totally dissipated in a barrage of fulminations and insinuations which could hardly help the UF Government in working out practical policies for the progress and prosperity of West Bengal. If the leaders are serious about restoring West Bengal's economic viability, about the first thing the UF leaders will have to do is to eschew adventurism and witch-hunting. Mr Ajoy Mukherjee hit the nail on the head when he said the UF would have to implement its programme in order to help industrial expansion, attain self-sufficiency in rice, and relieve unemployment. There were traces of these promises in Mr Jyoti Basu's speech as well, but the manner in which he put them across was not merely flamboyant but also threatening. There were dark hints of action against public servants and against certain sections of society. There is a persistent fear of some kind of conspiracy between the capitalists and the Centre to break the UF or end its hold on West Bengal. Yet Mr Basu also made it quite clear that even he did not want closure of mills and factories, because he knew that this would only create unemployment. If only he could restrain himself a little, maybe he too would fall in line with the more practical policies of some of his other colleagues, in order to step up the falling trend of investments and beat the slack in industrial development without which the UF Government can never hope to achieve its other objectives, such as fuller employment. Equally futile and dangerous were the charges that the Central Ministers did not wish to cooperate with the UF Government in its development plans and that the Centre is spoiling for a confrontation with the UF. If this is the way things are going to be, then it would seem that one wing of the UF will be chasing a shadow all the time. Some UF men give the impression of being in a kind of combat readiness, well before official contacts have even been started. The danger in this highly pugnacious attitude is that it may

itself create the sort of animosities which ought to be and can be avoided since they bring no real benefit to West Bengal. The UF mandate is to govern as best as it can, and not create occasions for conflict with the Centre.

The Statesman thinks that the main speakers at the Maidan rally talked some sound sense in the midst of what could be regarded as unavoidable rhetoric. There is no reason to believe that the UF leaders have not profited from their nine months' experience of administration, and the paper hopes that this experience, coupled with the enhanced self-assurance they have gained from the election results, will enable them to approach their manifold tasks not only with greater maturity but also with more efficiency. The paper is however critical of the size of the Ministry and says that there seems little reason why every constituent party should have one or two Ministers, especially when some maintain their separate identities mainly on factional or personal considerations. What will matter is the effect of the size on the quality of administration. Cabinet consultations may become more desultory and time-consuming than they need be, and consensus much more difficult to achieve even when the members are like-minded. Perhaps the best solution in the circumstances would be to have a smaller inner Cabinet to decide upon the most important questions of policy and then have its decisions ratified by the Cabinet as a whole.

NOTICE

Articles cannot be returned unless accompanied by return postage.

Business Manager
Frontier

For FRONTIER contact
S. P. CHATTERJEE
Statesman Office
Steel Market
Durgapur-4

MARCH 8, 1969

Pakistan

Two Tactics

BADRUDDIN UMAR

THE difference between "begging and praying politics" and the march of the people has already been established in the political life of our country. What the proposed Round Table Conference could not have dreamt of achieving has already been achieved by the might of the people. Those who proposed the so-called Round Table Conference and those who stitched sherwanis for the purpose must have also realized the difference between the "Round Table" and the "Street" approach to the political problems confronting the people.

On the evening of the historic February 21, President Ayub announced virtual abdication of power. What has happened may look like a miracle but there are no miracles in the world. It looks like a miracle because of certain people's lack of faith in the masses and also because of their ignorance of the character of the objective situation which obtains in our country. In fact, they had no idea of the extent to which the people, however disorganised, could carry the movement forward. The demands of the people made on the streets far surpassed the apologetic demands of the DAC and that is the reason why at this stage of the movement the DAC's eight-point programme stands so utterly discredited.

The leadership of the DAC has also thoroughly misunderstood the reason's why the President was obliged to make the announcement. Instead of congratulating the people, most of them have chosen to congratulate the President for his magnanimity and 'noble' deed!

The political fiasco was created by the leaders of the DAC, particularly those who are 'reputed to be on the left', because they went ahead with the idea of a united front without properly defining objectives of such a united front. The march of the people has now clearly created a situation

which demands that political objectives must now be defined first and then the question of a united front for carrying the movement still further be taken up. Once that is done those who really represent democratic forces in this country are bound to come closer and work together for certain definite and well-defined political objectives. It need not be unity of all the political forces and parties. What is necessary is that the democratic forces in the country must unite.

