

# frontier

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## On Other Pages

COMMENTS	2
VIEW FROM DELHI STRUGGLE FOR POWER FROM A SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT	5
ASSAM—1 THE OLD GAME ARUN KUMAR CHAKMA	6
ASSAM—2 WANTED A NEW APPROACH HIREN PHUKAN	7
KERALA POWER BY ANY MEANS RAMJI	8
CALCUTTA DIARY CHARAN GUPTA	9
ON MARX MONITOR	11
THE PRESS A DAMSEL IN DISTRESS	13
FILM CRISIS PRABODH KUMAR MAITRA	16
NOT AMATEURISH ART CRITIC	16
LETTERS	17

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## REVOLUTIONARY STALEMATE

FOR three successive weeks now France is in the grip of a revolutionary stalemate. Neither the oracular pronouncements of a General de Gaulle nor the pettyfogging manoeuvres of the Left parties can hoodwink the striking youth of the country. The Government has practically played itself out. It is alternating threats with carrots and proposing ever new solutions almost twice a week. After proposing university reforms it won the censure motion in the National Assembly; after conceding a few demands of the union leaders it thought that the workers would return to work; when this did not work, a referendum was proposed; now this too has been abandoned in favour of general election. For the first time too the Gaullists are busy organizing themselves while the General has hinted at the possible use of the armed forces to bring France back to normal. The country has an impressive number of policemen, of special riot police (popularly known as the CRS-thugs), of gendarmes and over a quarter million in the armed forces. But the latter is composed mainly of non-professional national servicemen who are unlikely to venture any sacrifices for the sake of de Gaulle. Thus even if the General seems determined to hold on to power, it is by no means certain that he has the necessary means to impose his will.

Inside the Left Establishment the CP seems to be in a predicament at least as great as that of the General. Its official line has not basically undergone any change during all these weeks. The Communists are mainly banking on a common platform with the remainder of the Left Establishment to establish a "national union of democratic forces", to quote a favourite phrase of the CP leaders. True, some of the Communist leaders have called for certain organic changes in the process of decision-making at the level of the firm or of the nation. But neither the Left Establishment as a whole nor any significant part of it, envisages a change in the style of government.

On the other hand, the Left parties are hopelessly left behind by the youthful revolutionaries. Off and on the latter are attacked by the CP in a most vicious way, only to be solicited in the most abject manner the very next day. The vagaries of the CP are not just a reflection of the vacillating leadership; it is dictated equally by fears of disintegration.

For, in the course of the last couple of weeks, the rank and file of the party have bitterly criticized the top; one or two important leaders of the CGT have resigned. A mere fissure in the party may not be the best for the success of the revolution; a well-knit party with a rejuvenated leadership could be the single most welcome development in the coming days.

Revolutionary students and workers have so far made popular spontaneity and imagination their mainstay. Local revolutionary or action committees have provided an admirable leadership; some degree of cohesion and cooperation between them has been achieved so that activities have often been synchronized over the country as a whole. Ultimately, they hope to form a Central Committee of Revolutionary Action that will exist, a la Soviet model, as a seat of dual power.

The question today is how long the stalemate will continue. The revolutionaries believe that time is with them; de Gaulle seems for once to agree with them, if we go by the plethora of his proposals to end the crisis. Will he now in despair actually mobilize his troops? Can the CP still sit back in the vacuum of its dogma of peaceful transition?

### No Restraint To Match

The Paris talks about Vietnam have made predictably little progress. Predictably, too, the Americans are blaming it on the North Vietnamese, whose only fault, as far as one can see, has been to stick to the position they clearly stated when they agreed to the talks. All that Hanoi agreed to discuss was an unconditional end to American bombing and all other acts of war against North Vietnam. The Americans want this step to be conditional upon de-escalation of the fighting in South Vietnam or perhaps a slowing down of North Vietnamese assistance to the South's National Liberation Front. If they were determined not to end the bombing unconditionally, they should not have begun this elaborate exercise in Paris. By

agreeing to discuss what Hanoi had specified as the central subject for the Paris parleys, they committed themselves to negotiating an unconditional end to the bombing. But now they are trying to go back on this commitment on the plea that their "restraint" is not being "matched by restraint in Hanoi".

What restraint has the United States shown so far? Some areas in North Vietnam have been exempted from the aerial assault, but this area-wise limitation has not reduced the intensity of the bombing that has continued over much of the country. Nor has there been any let-up in the attacks on the Vietcong, or for that matter on South Vietnam's civil population in the name of raiding suspected Vietcong strongholds. In fact, the area-wise limitation was immediately followed by a massive intensification of these assaults in both North and South Vietnam. For Hanoi or the NLF to slacken their effort at this stage would be only to help the forces of aggression to recover from the beating they received during the Tet offensive and later. The result would be a new phase of aggression, perhaps even more massive and vicious than before. The lifting of the siege of Khe Sanh was followed by furious American attacks.

Of course, the Americans, too, use this argument in support of their demand for reciprocal de-escalation as a pre-condition for an end to the bombing of North Vietnam. To accept this argument would be to equate the struggle of the Vietnamese people with the American-armed intervention in their affairs. Hanoi could have legitimately taken the stand that there was nothing to discuss with the Americans in any circumstances; it is only because of its anxiety for early restoration of peace that it has declared its readiness to negotiate with the Americans should they first put an end to their acts of aggression against North Vietnam. The demand for cessation of the bombing is not negotiable; negotiations can follow after this demand has been unconditionally met. There are now hints that Hanoi may change its attitude over this

basic demand at Moscow's persuasion. It is the Americans that Mr Kosygin should try to persuade to change their attitude.

### Lengthening Shadow

Mr Dharma Vira began his mini-dictatorship in West Bengal more than three months ago with a grim warning to hoarders and blackmarketeers that their pranks would no longer be tolerated. It seemed he had been waiting for this opportunity to clean up the racket and his unlimited power would be used ruthlessly against food offenders who have managed to thrive under party governments. Obliging newspapers conjured up visions of pot-bellied businessmen in handcuffs being dragged to courts through the streets of Calcutta, as was reported to have happened during Mr Dharma Vira's brief reign in Chandigarh. Dutifully, the Secretariat conveyed the Governor's wish to the district authorities and the manner in which they should set about their mission was pompously discussed at a conference. Hoarders and blackmarketeers must have guffawed and policemen laughed in their khaki half-sleeves at all this ado, for they knew that their tricks of survival were unailing.

The problem of blackmarketeers was solved by the Government quickly. Within weeks it discovered that there was no control on prices of essential commodities in West Bengal and no trader could be hauled up for infringement of the law however exorbitant the price charged by him. For a few days there was talk of fixing a ceiling on prices of certain essential commodities but the suggestion was quietly dropped, presumably because the Government did not want to create a blackmarket where none existed. Hoarders were found to be more difficult to tackle, though statistics soon available to the Government showed that the previous estimate of foodgrains production in the State was very much on the high side and West Bengal did not actually have a bumper crop. Hoarding was not, therefore, on the scale which could call for stern

action earlier contemplated by the Government. The vigil has not, however, been relaxed, and several kilos of rice and wheat are being seized daily by the elaborate machinery to unearth hoarded stock of foodgrains and to prevent the ancillary operation of smuggling.

Possibly to do their bit most of the newspapers appear to have entered into a conspiracy of silence over the food situation in the State. The papers which went wild over rice prices last year and wailed over the distress in the villages are still to wake up to the crisis. The lean months are not yet on the State, but rice prices have gone up to Rs. 3 a kilo in many areas. Even official statistics with their known flair for understatement in these matters put the average price of rice in the State around Rs. 2 per kilo. With the lean season drawing near and the total failure of the Government's procurement programme hoarders and blackmarketeers—who are not—have become active. Supplies to the open market are fast drying up, and rice is available only to those who can pay fancy prices. Several deaths from starvation have been reported and duly denied by the Government which is a great stickler for the suitable distinction between starvation deaths and deaths from malnutrition. But neither official quibbling nor newspaper blackout can stop the trek from villages to towns in search of food. Calcutta pavements bear out that this has already begun. The Food Department is said to be ready with a plan to expand the modified rationing system to another seven million people bringing the total to 21 million, provided of course the Centre supplies the additional foodgrain. For the rest of the rural population there is not even a paper scheme. No wonder the Congress and people of its sort have developed a crush on the Governor's regime; they want it to be prolonged because their patrons, the jotedaras and usurers, can make hay while the gubernatorial sun shines. But the left parties should have been able to take time off from their secondary preoccupations and turn their attention to the deepening food crisis.

## Sympathy, Whiskey, Aid

There is a small coterie of civil servants, mostly concentrated in the Ministry of Finance in New Delhi, who have flourished by virtue of the fact that this country begs for aid from abroad. Nothing suits these gentlemen better. It allows them free trips, on umpteen occasions every year, to the capitals of the Western world: Washington, London, Paris, Bonn, Rome, Tokyo. These trips are of course financed by the Indian taxpayer. The civil servants hop from one jet to the next, stay in the poshest hotels paint vivid, lurid pictures of India's penury. They also suffer from the delusions of perverted grandeur: they cringe before others not for their own sake, but for the sake of the nation. So the rest of the countrymen must remain ever so grateful to them: all their trotting of the globe's capitals, all their guzzling of good food abroad, all their downing of expensive wiskeys are with the object of accelerating India's economic growth.

