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THE WAY IT GOES

THE picture was widely carried by newspapers in the northern parts of the country. The Union Minister for Education, Dr V. K. R. V. Rao, performing *havan* for the welfare of the students of a university he was visiting. It was a remarkable picture: the usual paraphernalia of a typical Hindu worship, the ingratiating Vice-Chancellor and his academic colleagues, an assortment of students, and, in the middle of it all, this great secular country's Education Minister chanting the mantras. There was another picture in the newspapers a few days ago, about the launching of a new vessel belonging to the Indian Navy at the Calcutta docks: the bigwigs of the IN, the cadets offering a salute, and, next to them, squatting on the floor of the open deck, a bare-bodied Hindu priest, pigtail gently swaying in the air, engrossed in holy worship for the succour of the vessel.

That is the way it goes. The hypocrisy of the Constitution is wearing thin, everybody takes it for granted that this being a Hindu State, Hindu ceremonies are a must on any official or quasi-official occasion. The university the Minister for Education was visiting must be almost completely subsisting on the Union Government's money, and even the accessories for the ritual—incense, flowers, fruits, sandalwood paste, ghee, and what not—must have been arranged with public funds. The worshipper at the Calcutta docks was not a Minister but a run-of-the-mill professional priest, but his service too must have been purchased—a charge on the country's defence outlay. We could have multiplied examples, but that would be hardly necessary. Episodes such as the ones cited are taking place every day of the week. Hindu rituals as adjunct of official ceremonies have by now become so commonplace that there is no batting of eye any more.

But bigotry will be out. Last month, while East Pakistan was aflame with revolt, and the Muslim majority and the Hindu minority together were barricading the Dacca streets, on this side of the border the contemporary happening was the vicious attack on Muslims at Titagarh and Telinipara. The East Pakistanis were chanting for secular socialism; here near the Hooghly mosques were being demolished. But where the Education Minister of a country considers the performance of a Hindu puja in the line of his official duty, scarcely much else can be expected.

Over the years, there has been a blurring of distinction between official and Hindu theology, and between official and Hindu rituals. The intolerance towards minority views and the religious forms of minority communities stems directly from this officially sponsored identification between the concepts of the Hindu and the Indian. Where issues of economics are concerned, a trade union leader of socialist or communist persuasion may command the attention of the mass of workers, but in a diverse number of other fields religious prejudices surface, and no amount of socialist preaching can repair the harm that might follow from seeing

the picture of a *havan* performing Minister for Education within the precincts of a university.

What is worse, this same Minister himself would perhaps, on another visit to another university, preach the virtues of secularism and socialism. He would not, quite honestly, see through the incongruity of his two different roles. He would perhaps even pontificate that these constitute a non-antagonistic contradiction. Yes, he would be quite honest in his hypocrisy. It is the cumulative burden of such honesties which would one day do in this nation. And that day might be literally round the corner.

About Nothing

If newspaper reports are correct, the high-power ministerial delegation from West Bengal did not roar exactly like a lion in New Delhi. For weeks before the visit so much had been said about the conspiracies of the Congress Government at the Centre that one could legitimately expect some blunt talking. But it seems that the Ministers had spent up all their anger in Calcutta and when the moment of confrontation came they found themselves lacking. They allowed the Prime Minister and, what is more intriguing, the Home Minister to lecture them on what the UF Government should or should not do. After the New Delhi parleys "confrontation" may become a tabooed word, for the UF leaders are reported to have assured the Centre that they do not want any confrontation. Similar assurances have been given on some other issues also. If the UF continues to be so prolific in its assurances to the Centre, nothing may be left for it to want after a few more visits to New Delhi by the Chief and the Deputy Chief Minister. It would be advisable to make the 32-point programme compulsory reading for every Minister before he makes a trip to New Delhi lest he should say or do something repugnant to the programme on the basis of which the UF has been returned to power; and the

programme pledges confrontation with the Centre on about a dozen fundamental issues. Periodical whining for funds or more power does not constitute confrontation; that cannot be the UF way of "taking up" matters with the Centre for the simple reason that the Congress governments in the States have been indulging in such mock-heroics over two decades.

Nobody had expected that the visit would suddenly fill up the empty coffers or restore the constitutionally hamstrung tendon of the UF Government. But it was hoped that the Government would adhere firmly to the stand it had taken publicly on the stationing of the CRP in West Bengal and the Centre's handling of the firing at the Cossipore ordnance factory. It is reported that the CRP controversy has not been fully resolved. But what the UF has already conceded is substantial. The objection to the stationing of CRP units in the State has been waived; in return, Mr Chavan has magnanimously declared that the CRP would not be deployed unless requested by the State Government. The promise means nothing for Mr Chavan cannot use a power which he does not have. Not merely the CRP but even the army cannot be deployed by the Centre for maintaining law and order over the head

of a State Government as long as the Constitution is not suspended. The Central "assurance" would have had some meaning if Mr Chavan had agreed that the CRP would not be deployed in the Union Government undertakings without the consent of the State Government. On this point he has refused to yield for that would have frustrated the purpose of stationing CRP units in this State; it is not the salubrious climate of Durgapur which has made him decide to set up the regional headquarters of the CRP there. It is a phoney argument that CRP units have to be at Farakka for its proximity to the border; there is a Centrally controlled para-military Border Security Force to look after that, and the eastern regional headquarters of this force is in Calcutta. Above all, there is the army with the headquarters of its eastern command in Fort William. Mr Chavan is asking for too much credulousness when he says that the CRP is still a necessity in places like Farakka.

More abject has been the UF surrender on the Cossipore issue. The UF leaders need not have gone to Delhi to learn from the Prime Minister the antecedents of Mr S. K. Das, a former judge of the Supreme Court, who has been chosen by the Centre to hold the inquiry into the Cossipore firing. The UF leaders are reported to have promised to consider the matter again in the Cabinet, as if their original objection was not to the Central probe but to the person who had been entrusted with the job. The trend of discussions suggests that on the question of principle the UF has already yielded; it has conceded to the Centre the right to institute inquiries on its own into matters concerning law and order. Instead of wresting more powers for the State Government from the Centre the UF leaders have parted with some of the strictly limited powers they had. The decision has been taken in New Delhi, and the Cabinet meeting here will, in all probability, be a formality despite bombasts; at what price it is not known yet. "Trip" is a many-splendoured word, and some trips are said to create a hyper-euphoria in which

all senses are blurred. The trip to New Delhi may have been one such for the UF leaders, but the less fortunate would question the necessity of futile brinkmanship. Battle-cries become a hoax when a retreat is planned.

Friends, Not Brothers

The security forces in Nagaland are reported to be doing a splendid job; during the last one year, they have not misbehaved with any Naga woman, let alone a hostile. Fraternization between the security forces and the Nagas has been so good that whole village communities, we are asked to believe, want these forces permanently posted in their neighbourhood to save them from the hostiles. The bonhomie has reportedly reached such a stage that the Nagas themselves are eager to form village guards who can brief the security forces on the movements of the hostiles.

Sardar Swaran Singh wanted the Lok Sabha to congratulate the security forces and village guards in Nagaland on their good performance. This was a prelude to the President's visit to Nagaland. Much will be heard, no doubt, during the visit about the innate goodness of the Indian Constitution, for which even the hostile Nagas are reported to be growing a fondness—at a time when a large number of States have been condemning it in no uncertain manner.

It is true however that the Phizoites' hold on the underground is declining, even though this hold was almost complete only a year ago. Kughato Sukhai and Seato Swu, leaders of the important Sema tribe, captured the 'federal' army headquarters at Chedema a few months ago and formed a moderate revolutionary group, opting for a political settlement. Mowu Angami and Isaac Swu, leaders of the most militant group, have been captured along with the 200 China-trained followers, thanks to the harrying by the Burmese and betrayal by the Zungti group from

which came Phizo himself. Last month a group of armymen captured another federal headquarters in Khensa and declared their adherence to the cease-fire agreement of 1964. This group represents the Ao tribe, the second biggest Naga tribe, which refused to join the Kohima Convention last year when the Baptist Mission organized the Naga People's Conference to bring about a peaceful settlement.

These may point to a shift in underground leadership. Add to this the large Naga participation in the elections this year, even in the Zungti area, Phizo's stronghold. The 'sovereignty or war' line seems to be in the process of being discarded and the morale of the secessionists has been broken—or that is what the Government of India wishes to believe. The four years of peace, according to Sardar Swaran Singh, have convinced the Nagas that independence would not be viable. For the prosperity of Nagaland, hasn't the Government of India been treating the region as a special case? Rs. 700 per capita are being spent a year for the development of the State. More will be in the offing, if only the underground shakes off its enchantment with China.

While the Defence Minister patted himself on the back he conveniently overlooked the role of the Christian missionaries in Nagaland. It was they who had encouraged the Nagas to take up the 'sovereignty' line originally; but when they found the underground leaning too much on China, they lost no time in reversing the line. Now they preach the inviolability of the Constitution.

It remains to be seen, though, how strong are the followers of Kughato Sukhai and the new armymen in Khensa. The latter are reported to be a battalion strong only while the Ao tribe they represent numbers 50,000. Mowu Angami and his 200 followers have been captured but the 'federal' army strength is considered to be 10,000. It seems that the Defence Minister's statement on the role of the security forces smacks of propaganda a little bit.

As the President visits Nagaland, the Government of India would do well to determine what the moderate revolutionary groups want to say. They consider they have the right of self-determination and, as Rano Shaiza, Phizo's niece and herself a middle-ground politician, said, "We are friends; but don't force us to be your brothers."

