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On Other Page

COMMENTS	..	2
<i>Letter From America</i>		
NIXON'S TOUR		
ROBI CHAKRAVORTI	..	4
<i>View From Delhi</i>		
HIGH COMMAND, LOW DRAMA		
FROM A POLITICAL COR- RESPONDENT	..	6
<i>Kerala</i>		
DOUBLE-FACED GAME		
RAMJI	..	7
THE USURIOUS EXPLOI- TATION		
NIRODE ROY	..	9
CALCUTTA DIARY	..	12
MEETING JASIMUDDIN		
KRISHNA DHAR	..	14
<i>The Press</i>		
KOSYGIN'S BRIEF?		
KAJAL SEN	..	15
ARUNIK'S ONE-ACT PLAYS		
BY OUR DRAMA CRITIC	..	17
LOVE THY NEIGHBOUR		
MRIGANKA SEKHAR RAY	..	17
LETTERS	..	18

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IN SEARCH OF SECURITY

WERE the satraps consulted in advance, or did they learn of the Imperial tour from the Washington announcement of June 28? The mystery is still unsolved. A report from Djakarta on June 30, published in important newspapers all over the world, said that the news about Mr Nixon's visit had come as a surprise to Mrs Gandhi and "produced an official Indonesian reaction bordering on frigidity". Not that the visit was unwelcome, but New Delhi and Djakarta might as well have been given a little advance information. It is now being claimed that Mrs Gandhi did know about the visit, but was not aware that an official announcement had been made. But, according to the Djakarta report, when asked what she and Mr Nixon would discuss, she 'replied blankly': "I don't know that President Nixon is coming." Was she being diplomatically evasive? Nobody thought so. But if the amour propre of some sovereign nations in the free world has been hurt, their leaders know better than to make a fuss.

So Mr Nixon will be received not only with proper official honour, but also with gratitude and an expectant glee. The Americans have made no secret of the purpose of the visit. Vietnam may be lost, but there is a great deal still to be saved. According to a Washington report, the State Department is much encouraged by "progress" in Indonesia. And hasn't the Indian Prime Minister just returned from a visit to Indonesia after planning much closer collaboration between the two countries? Relations will be improved also with Thailand and the Philippines, and both Washington and Moscow are doing their best to impress upon India and Pakistan the need to subdue small differences in the interest of common security against China. In fact, American officials have already indicated that Mr Nixon will discuss the possibility of a new grouping that can replace SEATO and include countries like India. Washington has been particularly encouraged to plan such an alliance by Mr Brezhnev's hints about the need for a new collective security arrangement in Asia. According to the Washington correspondent of *The Times*, U.S. officials "do not believe that the Russians plan so much to set up their own military pacts with Asian countries as to find ways of cooperating with the United States in strengthening the smaller independent countries of the region".

So, for all practical purposes, a new alliance may be jointly guaranteed by the USA and Russia. Even formal participation may no longer be inconceivable, though the Russians are perhaps a little embarrassed at the moment by open suggestions in Washington about the possibility of Russo-American military cooperation in Asia. An Indian correspondent in Moscow has been sold the line that even China will be free to participate in the collective security system suggested by Mr Brezhnev. This is too funny for words. The Americans are at least a little more straightforward about their purpose. Perhaps the Russians do not want to appear over-anxious to cooperate with U.S. military arrangements in Asia before the minor misunderstanding over Mr Nixon's plan to visit Rumania is cleared up and forgotten. Moscow may, at the moment, be a little annoyed with both Washington and Bucharest, but assurances must already have been obtained on all sides. New Delhi has nothing to worry about. Any arrangement it makes with Mr Nixon will have the full support of the proponents of the doctrine of limited sovereignty.

Death Of A Non-Hero

Late last week the body of Moise Tshombe was on its way, in a chartered plane paid for by some Algerian committee, to Brussels where it will be buried. The Algerians had very good reasons to get rid of the corpse as fast as they could. The death in prison was natural; but not everyone will rule out murkier possibilities. The Belgians had equally good reasons to exhume the body with the utmost expedition because Tshombe was the repository of some of the nastiest secrets of Belgian goings-on in the Congo since June 1960. Even the dead body might have told many tales Brussels would rather hide. Relief at the end of the affair must have been felt much more widely in such capitals, for instance, as Lon-

don, Paris, Washington, Lusaka and Salisbury. The full story will never be known in detail. As Mr Conor Cruise O'Brien has indicated in his book, *To Katanga and Back*, a part of the U.N. Secretariat too may have a good deal to answer for.

All African frontiers in the last century were drawn so arbitrarily, entirely according to which European power had been able to grab how much, that there was nothing culpable about some areas seeking new frontiers. But in the Congo the secessionist demands of Katanga were not derived from the aspirations of the Luanda but from the doggedness of the Union Minière to demonstrate that the political independence of Leopoldville meant nothing at all to the absolute economic supremacy of the international combine in which British, French, South African and American interests were involved, to say nothing, of course, of the Belgians. This is where Moise Tshombe was immensely useful. He had to be made a hero; and he was, if only rather briefly.

In the early sixties the question in Leo was not which politician had been bought but for how long. Only the morning, or the afternoon too? Being wealthy even before independence, Tshombe wasn't perhaps quite so dishonest as some others seeing opportunity for the first time; but he knew that his wealth as well as his power, which he now coveted more, could come only from his Belgian masters. He was less a hero than Mobutu because at least the latter had risen from the ranks. If there is a next world there may be an accidental meeting between Lumumba, Tshombe and Hammarskjöld, a non-hero sandwiched between two diverse heroes. With a tape-recorder around, to be later despatched to the earth, the history of the recent Congo might be less incomplete. Not often in history has the truth been so assiduously suppressed; and outside the clutches of the Belgians and the British even Tshombe might be ready to tell us a part of the truth he knew.

Bihar : Stop-Go

In Bihar Bhola Paswan has come and gone again, but not into the wilderness. Very few legislators in Bihar do; though they richly deserve to be confined to limbo, hope springs eternal in their breast that they will be able to climb onto another bandwagon sooner than later. This time the period will be two months or so, during which the corruption of the legislators will continue unabated so that the Congress is able to set up another patchwork. As for the administration, it is almost beyond redemption and President's rule will boost the inept, get-rich-quick bureaucracy.

No tears need be shed for Mr Paswan and his temporary team, not even crocodile tears. Mr Paswan, however hard he tries to explain away his overtures to the defectors, will not convince many that his course was honest. In fact, his Ministry was doomed from the very beginning. In assessing the situation, the CPI(M), which is a minority of three in the State Assembly, proved right when it withheld its co-operation at the outset on the grounds that it would be an opportunistic alliance. The other parties, bigger in size if not in wisdom, by deciding to support Mr Paswan from the sidelines, succeeded in creating confusion. The Jana Sangh, that aggressive party of the Hindu-Hindi heartland, got annoyed when the wrong defectors, Christian and Muslim, were taken into the Cabinet and an attempt was made to set up an autonomous board for the tribal area. It could not bear the idea of Adivasi children having their primary education in any language except Hindi. In 1967, from inside the Cabinet it had stopped due recognition being given to Urdu and engineered the riots at Ranchi; in 1969 it wants Hindi to be thrust down the throats of Adivasi children. For the left parties to declare their support for a Ministry which would have been at the mercy of the Sanghites was a big mistake. Can there be any polarisation on this basis be-

JULY 12, 1969

tween the right and the left? Anti-Congressism is all right but the alternative should be something much better than the stinking co-existence which was aimed at. And whether that alternative will ever emerge through the corrupt processes of ministry-making is open to doubt. No talk of likeminded parties coming together to strengthen the democratic movement will dispel the doubt when the overriding objective is the Secretariat, and not any movement to defend the workers and the landless.

Both the Congress and most left parties are sore over President's rule—they want new arrangements for taking over the harem right now. If the Congress High Command had been honest it should have opted for fresh elections—a costly process no doubt but one which might have taught the legislators a lesson or two. However, the outcome of another election might have been the same in a caste-ridden society. What is the way out of the rot for Bihar is not known—and not Bihar alone. Meanwhile the state of suspended animation in which the legislators have been placed will mean a big waste of public money and be an encouragement to the traders in politics.

A correspondent writes from Patna :

The Sangh was opposed to the inclusion of Justin Richard, leader of the Hul Jharkhand in the Cabinet, not because he is a member of the Council and not of the Assembly, but because it felt that if he and his men entered the Government, it would be a big blow to its own political ambitions in the tribal belt where, through the non-tribal money-lenders (all kinds of exploiters in the tribal area are mostly non-tribals) and its slogan of non-Christian vs Christian tribals, it had succeeded in penetrating some remote areas.

The ministerial kaleidoscope has changed half a dozen times in Bihar since the 1967 General Elections but as for Government, there has been none most of the time. After the mid-term poll, the administration has been at a standstill for five months.