So far as these gentlemen are concerned, it is altogether irrelevant to ask whether the injection of U.S.-sponsored aid in diverse forms over the past dozen years has in fact hastened the process of growth. That this racket of foreign aid has enabled them to draw sympathy and to down scotch whiskey is a much more important issue. Here is one of these apostles dilating on the theme:

In strict economic terms, the contribution of foreign aid is glaring enough and widespread enough for all to see. But I for one *attach equal importance* to the fact that the relationship of aid has won for our country a number of valuable friends and allies all over the world, that there are a great many self-less workers in distant lands and institutions who continue to worry about our problems and to labour hard for their solutions, that there are many distinguished scholars and individual citizens who are so thoroughly identified with the cause of Indian economic development that we should

be privileged to count them as honorary citizens of this ancient land.  
(Italics supplied)

This truly astounding statement, translated into vernacular, would read somewhat as follows: never mind what foreign aid has actually contributed towards the country's progress, it has allowed us civil servants to get acquainted with some charming people abroad—maybe with John Kenneth Galbraith, maybe with that protagonist of systematic genocide in Vietnam, Walt Whitman Rostow — and that should be enough justification for our continuing to big for aid from the Americans.

These are people who, over the ages, have sold their country to the foreigners, and their conscience has not bothered them. Concrete gains for the nation they tend to weigh on the same scale as their private predilections: this is not even romanticism, this is treason. It hardly matters to the country whether the business of foreign aid has provided the opportunity for this or that civil servant to cultivate charming Mr X or ravishing Miss Y. It hardly matters even if Mr X or Miss Y comes to express certain abstract sympathies for India. These trivialities do not determine the fate of a nation; the latter is determined by such factors as whether self-sufficiency is being promoted, whether the pace of economic growth is being quickened through the adoption of a certain policy—or by the flowing in of a certain aid. The relevance of foreign assistance has to be judged by this single criterion: does it further the social, political, economic goals of the nation, does it raise—or diminish—our dignity?

But these are sentiments alien to our soliciting civil servants. Once more this year, as soon as the hot season set in, they made a bee-line for Washington. The Aid-India Consortium met, and, predictably, there was much expression of sympathy for India. Owe to our professional beggars, there was however little of actual pledging of aid. The Americans, mauled and battered in Vietnam, rent by domestic strife, shaken by a

succession of financial crises, have scarcely anything to throw in our direction this year. The Asian Development Bank has been turned down, and the U.S. Congress has also deferred the question of replenishing the funds of the International Development Association. India would thus be lucky to get even 200 million dollars for this year from the Consortium. Our heart-wringing civil servants are in danger of losing their profession, ichabod. But this is unlikely to chasten them.

### Doctor's Dilemma

It is still not clear whether Dr Triguna Sen, the man surprised by being suddenly given the Union Education Ministry, was personally associated with the recent peremptory directive from the Central School Organisation virtually abolishing the English medium from 118 Central schools. But his responsibility remains. These schools are mainly for the progeny of Union Government officials who are liable to be transferred from one State to another, irrespective of language. These are heavily subsidised, which means that the entire people of India pay for them. Yet some gentlemen in the CSO appear to think that these institutions exist only to promote a particular regional language, namely Hindi, which also means that they exist to promote the interests of those who have that language as their mother tongue.

If memory serves, Dr Sen once spoke of the need for English. Promptly came a sharp rebuke from a Gujarati named Mr Morarji Desai who not only believes in prohibition and Hindi but also happens to be the Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister of this country. Equally promptly Dr Sen became an ardent advocate of Hindi and a militant enemy of English. In spite of all the confusion Dr Sen has created in the field of education by his many, too many, speeches and policy declarations clarity certainly informs his totally submissive attitude to Hindi; the CSO would not otherwise

have dared to issue its directive on the medium of education in schools run by the Centre for the benefit of some 57,000 children coming from all the States of India. Most of them prefer to be taught in English.

It was once right to be offended that the people of India seemed forced to learn English to get anywhere. To the non-Hindi speaking people of India, who happen to be in a majority, it must be equally offensive that they should be compelled to learn Hindi and, in effect, little besides. All three Prime Ministers of free India, all Hindi-speaking, showed, even if in unpleasant circumstances, some realisation of this incontrovertible fact and made various promises that Hindi would never be forced upon anyone who did not want it. Who is this CSO to veto all those promises; and why should the Union Education Ministry tolerate this sort of impertinence? Dr Sen owes it to himself to explain just where he stands. The pressures from the Hindi militants are well known. If one cannot withstand them, one can at least withdraw and record one's protest. Or, is office all?

### Too Little Too Much

It is pathetic how most parts of India swing between one sort of cruel weather and another. Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Rajasthan and Jammu and Kashmir are said to be in the grip of a water famine; Durgapur in West Bengal is not doing much better; and there in Dibrugarh in Upper Assam some 1,500 people have been rendered homeless by floods in the Brahmaputra. Time was when man was content to resign himself to these "acts of God"; even today, with all the conquests science have made over environment, man can hardly be said to be the master of nature. In undeveloping India, which seems nearer the mark than "underdeveloped" or "developing", there are experts galore on just about everything. The performance of our geologists, meteorologists, soil experts and even economists has an air of total unreality. Nothing seems related to actual Indian conditions.

There is no reason at all to think that the country as a whole is actually deficient in its water supply. The view has been expressed that India uses about a tenth or less of the water available. Rainfall is admittedly uneven and unpredictable; rivers are either in spate or dried up. It is still not true that man can do nothing about these phenomena. The British showed what could be done with the desert in Sind; the Sukkur Barrage has changed the face of the country. In Punjab the same law-and-order Government achieved much more by way of irrigation so that even divided Punjab today is surplus in wheat. Free India has spent crores of rupees on schemes like the DVC and Bhakra Nangal and Nagarjunasagar. There have undoubtedly been some benefits accruing to the people in those regions. No serious effort, however, has been made to relate the cost to the result; the recipient at the end of a tubewell in disrepair may have even harsher things to say.

Grandiose schemes for flood control and irrigation have been made in India, mainly in imitation of the TVA. It is the local needs, mainly small and inexpensive, which have been neglected by politicians demanding showpieces and experts all too eager to oblige them. The fact is that even the showpieces have been neglected when political backing for them has been less than adequate—e.g., the DVC. The real needs of the people have never been looked into with the requisite earnestness and sincerity; and floods and water famines sweep over them at will as though we never had hydrologists and sundry other experts with charts and instrument boxes and drawing pencils of various colours. The question is very rarely asked why water was not conserved in time in an area where a shortage was perfectly foreseeable or why adequate drainage was not organised in an area where a flood was by no means unforecastable. We have lately seen some railway and other accidents ascribed to "human failure". We wonder whether "human" is the word.

## Struggle For Power

FROM A SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

THE question "After Indira who?" is already in the air here. The AICC session which ended on Tuesday, and particularly the party's Central Election Committee elections, could well prove decisive for Mrs Gandhi's future.

Now that the Syndicate has managed to get its men in all the five vacant seats for which election was held on June 4, it can be the first step in getting rid of Mrs Gandhi.

The tussle was not between the "reactionaries" and "progressives" as being made out by certain sections of the leftist Press here. It was purely factional. A look at the list of candidates sponsored by the rival factions will be enough to convince anyone of the futility of pinning hopes on such ideological divisions in the Congress.

The Syndicate's list was a heterogeneous one. At least two of the candidates—Mr Brahmananda Reddy and Mr D. P. Mishra—were not known to be favourites of the Syndicate. But it appears now that Mr Reddy has made up with the other Reddy—Sanjiva—who is the Syndicate boss in Andhra. He also managed to get Mrs Gandhi's blessings. As for Mr D. P. Mishra, he was also claiming Mrs Gandhi's backing.

To the other group belong Mr Nanda, Mr Sadiq, Mr S. N. Mishra and of course the indomitable Mr K. D. Malaviya. Mr Nanda's "progressive" views are too well known to be reasserted. Mr Mishra, who was one of the first to demand the AICC session and the election of the CEC, later gave up all hope of finding a place in the Committee.

In fact, it is not necessary to search for the bona fides of Mrs Gandhi's candidates regarding socialism. One has only to remember her own performance a few months ago, to shed all illusions about her being a "progressive". It was she who sent Mr

Nanda to West Bengal to help pave the way for the topping of the United front there and in the process to set up her own group in the State Congress. Her recent speeches in South-East Asia, particularly in Australia, should be an eye-opener to those who still cherish illusions about her progressive foreign policy.

As for the alternative candidate for Prime Ministership, two—Mr Morarji Desai and Mr Chavan—are being named. Mr Desai, who some months ago seemed to have reconciled himself to the position of Deputy Prime Minister, threatened recently that he could still be a force, when he let down Mrs Gandhi at the last moment by opposing her formula for Assam reorganization. This was possibly an overture to the Syndicate, which is still hesitant about sponsoring Mr Chavan. Not to be daunted, the latter is busy sponsoring his own case, thanks to the capital's renowned journalists. One English daily, and a Leftist at that, has been boosting his image for quite some time.