Incidentally, the left parties in India are yet to categorically declare whether they consider the underground Nagas friends, brothers or just Chinese provocateurs. Except the Naxalites, the leftists have chosen to keep aloof from what is happening in that unhappy region.

Abetting Espionage

Last Sunday the Americans resumed their spy flights over the Sea of Japan without a word of protest from either Russia or China. Surely the elaborately organized espionage, by fabulously expensive and sophisticated electronic equipment, is not aimed at North Korea alone. The neighbouring Russian and Chinese territories are likely to be of much greater interest to the U.S. espionage system, particularly after the border incidents in the Ussuri river area. Even if North Korea alone had been the target of such spying missions, Russia and China should have joined it in protest. The Russian assistance to the U.S. Navy in a wide-ranging search for the spying plane and possible survivors was curious indeed. This remarkably prompt and generous co-operation virtually put the Russians on the American side in the dispute with North Korea; they may not have aided the U.S. espionage effort, but they certainly abetted it by assisting the American search for any surviving spies.

More and more does it seem that it is the smaller countries which will have to call the American bluff. Vietnam, of course, is the classic example, but North Korea has also shown that courage is the only answer to threats from the mighty. President Johnson

fumed and blustered over the Pueblo, but the North Koreans refused to be bullied, and eventually the Americans had not only to admit guilt but also to apologize. Memory of that humiliation could not have faded when the so-called reconnaissance plane EC-121 was shot down. President Nixon was at least shrewd enough not to strike any heroic posture; he has not abandoned the spy flights, but nor has he taken or even threatened dire action against North Korea for what the latter did to one of the spy planes. He has ordered that planes or warships "menacing American reconnaissance flights in international air" are to be pursued and destroyed; but American planes make a habit of straying into other countries' air-space, as U.S. naval vessels stray into other countries'

territorial waters. When this happens, the North Koreans will again know what to do; so will the other communist countries when their air-space or territorial waters are violated.

But the mischief will not stop until there is a more concerted action against it. The Americans must be made to realise that they cannot go on endangering the security of other nations by continued espionage of the most brazen variety. And this can be done only if both Russia and China take stronger measures against American spying in general. But the Chinese have not said what they intend to do; and what Russia has in fact done makes one doubt whether it is at all interested in countering the American mischief.

Forgotten War

Honesty, it seems, is infectious. Hardly had Prince Sihanouk 'confessed' about the Vietcong presence in Cambodia when the Americans in Saigon came out with a series of confessions. The U.S. Secretary of Defence, Mr Laird, then visiting Saigon, admitted that American troops had indeed on occasion crossed into Laos. They did that, of course, just to defend themselves. A couple of weeks later came another elaborate confession from the American military command in Saigon that they have been daily sending Green Berets to 'patrol' inside Laos. These American visitors too have no hostile designs against Laos for they are ordered 'not to shoot' unless fired on by the Pathet Lao soldiers. These admissions, however, constitute only the floating part of an iceberg. Since 1964 American bombers on "armed reconnaissance flight" have been bombing the zones under Pathet Lao control. This year bombing has been stepped up to 200 sorties a day—about three to four times what it was before the partial and total bombing halts over North Vietnam. According to Western Press reports, 30,000 Meo hill tribesmen have also been

trained by the CIA to operate deep inside the liberated areas and destroy the infrastructure of a new Laos reared by Prince Souphanouvong and his compatriots. Western journalists have termed it the 'forgotten war' in Laos. Indeed it has to be. Didn't the 14-nation Geneva agreements in 1962 provide for withdrawal of foreign troops within 75 days of the signature? It is also convenient to forget that the 'neutralist' Government of Vientiane has been regularly sending observers to SEATO meetings and, according to some reports, it might be asked to assume full membership during the SEATO ministerial conference in May.

Forgetfulness is alright. But late last month Britain, grown very conscientious about her duty as the Co-Chairman of the Geneva Conference, proposed that the International Control Commission should investigate North Vietnamese infiltration which is in violation of Laotian neutrality. The Russians too are busy peddling 'peace proposals'. Last month the Soviet Ambassador in Vientiane, Victor Minine, journeyed to Pathet Lao headquarters carrying with him one such proposal from Souvanna Phouma.

The Pathet Lao, however, dismissed the spurious peace proposal from a man, who is "deliberately pleading for U.S. aggression in Laos." Mr Minine was further embarrassed by the widespread offensive mounted early this month by the Pathet Lao who attacked Saravane and Attopeu while closing in on the U.S. Special Forces base at Long Cheng (which, of course, officially is not there). Meanwhile Souvanna Phouma continues to preside by the grace of Washington over a kind of non-government—bankrupt, shadowy and corrupt—beating even the Filipino record. Mercifully his writ does not run, according to the *Economist*, beyond Vientiane, Luang Prabang and a few pockets near the Thai border. That the Russians are very close to Souvanna Phouma is no surprise. After all it was in Geneva in 1962, as the American officials admit now, that the Russo-American detente in Asia began.

Peruvian Oil

After months of diplomatic wrangling over Peru's expropriation of oilfields and refineries of the International Petroleum Company—a subsidiary of Standard Oil, New Jersey—when the day for the American crackdown on Lima came, the Nixon Administration, instead of applying economic sanctions, beat a hasty retreat. The new deadline for invoking the Hickenlooper Amendment to the Foreign Assistance Act has now been fixed at August 6. The dispute began last October when within days of a military coup which deposed President Fernando Belaunde, General Juan Velasco Alvarado ordered the seizure of the IPC property. The oil company has been pumping oil out of Peruvian soil since 1924. The Hickenlooper Amendment requires of the USA to stop foreign aid to and preferential trade-deals with any country that expropriates her property without compensating; and the sanctions would come into force after six months of the seizure unless meaningful negotiations are in progress.

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towards a settlement. (The Amendment was enacted in 1962 when the former President of Brazil, Joao Goulart, after ordering the seizure of two American companies, had to back down). Although the generals in Lima know that the economic situation would deteriorate, in case of the American economic sanction amounting to \$90 million a year, they could hardly succumb to the American pressure since the only way to improve the military junta's standing with the people is to whip up anti-Yankee sentiments. As a result, General Belasco did offer, after protracted bargaining with President Nixon's special envoy, the Wall Street lawyer, Mr John Nichol Irwin, \$71 million in compensation for the IPC property, but demanded in return about \$700 million for oil theft. This landed America in a difficult position. Although she stands for a policy of taking punitive

measures against a country that expropriates property without compensation, America decided to play it cool in Peru since a showdown would have had an adverse effect on her investment in the south of Rio Grande. (The U.S. private investment runs over \$10 billion in Latin America and earns an annual return of 11.8 per cent). As Peru's Empresa Petrolera Fiscal is running IPC's Talara refinery with Mexican help, America decided not to question Lima's right to expropriate. The only compromise offered by the Peruvian Government was to allow the IPC to appeal to the Ministry of Energy and Mines. The Secretary of State, Mr Rogers, persuaded the IPC directors to exhaust this possibility and President Nixon then decided that the appeal represented appropriate action under terms of the Hickenlooper Amendment.

Italian Fury

The sudden outburst of public fury which engulfed Italy following the Battipaglia firing has shaken the four-month-old coalition Government of Signor Mariano Rumor. It all started with an announcement that a State-owned tobacco firm and another sugar mill in Battipaglia were to be run down. Workers and sharecroppers launched a demonstration. Two were killed by the police, just five months after the death of two agricultural workers in police firing. The whole of Battipaglia next day came out on the streets, burning down the police station and town hall and almost lynching even a 'left-wing' member of Parliament. The whole of Italy was brought to a standstill by a general strike. More than 50,000 people marched through ten Italian cities battling with police and overturning automobiles. Even the prisoners in Turin, Milan and Genoa rose in revolt demanding better prison conditions and change of the penal regulations framed under fascism. Many of the rebellious prisoners had not been sentenced at all.

In Italy a citizen can be held without bail for up to two years before being brought to trial. (The Government of India should take heart.) The secretary of the ruling Christian Democratic party, Signor Piccoli, might find it convenient to condemn this "irrational and empty revolution" but could not suggest any remedy for the deep social and economic crisis that produced the fissionable material.

One is left wondering what really happened to the "Italian miracle"—an object of so much ballyhoo. During the last decade industrial production in Italy is said to have achieved a 112 per cent increase and production of automobiles has more than quadrupled. The fact that everything from automobiles to electric shavers now bears the 'made in Italy' label is expected to boost national pride. But one million unemployed, and four million underemployed Italians refuse to wallow in this national glory. The people of south Italy—the skimpy backyard of the industrial north—are becoming more and more aggressive and are not in a mood to listen. For too long they have been fobbed off with promises of a better deal that never materialise. Year after year the south threw up thousands of unemployed persons (in 1967 alone the figure of such immigrants was 300,000) swarming into the north in search of jobs. And from the experience of last year's student and workers' movement they have come to realise the only language that Rome understands.

Precisely a growing realisation of this sort has thrown the Communist Party into a quandary. The party enjoys the support of one out of every three Italians. To increase their following and even to retain what they have the communists must lead the people in their struggle. And once struggle is launched, as is apparent from the events of last year, it takes

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no cognizance of the constitutional game. But had Comrade Luigi Longo not reaffirmed at the conference in Bologna in February that the road to the dictatorship of the proletariat lay via parliament?

Meanwhile, the action of the people of Battipaglia has earned them a small success. Plans to close the tobacco and sugar factory in the area have been shelved. But shelving is no solution.

came. The communist second thoughts were the direct result of the Prime Minister's intervention, to go by what the SSP sources say.