Files have piled up without anyone having time to see them. Development work has stopped except for routine items.

The position is such that no party can form a Government that will last more than a few days. As for coalitions, the party line-up in the State legislature is such that none can possibly emerge. Is it not ironical that, despite the prevailing chaos in politics, the State units of most political parties are opposed to fresh elections and imposition of President's rule? Should one tell why? The MLAs sold their bullocks, land and much of their property to become Ministers (not legislators only).

Politics in Bihar is a glass of coffee, a bungalow on Fraser Road, a press conference in a dank hotel, a statement on the teleprinters, a caste majority, muscle power in some constituency, trading in a car, spying in the State Guest House, backroom intrigue. Politics is double-think, a changeable party label, defections and ministership. And Ministership, if one is lucky, is a free plane ride to one's home town, the first garlands of one's life and dreams of a house on Circular Road, an unreturnable car advance, an important portfolio and kow-towing officers. Ministership in Bihar is a nine-day wonder.

The Lawlessness Of It !

Corporate authorities are taking these days a page out in newspapers to inform people of their stand over a dispute as and when it occurs in their offices and plants. This healthy spurt in taking people into confidence should have been normally welcome. But the frequency of such insertions makes one a bit cautious. The State Bank of India, for example, issued six notices in a matter of twelve days. Their object in using newspapers, if not the frequency, was however understandable—the SBI being a public concern, every tax-

payer was entitled to know what paralysed the organization which covers one-third of the banking operations in the country. But not the same can be said about small private industries, which employ no more than a thousand or two workers and which produce no essential material, the lack of which can vitally affect people in general. What can be their interest, particularly in West Bengal, in incurring considerable expenditure by inserting notices in newspapers?

Analysis of these insertions may give an answer. Their headlines give an impression that lawlessness has become rampant in West Bengal. There is a negligible few among newspaper readers who scan these statements, except the headlines in big types. It matters little if the body of the copy contains contradictions, improbabilities, distortions, suppressions or plain lies. The object is to create in the collective subconscious in West Bengal an impression that labour here is unmanageable. If the West Bengal labourers were really so, there should have been no fresh investments of capital in the State and there should have been large flights of capital. Official statistics do not corroborate such apprehensions. The motive behind playing up lawlessness cannot but be an attempt to undermine the morale of workers who, the entrepreneurs hope, would be much too concerned with a threat of lock-out or closure to come up with a fresh charter of demands. The success of the industrialists in sabotaging tripartite talks on fixing minimum wages on grounds that they are not capable of paying more because of fall in production proves that they are on correct lines in their own way.

In the context of such intentions, it will be inconsiderate to expect sense from these newspaper notices. Even then, one should have thought, there could be a limit. To take an example—the statement issued by the Aluminium Corporation of India. Harrowing tales of assault and intimidation abound in the statement.

One such tale: "an officer of the Despatch Department was beaten severely at the factory gate by the workmen including Security Guards and after falling on the ground, he was gheraoed for a few hours without any medical help." A Falstaffian dramatisation, if the confusion in grammar can be overlooked, pervades the whole of the statement. It seems that the officers in Jaykaynagar are confounded by the police. The officers are beaten, dragged around, gheraoed and the police arrest the Works Manager! The Employment Exchange sends swarthy chaps for interview for posts of security guards and the police arrest them on some bogus criminal charges! The advertisement however never hints at the management's attempt to blow up the plant by withdrawing essential supplies. The workmen kept the plant operating by themselves and reached a production figure above the average. But that is the picture the hack copywriter could have been scarcely interested in.

Letter from America

Nixon's Tour

ROBI CHAKRAVORTI

THE announcement of Nixon's forthcoming tour through five States of Asia came as a surprise. The element of surprise should not blind us, however, to the significance of the trip. Nor should one miss it as one gloats over whatever mass demonstrations may greet him in Asian capitals.

There is a certain boldness in Nixon's decision to tour five Asian States while the unpopular Vietnam war continues. The contrast with Eisenhower's cancelled trip to Japan years ago for fear of student demonstrations comes to mind. If the radicals are happy at the growing anti-American feelings in Asia in the wake of the widespread unpopularity of the Vietnam war, they have reasons to be concerned at the boldness of the American President taking a tour of Asian countries at a time when American popularity is supposed to be at its lowest ebb. Nixon's Asian tour, thus, is different from his earlier tour of Europe; it is more akin to Rockefeller's recent tour of Latin America in face of violent student demonstrations. It has the symbolical meaning of unyielding strength of American presence in Asia which has apparently not been weakened by the mauling in Vietnam.

The tour will have substantive meaning, too. Since Inauguration, the White House staff, under the steady guidance of Prof Kissinger, has been formulating guidelines for a "new" foreign policy for America. Prof Kissinger had long complained of a lack of long-range planning behind Washington's policies. Now that he is installed as the chief foreign policy adviser to the President whose confidence he, according to all accounts, enjoys, he is doing what he has always wanted to do, namely to set down the guidelines for long-range policies.

The guidelines are described as "new"; but their only novelty consists, it seems, in planning ahead on the basis of co-ordinated information received from the three chief agencies of the Government involved in foreign policy decisions, the State Department, the Defence Department and the CIA.

The overall foreign policy goals of the United States remain the same. They are, simply put, containing Chinese and Russian influences in Asia. In view of the slowly changing relationship between Moscow and Washington, the "containment" of Russian influence means something quite different from that of Chinese influence. Chinese influence has to be kept out altogether from Asian countries by hook or by crook. If necessary, it has to be nipped in the bud. Russian influence is another matter; it has to be countervailed, reduced, restricted. The goals of containment have not changed, although the meaning of the term has changed, in the light of changes in the international scene.

Tactics

The main changes are in tactics. Washington would not allow any Asian Government to be taken over by pro-Peking elements. But, instead of moving suddenly to intervene (as in the Dominican Republic) or slowly escalating (as in Vietnam), the new policy would be a blend of a cautious review of events, forging of regional security arrangements and as a last resort, pre-emptive, selective intervention if the situation demands it. The most important tactical objective is to avoid involvement of American troops; but the goal of politically, economically and militarily strengthening non-communist governments so that they do not suc-

প্রকাশিত হল:—

নিশানা

দ্বিতীয় সংখ্যা

লণ্ডনের চায়না পলিসি স্টাডি গ্রুপের

অনুমতিক্রমে ব্রডশীট

এপ্রিল (৬৯) সংখ্যার পূর্ণাঙ্গ অনুবাদ

এতে আছে:

চীন—সোভিয়েত সীমান্ত সংঘর্ষ

প্রথম সংখ্যা এখনও পাওয়া যাচ্ছে

দাম : ৩৫ পঃ

এতে আছে:

শান্তিপূর্ণ উত্তরণ না জনযুদ্ধ?

দাম : ৪৫ পঃ

আরও পড়ুন:

কমিউনিস্ট ম্যানিফেস্টোর শিক্ষা

(লেনিন, স্টালিন ও মাও-এর ব্যাখ্যাসহ)

—বিজন সেন দাম : ৭০ পঃ

ছাপা হবে:

চীনের চলমান বিপ্লব—হিন্টন

নিউ বুক সেন্টার

১২৫-১বি, বিধান সরনি, কলিকাতা-৬

cumb to communist pressure remains unaltered.

The correspondent of the *Christian Science Monitor* spelled out these so-called "new" policy guidelines in these words: "Contingency plans would be made for the use of United States troops, if deemed necessary, but the overall effort would be aimed at giving help and guidance in such a way as to preclude, if possible, the prospect of United States troop involvement. Of course, the possibility would always remain that somewhere the use of some United States troops would be deemed essential. Administration leaders would then face the responsibility of immediately deploying troops when the need was determined, rather than indulging in some sort of hopeful procrastination that could lead to further deterioration of the situation, thus steadily increasing the extent of potential involvement."

In other words, nip the potential communist insurgencies in the bud; but avoid acting in panic. The political and economic supports to non-communist governments are not mentioned in the *Monitor's* analysis of the "new" policy—that is understood—but the pre-emptive counter-insurgency tactics, according to the *Monitor*, will depend, to a large extent, on the U.S. Army's corps of military assistance officers "trained both to recognize insurgency in its early stages and to work to combat the problems faced as a given country tries to cope with insurgency."

Caution would be used, under the "new" policy, in distinguishing "disorders" which are a 'threat' from those which are not. Only instability that could put a "nation under the control of a foreign and unfriendly government may well be a threat." So, in the judgment of the Administration, there would be disorders which are secular, others which are not; the latter type will have to be nipped in the bud, either through indirect assistance or through pre-emptive intervention, if the situation is perceived as a threat.

Stripped of verbiage, this "new" policy envisages a closer co-operation

between American counter-insurgency experts and the agencies of "law and order" and defence such as the police and the army in non-communist Asia. Another aspect of the "new" policy worthy of notice is the forging of regional co-operation between Asian countries.