It would be interesting to watch how Mrs Gandhi passes the test. Her aptitude for scheming which had stood her in good stead all these years, may come to her rescue. When at the most critical moment of the recession, she was about to collapse, her "friendship with the socialist camp" brought Mr Kosygin rushing to her help. Who will be her friend from abroad today?

### Assam

The Assam reorganization issue reached its head again the moment Mrs Gandhi arrived home from her foreign sojourn. While the hill people are in a desperate mood, the Congress leaders here are anxious to shelve the issue to provide breathing space for themselves to manipulate in the Congress leadership tussle. The issue,

instead of being a mere geo-political problem confined to Assam only, has become a decisive factor in settling the Central leadership question. If the hill leaders reach the breaking point and launch a movement that in all likelihood would create a law and order problem, the event could be utilized by both Mrs Gandhi's opponents and supporters in accusing each other. While Mrs Gandhi's followers would blame Mr Desai and the Assam Congress for the deterioration, the latter would accuse Mrs Gandhi of being soft to the hill leaders. The one in the Cabinet who has a lot to gain from such a situation is Mr Chavan. Significantly enough, he has remained more or less silent for some time on the reorganization question, although the issue comes directly under his Ministry. With both the Assam Congress and the hill leaders he has managed to earn the reputation of being a "moderate" in this matter. No one has as yet had any chance of eliciting from him what exactly he envisages as a solution of the problem. His non-committal attitude is understandable. Once the situation gets out of hand and the hill areas of Assam are reduced to another battlefield like Nagaland, there would be no need any more to plan painstakingly new formulas or schemes. With the images of both Mrs Gandhi and hardliners like Mr Morarji Desai tarnished for having mucked up the entire issue, Mr Chavan may have a clear field to project his own self for the Prime Ministership.

### Films

Typical of Delhi journalism was the indifference of the capital's film critics to two remarkable Cuban films shown recently at the Cuban Embassy here. One was a ballet film, the choreography based on an ancient Afro-Cuban rite—product of the fusion of African and Christian beliefs. At one stage the film becomes a spectacle of abstract colour shapes and rhythm—an experiment usually shunned by Soviet film directors in their handling of ballet compositions.

The other film was on the life of a guerilla girl—Manuela, who joined

the revolutionary movement from a desire to avenge the murder of her mother and destruction of her home. The film shows her evolution from the mere desire for revenge to a more solid view of life, emerging just before she dies. The sense of restraint and the almost meticulous shunning of the slightest propaganda make the film stand in sharp contrast with the usual films on similar topics in the Soviet Union or China. Politically also it is a rebuttal of the frequent allegations made by some Communists that Cuba is obsessed with a desire for revenge only.

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Assam—1

## The Old Game

ARUN KUMAR CHAKMA

THE goings-on over the issue of Assam reorganisation have once again proved a hoax. As it emerges now, the whole affair seems to have developed the way the Centre and the Government of Assam wanted it. Or to put it in another way, the right reactionaries have succeeded, in keeping with their tradition, in brushing this very important national issue out of consideration for the time being, if not finally.

We have no reason to be so naive as to believe that the Centre's new formula was not a piece of chicanery. It was rather a conspiracy hatched by the Congress bosses at the Centre to deceive the hill leaders into accepting, ultimately, the Mehta Committee recommendations. Obviously, the Centre was very much anxious to see, if its latest attitude is any indication, that the Assam Government did not react favourably to the new formula which pretended to vest the hill leaders with powers to deal with law and order in the proposed sub-State of Khasi-Jaintia and Garo Hills and to leave the onus of deciding the status of North Cachar and Mikir Hills with the people of these areas by a simple majority vote. The way the Congress bosses reacted to this formula indicates that the Home Ministry evolved it not in consultation with the big bosses at the Centre but on its own, perhaps to provide Mr Chaliha and his supporters at the Centre with another occasion to harp on their favourite theme—of course now in a different fashion—that law and order is too important a matter to be left entirely to the hill people because 'territorial integrity has to be preserved at all costs'. They seem to assert that even if the hill areas can be granted a federal status of the kind they suggest, the hill people cannot be trusted. Mr Chaliha, for his part, did not only haggle over the terms brazenly in order to block the negotiations but also made repeated attempts to

wreck any chance of the hill leaders' reaching an agreement.

Mr Chaliha had spoken his mind on the reorganisation issue immediately after the disturbances that shook Gauhati on the last Republic Day. He said that the situation in Assam did not favour any decision on a issue like reorganisation, not even on the basis of the Mehta Committee recommendations. And what we heard him argue in New Delhi was just an echo of the same thing. But his was not a lone voice; Messrs Desai, Patil and Nijalingappa also joined the chorus, with Mrs Indira Gandhi intermittently raising her faint voice. Mr Chaliha was immensely aided by them to sustain his arrogance.

When Congress bosses were seen to pressurise the hill leaders to accept the Mehta Committee recommendations, Messrs Chatra Singh Teron and J. B. Hagjer, Mr Chaliha's cronies in his Cabinet, lost no time in pressing forward their demands in compliance with Mr Chaliha's advice. They contended that if the reorganisation issue was to be implemented, on whatever basis, the North Cachar and Mikir Hills, wherefrom they hail, must not be tagged either to the autonomous hill unit or to the plains. This attitude on the part of his two Cabinet Ministers gave Mr Chaliha a chance to plead even against the Mehta Committee recommendations, let alone the new formula. And the conclusion the Central Board of the Congress drew from all these deliberations was that, whatever scheme was finally evolved, the wishes of the Assam Government had to be respected first, no matter what the wishes of the hill people were. The hill leaders' eagerness to settle the issue without any further misgivings on anybody's part must have been read by the bosses at the Centre as a sign of weakness.

### Joint Game

The hill leaders had so long believed that the leadership at the Centre was not as much opposed to their demands as the Government of Assam. But now they should be disillusioned. It is a game played by the Centre and

the Assam Government together. Mr Chaliha seems to have impressed upon the Centre that if the reorganisation scheme is at all implemented it would not only mean staking the future of the Congress as a party in the Brahmaputra Valley, it would also create a more dangerous situation there. The Centre has also a very shameful record of keeping its faith with vested interests and right reactionaries. It has made no secret of its desire to regard the wishes of a minority in the Valley to the extent of smothering the aspirations of the hill people as a whole, if necessary, by using force. Otherwise how could it declare that the responsibility of maintaining law and order could not be left with the hill people? As though it is not in the interest of the hill people to maintain 'law and order'. A fantastic amount of nonsense has so far been talked and written about the territorial integrity of Assam, mostly by those who do not seem to know what exactly that means.

The hill people had always wanted their leaders to take a stiff attitude towards the machinations of the Centre and the Assam Government. Only a few days before the hill leaders left for New Delhi for another round of talks with the Government of India, their wisdom had been questioned at a meeting by students who alleged that the present leaders had been guilty of putting off 'direct action' in the vain hope that they would be able to come to terms with the parties concerned; and that the hill leaders' recent attitude made the Centre think that they would not mind accepting the Mehta Committee recommendations if certain minor concessions were granted. Now that they have failed to convince the Centre of the legitimacy of their demands, the present leaders will have to change their mind or quit. But it is doubtful how far the hill people will gain from a new leadership that may surface. It can be said with some reason that their opponents will profit in case the present leadership is edged out of the limelight; they then would be able to divide the hill people in their own characteristic way. And, in the changed

circumstances, the right opportunists from amongst the hill people who have already raised the cry of 'Khasi revivalism' (the like of which is yet to be heard in other parts of the hills) at the instigation of the right reactionaries, will create a situation in the hill areas similar to that now prevailing in the Valley, which is what the Government wants.

### Assam—2

## Wanted A New Approach

HIREN PHUKAN

IT is clear that separation of the hill areas will strengthen the divisive and sub-regional forces within what would remain of Assam and there is more than a fair chance that there will be further fragmentation of the plains. The hill areas too are unlikely to escape a similar fate and a Hill State, in all probability, will only be a prelude to district States. Such atomization of a natural geographical unit can hardly benefit the country or serve the long-term interests of the people of the area itself.

A solution other than separation could perhaps be found if the hills tone down their obsession with the federal plan-or-split idea and the plains their dislike of the concept of giving the hills what is their due—a status of parity.

A major factor barring settlement has been the tendency of the plains to view the problem as one of autonomy, whereas the heart of the matter is the hill people's, or, more specifically their elite's, desire to wield political power. This, in every way a legitimate aspiration, is treated with derision in the plains. But it is this desire which must be satisfied if the hills and the plains are to be kept together. Variation in the quantum of autonomy is no longer relevant. What is relevant, and which the plains as also the Pataskar and the Mehta plans ignore, is the extent to which political power in the State can be shared equitably by the hills and the plains.