Another report adds: It has become clear now that politics in Pakistan is taking two different shapes: One is the politics of appease-

ment and the other is the politics of struggle.

The DAC leaders were unanimous on one issue—to resist any move for a radical change in the present socio-economic order in the country. As such they might again join hands to give a last-ditch fight to the leftists. Under these circumstances the parties which profess a socialist outlook, an independent foreign policy and full regional autonomy should unite right now. At least four political parties believe in such a programme—NAP (both groups), People's Party and Awami League.

From *Holiday*, Dacca.

Saubhanik's Antigone

BY OUR DRAMA CRITIC

ONCE on a pleasant morning a bird sat chirping on a tree. A Muslim priest passing by remarked to his Hindu counterpart, "Is it not wonderful what the bird is chanting, *Subhan teri qudrat* (Glory be to thy nature)". The other replied, "you are mistaken, friend, actually that bird is saying *"Raja Ram Dasrath"*. A young wrestler was passing by and they asked him to decide the issue. He listened and translated, "It says *Durh Mug-dar Kasrath* ("Dips, clubs and exercise)". Not satisfied they approached the grocer nearby and asked him what he thought. After listening he said, "all three of you are wrong, that bird is saying *nimak, tel, adrak*" (salt, oil and ginger).

This little anecdote has been cited to show that art means many things to many people. When France was occupied by the Nazis, the play *Antigone* written by Jean Anouilh, was performed in Paris. Based on Sophocles, like the one under review, the play centres round Antigone, King Oedipus' daughter through his mother Jocasta, and symbolises a person hearing the stigma of parental sin on the one hand and an undaunted opponent of tyranny on the other. How Creon tries to browbeat her by reminding her

of the shadow under which she was born, how he tempts her with visions of grandeur after she marries his son Haemon, and how he threatens her with a living death and finally pleads with her justifying his own position, forms the highlight of the play. Antigone, of course, remains steadfast to her resolve to bury Polynices branded by Creon as a traitor. Actually Polynices is the excuse for her revolt against Creon's tyranny.

Anouilh presented the argument so well that the Nazis allowed the play to run. To them Creon's case was irrefutable. And yet Antigone's defiance was an unmistakable exhortation to the French Resistance to rise against the Nazis.

Saubhanik's play by Bimal Bando-padhyay compares most favourably with the one mentioned before and although produced in slightly less violent times finds parallels with current political trends.

As Antigone Mamata Chattopadhyay was brilliant. Despite the lengthy dialogues her speech had sufficient speed and variation to compensate for the lack of physical action. In fact she was able to achieve a startling degree of detachment so that the situations on the stage became far more real than

a myth would suggest or the presence of the chorus would allow. This impression was from the second row where all her delicate changes of expression and movement came across clearly.

Close on the interpretation of Antigone's rôle came the effective rendering of Ismene by Chitra Nag. Although the chorus introduced her as gay, Ismene failed to convey this aspect of her role and was not helped by the costumier or the make-up man either. Instead of contrasting with Antigone, Ismene helped in deepening the portentous significance of the play. Creon, as played by Ashok Mitra, was somehow limited by his fear of overdoing his part. Gifted with a clear diction and the ability to take his lines at very high speed, he sacrificed vocal movement for the sake of maintaining clarity. Perhaps it was this approach which even prevented him from gripping Antigone's arm with vehemence, thereby robbing Creon of the power of calculated cruelty. To this extent the play suffered.

Haemon played by Bimal Bando-padhyay made a characteristic entrance by rushing up the steps. He could have played the initial part of his first scene in keeping with his entrance to lend a deeper tragedy to his youthful self-sacrifice.

Of the three guards the first played by Nemu Bhowmick had the most to say and do and he did it well. Particularly convincing was the diction in which he became detached from the audience. The most discordant sounding person on the stage was the nurse who was unable to match the stylised delivery of the others in the cast. Last but by no means least was the chorus whose natural manner and easy speech reminded one of *Six Characters in search of an Author*. That the author takes his inspiration from Pirandello is quite clear from the presentation made by the chorus. It might have been better, therefore, to dress the chorus differently. In a lounge suit he continued to remain real reminding the audience of their own tangibility. Perhaps the play would have gathered more force if the chorus became less real than the actors of the drama.