Nixon has been a believer in encouraging such regional co-operation to stop Chinese influence. In an answer to a written question presented to him by the editors of the *New Republic* before the election, he spelled out his belief in regional alliances this way: "By supporting and encouraging 'regionalism' and regional approaches, the United States will be in a better position to meet its commitments. In the long run, Asia will require its own security undertakings, reflecting the new realities of Asian independence and Asian needs. An appropriate foundation exists on which to build, namely, the Asian and Pacific Council (ASPAC). ASPAC has carefully limited itself to strengthening regional co-operation in economic, cultural and social matters. Nonetheless, the solidifying awareness of China's threat should make it possible—if the need for a regional alliance is put in sufficiently compelling terms—to develop into an association actively dedicated to concerting whatever efforts might be necessary to maintain the security of the region. It has the distinct advantage of including Australia and New Zealand, which share the danger and which would be able to contribute substantially to its strength without an unbalancing great power presence."

This is a succinct description of the Administration's outlook on new regional arrangements. The objective is clearly to stop Chinese influence, and within this overall strategic goal, the tactic is to operate discreetly. America does not want to burn its fingers in another Vietnam; she would like to use cats' paws to pull chestnuts out of other fires.

Russian Moves

There is another aspect of Nixon's Asian tour which should not be

missed. There have been reports, disturbing for Washington, that Russia is moving in a big way to fill the power vacuum in the Indian Ocean which is being created by the British decision to withdraw. In an article in the latest issue of the *Look* magazine, Denis Warner, its Asian correspondent, warned that in the Indian Ocean area, "the Russians are not merely coming. They have arrived." With their Navy, which is now second only to that of the U.S., including a submarine fleet twice as large as that of the U.S. (330 conventionally powered and 55 nuclear-powered submarines), the Russians, Warner wrote, are changing roles with the British. "At a time when the British are determined to pull out east of Suez, and American policy after Vietnam has yet to be formulated, the Russians are not only willing but determined to move in."

A need has arisen, therefore, to formulate a policy of determining the course and magnitude of the American presence in the Indian Ocean to offset increasing Russian power in the region. There have recently been signs of a convergence of international interests between Moscow and Washington but there are areas where the interests of these two super-Powers are still in sharp conflict. The Middle East is one such area; the Indian Ocean with its impending power vacuum is another.

These are the outlines of the "new" guidelines of foreign policy and some of the pressures that are shaping them. Obviously, Nixon and his aides have quite a few subjects to discuss with the Asian leaders he will be visiting in the third week of July. The meetings may indeed "lay the foundation of a post-Vietnam South-East Asia policy", as a White House official claimed in course of a briefing.

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High Command, Low Drama

FROM A POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

THE Congress High Command is a mythical quantity, nothing more than an assortment of politicking bosses and slick party operators from the Pradeshas and leaders of the Central Government. It cannot arbitrate for the country or the Congress party any more because its authority has been eroding gradually. The Congress Parliamentary Board's decision against a separate Telengana State means nothing in itself because it is not a party issue. Sooner or later, the demand would have to be conceded by the Centre and if that opens the flood-gates for demands from new states for Vidharbha or Sausrashtra, certainly the Telengana people cannot be blamed. After all it was the High Command of the Nehru vintage that vetoed the SRG's recommendation for a Telengana State with an option to merge with Andhra State later.

Last week, when it came to permitting Mr Brahmananda Reddy to resign, the High Command got cold feet. The Chief Minister called the bluff and returned home triumphant, at least for the moment. Last month, when the Working Committee met, the entire High Command was agreed against easing Mr Brahmananda Reddy out under pressure as long as he commanded majority in the Legislature Congress Party. But the moment he offered to step down, everyone tried to look as if it was a personal triumph for him. Mr Nijalingappa called a meeting of the Board for July 1, knowing that the Prime Minister cannot attend it. There was no hurry about it, because as it turned out, the High Command could not take a decision on July 1 and had to await the Prime Minister's return. Mean-time, came the counter-attack from Mr Brahmananda Reddy's followers who frankly told the Central leaders that if they

wanted to concede the separate State demand, let them do it forthwith. But if they did not want to concede it, they should allow Mr Brahmananda Reddy to handle the situation in the manner he liked. It was also made known to the leaders that if the agitation in Telengana could force the ouster of a State Government, they could start an agitation in the Andhra districts and bring down the Government at the Centre. This threat paid off.

The basic demand for a Telengana State and Mr Brahmananda Reddy's resignation are two separate issues. The High Command can still decide on the second issue but not on the first. At one stage the High Command thought that the best expedient in the face of a powerful movement for a separate State was to replace Mr Brahmananda Reddy. But when it came to a decision, it had second thoughts. A straight decision to replace him, when he still had the Assembly majority, would have created a tense situation in the Andhra region of the State. The High Command has written off Telengana for the party but it cannot afford to lose the whole of Andhra Pradesh. Mr Kamaraj is believed to have said that a Telengana State meant handing the region over to the communists on a silver platter and creating a communist base in the country's heartland. In any case, the Congress will lose Telengana in the 1972 elections if the demand is not met in good time. But it will gain new support in the Andhra region and, on the whole, would make up its losses in Telengana and be able to hold the State for another five years.

President's Rule

But this is not an answer to the problem. Time was when leaders

talked vaguely about President's rule in the hope the agitation leaders would settle for guarantees in the existing set-up if President's rule was imposed forthwith. Inadvertently, the High Command betrayed the fact that President's rule in a State has always been a matter for Congress decision and Mr Chavan was only talking the nation for a ride when he swore that the Governor's report decided such matters for the Centre. A political correspondent even wrote confidently that President's rule in Andhra Pradesh was inevitable and all that it awaited was Mrs Indira Gandhi's participation in the Congress Parliamentary Board's meeting. This was the truth but the folk-tale peddled in the past was that the Governor's report was everything. It is obvious that Governors' reports are manufactured to suit the Congress party's thinking and a party decision always precedes a Governor's report recommending President's rule.

Mr Brahmananda Reddy has been fighting the Centre's battle by holding out against the demand for a separate State and the Congress High Command and the Centre had virtually abdicated their role. But the moment he offered to quit, both the High Command and the Centre found themselves swept off their feet. Replacement of one Chief Minister by another cannot solve the problem now. Nor President's rule.

There is no convincing argument yet against a separate Telengana State and all that one hears here is the talk that it would balkanise the country. The argument of viability will not hold good because most States in India are not viable entities and the country as a whole is not viable as a free nation because its economic survival has to be underwritten by foreign aid. Small States will not weaken the Centre but would only strengthen it. If the linguistic principle is so sacred and inviolable, there is no need for five Hindi States, and Haryana as the latest of the Hindi-speaking States has no right to independent existence. It is amusing that those who denounce the Telengana State demand—the opponents

range from the CPI(M) and Mr Namboodiripad to the Jana Sangh—betray the same cliché thinking and have no case against two Telugu-speaking States when there can be so many Hindi-speaking States. All that the principle of linguistic States means is that each State should be organised on the basis of the language spoken by the people which means that there cannot be more than one language group in one State.

What strikes one is the total failure of communication between the Centre and the agitation leaders. Mrs Indira Gandhi went to Hyderabad in an effort to tag her name to any solution that might emerge. Mr Chavan was sent out to play the role of a trouble-shooter. Mr Morarji Desai was deputed by the party to go but the agitation leaders politely told him that it would not help matters any. Mr Nijalingappa and Mr Kamaraj are the latest of the emissaries, all to no purpose because it is too late in the day to stall the demand for a Telengana State. It might hurt the vanity of some in New Delhi when the demand is conceded some day. But everybody seems to admit in whispers that it would have to be done before the 1972 elections. The Congress had always begun with an outright rejection of a demand but ended by conceding it. That was in the heyday of the Congress. Its will to resist such demands is much weaker now.

July 6, 1969

NOTICE

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JULY 12, 1969

Kerala

The Double-Faced Game

RAMJI

A SERIES of mini-crises snow-balled into a major crisis during the third week of June in Kerala, but at the time of writing, this crisis too seems to have blown over. The CPI has realised that discretion is the better part of valour now that the Marxists, against whom it had concentrated, are no longer in a mood to tolerate the incessant nagging and are even prepared to wreck the Ministry.