The main grievance of the hill people is that they are "dominated" by the plains people. But how? Over matters which are of purely local interest, the autonomous district councils have complete authority and no interference from external sources is possible. In the cultural sphere, Western influences predominate and Assamese penetration is nowhere noticeable or even felt in the hills. As for employment by the Government which is the biggest employer, quite a number of posts are reserved for the hill people and, in relation to their population, any charge that they are being deprived of their rightful share would not bear scrutiny. The number of plainsmen exploiting economic opportunities offered by the hills is extremely limited. In the sphere of economic development, the revenue-deficit hills have fared well, if not better than the plains. The figures collected by the Centrally appointed Pataskar Commission contradict the frequently heard complaint that the hills have been neglected in relation to the plains.

Domination is nevertheless a fact in the political sphere. The Chief Minister has been, and always will be a plainsman under the present arrangement and his Cabinet colleagues will be mostly people from the plains. This is enough to make the hill people feel that things are being imposed on them, that they do not have the final say over anything.

Under the present set-up which relates representation to the size of the population, the hills have fewer representatives in the legislature than the plains, and hence in the Council of Ministers. The representation may appear adequate in relation to population figures, but this is one field where mathematics does not do away with misgivings and the feeling of being dominated and ruled over by external groups.

A solution retaining the State's integrity will require therefore a reorganization which will result in the reshaping of the political power structure in the region. This will necessitate reorganization of the system of Assembly representation and the mode of

formation of the Council of Ministers to enable the hill people to reach a position whereby they can equitably share political power and political leadership with the plains people.

Such reorganization may appear less acceptable to the plains people, whose generous impulses will have to be call-

ed into full play, than to the hills. But if they refuse to give thought to such a course, a series of fragmentations of the north-eastern region appears inevitable. The process of disintegration may even deal a crippling blow to the gradually consolidating society of the Assamese.

weaning away and winning over of the Muslim League to their side.

The Conference disappointed the old guard of the Pradesh Congress who planned to join with the Kerala (Rebel) Congress to start another liberation struggle if possible. Such an alliance had paid off well in the municipal elections and, true to tradition, the leadership could not resist the temptation of this short cut to power. However, they ran into very fierce opposition from the Youth Congress wing.

Out of the 24 delegates who spoke during the subjects committee and delegates' meetings 21 opposed the open-door policy enunciated in the political resolution.

The leader of the Youth Congress Mr John, who, incidentally, contested against the present Pradesh President during the last organisational elections, introduced an alternative political resolution which ripped to shreds such convenient assumptions as the "break down of law and order" and "Communist anarchy" etc. Mr. John's resolution pointed out that during the Congress regimes in the past the people had not benefited in the least and so they were disillusioned and disappointed. The resolution pleaded for a new leadership from among cadres who had entered the Congress fold after independence. This was a direct slap in the face of the old guard.

Those who opposed the official resolution followed more or less his line of attack. The double-faced tactic of wooing non-Marxists to isolate the Marxists and the hush-hush programme of the top leadership to win over disparate elements purely on the basis of opportunism, were strongly condemned by the speakers. Yet, as usual, the amendment which came in the form of a resolution was withdrawn.

The KPCC leaders had one consolation. They were able to show the Rebel Congress that they were quite amenable to an alliance and that only the mule-headed stand of the younger elements prevented them from taking this plunge.

One very significant feature of the

## Kerala

# Power By Any Means

RAMJI

THE State Conference of the Pradesh Congress, which took place at Kottayam last month, was a big affair, judged by the huge numbers of people it attracted and the very big demonstration that was staged at the end of the meet.

However, Kerala has proved during the last six months that such rallies do not necessarily indicate the true strength of any party. Even rudimentary parties like the Jana Sangh, and the not so rudimentary, yet small parties like the Muslim League and Right CPI, were able to field massive rallies during recent months. It would seem that such shows of strength indicate only the length of the purse and organising ability.

And these the Congress had in plenty. In fact the planters' town of Kottayam was chosen with this in view. Kottayam district in particular is the home of the reactionary, rich planters and kindred vested interests, who have always been generous to the Congress and the other so-called democratic parties. Funds for the Congress mela were provided by the Pradesh Congress Vice-President, a fabulously rich planter and no collection drive among the people was made.

The entire conference was organised and run by the clerks of the planter Vice-President of the Pradesh Congress.

The resolution drafted by the old guard, who have been instrumental in tarnishing the Congress image in the State, as usual mouthed sanctimonious

jargon about democracy, democratic unity, the red bogey, breakdown of law and order etc.

The leaders, who revealed that they were keen on forging an alliance with the Rebel Congress and similar "democratic-minded" parties through an open-door policy, shaped the resolution as a feeler for some sort of positive action to overthrow the Communist-led regime. Flushed with the unexpected victory in the civic elections they were eager to probe the possibility of another liberation struggle similar to the one they had staged in 1958. The alternative posed was the formation of an anti-Communist (Marxist) front under the leadership of the Congress with the non-Marxist parties of the United Front in tow.

The Conference came to the conclusion that it would be dangerous to stage another liberation struggle. The implication of the resolution as passed and the speeches made by the veteran leaders held out the hope of isolating the Communists (Marxist) and winning over all other parties under the Congress banner. The general anti-Marxist trend shown by other parties have encouraged the Congress to rely heavily on this new line of action.

Against this background, Mr. Nijalingappa's speech announcing the Congress determination to fight and defeat Communism and communalism was very unrealistic. For, one of the trump cards up the sleeve of the Pradesh Congress leadership is the

# Calcutta Diary

CHARAN GUPTA

Conference was the emergence of a new phenomenon: a big section of the youth, militant and in many respects ultra-radical in outlook, at least in their opposition to the moth-eaten tactics of the Congress leadership, has come into the Congress and is now straining at the leash to snatch control of the organisation.

Among the delegates the majority were under 35 years. They took keen and active interest in the proceedings, refused to be overawed by the past glory of the old guard, were thoroughly iconoclastic in this respect and finally signalled their importance in the organisation by organising the rally.

That there were forward-looking elements among this youth was amply evident from a resolution tabled by Mr M. A. John, the Youth Congress leader, which called for urgent legislation to compel the contractors and landlords to keep a register of the casual labour employed by them. This goes much beyond the demands of the Marxist party itself, since this casual labour is thoroughly unorganised and completely at the mercy of the employers. The KPCC leadership was uneasy and hedged the issue by saying that the Centre is considering the matter. Finally, this unofficial resolution was withdrawn. But it helped to rally opinion and split the Congress into two distinct camps of vested interests and radicals.

The discussions clearly revealed that the present leadership of the KPCC is rotten. Yet the conference was at a loss about any alternative leadership which can take over key posts of the organisation. To this extent the conference ended in a stalemate.

The net result was that the KPCC leadership managed to win the favour of the Centre and the Kerala Congress leadership. And Mr. Panampally Govinda Menon in his speech drew up the future line of action when he indicated that the Congress would be ready to win over any force in order to rid the State of the epidemic of Communism. He clearly hinted that in this endeavour the local Congress would have the unstinted support of the all-India body as well as the Central Government.

SUDDENLY, gerontocracy is collapsing here, there, everywhere. The Rudi Dutschkes and Daniel Cohn-Bendits have—or so it seems—taken over the world; even in the USA, it is not so much Bobby Kennedy's well-lubricated machine, but Eugene McCarthy's wild and enthusiastic young followers who continue to ride high. How the turmoil in France will end is still difficult to foretell. But whatever the culmination—whether there is a bloody civil war or capitulation by Papa de Gaulle—it will never be quite the same. And there are several lessons for each of us from the cataclysmic events happening in Europe. From now on, it simply will not do to shrug shoulders and address expletives toward the direction of 'wayward' students. There is a strong family resemblance here: the chain of events in Paris, West Berlin, Frankfurt, Rome, London on the one hand, and Prague and Warsaw on the other, reminds one very much of our own eager, turbulent, furious students, from the Presidency College and elsewhere. Barricades, police brutality, intense camaraderie, determination not to allow fascism and authoritarianism to pass. The breakdown of communication between the entrenched old and the boisterous young is almost total, as much in America and Europe as here. There is too much of vulgar zeal to enforce wooden rules, too many cynical responses to the expression of genuine needs by the students, too much superciliousness in seeing to it that however grotesque might be their demands, the young people are still given at least a respectful hearing. The assumption on which the establishmentwals proceed is that any counterposing of questions on the part of the brats is evil; evil, the text-book says, has to be put down. The wages of this folly have been demonstrated several times over in recent years in this very city itself. Confronted by the students, the authorities first try to brazen it out, by adopting an atti-

tude of hauteur; each little thing is made a matter of prestige; options are not kept open. Inevitably, therefore, each single concession appears as a major capitulation, lack of grace dominates the environment; even when the students win their point, much ill-will is created.

The lesson of France should not just remain a lesson for France alone. In dealing with the young, it is necessary to disabuse oneself of the impression that one is dealing with unreasonableness. More often than not, one is in fact dealing with the refractions of new reality. By their declamations and mannerisms, the youth are allowing us a preview of the world as it would be ten or fifteen years from today. What is much more, they have the one overriding virtue which we all lack: they dare to dare. They are impatient, yes; yet it is a positive social attribute, for out of their impatience creativity may still break through, as it is breaking through at present in France. If this creativity is sought to be stifled and responses on the part of the old granddads become responses of the *amour propre*, insurrection remains the only alternative. General de Gaulle is learning this lesson to his own cost—as least one hopes he is. How much one wishes the message would also percolate elsewhere.