Although the music was well composed it was always too loud and stood out independently at times. Why the stereophonic effect was tried one does not know. Costumes were well designed, but the lighting at times was so dull that the gestures and expressions of actors became indistinct and to those in the rear of the auditorium must have been completely lost.

Although it made no particular difference to the play the blonde wigs were not really necessary as the Greeks are by and large a dark-haired people. Also the last vowel 'e' in Greek names is pronounced so that Antigone should be *Antigony*.

Yet the play as a whole had great impact and left a haunting impression on the mind. It was well worth seeing.

Letters

The Other Path

I could not help bringing to my mind the line, Pease-pudding hot Pease-pudding cold, of the nursery rhyme while reading your otherwise remarkable editorial 'Plea For Instability' (February 15), immediately after the preceding week's 'The Choice' in which you asked people to vote for the very same leaders who will in all probability 'play it even cooler'. (They have already begun doing so by replacing the slogans of class struggle with that of Centre-State struggle, as if the Centre-State relation and not class relation is the root cause of all our troubles. Thus they flatter the national feelings and prejudices, which is, of course popular). Perhaps you were overwhelmed then by the wave, perhaps you are trying now to extricate yourself.

In any case, the election results are out. The Left CPI in particular is back with a vengeance. West Bengal has returned to a state of uneasy peace. With a vast Left CPI majority in the Assembly, politics have become abruptly lively again—a matter of detecting hairline fissures in supposedly monolithic parties or predicting a potential break-up in nomi-

nally allied parties. And all the outcry against 'Vote' has been ironically answered by the public with the casting of more votes. And the argument by Jyoti Basu, now dizzy with success, that the Naxalbari slogan has not been able to make any dent whatsoever, is on the whole convincing if we take it as final, if we fail to see beneath the apparently solid surface the oceans of liquid matter only needing something to rend into fragments continents of hard rock.

"Yes", as Lenin said, "Marx and Engels erred much and often in determining the proximity of 'revolution... But such errors—the errors of the giants' of the revolutionary thought who tried to raise and did raise the proletariat of the whole world above the level of petty common place and trifling tasks are a thousand times more noble and magnificent and historically more valuable and true than the puerile wisdom of official liberalism." Promode Das Gupta's jibe about the Naxalites as a group of Congress agents, however, is in keeping with his infinite capacity to reduce everything he touches to his own Lilliputian dimensions. Himself dubbed an agent of the Congress — Atulya-Promode entente — during the 1967 election — he sees nothing but agents everywhere. As a political leader, he will bequeath to posterity not a single noteworthy idea, not a single penetrating observation. But he is the leader of the victorious party.

True enough, the Naxalite activities on the election boycott slogan were to an extent enjoyed by the Congress, but so were Lenin's polemics and "splitting activities" against fellow social democrats by the Czarist secret police at one time, with a bitter after-taste, however.

The Naxalites are a handful of pioneers, set to fight the establishment both within and without, occasionally with nihilistic extravagance. Progress is usually resisted by the strong social forces always at work to protect the harmony of the status quo against conflict. To the taunt what else they did except tarring the walls one could say, tarring also is a deed? Vulgar

revolutionism does not know that talking at a particular period is also a deed. This may appear nothing more than propaganda work, but in reality it is extremely practical revolutionary work.

There is no gainsaying the fact that voting was considerable. "Ruggiero is again and again fascinated by the false charm of Alcine which he knows to disguise an old witch—sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything and the Knight-errant cannot withstand falling in love with her anew whom he knows to have transmuted all her former adorers into asses and other beasts". The Indian public is another Ruggiero and election another Alcine. Although pretty old and since 1952 occupying the public stage without interruption, election contrives to remain a novelty and evoke all the hopes that used to centre on an untried and promising youth. Even for the most dedicated Bengali Leftist and reformer the wrench from the womb of safe tradition has been traumatic at some stage or other and so he flings himself at tomorrow with all greater force in overcompensation as a man breaking an old habit discovers a new passion. For the large-scale participation in voting and the 'lam-post' victory for the Left CPI there are many reasons, both positive and negative, but the most immediate and influencing one was the crisis, the unprecedented slump, in the whole industrial complex of West Bengal in the last few months, leading to closures, lockouts, retrenchment and forced early retirement. There was the prospect of more unemployment through proposed automation over and above the huge existing joblessness. There was the spectre of total ruin—whatever surplus one had was gone in buying rice. All this was haunting the Bengali. Finding no other viable alternative—Naxalbari rebels being mere handfuls and without any 'locus standi'—they poured forth all their frustration, helplessness, and anger into the voting boxes—with no job, even rice at 50 paise a kilo will not do—paradoxically enough, in favour of the very same people who are willy nilly acting as a brake in the