On the question of enquiry into the alleged corruption of two Ministers, one Marxist and the other KTP, the Marxists have stood firm on their ground that no judicial or any other enquiry is possible in their cases, as decided upon by the Marxist Chief Minister, who had been empowered to go into the allegations and decide whether there was any prima facie case for an official enquiry. While the Chief Minister found the Finance Minister (ISP) liable to such an enquiry, he exonerated the other two. The Finance Minister had to step down from office and this has been the excuse for the CPI to mount a raging campaign against the Marxists, in the course of which its leaders put Billingsgate vocabulary to shame, and even went to the length of saying that the Chief Minister's hands are not clean. They rallied the disgruntled ISP behind them and with the Muslim League, adopting a novel and rather aloof stand vis-a-vis the Marxists, the CPI went into full war cry. Then came the Chief Minister's announcement that the Ministry's life was in danger and unless things were cleared up according to the dictum of the Marxists it would spell the end of the UF Ministry. In the teeth of this uncompromising stand the CPI had to come down several pegs and in the Cabinet meeting of June 25 it conceded a major point to the Marxists over the question of procedure of enquiry into the alleged irregularities in

the Travancore Cochin Chemicals, a State-owned industrial unit under the CPI Industries Minister.

Right from the start, the CPI has been playing a double-faced role in the United Front, functioning, at one and the same time, as the unofficial but highly vocal opposition as well as enjoying the advantages of partnership in the ruling united front. The CPI has been so effective in its role as de facto opposition that the regular opposition parties, the Congress and the Kerala Congress, have all along been obliged to tail along behind it and take up the refrain of attack where the CPI had left off. This role has been highly appreciated by the powerful opposition press in the State, which has always been generous in highlighting all the opposition stances of the CPI. And this in its turn tickled the vanity of the CPI so that the opposition press was always assured of getting the inside dope, usually the low down ones, from the CPI. Every Cabinet secret and all the proceedings of the Co-ordination Committee meetings used to be released to the opposition press by the CPI Ministers and leaders. Even the confidential letter of the CPI Minister to the Chief Minister reached the press before it reached the Chief Minister. The CPI, in short, has been spearheading the opposition while enjoying the benefits as a partner of the ruling front and the present crisis stems from the fact that the Marxists have at last turned round and declared that this has to come to an end if the Ministry is to continue, and that the CPI has to make its stand clear before the United Front takes any further step.

Almost all the frequent UF crisis have been engineered by the CPI. Barely two weeks after the Ministry assumed power, it started its double-faced game. There was a rice crisis, as the Centre had denied the supplies due. The Marxists and others in power mounted spirited protests against the Centre's discrimination. It was left to the CPI to pooh pooh the stand of the Government and side with opposition students who had mounted an agitation on this

issue. The CPI has not lagged behind the Congress in raising its voice against the alleged breakdown of law and order and the prevalence of "insecurity" in the State. It has been able to detect corruption only among the Marxists and Marxist Ministers. Further, in true Congress-style, it has functioned as a highly vociferous critic of the police policy of the Government, alleging that the police have become tools in the hands of the Marxists and that other sections have no hope of fair play at the hands of the police.

Examples are legion, of the CPI's outstanding role as the opposition party, inside the Government. And to cap everything it tried its best to rope in other parties, with the offer of Chief Ministership to the League, in order to push the Marxists out of power.

Its recent onslaught against the Marxists started only when concrete action was taken against the Finance Minister. They had no objections when the Chief Minister made the statement about his intentions in the Assembly, or when a resolution was

passed in the Co-ordination Committee to empower him to judge whether there is a prima facie case against any Minister accused of corruption. The CPI Minister was in the chair when the Co-ordination Committee passed this particular resolution. But the moment action was taken against the ISP Finance Minister, the CPI led the ISP in challenging the Chief Minister's authority and started clamouring for the blood of the Marxist Ministers.

The Bill

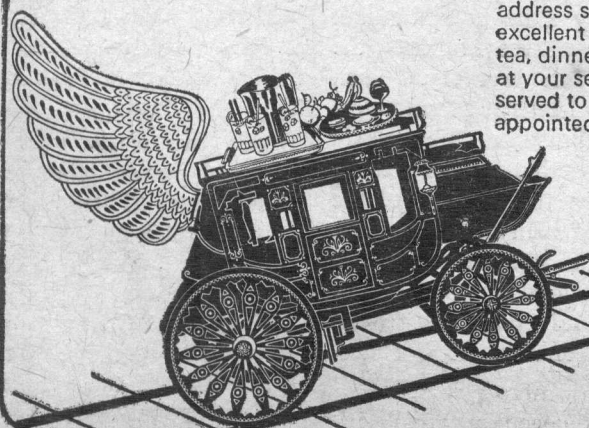
The Marxists, on their part, have decided to take the stand that the issue is not one relating to an individual or a party, but a basic one on which will depend the smooth functioning of the Ministry in future. A Public Men Enquiries Bill is on the anvil and the Marxists have given an unequivocal assurance that if the other parties co-operate, it could be made into law within a month, after which cases against Ministers could be taken up under the provisions of the Act. But the CPI has been insisting on an interim set-up to go into its allegations against some of the

Marxist Ministers. It is not in a mood, it has declared, to wait for the passage of the Bill. The Chief Minister and his party have firmly countered this demand, stating that if the CPI could wait for 25 and odd months for "discovering" corruption and for bringing corrupt Ministers to book, it could wait a few more weeks till the Bill becomes an Act. The tussle at present is on this issue, as simplified by the CPI. But the Marxists have taken a stand in a much wider context; that of basic understanding between parties of the United Front, and of their readiness to discuss things across the table and arrive at joint decisions instead of broadcasting their differences through the press and other media and flinging accusations and vile epithets against one another in public: A role usually reserved for the opposition.

Though the CPI has been rattling its sabre most heroically, it can be assumed that it would climb down. It knows which side of its bread is buttered, and in spite of its thirteen-point "ultimatum" and other do-or-

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die stances it would swallow its words and remain in the Front and in power. Whether it would get rid of its inveterate habit of Marxist-baiting is another question. And whether the Marxists would trust a CPI in a humble and chastened mood, is also open to speculation. A rational step would be to jettison

the CPI and proceed with the administration without it. There is a strong line of thinking among the Marxists in this direction. Conversely, in anticipation of the worst, the Marxists are getting ready to quit office and face another election. But their stand is firm: no more nonsense from the CPI, whatever the price.

What was the income of the vast mass of the rural population, particularly agricultural labourers? The average income of a family of agricultural labourer—the average family consisting of 4.3 persons—was Rs 447, according to the Agricultural Labour Enquiry conducted a few years after 'independence'. The breakdown of this income was as under :

The Usurious Exploitation

NIRODE ROY

Rs	Percentage	
286.97	64.2	From paid agricultural work.
59.90	13.4	From land they could use.
53.39	11.9	From non-agricultural work.
46.74	10.5	From non-specified sources—domestic work, etc.

447.0 100.0

From the above the average income per agricultural labourer worked out to Rs 104 as against Rs 265.2 which was considered the national income per capita in that period. It should also be mentioned here that male and female agricultural workers are engaged in purely agricultural work in the fields for 190 and 120 days a year respectively. For the rest of the days the worker has to eke out a meagre living, if of course, he is situated to do so. Otherwise he remains at the starvation or semi-starvation level.

This abject poverty of the overwhelming majority of the rural population resulting from the most brutal form of economic exploitation drives the poor cultivator and agricultural labourer to borrow money from private agencies in order to invest whatever little they can afford on land and to maintain their families throughout the year. The biggest agency in providing such cash is the private money-lender. The commercial banks and co-operatives also provide credit at a

INDIA's total population enumerated in 1961 was 439,235,082 as against 361,129,622 in 1951. Of this, only 78,835,939 (18%) was classified as the urban population and 359,772,165 (82%) belonged to rural areas. Of the total world population estimated in the U.N. Demographic Year Book in 1959, India accounted for nearly 14.6 per cent of the world's population. The population of the People's Republic of China having been estimated at 582.5 million in 1953, India occupies the second place in the world (1).

Of the 361 million enumerated in the 1951 Census, roughly 295 million or nearly 83 per cent lived in rural areas and the remaining 62 million or nearly 17 per cent in cities and towns. The rural population was, therefore, about five times the urban population or five out of every six Indians belonged to the countryside.

Although the total urban population has increased from 62 million to 78 million in course of ten years, its percentage to total population has remained almost constant. The bourgeoisie and its hirelings attribute this phenomenon to the "alarming population growth" with a view to concealing the semi-colonial and semi-feudal structure of our society.

Of the total rural population in 1951, the total number of cultivators was 70 million and that of agricultural labourers 28 million. The corresponding figures for the 1961 Census work out to 99.5 million and 31.5 million respectively. Thus, an increase of about 43 per cent in the

case of cultivators and 14 per cent in the category of agricultural labourers was registered in 1961 (2).