\* \* \*

It is time the message of France at least percolated into the Left establishment. The French Communist Party, and its trade union wing, the CGT, have made fools of themselves, and *Pravda* is only committing a bigger folly by rushing in to defend Monsiers Waldeck Rochet and Seguy. If Marxism means anything, it is that those who do not dare to dare will be overtaken by history, and this goes for a Communist Party too.

The official Communist groups in France were overtaken from the Left; by last weekend it

became obvious that even the CGT rank and file—usually a most disciplined lot—were rejecting Monsieur Seguy and coalescing with the 'adventurists'. This is a trend which was developing about everywhere. It could hardly be otherwise: if the official Left is reluctant to lead, the following is bound to move elsewhere in search of a more radical leadership. But in case it is an advanced case of atrophy, pressure from below only succeeds in making the leadership still more conservative. As the Communists in France are still the officially recognised opposition, they can use this vantage position to negotiate with the ruling class. This is precisely what they are doing. It is a sad fate for a Communist Party to be reduced to. This is the sort of fate which might also overtake several other Communist parties, unless they can find some means to fight off creeping embourgeoisment.

He laughs best who laughs last of all. In retrospect, one realises how far-seeing the leaders of China were. After the developments in Europe and the USA, there will be no more sniggers about the alleged anarchy of China's Cultural Revolution. There will be no more talk of China's student rabble either. Instead of being swamped by the erratic pressure of events, Mao Tse-tung decided to take off the lid himself, and allow the revolution to work from below. The mass was invited to take charge of the superstructure. There has been turmoil in China, but it has been a *planned* turmoil; things have happened according to a pattern. And now that things have simmered down, there is much more of communion between the older and the younger generation, apart from the fact that the entire Communist movement itself has had some sort of a spring cleaning. Under all circumstances, it is a difficult exercise—to disinherit the old. Old age brings in its train an enormous ego. Old people do not know how to abdicate gracefully, just as older soldiers do not know how to fade away with dignity. There is a natural urge in them to

cling on to what they possess. They have an apprehension—perhaps legitimate, perhaps not—that what is going to supplant their own system and ideas is necessarily inferior, and therefore has to be resisted. China's experiment has shown that this confrontation between the generations can be fitted into the rigours of revolutionary discipline, and none of the basic objectives of the movement gets diminished in the process. It needed tremendous courage to dismantle deliberately a frozen mould, but Mao did not baulk: he could see that the only way to save the movement and restore it to purity was to let the young ones take charge, *on official sponsorship*. He dared to dare. Which is why he has now inherited the world's young.

Compare the great adulation which the very incantation of Mao-Tse-tung's name brings forth among the young people elsewhere with the petty-mindedness exhibited in this country. A stray poster praising the thoughts of Mao scandalises our good citizens, and the question hour in Parliament reverberates to shrieks of righteous indignation. We dare not to know, dare not to learn; we love to be ensconced in our ignorance, to shut out the rest of the world to wallow in the thoughts of the Holy Cow. Much more than anywhere else, it is this country which needs a cultural revolution—to sweep out the illiteracies, the banalities, the hypocrisies. This will however not be allowed to happen; class instincts will warn everybody that there is no safety beyond the roots of reaction. We will stay where we are, spending Rs. 1100 crores annually on a phantom known as defence, generally making fools of ourselves in international relations, and within the country, allowing the corrupt ones to take over the sources of power. Even our clinical admiration for the happenings in France has a certain phantom quality: India is not France, Calcutta is not Paris, the students around here will never quite unite under a single banner, the workers will dare not flout

the injunction of the leaders, and, to clinch all, barring the irrelevancies of a Kerala or a West Bengal, the situation will be hardly such as would invoke the insurrectionary spirits of the entire nation. Our masses will perhaps prefer to be led by Shri Balraj Madhok and Shri Bal Thakerey.

Last week, I found myself in Cochin for a few hours, and discovered myself in strange company. It was the Sealord Hotel, and a group of businessmen, their spirits greatly lifted, were entertaining one another. Some of them owned rubber or coffee plantations, some were in the rice trade, others have made their pile by either exporting lemon grass or importing copra. There was glee in their heart; there are only two good men in Kerala Cabinet, they put me wise: M. N. Govindan Nair and T. V. Thomas. But they are Communists, I protested. "Of course they are not, it is only the Marxists who are Communists. Nair and Thomas are just like us. And they are fighting our battle *from inside*". Toasts were drunk.



# On Marx

MONITOR

## II

IN their analysis of the history of human society Marx and Engels spoke of two kinds of revolution in modern times—the bourgeois-democratic revolution and the proletarian or socialist revolution. The first is led by the bourgeoisie against feudalism, the second by the working class against capitalism. In this analysis the founders of scientific socialism were greatly influenced by Western European history, particularly by the history of England and France. By the time they wrote the *Communist Manifesto* (1848) the bourgeois-democratic revolution had, in the main, been completed in both the countries and the authors of the *Manifesto* confidently believed in the socialist revolution as the next stage in human history. England and France seemed, however, to have been the only countries where the bourgeoisie carried out, in the main, the tasks assigned to them by history and brought about the victory of the bourgeois-democratic revolution against the old feudal social order.

The Paris Commune of 1871 seemed to follow the original Marxist schema in that it constituted the first serious attempt by the proletariat of a capitalist country to seize political power. It was however defeated. But even in its defeat this great experience taught valuable lessons to the proletariat. Marx and Engels drew one particularly profound lesson from this experience, so much so that it constituted an important development of their earlier stand in the *Communist Manifesto*. The famous second section of the *Manifesto* was, for obvious reasons, somewhat abstract on the question of the seizure of political power by the working class in the proletarian revolution. After the experience of the Paris Commune Marx and Engels emphasized that “the proletariat cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made [that is, old] state machinery and

wield it for its own purposes”.<sup>1</sup> In other words, the proletariat must have to *smash* the old state machine whose essence lies in the bureaucracy and the standing army. As is well known, Lenin had to re-emphasize this vital aspect of Marxism in his fight against the right-wing opportunists in the working class movement.

As we pointed out, the Paris Commune seemed to have been in line with the original Marxist model of social change. But what about those cases where history does not present itself so ‘methodically’? What, if the bourgeoisie, for various reasons, is incapable of undertaking the struggle against feudalism and thereby shows its incapacity to accomplish the task that history has assigned to it? Such indeed was the case with Germany in the middle of the nineteenth century and the founders of scientific socialism gave a two-fold answer to the problem. First, they pointed out that the task of the proletariat in such a situation was to make a joint front with the bourgeoisie against feudalism. “They (the Communists)”, says the *Manifesto*, “fight with the bourgeoisie whenever it acts in a revolutionary way, against the absolute monarchy, the feudal squirearchy, and the petty bourgeoisie”.<sup>2</sup> In the second place, because of the “advanced conditions of European civilization” it would not be necessary for a country like Germany to go through a long period of interval between the first and the second revolutions. “The bourgeois revolution . . . will be but the prelude to an immediately following proletarian revolution”.<sup>3</sup> This last point was further elaborated by Marx and Engels two years later in their address to the Communist League. “While”, they observed, “the democratic petty bourgeois wish to bring the revolution to a conclusion as quickly as possible . . . it is our interest and our task to make the revolution permanent, until all the more or less possessing classes have been forced out of their position of dominance, until the proletariat has conquered state power”.<sup>4</sup> It is also in such a situation that there arose the necessity of defining the attitude of the proletariat towards the peasantry.

## Role of Peasants

In the *Communist Manifesto* the references to the peasantry, it must be admitted, are not altogether complimentary. Its authors, however, soon modified their earlier stand, perhaps because of the political events of 1848 in Central Europe which showed that the proletariat alone could not win a revolution without the help of the peasantry. In their address to the Communist League, referred to above, they said that “just as the democrats combine with the peasants so must the workers combine with the rural proletariat [mit dem Landproletariat verbinden].<sup>5</sup> Later in a letter to Engels (16.4.1856) Marx wrote that “the whole thing in Germany will depend on the possibility of backing the proletarian revolution by some second edition of the Peasant’s War”.<sup>6</sup> As a matter of fact one of the reasons why the Paris Commune came to grief was the isolation of the proletariat from the rest of the population due mainly to its inability to forge an alliance with the peasantry.

This vital lesson was not lost upon Lenin when the task of determining correct revolutionary strategy and tactics fell on his shoulders in the conditions of a backward Russia. There the bourgeoisie was not interested in carrying the bourgeois-democratic revolution to its logical conclusion and wanted to come to terms with feudalism and its biggest representative, the Tsar. In such circumstances Lenin, in a famous pamphlet written in 1905,<sup>7</sup> stressed the necessity for the proletariat, in alliance with the peasantry, to assume the leadership of the bourgeois revolution and carry it to the end. It can perhaps be safely said that Lenin was the first Marxist to have understood the full implications of the alliance between the proletariat and the peasantry in the context of a revolution taking place in a country with a predominantly agrarian character. He clearly saw that in such conditions the attempt by the proletariat to win political power all by itself was doomed to failure inasmuch as this would automatically isolate it from the vast majority of the population, a part

of which might even go over to the bourgeoisie.