The softening of the CPI (M)'s attitude to the Centre may not be very significant in itself because participation in office imposes its own constraints on a party. Even Mr Namboodiripad tried to soft-pedal the Centre-States issues when he dismissed them as unimportant on the eve of the National Development Council's meeting. He said it was an ideological conflict, covering the entire gamut of policies. Mr Jyoti Basu has now moved closer to Mr Namboodiripad and they would make a rare tandem for any bargaining with the Centre. The West Bengal leaders' demand for greater powers from the Centre was vague and diffuse and Mr Chavan had no difficulty brushing it aside with the observation that a "national dialogue" on Centre-State relations has already been initiated, though nobody knows where the dialogue is taking place. Though it was widely publicised that the Prime Minister would consult the Congress Chief Ministers as the first step towards a round-table with the Chief Ministers on Centre-State relations, the talks in New Delhi turned out to be hard bargaining for greater share of resources for the States and nothing more. The CPI (M)'s retreat all along the line surprised several non-Congress Chief Ministers.

Convulsion

The convulsion inside the CPI over the Czechoslovak issue is far from over. The two errant National Council members who dared contribute to the book *Whither Czechoslovakia* are on the mat and if they do not express regret in two weeks, they are to be punished with a public censure. The two members have not relented. The charge against Mr K. Damodaran, a senior member of the Council, is that he had identified himself with an anti-Soviet venture (that is the impugned book). The party journal which is now specialising in writing about the undergarments of Congress women MPs would not accept an advertise-

View from Delhi

Another Damp Squib

FROM A POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

IT was the dampest of damp squibs last weekend. The long-haraldered confrontation with the Centre never came off. One presumes all the heroics about a confrontation are meant exclusively for the Calcutta Maidan because New Delhi does not take such things seriously any more. Mr Y. B. Chavan's tough talking seemed to have left Mr Ajoy Mukherjee and Mr Jyoti Basu relenting and chastened. Of course there are two slightly conflicting versions of the "non-confrontation" in circulation here, though the correspondents of Calcutta papers have put a lot of gloss on the stories they filed. There is no denying that the two leaders solemnly assured the Centre that they do not want any confrontation and that the State Government did not in fact mind the stationing of the CRP in the State and what is more, they would co-operate with the judicial inquiry in Cossipore. What more could Mr Chavan or Mrs Indira Gandhi and Swaran Singh have asked? And pray, what are the differences if any that persist? About the position of the CRP, the Home Ministry's version of what Mr Jyoti Basu said does not exactly tally with what Mr Jyoti Basu's own version. But in principle there does not appear to be any difference between him and Mr Chavan. When his party sees nothing wrong in Soviet troops being billeted in Czechoslovakia, a CRP unit in Farakka should not be an antagonistic contradiction, dialectically speaking, for Mr Jyoti Basu.

All the communist oratory in the Lok Sabha debate on Mr Chavan's

statement (on the bandh) did not carry conviction. If anything it betrayed a confused approach on the part of the communist spokesmen who were not quite sure whether they could say that the West Bengal Government was a party to the bandh or not. Mr Jyoti Basu too had to quibble about it later in New Delhi and there were sure signs of cold feet, induced by a hard line. One is left with the impression now that the State Government only joined the bandh and had no role in sponsoring it, but how does this square up with the statements of Mr Dange during the debate?

Far from confronting the Centre, the two communist parties are vying with each other to bail the present leadership at the Centre from a developing crisis. The CPI indeed looks askance at the CPI (M)'s success in its attempts to move closer to the Government at the Centre. For instance, when Mr Madhu Limaye sponsored a statement by Opposition MPs demanding a probe into the Birla company affairs and into the charges against Ministers in this connection, a CPI (M) leader and a CPI leader had affixed their signatures. The statement said that Mr Chandrasekhar was the victim of one leader's vanity and another's cowardice but the two-front attack on Mr Morarji Desai and Mrs Indira Gandhi and the general attack on the Birlas was too much for the leaders of the two communist parties to swallow. The signatures were withdrawn and the statement was released to the Press after 48 hours of waiting for a final communist decision on supporting it. The support never

ment of the book even against prepayment. There are shades of inquisition in the party now. The leadership even wanted one of the two members to disclose the identity of some of the contributors to the volume who had used pseudonyms. Mr Damodaran is now sought to be un-personed and the easiest technique is to dismiss him as a "Gandhian Marxist" of sorts.

With the Chief Ministers back in their States, all is well with New Delhi. The next event to await is the Faridabad Congress session which has nothing particular to discuss. The old Morarji Desai following in the Congress Parliamentary Party has virtually gone over to Mr Patil whose return to the Lok Sabha looks imminent. Mr Morarji Desai is a goner and Mr Patil should be happy if Mr Chandrasekhar's campaign against Mr Desai succeeds. With Mr Patil in, the challenge to Mrs Gandhi's leadership will gain a new edge. The Syndicate is coming back in a big way though the odd man still out would be poor Mr Atulya Ghosh.

Nobody, however, is aiming at toppling Mrs Indira Gandhi. All that is being attempted is a measure of party control over her to end the one-faction Cabinet at the Centre. Mr Nijalingappa might assert his position as the party boss with the help of the famous reorganisation plan for the party drawn up by the S. K. Patil committee. Mrs Gandhi has been trying to counter the attack from the "right" (she is considered a leftist!) with the new argument that there is no right or left in the Congress and all of them were committed to a certain programme.

How left is Mrs Indira Gandhi is bettered answered by Mr S. A. Dange and Mr P. Sundarayya, one presumes. But a recent assessment of the so-called left in the Congress Parliamentary Party is revealing. Mrs Gandhi's hard-core leftist following is about 35 MPs but even this is on the high side. It will be 29 according to the revised estimate. But the left in the Congress is a pathetic quantity. They are drop-outs either from the PSP or from the CPI. What they could not achieve through the leftist parties these mem-

bers seek to achieve through the Congress. All the talk of the Congress splitting into right and left sounds irrelevant because there is nothing called the left. If "split" is a euphe-

mism for Mrs Indira Gandhi's exit from the Congress with her hard-core following, she can at the most take 29 MPs with her!

April 20, 1969

The Sino-Soviet Frontier—II

N. R. KALPATHI

IN order to understand the significance of the recent border clash between the Soviet Union and China it is necessary to analyse in detail both the Soviet and Chinese versions of the clash.

The Chinese protest note of March 2 was as brief as the Soviet note issued on the same day. The Chinese protest note was unusually mild in its tone. Further, the customary practice of issuing the protest note and following it up with a commentary on the same day was not followed by the Chinese this time. Strangely, the *Jen-min jih-Pao* dated March 2 had nothing to say on the border clash. It was only the issue dated March 4 that carried the protest note and the joint editorial of the *People's Daily* and the *Liberation Army Daily* captioned "Down with the new Czars". This unusual happening perhaps suggests that the Chinese Government was taken by surprise by the developments on the border. This was perhaps the reason why the editorial appeared only on March 4 when more details were available to the Chinese Government about the clash.

The Soviet protest note was followed by detailed commentaries on the border clashes. Following the lead of *Pravda*, the other Soviet papers carried detailed discussions on the border incidents. Thus at least in sheer volume, the Soviets have published more on the question than the Chinese have done to this date.

According to the Soviet version a batch of intruding Chinese numbering about 300 suddenly opened fire on the Soviet guards protecting the area of Damansky island. That is to say, according to the Soviets themselves, the Soviet guards were already in the Damansky or Chenpao island area

when the incident took place on March 2. An elaborate statement issued on March 7—five days after the incident—by the Soviet Foreign Ministry Press Department Chief, Mr Zamyatin, went further and described the "intruding Chinese" as soldiers "disguised in white gowns". It also increased the number of intruders by 30—that is, it alleged that they were 330 in number. It further stated that when the Chinese intruded "a group of Soviet border guards led by the station Commander Senior Lt Strelnikov went along the frozen Ussuri River towards the site of the border violation." Thus the Soviet statement of March 7 with regard to the point noted above repudiates the position implied in the earlier protest note that the Soviet soldiers were already on the island when the Chinese were alleged to have intruded. Thus the version given in the Soviet protest note of March 2 and the one given by the Soviet Foreign Ministry Information Department Chief on March 7 do not tally. Why these inconsistencies and contradictions? The Russians have not offered any explanation.

The Chinese version did not deny that Chinese army personnel (Frontier Guards) were on Chenpao island when the incident took place. It said (March 2) that the Soviet authorities "flagrantly" intruded into the "indisputable Chinese territory" and provoked the Chinese Frontier guards on "normal patrol duty". The Chinese note also fixed the responsibility for opening fire on the Russians.

The Chinese subsequently provided maps in support of their claim. The *Jen-min jin-pao* (March 4, p. 2) carried two maps showing the island on the Chinese side. It is also significant to note that the KMT maps of

the pre-1949 period also show the disputed island on the Chinese side of the Ussuri River. Not only have the Russians not published any map to this day, they have charged that the Chinese had "deliberately planned" the provocation on the Ussuri river border. According to the Soviet statement of March 7, there are two reasons why the Chinese should create a crisis on the border: First, the provocation was designed to distract the attention of the Chinese people from the "economic and political setbacks" they have suffered. Secondly, in view of the imminent 9th Congress of the Chinese Communist Party, China's leaders deliberately wanted to create "anti-Soviet hysteria" in order to make it "easier to impose a programme hostile to the Soviet Union".