While the population has increased since 1901, the area of cultivated land per capita has steadily gone down, signifying overcrowding, unemployment and under-employment of the agricultural population. The following table will speak for itself (3) :

Year	Population crore	Area of cultivated land per capita per cent
1901	23	103
1911	25	109
1921	25	111
1931	27	104
1941	31	94
1951	36	84

On an all-India basis, the area shown for male cultivators was 4.90 acres in 1961. It was also found that cultivators and agricultural labourers, constituting what was termed as agricultural workers, added up to roughly 70 per cent of the total working population in India. Expressed as percentage of the total working force, agricultural workers came as under (4) :

Cultivators		Agricultural Workers	
1961	1951	1961	1951
52.82	50.02	16.71	19.72

'reasonable' rate of interest but that is beyond the reach of poor peasants and agricultural labourers as they can give no adequate 'securities' against loan. A survey conducted by the Reserve Bank of India of rural credit gives the following pattern (5) :

Credit Agency	Proportion of borrowing from each agency to the total borrowings of cultivators Per Cent
Government	3.3
Cooperatives	3.1
Relatives	14.2
Landlords	1.5
Agriculturist Moneylenders	24.9
Professional Moneylenders	44.8
Traders & Commission Agents	5.5
Commercial Banks	0.9
Others	1.8
	100.0

Thus, of all the agencies, the professional moneylender enjoys the do-

minant position on the scene. Between professional and agriculturist moneylenders (namely the rich peasants) they control 70 per cent of the total credit available to the cultivators, while the Government agencies do their bit by providing 6.7 per cent only. Thus the Government of the comprador-capitalist and landlords with the professed aim of achieving a 'socialistic pattern of society' has provided the professional moneylenders and rich peasants with ample opportunities to fleece the poorer section of the peasantry and is thereby perpetuating its semi-feudal and semi-colonial rule in the countryside.

The debt of the cultivator mounts every year, bringing more misery and greater indebtedness. A survey of 75 districts spread all over the country conducted by the Reserve Bank of India in 1954 showed that the percentage growth of debt at the end of the year was 65.5 and the average amount borrowed during the year was Rs 214. The following table will reveal some of the most glaring facts (6) :

Group Average	Average Debt at the beginning of the year	Average Debt at the end of the year	Average Growth of Debt	% Growth of Debt	Average Amount Borrowed during the year
(1) % Growth below 40 per cent (14 Districts)	365	452	87	23.8	176
(2) % Growth between 40-60 per cent (9 Districts)	315	472	157	49.8	237
(3) % Growth between 60-80 per cent (16 Districts)	262	450	188	71.8	253
(4) % Growth between 80-100 per cent (11 Districts)	186	349	163	87.6	229
(5) % Growth between 100-200 per cent (19 Districts)	131	288	157	119.8	213
(6) % Growth between 200 per cent and above (6 Districts)	45	167	122	271.1	144

The borrowings were utilized mainly for the following purposes (7) :

Purpose of Borrowing	Percentage to Total
Capital Expenditure on Land	27.8
Current Expenditure on Land	9.3
Non-Farm Business Expenditure	6.6
Family Expenditure	50.2
Other Expenditures	5.7
More than one purpose	0.4
	100.0

The capital expenditure on land includes purchase and reclamation of land, digging or repair of tubewells, purchase of livestock, implements and other equipment. Current expenditure includes purchase of seed, manure, fodder, payment of rent and land revenue, cess and other charges, repair and maintenance of equipment, etc. Family expenditure means construction or repair of residential houses, purchase of household

utensils, marriage and death ceremonies, medical expenses, purchase of clothing, etc. and other family expenses. Other expenses include litigation charges (these are mostly forced upon the peasantry by the landlord and/or the rich peasants) and part payment of old debts.

So, 56 per cent of the total borrowings is utilized for the upkeep of the family only. This means that a larger amount is spent on the family's subsistence than what is invested on land for better productivity and yield. The peasant is, therefore, in perpetual debt which runs through generations, and his destiny is controlled by the moneylenders, often in the garb of traders and merchants. Writing on the role of moneylenders Gunnar Myrdal observes (8) :

"The power of moneylenders in the rural structure does not derive solely from their position as financial intermediaries. Often it is buttressed by their ancillary roles as merchants and landlords. In these circumstances the peasantry is still more vulnerable to unscrupulous practices. As trader and landlord the moneylender has significant opportunities to raise the real rate of interest well above the nominal rate. He may set arbitrarily low prices on the products the peasant sells and excessively high on those he buys, or he may manipulate rents to the peasant's disadvantage."

Punjab

Punjab is no exception to this general pattern. Although the agricultural yield has increased over the years and the State has become 'surplus' in production of foodgrains, the stranglehold of the moneylenders on cultivators has become stronger. The landlords and the rich peasants have become richer while the poor cultivator and the agricultural labourer languish in debt.

The production of foodgrains in Punjab increased from 19.95 lakh tonnes in 1950-51 to 53 lakh tonnes in 1967-68 (9). The yield of wheat per hectare increased from 910 kg in 1950-51 to 1514 kg in 1966-67—a

rise of nearly 67% over a period of 16 years (9).

The reason why this has been made possible, among others, is the investment of an appreciable amount of capital on land. And this capital was, obviously, not within the reach of the poor peasants of Punjab. While there were only 1511 tractors being

mated that in post-reorganization Punjab (1964-65) 29 per cent of the cultivators took land on share while 12.8 per cent of the total area was taken on rent out of which 90.7 per cent was on Batai. The following table which appeared in the *Economic Times* of the same date will show the plight of the tenant:

Share of the Landlord & Tenant
in Net Income per acre
(Rupees)

Year	Landlord	Tenant
1961-62	93.18	3.48
1962-63	67.61	—67.74
1963-64	102.05	—18.46
1964-65	117.92	—64.80
1965-66	110.96	—97.92

used in 1951, the total number registered in the State in 1966 was 10636—a 'phenomenal' rise by Indian standards. Pumping sets run by oil engines increased from 1648 in 1951 to 25733 in 1968 and power tubewells from 325 to 44491. These figures show the extent of capital invested on land in course of the last two decades. (10).

The total borrowings estimated by the All-India Rural Debt & Investment Survey, 1961-62, for the State of Punjab were in the region of Rs 59.39 crores and the borrowing per cultivator household was Rs 574. Referring to the Survey the *Economic Times* of 29 March 1969 observed :

"The survey has revealed that the Government and Cooperatives accounted for 2.1 and 10.5 per cent of credit made available to the cultivators. The agriculturist moneylenders, traders and relatives satisfied the credit need of the farmers to the extent of 30.9% 16.5%, 3.6%, 13.9% respectively."

In the districts of Karnal, Rohtak and Jhind Tehsil of Sangur District it was revealed that 46 per cent of the households were under debt and the major source of credit was the moneylender who supplied about 82.67 per cent of the total requirement.

Batai tenants (those who take land on half-share basis) are the worst sufferers in Punjab. It has been esti-

It will be worth our while to examine how the moneylender comes to occupy such a predominant position. First, according to the Reserve Bank of India survey, "there is little that escapes his eye in the circumstances of his debtors or of those who may one day be his debtor." The moneylender knows quite intimately the people he desires to oblige and is there at the first sign of distress expressed by the peasant.

Secondly, the lender exercises different kinds of hold on the person he chooses to lend. He is not interested in resorting to law or acquiring debtor's property (in majority cases this means little) should the debtor fail to oblige him with the usual interest. The lender uses the big stick of economic compulsion which runs supreme in this relationship and that is to withhold further credit.

Third, the moneylender is not at all keen on realising the original sum; what he wants is the realisation of the interest. It is on an average 40 per cent in West Bengal, 70 per cent in Orissa and nearly 30% in Bihar.

Fourth, having decided on the issue of loan and the interest he is going to charge for it the moneylender decides the course of spending by the debtor also. The documents he prepares hardly conform to truth. In most cases entries are made for larger amounts than what they are actually ten-

dered. The debtor, mostly poor peasants and agricultural labourers, have no option but to enter into such agreements, for otherwise it would mean sure death from starvation.

Legality

Such is the back-breaking usurious exploitation prevalent in the countryside. Neither the Government nor any of the political parties—"Marxists" or otherwise—has given any serious thought to the problem of peasant emancipation. This emancipation is not of the kind the Russian narodniks thought of; it is inseparably connected with basic changes in social relationships which the Government is unwilling to execute. The primary requirement in organising resistance to the usurious exploitation is peasants' associations in the countryside, but they are likely to fail if their activities are confined within the strict bounds of legality and 'democratic movement'.

It is tragic when, in the context of a broad peasant movement, the CPI(M) asks for "strengthening of peasants' links with the rural middle class and jotedars who hold up to 25 acres of land and are not involved in usury and other unfair practices" (11). Unfortunately, enumeration of jotedars not involved in usury was not made in the 1961 Census, and we only hope that the UF Government will insist on its inclusion in the 1971 enumeration. The Minister for Land and Land Revenue of West Bengal is "aware of the difficulties in trying to infuse militancy in the peasant, yet at the same time, restricting it to a level commensurate with the party's tactical line." This curious marriage of pseudo-militancy and the CPI(M)'s tactical line is yet to be fully witnessed by the millions under the grinding wheel.