Lenin also imbibed another lesson from Marx and Engels—the uninterruptedness between the bourgeois-democratic and the socialist revolutions. We have already cited the relevant passage from Marx and Engels. Lenin also wrote, “From the democratic revolution we shall at once . . . begin to pass to the socialist revolution. We stand for uninterrupted revolution. We shall not stop half-way”.<sup>8</sup>

In the new epoch which world capitalism entered towards the end of the last century and the beginning of the present, Marxism stood in need of creative development in another respect. Marxists have termed this new phase of capitalism ‘Imperialism’, which should be clearly distinguished from simple colonialism in the traditional sense of the term. There were colonial empires long before imperialism. To the Marxists imperialism is a comparatively modern phenomenon that has marked the later phase of capitalism. The most important economic features that characterise imperialism and distinguish it from early capitalism are monopoly capitalism based on advanced industrial techniques and the export of surplus capital.

### Imperialism

Marx lived and wrote before capitalism entered this phase and hence could not leave behind him a complete theory on this new phenomenon. However, Marx by studying the basic contradictions inherent in capitalism, could discern some of the important trends—specially those relating to the concentration and centralisation of capital<sup>9</sup>—which later changed it into monopoly capitalism. That capitalist countries, at a certain stage of their development, require the export of capital can, similarly, be discerned in Marx’s theory of crisis—concerning the realisation of surplus value—as well as in his discussion of the counter-tendencies to the falling rate of profit in his principal theoretical work<sup>10</sup>. Nevertheless it remains true that the original Marxian model of capitalism was mainly based on competitive, that is, pre-

monopoly capitalism. Later Marxists—particularly Engels, Kautsky, Hilferding, Luxemburg—made further valuable studies of the new trends. We here particularly refer to Engels’ discussions in 1891—in connection with his critique of the German Social Democratic Programme<sup>11</sup>—and in 1895 in his brilliant, albeit unfinished, supplement to the third volume of *Das Kapital*<sup>12</sup>. It was, however, left to Lenin to come out with a coherent, systematic and complete theory of imperialism in his now classic work on the subject—*Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* (1916). After describing the principal features of imperialism Lenin showed that in this later phase capitalism loses its former ‘progressive’ character and becomes parasitic. It is moribund capitalism, capitalism in decay. But at the same time “Imperialism is the eve of social revolution”, that is, though decaying the system *will not die of itself*. It has to be destroyed through the proletarian revolution. A very significant feature of imperialism, Lenin observed, is that it greatly accentuates, on a world scale, the uneven economic and political development inherent in capitalism. An important corollary follows from this. The original Marxian schema of proletarian revolution first breaking out in advanced capitalist countries no longer remains necessarily valid. Imperialism, in fact, allows advanced capitalism a fresh lease of life in a double sense. *First*, the tendency of the rate of profit to fall in the home country—owing to higher organic composition of capital—is checked by the export of capital to colonies and semi-colonies where capital is scarce and labour plentiful and cheap. *Secondly*, the workers—or at least those constituting their upper stratum—in the metropolis get a share of the huge ‘super-profits’ earned by the owners of capital and thereby come to have a stake in maintaining the *status quo*. Simultaneously, however, with this temporary stabilisation of the metropolitan system, there arises the possibility of revolutions breaking out in the underdeveloped areas of world capitalism, of the imperialist links, that is, in those places where, on the

chain being broken at its weakest links, that is, in those places where, on the one hand, the working class and its allies are the most oppressed and, on the other, imperialism is least protected and it is easiest for a revolution to expand. From this it follows that, in as much as it is possible for the proletariat and its other oppressed allies to break the imperialist front in one place or several places, victory of the proletarian revolution is possible first in several countries or even in one single country but not in all countries simultaneously.

In the context of the possibility of revolutions breaking out in the colonies and semi-colonies there arose the necessity of defining the role of the oppressed nations in the proletarian revolution. Here also Lenin broke new grounds. Before Lenin, Marx had touched upon this problem particularly in connection with the Irish question. In a letter to Engels [10. 12. 1869] he pointed out that he no longer believed that the proletarian ascendancy in England would solve the Irish question. Rather “*it is in the direct, absolute interest of the English working class to get rid of their present connexion with Ireland*”.<sup>13</sup> In another letter to two other friends [9. 4. 1870] Marx added that “the decisive blow [der entscheidende Schlag] against the ruling classes in England cannot be delivered in England but only in Ireland”. However, the national and colonial question did not assume major importance before the rise of imperialism and, in the entire working class movement of the time, Lenin alone seemed to have the full grasp of the situation. He emphasized that the surest allies of the proletariat of the metropolitan countries were the people of the colonies and semi-colonies because both of them had the same class enemies—the imperialist bourgeoisie. The fight for national independence waged by colonised people directly contributes to the success of the proletarian revolution in the imperialist countries. “World imperialism”, said Lenin, “must fall when the revolutionary onslaught of the exploited and oppressed workers within each country . . . unites with the revo-

lutionary onslaught of hundreds of millions of men who hitherto remained outside history and were merely regarded as objects of history". At Lenin's suggestion the Second Congress of the Communist International amended the original Marxist slogan "Proletarians of all countries, unite" to read "Proletarians of all countries and oppressed nations, unite". In the particular case of the pre-revolutionary Russia where non-Russian nationalities were being oppressed by Tsarist imperialism, Lenin openly advocated that in order to attain its victory against its own ruling classes the Russian proletariat must champion the cause of the oppressed nationalities even to the extent of supporting their demand for secession from Russia.

The October Socialist Revolution of 1917 and the subsequent events fully confirmed the conclusions drawn by Lenin from his study of imperialism.

(To be continued).

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## The Press

### A Damsel In Distress ?

COMMENTATOR

SUDDENLY the air was thick last week with reports of a crisis in the Union Cabinet. It was said that the Prime Minister and her deputy had once again failed to agree—this time on the question of Assam reorganisation—and a showdown may be expected on the Prime Minister's return from abroad. Mrs Gandhi and Mr Desai seem to have entered into a compact to feud eternally, and there is no reason why the upshot should be different this time. Both of them may continue after making the murky, politics of the Congress party a little murkier. But there were certain peculiarities in the manner in which the reports were gaining currency that intrigued the common reader. Whatever differences there may be in the Union Cabinet over the proposed scheme of reorganisation of Assam they must have arisen before the Prime Minister's departure. There was enough indication that everything was not going well with the scheme when the announcement of the Government's decision was not made on the appointed day and was postponed till the Prime Minister's return.

The perquisitewallas among Delhi reporters could not have failed to notice this. Some of them have claimed that they did not. Normally, they would have spun a story round it complete with details of what vicious fate awaits the country if one or the other quits the Cabinet. But they refrained. In spite of the frequency of Gandhi-Desai clashes over what is good for the country in which a point of no return is reached every time and then the miracle happens, a rift between the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister has not yet ceased to be news. It can make a lead story, especially in the silly season. But the correspondents who knew all about it preferred not to break the news. When the self-imposed censorship was lifted, the news spread through personal columns of special

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correspondents in which trends, gossip and predilections of correspondents predominated. It was surprising that reports of a serious breach between the two top men in the Government had not been found worthy of news page. Another interesting point was that the correspondents had in their individual wisdom decided to break the news almost simultaneously on the eve of the Prime Minister's return. No paper seemed to be loth to publish the story on the reasonable ground that it had already appeared in a rival paper; nor was there the customary attempt on the part of a correspondent who had missed a good story to prove that his rival had gone wrong at least partially, if not wholly. The dispatches tallied suspiciously in all essential details. It seems some people in New Delhi were interested in getting the story circulated at this point of time, obviously for some one's benefit. And the special correspondents had agreed to eat out of their hands. Otherwise, so many correspondents could not have decided one fine week to dip their pens in the same ink.

The first to come out with the report was K. Rangaswami of *The Hindu*, presumably because his column appears on Mondays. In his weekly column which appeared on May 27 Rangaswami wrote that what inhibited the Congress from bold and positive action was the in-fighting that had been going on within the ranks of its leaders all the time. Otherwise, the last-minute postponement of the decision on the reorganisation of Assam cannot be explained. Initially the controversy was over the allotment of law and order to the sub-State, and a compromise was evolved vesting the Governor with the responsibility of maintaining law and order. But suddenly vehement opposition to the entire scheme of reorganisation was voiced. Fear was expressed that if the Government of India yielded to the threat of violence held out by the hill leaders, similar attempts at blackmail might be made in other parts of the country as well. The Deputy Prime Minister and one or two other Ministers firmly urged this point of view. Mr Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed, who was till then

in support of the reorganisation scheme of Assam, backed out. It is no doubt a delicate situation and must be tackled carefully. Whether the problem will be dealt with on merits or will be shelved to avoid a showdown at the personal level remains to be seen. If some leaders held strong views against the reorganisation of the State, then one must even expect resignations from the Cabinet. It is believed that some leaders would not mind provoking a crisis on an issue rather than quarrel on personal grounds. The situation will become clear when the Prime Minister returns. Meanwhile, dilly-dallying in Delhi may well drown the democratic leadership in the Hill districts and demagogues with desperate demands will dominate in a delicate zone on the border.