working class movement from within. The petty-bourgeois Left CPI, the free traders and national capitalists of the Bangla Congress, the social chauvinist Right CPI coalesced to oppose the Tories, the Congress. It was between this coalition and the Congress that the real electoral battle was fought. Opposed to the Left and Right CPI, free traders, and the Congress and thus opposed to entire official West Bengal were the Naxalites. They have the courage to sacrifice momentary success for more important things. They know that defeat is often more honourable than victory. Among the admirable qualities of the Naxalites, especially the younger ones who fought the establishment, is the temerity with which they burned their boats.

The slogan 'Down with the Vote', is of course a correct one in the main, the total lack of response to it notwithstanding. As Lenin said in his preface to Letters of Marx to Kugelmann—"there are moments in history when the desperate struggle of the masses even for a hopeless cause is essential for the further schooling of these masses and their training for the next struggle". It is better to remain alone like Liebknecht—and that means remaining with the revolutionary proletariat—than to entertain any thought of uniting with people who tolerate blocs with thoroughly unscrupulous politicians. The rank and file activist in the electoral battle is sincere not in the personal but in the class sense. He regarded the matter in a simple way—"I want revolution and don't believe in parliamentary democracy but the Congress will win if I don't vote, therefore I am defending a just cause and not any kind of revisionism at all". It must be explained to a man like this, to those undoubtedly honest broad strata of the masses who voted that this is not a question of one's personal wishes but of mass, class, and political relations and conditions, of the inseparable connection between parliamentary democracy and rule of capital, of the inseparable connection between participation in the administration and betrayal of revolution and that it is

impossible to end the misery without the forcible overthrow of the rule of capital and that "patch up" will not do. The Congress is still the main enemy but the United Front is certainly no longer its revolutionary Opposition, it is "His Majesty's Opposition" or, should I say, Congressmen out of office? In reality UF leaders are both competitors and collaborators at the same time. They compete with the Congress for the allegiance of the people offering some concession in miserable dribbles to get into the gaddi but collaborate with it in opposing Naxalbari and revolution. To them, the socialist republic is an unattainable remote, the overthrow of the capitalist system is equally so, and therefore, it has absolutely no significance for practical present-day politics. Class struggle is recognised on paper but in practice it is hushed up, diluted, attenuated.

For conditions to mature for the revolutionaries and the revolutionaries for them, perhaps the intermediate parties should come to power and expose themselves. True, revolutionary struggle for power is almost absent at the moment in India. Yet there never was more widespread feeling than now that the old parties are doomed, that the old shibboleths have become meaningless, that old watchwords are exploded, that the old panaceas will not act any longer. Thinking men of all classes begin to see that a new line must be struck out and this line can only be in the direction of Naxalbari.

PROBODH CHANDRA DUTTA
Dankuni, Hooghly

Economic Programme

It was good of Ashok Rudra to make a quick rejoinder (February 15) to the "Economic Programme" (February 8).

While agreeing with him that "there is *nothing whatsoever* that a UF Government can do on the economic front which can be regarded as a step in the direction of the socialist transformation of society", I think he should change the italics from "nothing whatsoever" to "the socialist trans-

formation of society", because it is incorrect to give the impression that "nothing whatsoever" can be done on the economic front by a UF Government. Something can be done, not only for immediate marginal social gains but also to accelerate the process of polarisation in favour of the left forces.

The UF Government should ask a professionally experienced plus committed person to lead a task force of technical clerks (they may be called 'experts') in the donkey work so necessary to develop a well-knit economic programme for West Bengal. Six months' solid work by such a task force of, say, six persons with adequate supporting staff can complete the initial work.

Though internal contradictions in the UF, with the constraints of the Centre and the adjoining States, will not permit even half-hearted action towards socialisation of land, it will be worthwhile for the task force to show in physical terms what could be achieved, given the precondition of socialisation of land; and what maximum social gains can be achieved over the tenure of five years without such socialisation.

Efficient management for short-term social gains is likely to bring partial relief to the people, which will help retain the UF Government; and the comparative projections of benefits of planning with or without socialisation of land will make the people conscious of the limitations on the economic front in *real physical terms*. This is likely to result in further polarisation in favour of the left forces.