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Calcutta Diary

WASN'T there a general strike, a complete general strike, some time, somewhere, after the United Front came into power? When was it? Let us try to remember. Yes, Mr Chavan was very angry that trains did not run, that IAC services had to be cancelled, that the loss to the nation was enormous. Since it was a general strike supported by the UF the word 'confrontation' was very much in currency. Ministers flew to Delhi, angry, worried, protesting. When did the strike take place? What was the occasion? Yes, it occurred just after the soiree at Rabindra Sarobar—which means, the first week of April. You can remember the time of the soiree, because Rabindra Sarobar is very much in the news today. So much so that it has blacked out all memory of the general strike. The strike, now we remember, was over the murderous assault on workers of the Cossipore Gun Factory by security staff. There was a big row between Calcutta and New Delhi over the arrest of some of the security staff. The Centre ordered an enquiry and then stayed it. Did the West Bengal Government order an enquiry? If so, what has happened? The whole incident seems to have been forgotten by everybody, except the wives of those who were killed. It has been overshadowed by what happened at REC, Durgapur. Cossipore, as we were afraid when it occurred, has been talked out. So will be Durgapur. What our enlightened people will remember and continue to discuss is

Rabindra Sarobar. Perhaps a book will be written on Sex and Repression in Indian Society.

Do you remember the College Square outrage in March when a non-student was killed, it is reported, by the Naxalites, and UF leaders led the funeral procession and delivered famous orations? We shan't blame you if you don't, because since then there have been about 20 political murders, among the UF parties, with the CPI(M) losing about 11 men. As Auden once wrote, 'By loss of memory we are reborn, for memory is death.'

* * *

Well-wishers of the United Front are unhappy. Because of the way things are reported, the front pages of newspapers are these days full of stories of gheraos, train hold-ups, clashes over land and fish, with daring dacoities thrown in now and then. And on Sunday an arms train was looted. Outsiders must be wondering how one lives in West Bengal. Women all over India are scared of the land of Tagore. Some people in West Bengal too have started worrying about the image of the United Front, which is being tarnished by inter-party knifing. Even some UF leaders profess they are troubled at the turn events are taking. But in their heart of hearts they know that, so far as people in West Bengal are concerned, they need not worry. Because the people themselves are not worried.

Who are the people? Those who visit Calcutta Club and such places never had a bright image of the

United Front. Their opinion at the moment does not matter, particularly because the Congress has only 55 seats in the Assembly. They may have been encouraged by Mr Morarji Desai, but there is no immediate danger from the Centre.

Other people—the lesser fry—are too busy surviving to bother about the image of the UF. Government employees have reasons to be grateful for the change. Teachers are grumbling, but they do hope to get something, somehow. As for the workers, their jobs are at stake, and they are not scared by the occasional inter-party bloodshed, because the bloodshed is supposed to be for their benefit. Gheraos? Desperate diseases demand desperate remedies, and the workers would concentrate on their particular factory, and not mope over the state of the economy as a whole. Students are restless and turbulence does not frighten them. In the countryside, peasants are, according to Mr Konar, on the move, seizing benami and vested land. Whether the clashes between landless peasants led by different parties or for that matter, looting of fish, can be explained away as inevitable class struggle is a matter for the ideologues to settle. It seems that in some areas at least Mr Konar has released forces which Mr Basu will soon begin to rue. Jotedars are in a fighting mood, and the Bangla Congress is becoming angry.

But a deprived, dispossessed people do not mind violence, even if the violence is partisan. What may surprise them is police inactivity, in their favour, in certain cases. This is what leads to class confusion—the police standing by when land is being taken over! Too good to be true for all time. But then there are others with whom the police are not so pliant. Will the peasants not belonging to the favoured party and suffering at the hands of the police turn out to be more class conscious in the end? And what will happen to those who do not get any land? However, any movement is better than no movement.

Meanwhile, the UF should not

bother about its image being tarnished. It has world enough and time—four years and eight months—to reap the harvest. There will be heartburning over loaves and fishes, but the people know what it is to live in a joint family; senior members are always given the largest pieces of fish and the best rice. Junior members grumble and intrigue and spread scandals, but the undivided family goes on. And the balance of forces in the Assembly is such that there is no profit in crossing over to any other bloc. Tension will climax when vested and benami land is exhausted, when the peasant who gets two or three bighas discovers that he has not the wherewithal to raise a crop, when more and more workers are thrown out, when students leave their institutions to wander in the world of the unemployed and when those who want to join colleges do not get admission.

A couple of months before the mid-term elections some people in Calcutta started tarring the walls with demands like 'employment for 90 per cent of the Bengalis' and 'quit Hindi, spread Bengali' (in English) etc. These nationalists, hundred per cent Bengali in spirit, could not but choose an English abbreviation like BNVP to identify themselves. A number of candidates were also put up in the election for the salvation of Bengalis and Bengal. The election results however turned out to be a traumatic experience for these gentlemen. Reasons for the debacle must have been analysed and lessons learnt. Ninety percenters have now painted a revised version of their demand on the walls—'employment for 100 per cent of the Bengalis.' The revised version may or may not secure the gentlemen more votes but an undercurrent of provincialism in some form or other is unmistakable among the urbanized middle class. The habit of referring to the people of Bihar, Orissa or Assam in sneering terminology is strong, even among the left. More dangerous is, however, the tendency to transfer the blame for shrinking job opportunities and sky-

rocketing prices to people of some particular province. And business sharks are adept in damning any genuine people's struggle as communal. Since most of the blood-sucker businessmen hail from a particular province any movement against their activities could easily be condemned as an expression of provincialism. Two years back, students and progressive elements in Siliguri launched a de-hoarding drive. Immediately the Congress and the Jana Sangh cried themselves hoarse against provincialism. The campaign had to be abandoned. The Left must find out ways of fighting provincialism and class enemies together.

* *

Indians may not have food or cloth round their loin but they are at least in the safe custody of guardians defending their body from foreign aggression and their soul from foul ideas. Recently a consignment of the British journal *Broadsheet* was impounded by the Indian Customs. This mischievous journal tried to vitiate Indian minds with a version of Sino-Soviet border clashes likely to infuriate our great Russian friends. This week some of our local agents reported that some unidentified guardians have been politely threatening the agents not to sell *Frontier* which, they explained, was financed by some unspecified foreign country.

* *

Calcutta football, like Calcutta city, cannot be yet pronounced dead, because there is some tension on the Maidan this year too. Tension, though not for old reasons. Previously people used to get excited over the tussle between East Bengal and Mohun Bagan, with occasional intrusion of Mohammedan Sporting into the picture. This year, the tension is over speculation whether the IFA League fixture will be completed. Last year it was not, and the IFA never stated the reasons. It was suspected, however, that East Bengal put in all sorts of legal difficulties because they had no chance of winning the League. This year it is the turn of Mohun Bagan to create the obstructions—legal—for they are al-

legedly inferior this year in football skills. Possibly too many barristers are spoiling Calcutta football.

Mohammedan Sporting, unfortified by barristers, tried this year to upturn the League through means other than legal. Predictably they failed and they have now retired calling the Calcutta referees useless. They have however made some unmentionable record in the process—causing the use of tear gas on the Maidan on five days, gheraoing referees all the five times, and hitting the referee well below the belt on the last occasion. It was not the spectators who caused trouble; it was the players themselves who forestalled the eventuality by retiring as soon as they went one down. The pattern became so well defined that spectators made no delay in emptying the gallery as soon the ball entered the Mohammedan Sporting net. On one occasion of course the net itself caused trouble. It was torn and the ball slipped out of it. The Mohammedan players were not prepared to accept the assumption that the ball ever entered the net.

There is of course a wave of tension, although the supporters of the three giants would not believe it, among the middle rankers. Five teams are struggling to enter the Super League, an innovation since last year. Unfortunately the tension is caused not by the players' footwork but the persuasive capacity of the team secretaries. They are allegedly busy making frequent requests to the low rankers: Would the latter please give them full points without any fight?

There is still one more wave—among the bottom rankers, two of

whom must go down to the second division. One such team, according to some, is Police. They have lost all the thirteen games they have played except one which they drew. They have to win all the three remaining games. Obviously a stiff proposition. The situation, however, can be salvaged if the League fixtures are postponed till a certain time beyond which the League games cannot be played according to, again, law. One such postponement of all the three fixtures on a day had happened—the policemen were disengaged from the Maidan, because Lal-bazar said that there was the possibility of some political or communal or cinematic or Higher Secondary trouble somewhere in the city.

Monsoon clouds and rains have created a barrier between the plains and Darjeeling, Kurseong and Kalimpong. The tourist season is over. The season was slack this year and minor landslides created many anxieties for the returning. Darjeeling is better looked after than Kalimpong; but all in all, it is being said that as the earth has not yet settled down after the October disaster of last year, it will be two years before permanent roads can be built.