It was the turn of *The Statesman* to publish the story on May 28. The writer preferred a cautious approach and took the pen-name of "Chorus". The paper, however, sought to create an impression that a great secret was being revealed, though to readers of one national paper at least the story was twentyfour hours old. "Chorus" said at least two Ministers, Mr Morarji Desai and Mr Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed, had gone on record in Cabinet discussions as opposing the Assam reorganisation scheme. If the scheme was pushed through despite his opposition, Mr Desai threatened to vote against it in Parliament and Mr Ahmed had threatened not only to quit the Cabinet but to join the Opposition. On the other hand Mrs Gandhi said she was equally determined to implement the scheme unchanged. At present, there appears little possibility of a compromise; at any rate little effort is being made to find one. The point in the scheme to which Mr Desai particularly objects is that law and order should not form part of the subjects transferred to the proposed autonomous State to be formed by Hill Districts. Mr Ahmed's opposition is more fundamental. He fears that the creation of an autonomous Hill State will mean the total dismemberment of Assam, especially because the Mikir Hills and North Cachar will also be given the

option to quit the bigger State of Assam. He seems not to have been impressed by Mrs Gandhi's argument that all that was sought to be conferred on the Hill Districts was autonomy within Assam and not outside it. The discussions at the two Cabinet meetings held before Mrs Gandhi left on her South-East Asia tour were rather heated, almost vituperative. Voices were raised and warnings given of dire consequences if the scheme was put through as it stood. Repercussions in the lobbies of Parliament became serious enough for Mrs Gandhi to think at one stage of cancelling her foreign tour and see the reorganisation scheme through to the end. But at that time she decided to postpone further action in the hope that tempers would cool off and that the opposition would lessen in the few days she would be away. According to "Chorus", the latest position of Mr Desai is believed to be that a compromise with him is possible if he is allowed to abstain from voting in Parliament on the Bill for

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JUNE 8, 1968

Assam's reorganisation. But it is harder to bring round Mr Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed because he thinks his political career would perish if he were to agree to what he considers to be the undoing of Assam. Maybe his resignation would become inevitable.

#### He too . . .

Next to come out with the story was *Hindusthan Standard*. In the issue of May 29 of the paper Ranajit Roy wrote that at the meeting of the Union Cabinet held a few hours before the Prime Minister's departure for her South-Asia tour Mr Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed threatened to resign not merely from the Government but also from the Congress and carry on a campaign against the reorganisation proposal if it was accepted. Mr Morarji Desai and Dr. Ram Subhag Singh also had adopted a firm attitude against the proposal, but they took care not to go so far. There was a time when Mr Asoka Mehta had a spell over the Prime Minister. He has now fallen from grace. Mr Dinesh Singh is among the few others who continue to be wholly in the Prime Minister's camp. It must have been a shock to Mrs Gandhi that even Mr Singh was critical of the proposal as it had been placed before the Cabinet. Mr Singh's attempt was to rescue the Prime Minister from her predicament and to prevent a final breach between her and the Deputy Prime Minister by stressing the need for a compromise solution. The battle, now in suspension, will be joined again on Mrs Gandhi's return. Roy writes that on the problem of Assam Hill Districts politics at the Centre has now taken a turn the consequences of which cannot yet be foreseen. Today Mrs Gandhi holds office not because of her own influence in the party or support of those who control the party machine. She is where she is because of a delicate balance of forces. It is said that the Assam issue is being exploited by her adversaries to isolate her and pave the way for a change-over to a new leader. This prognostication appears far-fetched. But there may be truth in reports that some of the organisational leaders have changed their ideas about Mr Desai and

will support him in case of a fresh contest. At any rate, the Prime Minister's supporters have become alert and so far as it lies with them they will try for an understanding with Mr Desai on the issue.

Not to be outdone by others, *Hindustan Times* served the story in a piece by its correspondent, M. K. Dhar, on May 30. Dhar said the rift between Mrs Gandhi and Mr Desai had come into the open during discussions on Assam's reorganisation. Apart from his objection in principle to a separate Hill State, Mr Desai's opposition to the proposal was interpreted to mean that he was beginning to accept the advice of his friends and followers to take up an independent stand on certain issues to improve his image. The Home Minister's inscrutable silence over the merits of the reorganisation scheme he himself had drafted may appear curious. But it is not difficult to find an explanation: he has lately been trying to retrace his steps fearing criticism of the scheme from the party bosses, including Mr Nijalingappa. Thus Mrs Gandhi herself will have to pull her chestnuts out of the fire. Recent developments point to signs of new power alignments and personal equations building up in the party leadership and a sort of power vacuum developing at the Centre with the major groups in the ruling party pulling in different directions. The result of this developing vacuum is that the Cabinet is unable to come to grips with major problems. The Syndicate therefore seems to think that the time to strike has come.

It is clear that all these correspondents writing on different dates agree on the nature of the "crisis" and the protagonists. There is also an unmistakable undercurrent of sympathy for the Prime Minister in the dispatches. It will be surprising, in the circumstances, if the very special correspondents have not been fed by the same grape-vine. It seems the Prime Minister's P. R. men are an efficient lot and some of them must have become quite active in building up an image of her as a damsel in distress for a purpose which is yet to unfold itself.

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## Film Crisis : New Phase

PRABODH KUMAR MAITRA

THE strike of cinema house workers is three months old now. Their tenacity and doggedness, their refusal to kowtow to the owners and the unity that has been forged between the actors' union, the technicians and creative workers in various other fields and the ordinary filmgoers are unique, not only in the realm of trade unionism but also in our cultural and intellectual movement. A stage has been reached when, it seems, passing of resolutions is not enough. The situation calls for concerted action by all those who have come forward to stall the onslaught on cultural life.

The decision of 45 cinema house owners not to screen films with which three particular actors and three technicians are connected because of their open association with the strikers and their honest attempt to apprise the Government of the unwholesome effect of the proposed increase in the price of tickets by ten paise, shows a fascist proclivity. The owners were dictating terms for settlement by concealing facts from the authorities. In fact the inner working of the industry itself is deliberately kept so confused that even when a commission was probing into it some years back, fears were expressed by a member that the tricks of the trade were not adequately revealed; he was reported to have appended a separate note with a frank and forthright assessment.

The six "offenders" and some others from the very beginning came to brass tacks in the Samity formed by the distributors and producers. The first shot was fired by the President of the Actors' Union, questioning the representative character of the body. The Samity was improvised, it seemed clear, not so much to do some good to the industry but to extract concessions from the exhibitors and to put up a front to deal with the Government. It was an opportunistic alliance, because to the close observer it was apparent that basically the exhibitors, who dominate the scene,

could not be in eternal enmity with the other expropriators—the distributors and producers. Talk of self-regulation in the industry, cleverly planted by the S. K. Patil Committee in their report over a decade ago, proved to be a piece of self-delusion.

What is regrettable is the behaviour of some directors who, while paying lip support to the cause of the workers and fellow directors, actors and technicians, have recoiled under the pressure of distributors. Professional ethics seems to be an alien idea among sections in the entertainment world.

There are renegades among the technicians too. Clever manipulation by the exploiters and the dubious attitude of some of their leaders stand in the way of any effective liaison with technicians in general. They fail to realise that by letting down the cause of the employees and by harbouring stooges they cut at the root of their own existence. Things are taking shape in a clearly recognisable fashion. The situation has unleashed a whole range of possibilities whereby united action by the striking employees, technicians, actors, directors and the trade union apparatus, coupled with the massive support of the creative and intellectual workers and common people, will compel the arrogant employers to see the futility of their stupid stand.

The showhouse owners include some former defectors in the political field. The pressure brought to bear by them must not be allowed to be decisive. The exhibitors' unilateral decision to open a dozen showhouses holds a threat. These are in localities notoriously prone to inflammable conditions on minor pretexts. It seems the move is calculated. The former defectors may have started their political game in a previously untested area of operation.

This is the time to evolve proper machinery to regulate the industry and protect it from the limitless greed of the monopolists. Self-regulation is bunk. Taking over a few showhouses and leaving other areas untouched will be only tinkering with the problem. Distributors are unlikely to play angle to the Government. So far per-

suasion by the State has failed to deliver the goods. Delayed action might deny justice altogether.

## Not Amateurish

BY AN ART CRITIC

AMAR Nandan, who paints for pleasure and does not mix it up with his means of livelihood (for which he works in a small office) had a solo exhibition of his paintings last week at the Birla Academy, Southern Avenue, Calcutta. Although he is an amateur, he is not amateurish. He has taken the trouble to learn the technique of his craft and one can see that his interest in it is never flagging. He generally favours the formal approach, but that is not to say that his works are mechanical. Most of them are warm and fresh. He handles water colours with greater efficacy than he does oils and he had a number of pastels that were quite engaging, especially considering the fact that this was the artist's first exhibition. His pastel piece "Landscape" had a dreamy quality. "Ruins" was a well-constructed oil, but, as is so often the case with this over-played subject, a trifle melodramatic.