Are these reasons convincing? Has the Maoist leadership suffered economic and political setbacks as the Russians make it out? True, there was some dislocation in the economic sphere during the more intense phase of the Cultural Revolution. However, the available data from unbiased sources point out that the Chinese leadership has overcome these difficulties. Further, if there is anything that is an iron-clad fact about China today, it is the successful emergence of the Mao-

Lin leadership at the end of an important phase of the Cultural Revolution. The confidence of the leadership was seen in the busy preparations going on in connection with the 9th Congress. It was fairly well known that a new draft constitution was being circulated in China for discussion among cadres and various issues were being debated in Peking's prestigious journals. Thus all evidence concerning developments in China exposes the hollowness of the Soviet argument of "economic and political setbacks".

Then there is the Soviet argument that the Chinese leadership is out to create "anti-Soviet hysteria" in China through whipping up border tensions in order to facilitate the passing of a programme hostile to the Soviet Union. Are the Chinese primarily concerned with an "anti-Soviet programme" or with a programme which the present leadership believes, rightly or wrongly, to be capable of delivering the goods to the Chinese people? And are they in desperate need of a provocation on the border to create "an anti-Soviet feeling"? It is common knowledge now that for nearly three years or so since the beginning of the Cultural Revolution there have been determined and continuous efforts in China to eradicate the influence of Soviet ideas—"the poisonous weeds"—that have "corrupted" a section of the top leadership. The exit of Liu Shao-chi and other "capitalist-roaders" from the seats of power symbolises the most significant stage in the repudiation of Soviet ideas. The 9th Congress of the CCP was likely to put its stamp of approval on the policies proposed by the Mao-Lin leadership. Under these circumstances did the Chinese really need a border clash to create "anti-Sovietism"? Not likely. Nor do the Chinese need a border clash to sustain an anti-Soviet attitude in China. For the Maoist value-system that is being constantly rubbed in is in itself a sufficient antidote to prevent the spread of the "revisionist" virus.

Pravda dated March 8 also gave two additional reasons why the Chinese "deliberately planned" the clash: (a) The Chinese want to hamper the convocation of the conference of the

communist and workers' parties and sow mistrust of the Soviet Union; (b) The clash was engineered by the Chinese with the hope of getting closer to the USA and West Germany. Are these charges valid? *Pravda* assumes that the proposed communist meet would proceed smoothly but for the Chinese throwing a spanner in it. To an observer of the current scene in the international communist movement, this is a highly questionable assumption. For, in the prevailing situation when many communist parties are up in arms against Soviet policies and vociferously critical of them since the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, the proposed meet in all probability will end up like a vulgar vaudeville play. The Rumanian action of walking out of the recent Warsaw Pact meet is a fair indication of the fate of the proposed jamboree. The Soviet concept of limited sovereignty has opened the gate to unlimited friction between the Russians and several other communist parties. Thus China can afford to don the role of Zeus and condescendingly watch the proceedings of the proposed comic opera. In short, the charge that China has engineered the border clash to torpedo the convening of the world communist meet appears rather childish.

The Russian charge that a "Bonn-Peking axis" is in operation has been obediently echoed by certain quarters in India. The Russians have quoted a Vienna newspaper to link up two events—the West German Presidential election in West Berlin and the Ussuri border clash—in order to prove that the Maoists have lent a helping hand to the West German cause, and have attempted to thwart Soviet action in Berlin.

First, the Russians imply that they had meant serious business in Berlin when West Germany decided to hold the election there. It is well known that in "the post-detente period" any Soviet posture in Berlin is just a political gimmick. It is nothing more than a periodic Soviet gesture to reaffirm the credibility of the GDR regime.

Perhaps the most significant point, a point that has not been discussed by

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many, is the emergence of a triangular power relationship between the United States, the Soviet Union and China. The rapid acquisition of nuclear capability by China and her efforts in the direction of manufacturing the ICBM have played their part in making the United States rethink her China policy in recent years. Both the Republicans and the Democrats recognise the need for a *rapprochement* with China—a determined gate-crasher into the nuclear club. President Nixon perhaps indicated this mood when he said in one of his recent speeches that the United States had entered upon an era of negotiation. It is equally true that any effort on the part of the United States to develop an understanding with China would affect Soviet interests as a global power in the long run. It will restrict the Soviet options on the global plane. However, in the short run any border clash between the Soviet Union and China will only contribute to limiting China's options—since China is not a super-power—vis-a-vis the United States in any negotiation between the two countries. The United States would undoubtedly utilise the issue of China's uneasy frontier with the other super-power as a potent weapon in any possible negotiation with the latter. Thus border clashes will adversely affect China's options in any discussion with the U.S. across the table and will only help the Soviet Union's policy of hampering Sino-U.S. negotiations. There is no reason to think that the Chinese are not aware of this fact. In short, there is no foolproof rationale behind the argument that the Chinese might have provoked the border clash, unless of course, one is going to assume that the decision-makers in Peking are adventurists unaware of the political implications involved in creating such incidents.

It is not proposed here that the Chinese are pious angels with a missionary zeal to propagate the philosophy of flower-power. In fact they understand quite well that being angels in an age of dinosaurs would lead to national disaster. And it is undoubtedly true that the two super-powers are the dinosaurs. (Concluded)

APRIL 26, 1969

Kerala

Operation Mud-Slinging

RAMJI

A mud-slinging contest is going on in Kerala among the partners of the so-called United Front. The CPI and the Marxists are outstanding in this exercise. The allegations and counter-allegations of the leaders, serving in and outside the Cabinet, flood the newspapers and elbow out other news in the process. Evidently, the contest is meant to preserve and build up the image of the various parties, badly affected by the indifferent performance of their representatives in the government.

Smt K. R. Gouri, the Marxist Revenue Minister, and Mr M. N. Govindan Nair, the CPI Minister for Agriculture, are leading champions of their respective parties in this fight. The style and content of their allegations and counter-allegations, vehement and devastating, are in fantastic variance with their position as members of the Cabinet. Many issues which have their places only in Cabinet or co-ordination committee meetings are aired before the public through statements and Press conferences. Absurdity reached an all-time high on April 13 when one Minister accused another through the medium of the Government's Public Relations Department. Smt Gouri was responsible for this feat. In her statement issued through the Public Relations Department, she has accused M. N. Govindan Nair of grave disservice to the flood victims in the State in that he allowed over Rs. 1 crore of flood relief funds granted by the Centre to lapse. Earlier M. N. had stated that because of the inaction of the Revenue Department under her, the funds were not made available to him in time. The debate over this is going to be long and bitter, with no holds barred.

A statement, some time back, by Mr A. K. Gopalan, MP, the State Secretary of the Marxist Party, accusing

the Governor, the Chief Secretary and the Inspector General of Police, of deliberate moves to sabotage the State Government under instructions from the Centre, gave new life and intensity to the mud-slinging campaign. Mr Gopalan based his arguments on the incidents at Viyupuram in the Kuttanad rice bowl of Kerala, where the police made a heavy lathi charge on agricultural workers and fired several rounds (in the air, it is said), to disperse them. The landowners in Kuttanad have been organising their own goonda and other forces to resist the united demands of the agricultural workers and at Viyoor a situation arose when the workers in strength confronted a party under landlord and his black legs in the paddy field, ready for harvest, each side determined to prevent the other from harvesting. The police intervened in the tense situation and the parties agreed to leave the field at a signal from the police. The signal was given. The landlord and his men, allegedly, obeyed it. The agricultural workers did not, it is alleged and started throwing stones at the police. And the police made the lathi charge and fired some rounds. It is admitted, even by the supporters of the police, that the lathi charge was merciless and many a worker was beaten up and thrown into ditches and canals, so plentiful in this region. Mr A. K. Gopalan's accusation is that the police, under orders from the IG, acted as agents of the landowners and sought to crush the workers. The Government appointed a one-man commission to conduct an enquiry into the incidents and suspended certain police officers. This was on March 31. On April 1, at a Press conference, Mr M. N. Govindan Nair, condemned Mr A. K. Gopalan's statement and dubbed it a move to make the officers mere tools of the Marxists by terrorising them into submission and he accused the Chief Minister of adopting double standards, by ignoring similar police action in other centres where the Marxists were not so fully involved.

In addition, Mr A. K. Gopalan had

demanding that certain officers on the Electricity Board (under Mr M. N. Govindan Nair) against whom there had been grave allegations should be suspended. M. N. countered this with an example of alleged favouritism by the Revenue Minister (Marxist) towards an officer who had been accused of grave charges. The Finance Minister, Mr P. K. Kunju (SSP), said that this officer who had been recommended for compulsory retirement was given a bigger post in the Revenue Department. A flood of words descended over such issues and the atmosphere has become vicious and unreal. And to cap everything the Chief Minister had to counter a statement of his Party Secretary by stating that the Inspector General of Police was very loyal and dependable. This has helped to make the pattern much more fantastic. All in all, it has become a madhouse, to put it charitably.

Civic Elections

The leading lights of the United Front can indulge in these things with impunity, because the discredited opposition seems determined to go downhill with a vengeance. The

Congress has allied itself with the Kerala Congress to contest the coming Corporation elections, in Cochin. Ten seats have been allotted to the Kerala Congress in this Congress stronghold, where the Kerala Congress has no roots. Actually the alliance was engineered by a few leaders in the Pradesh Congress Executive at the behest of the Nair and Christian communal elements and in violation of the decision of the Congress State Convention not to have any alliance with any other party. The Corporation election alliance is only a thin end of the communal wedge with which the Nair communalists and the Church hope to rope in the Congress to fight the University Bill which has crippled the licence of private managements of colleges. The Congress, in and outside the Assembly, had supported the University Bill. But with this alliance second thoughts seem to have been forced on the party by a few leaders, including the Congress President. After supporting a Bill which has been passed, the Congress now has taken the fantastic step of setting up a committee to examine it. The committee will surely come to a fore-

gone conclusion: that the Bill has to be resisted. Such Janus-faced antics are characteristic of the Congress here.