Kalimpong is a gloomy place these days. Water is a daily problem, most people have to be content with a bucket a day. Electricity is failing and the power is so low that it is difficult to read anything in the evening. Roads even in the town sometimes are difficult to manage. The most distressing fact is that prices have gone up like anything. The large concentration of the military means very good business for contractors and traders, but the hardy hillmen have little left after supplies to the armed forces. Their heavy vehicles are a tremendous burden on the cracking roads. Every civilian trip from Siliguri to Kalimpong—or Darjeeling—is a calculated risk for taxis. Naturally, the fare for a seat has gone up to Rs 25 from Rs 8. The drive to Gangtok from Kalimpong takes about ten hours these days.

Meeting Jasimuddin

KRISHNA DHAR

IT was a delight to meet Jasimuddin, the famous poet of undivided Bengal, in Calcutta after so many years. He is 66 but looks much younger. Casually dressed in punjabi and pyjama, he resembles an elderly and kind school teacher. He speaks in a soft Faridpur accent.

I saw him last in 1961 during the Tagore centenary year. He was at that time convalescing in a Calcutta hospital. He has a nostalgic feeling for this city and whenever he finds time and opportunity, he prefers to visit Calcutta to meet his old friends and acquaintances. As we sat talking, the telephone rang almost without intermission. Innumerable visitors—poets, novelists and friends—call upon him all day just to talk to him and know from him something firsthand about the Bengali resurgence in East Pakistan.

Jasimuddin feels that this is a tribute of the people of West Bengal to the people of East Pakistan, their blood brothers, who have fought for their language. He is honoured here, the poet feels, not so much for his own contribution—very few among the younger generation have had any chance to read his poetry after partition—but as the representative of the culture of East Pakistan. It is the younger people of Calcutta, writers, poets and journalists, who come everyday to meet him. It shows the growing awareness among the new generation of their indivisible culture and tradition and their eagerness to communicate with their counterparts across the border.

Jasimuddin seemed visibly moved at this show of affection. He remembers with gratitude the inspiration and patronage he received in his early years from Dinesh Chandra Sen, formerly Ramtanu Lahiri professor of Bengali in Calcutta University. It was Sen's review of his poems in the *Forward*, a paper run by Deshabandhu C. R. Das, which made him famous overnight. It was Sen again

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who included his narrative poem 'Kabar' in the Calcutta University syllabus for high school students, when the poet himself was an undergraduate student at that time.

Jasimuddin remembers the great Abanindranath Tagore in whom this village boy with his indigenous style and rural background found his mentor. Abanindranath wrote a beautiful preface to his *Nakshi Kanthar Math*, a narrative poem of love between Rupa and Saju, a village boy and a girl, written in a sensitive style. Jasimuddin was initiated into the folk culture of Bengal by his old and blind granddad who, the poet says, was a storehouse of folk tales and folk music. It left a deep and abiding impression on the young boy who later became the foremost exponent of folk poetry and folk music in Bengal.

Jasimuddin is not keen about modern experimental poetry being written in East Pakistan. But he is all praise for the young novelists. As in Calcutta, the poet said, in Dacca too there is a spurt of literary and cultural activity among the younger people. Scores of little magazines are published in which the young are doing their apprenticeship in various forms of literary creation. In the field of drama they are not lagging behind either. In Dacca and in other towns drama groups regularly stage modern and experimental plays written and produced by imaginative and ambitious young playwrights. Girls take part in these activities.

Jasimuddin repeatedly emphasised the need for cultural exchanges between the peoples of India and Pakistan. But this, he added, needs initiative and response from both the sides, especially at governmental level. As we rose to say goodbye he recited a couplet from the Gazi song :

নানান বরণ গাভীরে—একই বরণ দুধ

জগৎ ভরমিয়া দেখিলাম একই মায়ের পুত্র।

(গাজীর গান)

"There are cows of different hue but the milk is the same. Wandering all over the world I found that mankind is born of the same mother."

The Press

Kosygin's Brief ?

KAJAL SEN

IF India did not have any roving ambassador in the past, she has two now : the Prime Minister and the Minister for External Affairs. Maybe Delhi has decided to do away with formalities and to get down to its tasks. The functionaries have certainly taken their jobs seriously. Immediately in the wake of her Afghanistan trip came the Prime Minister's journey to Japan and Indonesia. Mr Dinesh Singh on the other hand is set for a trip to the USA after having done Nepal, where, judging from Mr Kirtinidhi Bista's statement, things seemed to have gone wrong. Washington, however, will be a different matter. There we will certainly respect the American custom which says visitors from these parts should not talk much, only listen and obey.

The trips are not entirely without significance. Mrs Gandhi has been making them ever since the Soviet Prime Minister, Alexei Kosygin, talked of closer co-operation between Russia and other Asian countries. It is not much of a secret today that the Russians are out to woo countries like Japan and Indonesia, ostensibly for trade reasons, but really, one suspects, to have a strong area of influence in Asia as part of their anti-China drive. A visit to these parts by a Soviet leader might have become too obvious and it is quite possible that Mrs Gandhi had others' messages to convey to Messrs Sato and Suharto. And while India's own efforts to contribute to the Soviet drive have not yielded much in Nepal, her reporting of a super-power's plans might have been heard with greater attention in Tokyo and Djakarta.

After all, with the Americans bungling the show in Vietnam, these countries are also in search of a saviour to protect them from Peking and the "communist menace".

At home, in West Bengal, Mrs

Gandhi's attitude has seemed rather strange. This was the second time since the installation of the Ministry that Mrs Gandhi passed through Dum Dum Airport without caring to enter the city. From what appears in the Press her interest in the State's problems seems remote. In fact along with her colleagues in the Union Ministry she seems to be interested in other things, so far as this State is concerned. The Deputy Prime Minister who visited the city last week said the Centre was watching the situation in West Bengal and made it sound like a warning. And questioned by reporters at Dum Dum the Prime Minister could merely add that the Centre kept a watch on all States. Indeed whatever one might say of the Government of India one would have to agree that it has at least avoided double standards creeping into its political line : resist leftism at home, help resist communism abroad.

With Telengana and Bihar at home, the newspapers have not been able to flash Mrs Gandhi much. While accounts of her doings in Japan and Indonesia have appeared almost regularly, Mrs Gandhi failed to find a place in the holy of holies, the editorial columns, in a majority of the Indian newspapers. Perhaps even the Indian Press found it difficult to write of a Prime Minister playing somebody else's tune on her fiddle abroad while her country was passing through a period of serious crisis and tension continued to mount. Or it maybe that after Mr Dinesh Singh and Nepal, most newspapers have decided to adopt more caution while commenting on the "success" of tours by Indian leaders.

The *Hindustan Times* says Mrs Gandhi's journey to Djakarta was important even though there are no problems between India and Indonesia. Being neighbours the countries have every reason to come closer to each other. Also being the two largest and most populous nations in South-East Asia their futures will affect to a great extent the happenings in this part of the world. Trade between the two countries which

started in 1956 can be further extended; Mrs Gandhi's visit may encourage Indian industrialists to venture more boldly into the Indonesian market. (Does this mean Ambassador cars for the streets of Djakarta?)

Improving communication between her 3,000 islands is one of Indonesia's more urgent problems, thinks the *Indian Express*. India could be of assistance in this sphere and thus help ease one of Djakarta's main headaches. It should be remembered that like many Asian countries, politics in Indonesia will be determined largely by her economics and for this reason the plan for closer economic and political co-operation between the two countries is most welcome. Relations between the two countries visibly improved with the exit of President Sukarno three years ago and extension of Indian aid and co-operation should help strengthen the existing bonds.

Vietnam

Any reference to South-East Asia inevitably brings in mind the war in Vietnam. One is reminded of that small yet heroic country when one

reads in the Press of the need for greater co-operation and understanding between S-E Asian countries. One is reminded of the American bombs and napalm which continue to kill in the rural areas, the easy money that tries to corrupt a generation in Saigon. One is also forced to realize that the fate of South-East Asia depends on the fate of Vietnam.