### Group of Five

The Birla Academy also housed an exhibition by a group comprising five painters. The participants had one thing in common, and that was sincerity and being appealing without being flashy.

Among the participants, Mrityunjay Chakravorty was selective and chose to retain the essentials, repudiating the redundant. His canvases are well considered and built up with deliberation. "Composition" was one such canvas.

Benu Lahiri is simple and unostentatious, but her very simplicity is her asset, for, without any loud and screeching notes, she manages to convey her message. An instance of this is "At Work".

About Shyamal Bose's ability there is absolutely no doubt, and it is

precisely on account of his mastery over his medium (oil) that he can achieve his goal with such stark economy of colour. "Lemon Light" creates a dream world of a mundane theme, anchored boats.

Chitra De's landscapes are good, but she seems not to be so sure of herself when the subject is water. Her well-formulated "Hutments" is articulate and "Munna" is a living portrait.

Santosh Rohatgi is on a soft and low note. She holds the viewer's attention with her quiet assertiveness and is at home in her medium. Of her exhibits the one we liked most was "Coiffure". It was gently modulated and rhythmically composed.

## Letters

### "Voyage Of Discovery"

Your first editorial, "Voyage of Discovery", (June 1), was interesting and convincing reading except for a slight flaw, showing a momentary aberration, or—shall I say?—a fleeting hallucination when you talk of "Russo-American druzba". Not that such a thing is an eternal impossibility. It may become a reality some day, not after "the good Americans" leave Asia to Asians, or withdraw their 7th Fleet, or refuse to have bases in the Indian Ocean, but after those rotten though fresh, American neo-colonialists find their stinking neo-colonial game too costly for themselves, and retire hurt into their own shell. For the present it is just a paranoid phenomenon in somebody's fertile brain! I wish to hear the all-clear signal from this fog or mist-

A. M. O. GHANI  
Calcutta.

### Student Rebellion

Why are students, whether in a mofussil town of West Bengal or in Paris, Berlin, Prague or New York, on the move? No doubt economic, political and cultural reasons are

there; there is the impact of the thoughts of Mao Tse-tung and Guevara. But why is the first tremor of the upheavals recorded among the students? The reason perhaps is that like peasants in underdeveloped countries the students are the only stratum in society which has nothing to lose but the sense of insignificance. Loss of a sense of significance is the result of the alienation of capitalist society—the result of the overall dehumanization of values and social relations. A student who is in great need of identification thinks himself insignificant, powerless and helpless in the education factory whose prototype is the society itself. Hence the anger, the rebellion and the intellectual guerilla warfare. In the underdeveloped countries, the two most important revolutionary forces are the peasantry and the students. Coordination between these rural and urban forces is necessary.

ARJUN BANDYOPADHYAY  
Naihati.

### Jadavpur

Jadavpur University makes it vulnerable to American influences to an extent that is not possible in Calcutta and other universities in this zone. How do these influences operate?

There are several hobby clubs and a centre of the World University Service (WUS), whose main function is to inject jingoistic chauvinism and Yankee culture into the students. The clubs are virtually run by a university official, though a fake election of a student secretary also takes place every year. In the Debating Society the topics are so chosen as to avoid the main social contradictions of the day and to introduce Americanized snobbery and all sorts of flippancy. A recent inter-university debate on "Lady Pankherst has destroyed womanhood" shows how perverted a debate can be! Also on the same dais an inter-university debate was held in the presence of the officials of the U.S. Embassy on 'the role of the Ford Foundation in the educational sphere of India' last year whereas a debate "communism has contradicted

its own theory by coming to power through the ballot-box", proposed and suggested by the College of Engineering Technology Students Union, was postponed indefinitely on flimsy grounds.

The WUS organised a fete "to help the T.B. patients", where quite a sum of money was spent (alcohol was there). It is alleged that the closing balance was Rs 9. The WUS also organizes many social festivals like "Holi" and "Rakhibandhan". At these functions students get acquainted with groups of 'American couples' or some individuals who invite them to informal discussions on a to z of Indian and American policy, particularly the Vietnam war. One of the directors of the Indo-American Society is the chairman of one of the hobby clubs and another advisor is now undergoing training in the U.S.A.

In recent weeks, one Dr Beach of an American university, was permitted to circulate a form among students which raised objections from a section of the students. Some parts of the form are: What is your socio-economic class . . .

Considering only the students in your class, who are your best friends? Please PRINT their names below . . .

Considering only the students in your class, who are the persons you do not like or like the least. Please PRINT their names below (All answers will be kept confidential).

Which political party or group do you like . . .

This could be an attempt to classify students and might be followed by discrimination and victimization.

A STUDENT  
Calcutta.

### Genocide

In your journal dated May 18 I read with profound interest Jean-Paul Sartre's article on Genocide.

Sartre's style of writing is wonderful, and living as we do in a country where the academicians decry Marxism as outdated, Sartre's analysis of the reasons behind U.S. intervention in Vietnam is masterly. He points out that the strength of a united people can

withstand aggression by the most powerful imperialist country. So today in a war between the metropolis and the colony it is not possible for the aggressor to defeat the ruled country without destroying the entire civil population. That is not possible for a country which has vested interests in the colony. America has no such stake in Vietnam and so it is out to kill the whole Vietnamese people so as to prevent the possibility of "communist expansion".

A. K. ROY  
Bankura.

### United Front

To blazes with Mr Sukumar Paul because he could not bring himself to praise one basking in the glory of being a theoretician. In putting the question to Mr Probdh Ch. Dutta Mr Paul merely echoed the view of the supporters of the United Front Government in West Bengal. Still, Mr. Paul should not have forgotten that dignified silence is the only answer to the smear campaign launched against the leaders of the Marxist party.

We are already in the swirl of revolution and only men in blinkers do not own up the incontrovertible fact that the tasks of the revolution are being accomplished; that they are being accomplished is seen beyond a wisp of doubt in the fact that the Marxist party, particularly since the United Front Government was shoved out of the picture, has come out stronger and qualitatively more united and has already won over what belonged to elements less reliable on the trade union front. And that is exactly what sends cold shivers down the spines of the diehard reactionaries.

However, what we crave for in your esteemed weekly are less revolutionary parrot-cries, less snap evaluations bordering on pontification, and more objective depiction of reality as well as an analytical diagnosis of the causes leading to the Indian communist movement being ham-handed and positive suggestions as to how the limitations can be staved off.

JYOTI P. ROY-CHOUDHURY  
Dum Dum Cantonment.

### Railways

Never before has discontent among the staff been more acute as now on Eastern Railway. If proper steps are not taken to remove this discontent, the lives of many passengers will be in danger owing to human failures inevitable under present working conditions. It will not do, for instance, to issue good chits to the administration, as a daily tried to do under a piece entitled "Railways' Problem of Rationalization".

The correspondent who wrote it tried to boost the image of Asansol Division, dwelling on certain experiments to check ticketless travelling, and all that. But a correct and impartial probe into staff discontent, specially in Asansol Division, will reveal how a high-handed Divisional Superintendent is treating the employees. In the name of economy people are being made surplus and forced to do all sorts of odd jobs.

Agreed that ticketless travelling is rampant over the Indian Railways, but one wonders what protection is given to the checking staff against physical assaults by regional goonda elements duly protected by the political big brother (Congress)? Isn't it as much a problem of the Railways as it is for the State governments? How much help have the State governments willingly given so far?

When a checker trying to haul up persons travelling without tickets at Madhupur, in Asansol Division, was being mercilessly beaten up by goondas, the Divisional Superintendent was sitting quietly in his coach at the same station. New experiments indeed!

SOME RAILWAYMEN  
Calcutta.

### Vivekananda Rock

It is strange that in a country where people die on the footpath and where death from starvation is a daily affair we are going to spend some Rs. 50 lakhs for the Vivekananda Memorial Rock. This amount can be spent in installing pumps for irrigation in a drought affected area. In the name of

voluntary donation, the staff in many organisations will be indirectly forced to contribute.

S. N. DEB  
Calcutta

### Your Religion?

India is a secular country and the Government is not supposed to bother about the religion of any man, as it is intensely personal. But then, why the question of what religion one belongs to when he or she applies for a post? If I do write Mohammedan instead of Hindu could it change anything at all?

Would you think that this system is necessary? If we simply call ourselves Indians, would it not be more helpful?

KASHINATH KAR  
Jadabpur.

### Germany

I read the article "New hopes for Germany", by Abdul Gafar (May 11). Fascism in post-war Germany can be overthrown only by organised working class movement, and students and intellectuals may at best assume the role of leadership. It is really a hopeful sign that the students have realised the gravity of the situation. Whether they condemn Russian revisionism or not does not matter but they must come into contact with the workers, make them class-conscious. Revolutionaries in every country must concentrate on their internal problems. Their sympathy for the Vietnamese is all right, but the fascists are desperate and formation of student organisations not backed by workers can do Germany no good.

A. K. ROY  
Bankura.

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