It goes without saying that this conjecture presupposes the setting up of active gana committees by the left parties.

Let no one be frustrated within the conclave of his expertise. Let the UF Government set the economic objectives, however wobbly, and its left constituents muster the requisite services to expose their implications so as to show that there is little honey and the bees should spread out of the hive.

BASHUDEV MOOKHERJEE
Bombay

Same-Feather Birds ?

Mr. P. C. Sen in one of the general elections was not returned to the Lower House. He was then nominated MLC to become the Food Minister. This type of backdoor entry into the Cabinet was severely criticised. I used to think that the communists (Right or Left) would not descend to such tactics. But what about Sm. Renu Chakravarty? Was she not defeated in the 1967 general election? Why then did the CPI nominate her as a member of the Upper House in West Bengal with the object of making her a Minister in the United Front Cabinet? Was not Sm. Ila Mitra, who has been elected by the people as an MLA, a more correct selection?

MRITUNJOY SINHA
Calcutta

"Kalmaspad Natak"

The review of *Kalmaspad Natak* by Z. H. Khan (February 8) being a bit unbalanced calls for a rejoinder. It seems he did not go to analyse the play with a dispassionate and open mind. Maybe he had some preconceived notions about the Pavlov Institute's delving in the realm of dramaturgy. One feels he did not quite succeed in grasping in totality the ideas, essence and spirit of the production. He admits the use of "very effective dialogue", but I cannot agree with his conclusion that the "very effective dialogue proves that man's basic tenets are founded on absurdities". The author has tried to depict the absurdity that is the social reality today, and not confined to any particular man. How far he has succeeded is another matter. One cannot unqualifyingly accept another remark made by Mr Khan, that one species of drama-writers' "belief lies in frustration." Not that there is no such species. There surely is, not only in the field of drama, but in literature and fine arts too. But these are symptoms and manifestations of decadence which are bound to corrode and erode social values until society undergoes a revo-

lutionary jolt and lifts itself to a higher and rational level and system.

Mr Khan adds insult to injury when he asserts that the drama fans of Calcutta (of all places) "have neither time for subtleties nor appreciation for symbolism." Had it been so, the Calcutta stage would have died long ago. More than 150 persons enjoyed the subtleties and symbolism of *Kalmaspad*. It drew a bigger audience than most of other productions. The reviewer's remark pertaining to the "absurdity" "amil", "mekimil" and "gonjamil" itself shows by negative example that the drama succeeded in depicting the absurdities of life today, which was the predominant aim of the author. That the reviewer has, throughout the drama, felt the absurdity of it, is in itself the best compliment to Birochit.

A SPECTATOR
Calcutta

'Prevailing Wind'

The information given in the editorial 'Prevailing Wind' (January 18) will shock those who cherish socialism as an alternative to the bourgeois economic and social order. Messers. Suslov and Brezhnev have been saying that the ever growing strength of socialist economy will compete with Western capitalists in the Third World and will thus facilitate the non-capitalist path of development by helping the national bourgeoisie and precipitate the crisis of world capitalism. And now they are inviting Western capital to exploit the natural and human resources of Russia! Competition indeed! How the hell do they expect of us, the wretched of the earth, to believe (1) that one day the superiority of socialist economy will be established through peaceful competition; (2) the bourgeoisie of the Third World will have to follow 'non-capitalism' by the pressure of circumstances; and (3) the crisis of capitalism will continue to recur because the Russian model of socialism is competing with it?

G. MUKHERJEE
Calcutta

ASSAM BENGAL RIVER SERVICE PVT. LTD.

POWER BOAT BUILDERS & ENGINEERS

26A, EZRA MANSIONS

10 GOVT. PLACE EAST,
CALCUTTA.1


**DEPEND
ON
US...
YOUR
SOUND
COMPANION**

**WE ARE SOLE DISTRIBUTORS
FOR EASTERN INDIA OF :**

MURPHY

Radio and Transistor

AHUJA

P.A. Equipment, Hi-Fi
Stereogram, Tape Recorder

PYE

Car Radio

ARCEY

Car Aerial, Suppressor,
Condenser

MECOM

Intercommunication

KEL

Potentiometer, Rotary
Switch



murphy radio

Delights the home!

DEBSONS PVT. LIMITED

CALCUTTA * PATNA * GAUHATI