Indian newspapers, however, seem to be blind to this aspect of the situation. Stoogelike they talk of non-alignment while discussing essentially aligned nations, of Asian peace under the father figure of Nixon even when a tiny people have flouted his authority in the bravest manner. Indeed it is an indication of the extent to which the Indian Press can be slaves that there has been an almost total blackout of Vietnam news since the formation of the provisional Revolutionary Government by the Liberation Front. The Press which talks of better understanding among neighbours did not even feel the necessity to have any representative in Saigon. For the Indian people it has only the garbled version of the American and British news agencies

to offer. It might be mentioned that even Japan has over 100 correspondents in South Vietnam. The only Indian journalists to have visited Saigon are those who have been taken on conducted tours by the American Government on their way back from the United States. A short stay, a tour of night clubs, U.S. handouts, maybe an aerial survey of the zone of operations and plenty of whisky—that is the routine of these conducted tours. The Americans know that in most cases the able representative of the "free Press" would not write anything or even if he does would in all likelihood discuss the "welfare activities" of the Americans in rural Vietnam. The Americans also know that while the Indian Press would raise a hue and cry at even a hint of affront from Pakistan, it will remain silent when the U.S. Government asks India to stop trading with Cuba and North Vietnam as a condition for renewed aid; they know that while talking of non-alignment, the Press will not utter a word when the Tatas export trucks to South Vietnam. The Americans know they have bought 'em all.

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Arunik's One-Act Plays

BY OUR DRAMA CRITIC

PERFORMANCES at Rabindra Sadan or Kalamandir, despite the space and stage equipment, the air-conditioning and plush seats in the auditorium, somehow leave one with a feeling that there is something missing. That something may well be fervour, a zeal which raises a production to the level of an experience and makes an experience an unforgettable event.

This has happened on two occasions at Muktagan where the stage is considerably smaller, equipment reduced to essentials and chairs are anything but comfortable. The sides of the hall exhibit fossils of props and scenery of past productions. The first time it was *Antigone* and the second *Abarta* was a recent production discussed last week. Another such was an experimental one-acter *Surjer Moto Samudra* which with all the disadvantages that can be imagined, still rose above the hundred and one productions that city enthusiasts, present year in and year out. *Surjer Moto Samudra* dealt with the slow transformation of thought of a man who considered himself too cultured and too refined even to consider as human beings the raucous stinking crowd who had nothing better to do than work out their boredom through street demonstrations—what utter bad taste! True, he was a clerk—so what? On his birthday he could still mix a cocktail and discuss the qualities of its various ingredients. Yes, he addressed his parents as “mummy” and “daddy” and he could appreciate the blue haze of isolation in which his stratum of society lived.

Man was an individual, had to be an individual. The herd mentality, the mob psychology, was completely alien to a man of his delicate sensibility. This was Sheshadri and he was above all this.

Through a series of “insets” in which Sheshadri remains an observer, the audience was introduced to

the difference in the standards of life of the “blue-haze” people comprising mainly his family and those of the “common herd”. While his own mother and sister are involved with the same man, his father connives at the affair because of the financial advantage he derives out of the situation. The milieu to which Sheshadri belongs showed how little fellow-feeling there is, how selfish and how alienated everyone becomes. On the other hand the “demonstrators” returning after the processions have broken up (display completely different attitudes which are at once human. In fact Sheshadri's own wife and child have escaped from the loneliness of the “blue-haze” people into the sunshine of human struggle and human concern. Slowly Sheshadri's conscience awakens, particularly after his sister's tragic death and he welcomes the “ocean like the sun”.

The play, written by Ajit Ganguly, held one's interest throughout. Kashinath Banerjee's direction should have provided a smarter “blue-haze” set because the only really convincing character among them was Ganesh Dutt. His last exit could have been less stiff despite the tragedy.

The main applause, however, should go to Debashish Banerjee who played Sheshadri. Sitting at one end of the stage with hardly any movement, with literally hundreds of lines flowing in an unceasing current he held one's attention right through. If anything matched his performance it was the “voice” which gave one the feeling of inexorable fate dragging this unwilling horse to the trough to make it drink.

The set could have been more imaginative. As it was arranged, one did not know whether the “insets” were taking place in a park or outside the ice-cream bar. More thought should have been given to this aspect, because it is through these “insets” that the inner action of the drama developed.

Aguner Parashmoni

This indeed was a play for middle-

class audiences. *Aguner Parashmoni* which followed was unfortunately disappointing. One's senses had been so keyed up that expectation ran high. The play, however, turned out to be more of a harangue than anything else. It deals with the life of three members of a family—the father and his two sons. The father is an old revolutionary. The elder son is a mercantile employee while the younger one is in student politics. The elder brother is worried because of his younger brother's activity. It could jeopardise his job. The father harks back to the old days when men were men and revolutionaries terrorised. A policeman enters the scene and enquires about the younger boy. The drama is about to develop when it turns out that he is the younger boy's school friend. Of course this does not prevent the old man from including him in his rabble-raising speech. There is a time and place for everything.

Love Thy Neighbour

MRIGANKA SEKHAR RAY

SARATCHANDRA seems still the biggest box-office pull in Bengali cinema. The huge audience drawn by the revived *Chandranath* and the roaring success of *Parineeta* (directed by Ajay Kar) are proof that tear-jerkers and adolescent romance are the two sure money-spinners. *Parineeta* is definitely one of the minor works of Saratchandra, and the usual story-telling tricks, the only assets of a Saratchandra story, are almost absent here. The hero is a subtle kind of bully and the heroine lives up to the conventional conception of the Indian woman as a submissive cow. The problems are hopelessly dated; not only dated, but the portrayal also is highly unreal. All these faults of the original have been retained in the scenario and the material is scarpily thought out and thoughtlessly put together. The film makers also treat the spectators as giggling bumpkins to be fed on clichés

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and burdened with over-explanation. This medieval conception of scripting is matched by an equally backward style in visual construction. Direction and photography are as listless as the acting, bringing back the nauseating smell of the mid-thirties', archaic photoplays. Mousumi Chatterjee fails to get over her baby doll image and artificial lollypop accents. Both Soumitra Chatterjee and Shamit Bhanja as the romantic protagonists strut like lifeless wax-dolls through this maze of celluloid incredulities, reducing the film to a tedious tale of calf-loves of some under-sexed imbeciles.

Aya Sawan Jhumke (directed by Raghunath Jhalani) is also a tiring arabesque of false intrigues and wholly unconvincing situations. The problems of as many as four pairs are sorted out in course of this long-winded film and the whole process is punctuated by two murders, one street accident and some slight kind of vamping. As usual, the whole thing has been done in thoroughly bad taste and each character vies with the other in his measure of hamming. The location shooting is said to be done in Kerala, but with all the resources of Eastmancolour photography the cameraman has not been able to capture the quiet beauty of the backwaters and the coconut-groves.

Letters

A Reply To Dhara

Addressing a public meeting in Haldia Mr Dhara, as is customary with him, tried to put the blame for any future disintegration of the UF on the forcible occupation of land and 'gheraos'. He emphasised that nowhere in the 32 point-programme of the UF there is any mention of gherao or forcible occupation of agricultural land. What requires emphasis is the anti-people attitude which Mr Dhara has now taken and his denunciation of other constituents of the UF, after he had been left alone in Cabinet meetings over the issue of gherao.

We the common employees of Durgapur Projects Ltd would like to put a few questions to Mr Dhara. Hasn't he told the employees here that he would root out corruption and purge the State Government's biggest industrial undertaking of corrupt officials? Has not the Suku Sen Committee pinpointed some of the 'black sheep' among the senior officers? But are not the members of the Board appointed by the UF Minister protecting the same officials, and the officials against whom the employees submitted positive evidence of corruption? Is it not a fact that when he visited Durgapur two months back the first thing he did was to meet in secret one member of the INTUC led union with the intention for forming another union to counterbalance the Employees' Union? Are there not already signs of dissension among the two boards of directors representing CPI(M) & CPI MLAs and other bureaucratic members? Why is there so much 'hush hush' over the breakdown lists of electrical equipment of the power plant. Removal of corruption, perhaps Mr Dhara has forgotten, is one of the points of the 32-point programme.

A. GANGULI, A. K. BHATTACHARYA,
P. BOSE, MIRA BISWAS AND OTHERS

Durgapur

The UF Commerce and Industries Minister, Mr Dhara, thought that the induction of a technical man as the Director of Durgapur Projects would cure many evils and help revive the working of this project. The gentleman chosen, however, lacks administrative ability, has only lopsided technical knowledge of theory and of the maintenance and operation of the coke oven group of plants and is ignorant of power plant and sub-station maintenance, operation and construction. The result is a sharp deterioration of the coke oven group of plants, continued damage to electrical and mechanical equipment, frequent failure of power supply and a virtual chaos in administration.

ARGUS
Durgapur

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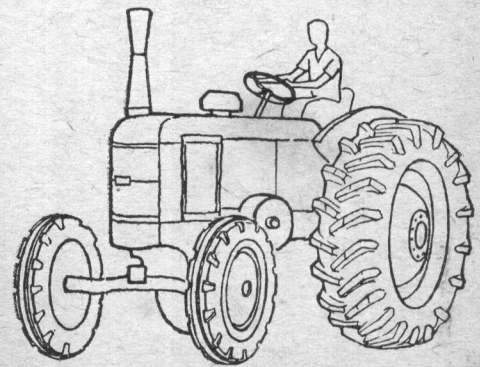
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