The fight for tickets in the Corporation election started off with an actual fight. The Secretary of the District Congress Committee, Ernakulam, manhandled one Congress leader, a member of the election committee, from inside the Congress house, right in front of other top leaders, the Secretary was so upset over the denial of an election ticket to him. Most disreputable elements, vested interests and men of shady background have been given Congress tickets. Two leading Congress men in the Mattanchery area, both leaders of rival trade unions in the Port, have been denied tickets. The idea is to avoid a tussle for mayoralty that would ensue if both of them get elected. The Congress evidently believes in counting the chicks before they are hatched. Anyway, these two worthies, veteran Congressmen both, with considerable influence in their localities, have filed nominations as independent candidates.

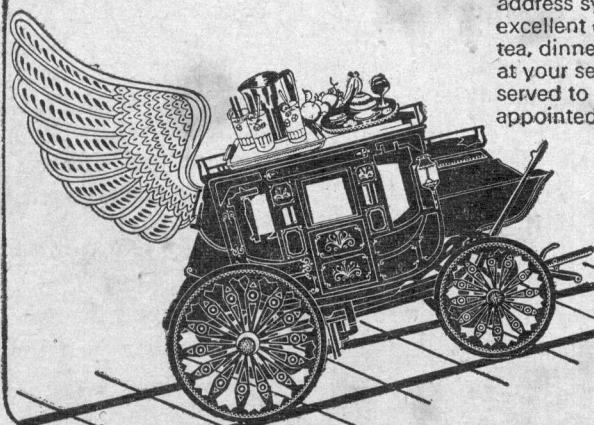
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EASTERN RAILWAY

Brief Committee

N. K. SINGH

STORM again in Bihar politics. On April 3 the Congress-led coalition Government's new Chief Secretary, Mr S. N. Singh, set up a committee of top officers, including himself, to "assist" and "guide" the two inquiry commissions set up by previous governments, the Aiyer and Mudholkar Commissions. These are at present inquiring into charges of corruption and misuse of power against six former Congress Ministers and 14 UF Ministers. According to the officials, the briefing committee was to scrutinize evidence relating to each charge with reference to relevant papers and instruct lawyers concerned about the Government's point of view in respect of each charge. But the storm of protest forced the Chief Minister to dissolve the committee on April 9.

Almost all the party leaders had sharply reacted to its formation. Even Congress leaders. The former BPCC Chief and Congress Minister, Mr Ansari, and the BPCC Secretary and former Minister, Mr N. K. S. Singh, expressed surprise and said three Governments had ruled over the State in the recent past, including the President of India, but none of them had thought it fit to interfere with the course of justice in the manner the present Government was suggesting.

Just a day after the committee had been set up the SSP, PSP, Loktantrik Congress and the Jana Sangh set up a joint action committee to mobilise public opinion for scrapping it. Several mass organisations like trade and student unions joined the campaign.

The most interesting part of this drama was the disunity among the Top Fives for whose benefit the Aiyer Commission was sought to be scuttled. Supporters of Mr K. B. Sahay did not support this step. They felt that the hearing against him was already complete and the committee would benefit the other five accused. On the

other hand, another top man, Mr M. P. Sinha's supporter were also not very enthusiastic. They thought that the other three accused, who are caste men of the Chief Minister, and Mr R. L. Singh Yadav, who is nearer to this faction, might benefit from it but not Mr M. P. Sinha.

The people included in this "briefing" committee were also not "very clean". They are in glass houses and cannot work properly. The Chief Secretary, Mr S. N. Singh, is indirectly concerned with Charge No. A-39 (interference in a criminal case against Narbheram) against Mr K. B. Sahay and Charge No. B-4 (claim case of Rambilash Ojha) against Mr M. P. Sinha. The Law Commission Chairman, Mr Kanhaiya Singh (one of the ex-briefing committee members), is concerned with Charge No H-12 against the Raja of Ramgarh and his conduct has also been adversely commented upon by the Calcutta High Court.

Another proposed member, the Development Commissioner, is involved in Charge Nos. B-2, B-3, B-8 and B-10 against Mr M. P. Sinha and A-37 against Mr K. B. Sahay.

The briefing committee, however, managed to hold its first meeting. But it ended in a note of controversy when three of its members wanted charges against the remaining five Congressmen to be rescreened. The Vigilance Commissioner (with whom the Chief Minister is not pleased) did not favour such a course.

Caste politics was clearly visible in this affair. The Rajput group was going to benefit from the briefing committee. Hearing against Mr K. B. Sahay is complete and Mr M. P. Sinha has been partially heard by the Commission. That leaves Messrs S. N. Sinha, Ambika Saran Singh and Raghvendra Narayan Singh, who are caste men of the Chief Minister, and Mr R. L. Singh Yadav who is nearer to this faction. It could help the Ramgarh brothers (of course Rajput) also in their hearing before the Mudholkar Commission.

Too much has been spent on these commissions. But what have the people of Bihar gained?

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Calcutta Diary

GYAN KAPUR

THE protracted wrangle over the allocation of seats in the Calcutta Corporation elections has led to ugly accusations and a sour atmosphere. It was an unedifying spectacle which could gladden the hearts of the Congress only. After the last elections it might have been supposed that the lessons had been learnt well by the partners of the UF. The people want unity against the reactionary forces and are prepared to vote any one to power if backed by the UF. But essentially they are against corruption and inefficiency which have landed the State in its present position. And this is where the danger lies for the UF so far as elections to the Calcutta Corporation are concerned.

Postponement of the elections by two months may have been necessary for revising the electoral rolls, but judging by its performance on the issue of allocation of seats, the UF has lent some credence to the charge that the respite was equally needed for internal reasons. This may yet turn out to be a remedy worse than the disease. People are just tired of the Corporation type of politics, from whatever source it comes.

In the wake of the Congress debacle in the last election it was being said that the party was finding it difficult to get candidates willing to stand for election. It was no doubt an indication of the poor rating being given to the Congress winning but I am inclined to think that there is more to it than meets the eye. The Corporation is of course a thoroughly disgraced body. There are those who have no other profession but being a Councillor, still others are high-minded people who feel they are cut out for better things and grudgingly agree to serve a period of apprenticeship. In between are some who go in for the fast-wearing-out glamour of it. Calcutta citizens, however,

frequently tend to forget the distinctions between the different sets.

Should the UF win a majority in the Corporation, which is not as much a sure thing as one might suppose, it is going to have its hands more than full. It is a job for young men who have still some gusto left in them and not for old men covering up their frustrations under the garb of 'maturity.' It is no good omen for the Corporation to be that most young men seem to have developed an allergy to it. Actually I know of some young men who were approached by one of the UF parties to accept nomination for the Corporation. They recoiled in horror. This they felt was a sacrifice which was unfair of the party to expect of them.

* *

What exactly happened at Rabin-dra Sarobar may never be known in spite of the judicial enquiry but there are lessons which the UF and the people in general would do well to learn. If a frontal attack cannot be launched then an indirect one will be, starting with a whispering campaign against the UF. The West Bengal Home Minister has been blamed for not agreeing to an enquiry promptly enough but it is forgotten that for quite a few days after the incidents the papers who later on took upon themselves the task of safeguarding the chastity of Bengal's and India's women, were completely silent on this aspect of the happenings on April 6. The suspicion is unavoidable that at some stage someone discovered the explosive possibilities of the situation and decided to give rumour a hand. So far as molestation of women is concerned, the appointment of the enquiry commission is a concession to the power of rumour. The UF Government was placed in a position from where it had no retreat. It could either accept the demand for an enquiry commission and thus give a semblance of recognition to the wild

rumours or reject it and lay itself open to the charge of hushing up things.

Many eye-witness accounts of the happenings have been published and even the Press Trust of India has not hesitated to circulate the account of someone who preferred to remain anonymous for reasons of 'safety', thus giving a melodramatic twist to his statements. It is curious, however, that not one of the accounts published says specifically that the supposed sex orgies did not take place. All the thousands of people obviously cannot have witnessed such scenes. Apparently there is some selection going on.

In my own small way I have been trying to collect some eye-witness accounts and they tell a different story. Two young men who had been inside the stadium till 11-30 p.m. had not seen any untoward happening so far as women were concerned. Taking the worst possible view and supposing they were themselves the culprits, I have the report of another, a middle-aged man who went there with four young women and came out at 11 p.m. He had no tale of horror to tell, nor did he hesitate to say he had been there. On the other hand he spoke of being helped by young men inside the stadium to go out safely as a pitched battle seemed to be going on outside.

I am therefore inclined to take it that by and large women were not molested inside the stadium. But stray incidents always occur in such places and with pandemonium prevailing all round, incidents might well have multiplied. As for allegations of molestation of women on the streets outside, if the enquiry commission does establish that the allegations are true, it would raise serious questions. If such things can happen on the streets in residential areas, it is a reflection on the young manhood of the country. Most young men are either obsessed by the preparations for a career or politics neglecting their bodies. As a result they are cowed down by the riff-raff of society and on occasions have even to depend on

such doubtful elements for protection. It is a sad climb-down from the pre-independence days when physical culture and the ability to stand alone and fight against heavy odds was considered a part of one's duty to the nation. As a result of course the goonda elements went in awe of such young men knowing they would be smashed in any confrontation.

If anything, the Rabindra Sarobar incidents prove Mr Jyoti Basu's contention that the police are unfit for anything but going after the politicians. Otherwise they could have taken at least some steps to round up the rowdies who let loose all hell in a pre-planned way. It is just hard luck for Mr Basu that for this also he should be blamed.

Lastly, the UF leadership would do well to put a curb on their enthusiasm for getting their names associated with nondescript organisations or gatherings. It was unfortunate that the Speaker was present on the occasion while the Minister of Sports was only kept out by the trouble outside. The name of the Advocate General somehow got entangled with those of the sponsors though he seems to have done his best to dissociate himself from them.

It is a good thing that the findings of the enquiry will be made public. This is a first step towards ensuring that, should the findings point to lapses on the part of someone in the administration, he will have to go however high or dear he may be. Should that be necessary, far from losing face the UF would only gain added prestige.

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APRIL 26, 1969

The Press

The Ninth Congress

COMMENTATOR

MOST newspapers have grown a sudden interest in China. Articles and comments on what is supposed to be happening in China have appeared almost daily in the past one week or so, and the so-called China-watchers in various newspapers have become busy. There is no doubt that the interest is short-lived; it centres entirely on the Ninth Congress of the Communist Party of China and, more precisely, on the naming of Marshal Lin Piao as the successor of Chairman Mao. Most papers have interpreted the nomination as a sign of the continuing unrest in China and doubted if the Marshal will be able to hold the regime together in the absence of Mr Mao. One paper has quoted foreign experts as saying that Marshal Lin is a chronic consumptive and it is doubtful if he will outlive his leader. Some others think that Mr Mao still needs the army to keep himself in power and Marshal Lin is being rewarded for his loyalty to Mr Mao in his battle against Mr Liu Shao-chi.

The Times of India says that Mr Mao could not have planned and led the assault on the powerful party hierarchy without the collaboration of the Marshal and defence forces over which he presides. The army organised the Red Guards and provided them with the necessary leadership and resources to launch a campaign of vilification and terrorisation against the party leadership and the bureaucracy. When the party hierarchy was able to beat back this attack by forming Red Guards of its own and proclaiming equally loudly its allegiance to the thoughts of Chairman Mao, the army was asked to step in directly in support of the Maoist faction. The revolutionary committees which have now superseded the party committees in all provinces are for all practical purposes handmaids of the People's Liberation Army. The three-way alliance of rebels, party cadres and

army men is only a fiction. It is the PLA which has been running the country's administration for the last two years. The Cultural Revolution has seriously weakened the party organisation, disrupted the State apparatus and made the PLA the strongest power in the country. But the PLA's victories have not been won either under its own banner or under its own leadership. It has been an instrument of Chairman Mao Tse-tung's will and caprice. Its fortunes will continue to depend largely on his favours. Who can guarantee that he will not once again seek to subordinate the PLA to a reorganised party? Marshal Lin Piao is not without rivals in the Cultural Revolution group and it is not known how good he is at infighting. Marshal Lin Piao has staked his claim to be an ideologue with his article outlining the strategy for wars of national liberation and for an assault on the cities of the world by the countryside. But who can take him seriously in that role? In any case, it is difficult to believe that the army can step into the place of the party and China can still call itself a communist state. The fact of the matter is that China is in great ferment, that the power balance that had been carefully built over the years has been seriously impaired and that the present Congress cannot sort out the great mess. The choice of a successor means little in such a setting.

Holding a different view *The Statesman* says that Mr Mao's experiment with a Proletarian Cultural Revolution has not radically altered the power structure in China. Perhaps he saw how far he could go and decided not to transgress the limit. Now, it appears, is the time for internal consolidation after the great confusion that seemed to have been deliberately created for certain political objectives. The results could not have altogether satisfied the Chairman himself. He described the Ninth Congress as a congress of both victory and unity, but the session had not been extravagant in praise of the victory of the Cultural Revolution, while unity has been a recurring theme. The outside world has no reason to grudge a greater unity

among China's people and leaders, but it will be a matter for concern if Peking, freed from the distractions of internal disunity, begins to take a more active subversive interest in other countries. Three documents published during the Congress speak of armed struggles in many countries in Asia, the Middle East and Africa. The tone of these documents, which curiously do not mention any struggle in Pakistan, suggests that China would like to give increasingly vigorous support to Maoist revolutionary movements elsewhere. The conduct of China's relations with the outside world will be watched with special interest. On the question of succession the paper says that it is not impossible that Mr Mao was keen on formal party endorsement well in advance of the time for succession; a struggle for power after his death or retirement could prove disastrous. The so-called revisionists, led by Mr Liu Shao-chi, have been removed from positions of authority, but the tensions generated in the process do not seem to have disappeared. Mr Mao apparently thought it time for some compromise. The summoning of the Party Congress, after all that had been done to incapacitate the old party machine, was itself a compromise; so was the relatively conventional nature in which it was conducted and its controlling bodies constituted.

The Indian Express says that Mr Mao has in fact achieved what some have described as his second take-over in China. The first was twenty years ago when from the pavilion of Tien An Men in Peking he proclaimed the establishment of the Communist regime. Among the chief objective of the cultural revolution was to destroy the power of the party bureaucracy as symbolised by Mr Liu and to install instead the revolutionary fervour of the masses. China's leader appears to have succeeded in doing this. But at a price. It is significant that soldiers head the Revolutionary Committees in nineteen out of China's twenty-six provinces. As in Soviet Russia today, the army in China is beginning to exercise an important

role in political affairs. The formal nomination of Marshal Lin Piao as Mr Mao's successor causes no surprise since it was bruited nearly three years ago. In the process of mobilising the army's support Mr Mao was obliged to remove several top military leaders whose loyalty to his thoughts was questionable. Marshal Lin Piao, though a staunch Marxist, is physically in bad shape. But if Mr Mao is to complete the process of rebuilding the Communist Party he will need the continuing support of the generals. This price he is evidently prepared to pay. Indeed he has no alternative. Another significant change which preceded the Ninth Congress was the appointment of a new 14-man leadership group within the 24-man Politburo. This body consists of Mr Mao and Mr Lin along with their wives, four other cultural revolutionaries, three generals on active service, two security chiefs and the politically indestructible Mr Chou En-lai. The moment of crisis and decision will come when the rebuilt Communist Party tries to take over power from the generals of the army. Already workers are being sent to take over power from the young Red Guards and the intellectuals in the universities for whom Maoism professes a supreme contempt. The groundwork is being laid for the rule of the proletariat inspired and infused with Mao's thoughts. But for how long will these thoughts outlive their creator? In the process of organising and achieving his second take-over in China through the instrument of the Cultural Revolution, Mr Mao could seriously damage and undermine not only the fabric and structure but the base of his great revolution.

"Sphere of Influence"

Commenting on the foreign policy documents presented to the Ninth Congress, *The Hindu* says that the Maoists repudiate the status quo in Asia because they see China as the most important country in the region, which should by rights be a Chinese sphere of influence. They note that, on the other hand, the United States and Russia are the most influential powers

in the area and even such close neighbours as Mongolia, North Korea and North Vietnam follow the Russian rather than the Chinese lead. Other important countries like Japan, India and Indonesia tacitly encourage the presence of the US and Russia as counter-weights against Peking. The Maoists would like to see this situation altered in their favour and they therefore encourage all the dissident elements in the region. Though they refer to the communist supporters of Mr Mao, in fact these dissidents include such non-communist elements as Pakistan, the Nagas and Mizos in India, the Kachins and Shans in Burma and the settlers of Chinese origin in Indonesia and other South-East Asian countries who are far from being communists. What is essential from Mao's point of view is that the pot should be kept boiling and that China's own territorial claim to Taiwan and Mongolia should not be forgotten by the younger generation of Chinese. In countries like India, Burma, Malaysia, and Thailand no direct attempt is likely to be made to overrun the existing regimes. The aim is rather to keep alive rebellious movements in the frontier areas so as to weaken these countries and foment animosities between them. Since the Great Powers are seen as standing in the way of China's dominance in Asia and the border with Russia in Manchuria has come under fire, it is not surprising that Mr Chou En-lai has expressed willingness to settle the border dispute with India in his interview with two Japanese members of Parliament. The Chinese encroachment on a large area of Ladakh including the Aksai Chin highway to Tibet continues, and there is not much likelihood of Peking yielding any ground in this area. Mr Chou's statement is significant for the reason that it is the first time for several years that China has raised the border issue and offered to discuss it. But vague as the statement is, there can be no mistaking the fact that Peking means to have and to hold those areas which it seized by force in 1962.

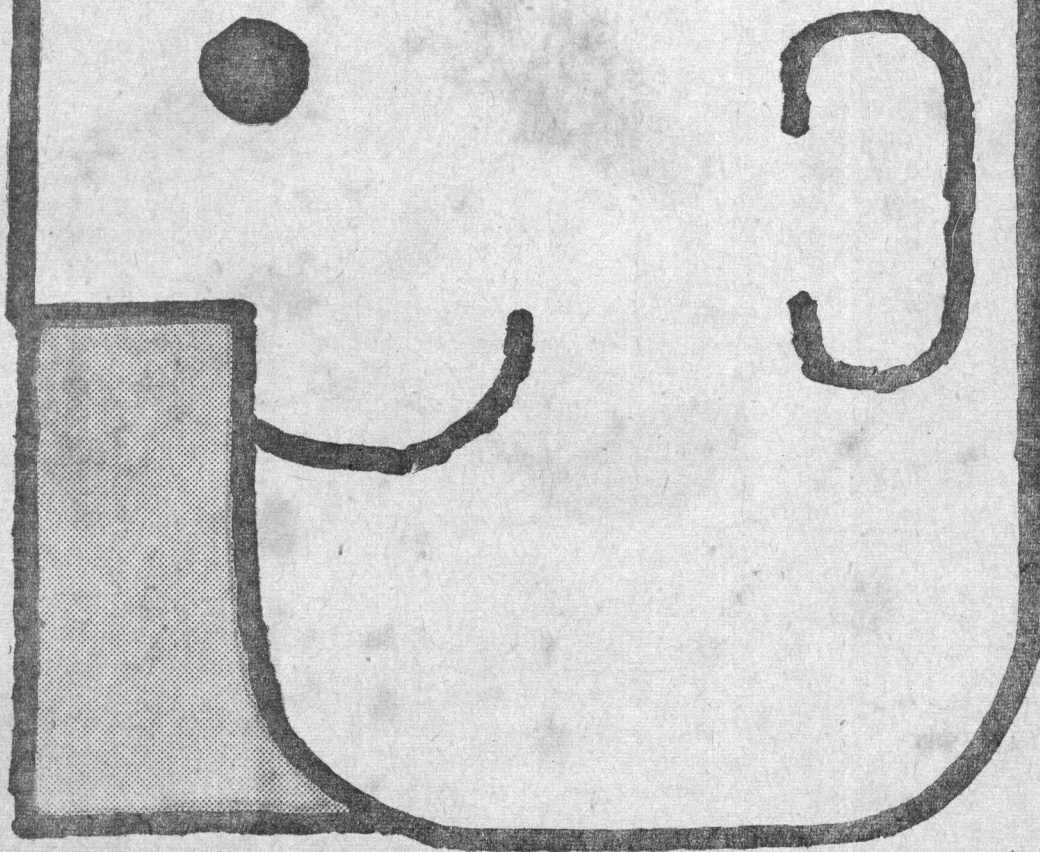
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A Time Of Torment

PRABODH KUMAR MAITRA

THE two-reeler *Manusher Jayjatra*, produced by Neo Decor, a private producing company, and directed by Bimal Kumar Roy, which caused a controversy has now been passed for universal exhibition but not before excision was effected by its producer. The West Bengal Government now proposes to release it all over the State, in showhouses and through its network of audiovisual units.

In the fateful fifteen months between November 1967 and February 1969—the period covered in the film—the director has found an issue made to order for film presentation. There is need to explain the events and draw lessons from them. The centre of gravity in the film, and in the political life of West Bengal, is the emergence of progressive forces. The masses, relentless and implacable, have a massive role in it. They are the real repository of power. The folly of the Centre in not respecting their verdict is laid bare.

The film is frankly purposive and political in tone. The first of its kind based on contemporary happenings, it makes copious use of newspaper headlines of the significant events. Still photographs are used as a telling indictment of atrocities committed on the people. The film takes us to the mid-term elections and shows the jubilation of the people when they find that their cause has been vindicated and the UF taken over. The commentary narrates the progress.

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Rajkot Painters

BY AN ART CRITIC

A joint exhibition of the paintings of five young artists of Rajkot, who call themselves Group 6, is now being held at the Academy of Fine Arts. The names of the painters are Jasu Rawal, Manhar Makwana, Wala Kishor, Sanat Thaker and Ashvin Vyas.

There are 35 paintings on display, all oils except about half-a-dozen each of water colours and lithographs. It is a refreshing show. Almost all the exhibits are neatly done and pleasing to look at.

Manhar Makwana, the moving spirit behind the group, is a fine painter. Of his oils, a still life in lovely shades of blue has a quiet refinement. His 'Bird Seller', again in blue, with the bird in batik, is delightful.

Jasu Rawal has six oils of which the most fetching is 'Painting' (No. 29). It is a landscape in green with huts in white, yellow, blue and enlivened by judicious touches of red. His 'Painting' (No. 35), a more abstract piece, is attractive.

Sanat Thaker draws in a more realistic style. His 'A Corner', with its unusual use of mauve, and 'A Farm' are fine jobs.

Ashvin Vyas's water colours are competent and two of them, both depicting men caught in rain in a city street, are more than competent.

Some of the best things in the exhibition are the six lithographs, all depicting horses, by Wala Kishor. One of these, rather strangely entitled 'Fragrance', looks like a horse in a cave painting. Another one, entitled 'Lonely', shows nude riders of both sexes who could have been Greek but for the receding rider, an officer in uniform. Easily the most powerful and attractive lithographs are the two entitled 'Dolorous' and 'Life a Run'. The former shows a pack of wild horses, and the latter three black and white horses in full gallop which successfully conveys a sense of speed.

A Dance Drama

By A Music Critic

ON Sunday, April 13, at Rabindra Sadan, Surangama presented *Navin*, a dance-drama with Tagore songs and narration. The show had a bad start. The placement of microphones was defective, the organisers pulled down the curtain and started a second time although two songs had already been sung. The mikes however were bent on giving trouble, more or less, throughout the show and the singers made matters worse by constantly fiddling with them.

Navin, which is not ordinarily staged, particularly in Calcutta, was refreshing in the sense that Tagore's other dance-dramas have become rather hackneyed. *Navin* tells of the arrival and departure of Spring. It was a pleasure to hear the songs sung in the traditional style, faithful to the notations as was always desired by Tagore. The chorus songs were superbly executed, but the soloists were not at all impressive, they were jittery, not being used to the microphone. It was a good thing that the harmonium was not used at all and the esraj accompaniment was competent. The group dances were well synchronised, well rehearsed and ably directed. About the solo dance numbers, mention must be made of Sm Purnima Ghosh whose rendering of a not so well known song "Chaley jaye mori haye" was impressive. But she lacked expression. The numbers by Sm Arundhati Chakladar and Mr Derick Monroe were the highlights of the morning performance. In "Aj dakin-batasey" Miss Chakladar was graceful and had the right expression for a Tagore dance. Mr Monroe is to be praised for his efforts. The performance was directed by Mr Sailajaranjan Mazumder and we hope he will present us with similar productions in the future. The stage decor was in good taste but the narration was drab and did not quite fit in with the spirit of the drama.

APRIL 26, 1969

The Ussuri Clash

Believing as they do, that discretion is the better part of valour, Mr M. L. Sondhi and his Jana Sangh bully-boys feel somewhat safer when demonstrating before the Chinese Embassy, to have the protective arm of their praetorian guard of Tibetan levies around them. Earlier this year Mr Sondhi and his friends made loud and vaporous protests to the Soviet Embassy about its supposed interference in India's domestic affairs; now apparently they want Moscow to liberate Tibet for them. The Editor of the *Indian Express*—a good friend of Mr Sondhi—may however feel that an Australian contingent would be better suited to protecting Indian interests when the expedition finally reaches Lhasa (it is of course worth remembering that not so long ago Sir William Yeo, an important personality in Australian politics, was reported by the *New Statesman* as having described Asians as wogs, bogs, dogs etc., but no matter, one should'n't be a spoil sport and wreck what promises to be a most entertaining little party!). To top it all, Mr Chavan seeks to make support for Soviet policies against China, a test of Indian patriotism. Evidently, the common political denominator here is, a fear and hatred of China which is quite paranoic in its intensity.

In reporting the recent Sino-Soviet clashes along the Ussuri river the radio and Press organs of the New Delhi establishment seem to have surpassed their normal standards of muddled hysteria. And even Mr Dange was'n't to be denied his little smirk of triumph. For those of a more rational turn of mind, the following despatch from a Japanese correspondent may have more than usual interest. Keito Tokuga was on a visit to China when he heard the news of the incident on Sunday, March 2, the day it occurred, at Harbin, the big industrial city and railway junction of N-E China. The story in his words:

"I applied for permission the very

same evening to visit the frontier district of Lung-Kiang. As expected the military authorities refused this next day, on the grounds that there may be further armed clashes and thus my safety could not be guaranteed. I was all the more surprised to be invited to the military headquarters a few hours later and told that the situation had quietened down and I could after all travel to the frontier.

"I received a permit stamped by the army as well as by the (civil) administration for the following day. But in order to avoid any special preparation for my visit—it was possible that the frontier inhabitants might be instructed for my benefit—I travelled the same evening.

"I arrived in Fuchin by the late train and was lucky to find a lorry carrying supplies to the commune of Wei-lung. Their land is situated inside the frontier-elbow formed by the Amur and Ussuri and reaches to a little north of the 'Holy Island' Chenpao.

"On Tuesday morning, at day-break, the leader of the commune took me himself in his official car to Paiwan, a village on the Ussuri. I was introduced to the local party leader and the oldest man in the village and then they gave me a free hand to question the inhabitants...

"Many of the inhabitants of Paiwan are fishermen. They fish even in winter, hacking holes into the ice of the river. One especially fruitful place is below Chenpao Island (in Russian Damansky). There the fishermen hang lamps onto the hacked-up ice to attract the fish.

"On the night from Saturday to Sunday (March 1 to 2) old Liu Chang had been on the ice with his son. They intended to be back soon after midnight. When they had not returned by daybreak it was feared that something had happened to them and a search party was organised. By mid-day more than 100 people as well as a detachment of the nearby frontier garrison had joined in the search for the missing.

"The search party approached Chenpao Island where Russian frontier guards had been recognised,

waving their hands. The so-called white camouflage suits, of which the Russians speak in their reports, were actually the light furs of the fishermen. I was shown such furs, blood-soaked and riddled with bullet holes.

"Suddenly the Russians opened fire. The Chinese taken completely by surprise, took their caps off and waved them. The distance is said to have been about 300 metres (according to other statements even less). Near the Russians were only unarmed civilians; only two or three young people were carrying old fowling-pieces, hoping perhaps to shoot some game-bird. The Chinese soldiers kept in the background at about twice the distance.

"Under the first salvoes from the Russians, who kept on firing, about two dozen villagers fell. Then they retreated over the ice which offered only scanty cover of hummocks. They threw themselves down and slid like seals and crawled under the hail of Russian bullets.

"Older people who had no military training and could not move so expertly continued to fall victim to the bullets. In the meantime Chinese soldiers had advanced and opened fire to give cover to the fleeing villagers. But now the Russians started to use grenade-throwers and secured further victims. The group of frontier guards too had serious losses, but at last replacements arrived with four armoured scout-cars from the nearby garrison.

"The Russians retired to fortified positions and used field-howitzers, grenade-throwers and machine guns.

"After three hours' fighting in the course of which a Chinese armoured vehicle was destroyed, Chinese artillery finally arrived and silenced the Russian fire. More than four hours after the first fisherman had fallen on the snow under Russian fire, the last grenade howled over the ice. The sad result of this incident: 27 villagers and 11 frontier guards killed, and 63 wounded, half of them seriously. The Russians say they had 31 dead, which, according to Chinese observations, may well be true.

"I spoke with numerous relatives of the dead. They are embittered and

full of hatred, whereas previously the anti-Russian utterances from Peking had made little impression on them.

"All eye-witnesses completely exclude the possibility of a mistake by the Russians. They say it would have been impossible for anyone to have mistaken them for aggressors or even for ill-intentioned violators of the frontier.

"I had conversations with some 30 to 40 people who were entirely independent of each other. Although not rehearsed they all said essentially the same. Thus for me it is beyond doubt that the statements of the villagers conform with the actual happenings.

P. N. ADDY
London

Boycott Slogan

Mr Gopal Das Mukherjee protests in his letter (April 12) against dogmatism and distortions. But he himself distorts history and dogmatically refuses to learn his lessons from historical realities. The boycott of the Bulygin Duma in 1905 was a success, but the boycott of the first Duma, also known as Witte Duma, was not only a failure, it was a mistake, as Lenin says in his *Left-wing Communism*. But Mr Mukherjee says, the boycott of the first Duma 'took the shape of a great revolutionary upheaval', which means it was a success. It simply could not be a success, as already the December uprisings of 1905 had been crushed and revolution in Russia was receding. The Bolshevik Party too was not as organised as Mr Mukherjee imagines it was. There were differences and divisions and the opportunist Mensheviks practically dominated it. The Unity Congress of 1906 did not change this pattern. Of course, Lenin was there. But the December uprisings left the Bolshevik Party 'smashed up'. The History of the CPSU (B), Short Course, gives us these facts.

But why all this talk about the Russian Drama? An analysis of the class character of our State here shows that India is not Russia. Its neo-colonial character does not and

cannot permit the luxury of elections.

Of course, we don't have a strong enough organisation yet. But parties don't drop from heaven; in spite of the fact that we have an excellent heritage, they are built in a process. 1964 cannot be repeated. The question of a process cannot be shelved this time. There must be struggle, the groups must be co-ordinated and the cadres tested in the process, and then a real revolutionary leadership and a party will emerge.

ARUN MISRA
Calcutta

The question of participation in elections is a tactical not a strategic one. The boycott slogan cannot be given for the whole period of a new democratic revolution. It is an ideological question to be discussed. But communist revolutionaries of the All India Co-ordination Committee (AICC) states that the issue is not debatable, it is a basic condition for coordination with other revolutionary groups and for this reason they have dissociated themselves from the Andhra Co-ordination Committee.

There are other things too. Mr Charu Mazumdar, in his article "One year of Naxalbari", wrote, "This is the first time that the peasants have struggled not for their partial demands but for the seizure of State power." (*Liberation*). So, the Naxalbari leaders do not recognise the revolutionary heritage of the Communist Party which once led a movement in Telengana, resulting in the liberation of 3000 villages from the shackles of feudalism and imperialism, though the armed struggle was later betrayed by the leadership.

The leaders of the AICC of the Communist Revolutionaries do not have a clear understanding even about the Naxalbari struggle. Mr Charu Mazumdar in the above article wrote, "If the Naxalbari peasant struggle has any lesson for us, it is this: Militant struggles must be carried on not for land, crops etc. but for the seizure of State Power." (*Liberation*). These leaders, by differentiating the land struggle from the liberation struggle,

are living in a fool's paradise.

The AICC of communist revolutionaries state, that the Naxalbari peasant struggle has already entered its second stage, the stage of guerilla warfare. Since we do not have any news about the warfare and since 75% of the Naxalbari people participated in the recent mid-term poll, I, as a layman, take the second stage as the ending stage of the struggle.

K. RAM PRASAD
Kakinada, A.P.

Teachers' Pay

The UF Government has declared a uniform pay scale of Rs. 300—800 for college teachers since April 1, 1969. But the interests of a considerable number of teachers in the post-Second Plan colleges (most probably 36 in number) may suffer.

When the first UF Government came to power in West Bengal, the then Education Minister granted an ad-hoc payment of Rs. 60 per month, pending fixation of the pay-scale of these college teachers. A huge amount has piled up as arrears. The unfortunate Second Plan college teachers are quite at sea in the absence of a categorical statement by the Government. The UF Government has not yet made any categorical commitment about whether it is ready to clear the arrears. Moreover, these teachers who have worked for the last four or five years may be placed in the same category with "new entrants" from the month of April, 1969. In this way they lose four or five increments to which they are morally entitled.

DEBAL KUMAR CHAKRAVARTY
Calcutta

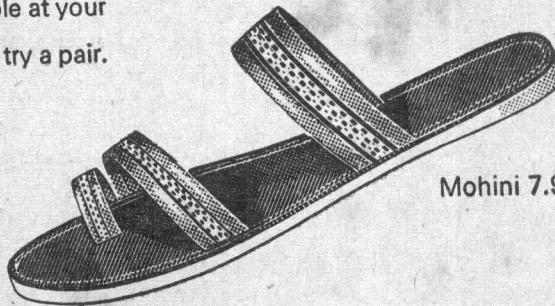
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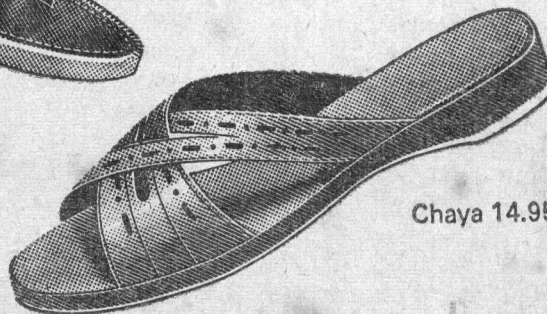


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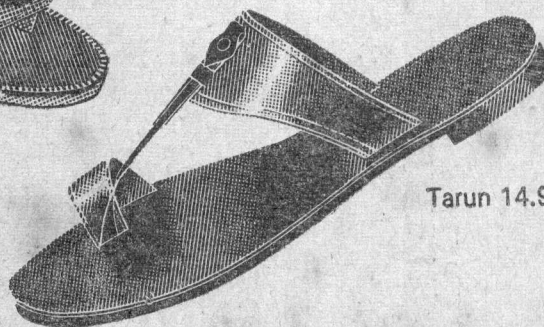
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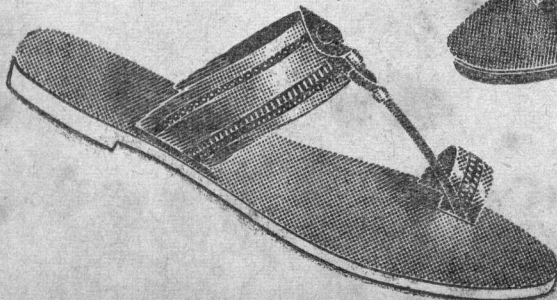
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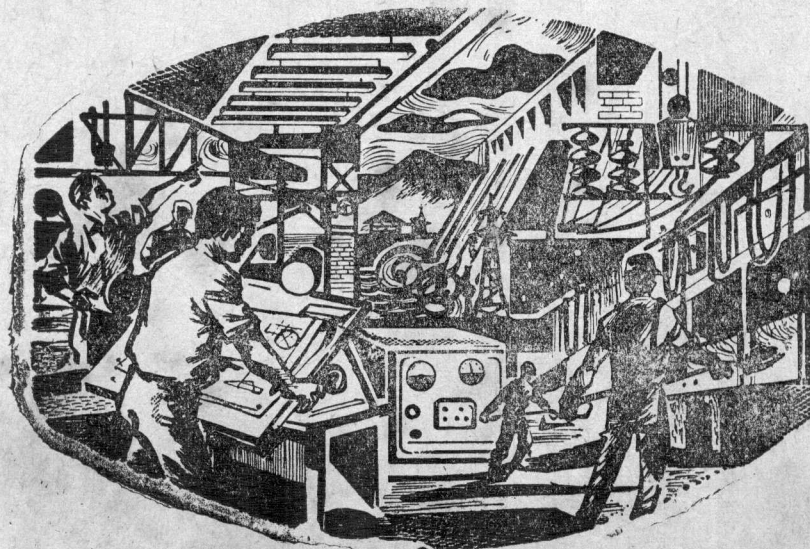


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