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GREAT EXPECTATIONS

ELECTIONS are already on, here and there, the excitement being highest where assembly polls are taking place. In West Bengal some more days of tension await politicians and their supporters as well as the murderous forces of law and order. The common folk is caught up in the brutal melodrama. The period of tension will be punctuated next week by memories of Karbala—Muharram is on Monday—and the wild festival of Holi, on Friday. In between is polling day, March 10. The nagging question at the time of writing however is: Will there still be sort of an emergency? Those who will disappear into limbo in the meantime would not know what General Manekshaw and the Election Commissioner, the Union Home Secretary and the Principal Adviser will decide.

If intelligence reports on voting trends in other States are favourable to the Congress (R) and the gentlemen mentioned above approve the West Bengal elections, the ringing hope in the CPM is that in a landslide victory it will return to power. It won't have to be a majority. In 1952 the Congress romped home with 152 seats though it won 38 per cent of the votes cast. If the anti-CPM vote is split and the CPM gets 35 per cent, in a mad swing of over 13 per cent over 1969, it will be able to rule the roost. Or, as purists prefer, rule the roast, a phrase more evocative of the smell of flesh in West Bengal.

Maybe a large number of people in this derelict, desperate State will prefer to have a strong, one-party dominance after the experiment of two united front governments. That party cannot be the Congress (R) despite the infinite variety of Mrs Indira Gandhi. Will it be the CPM? By a combination of circumstances it has been able to present itself both as a party of the status quo and of change to various sorts of people. The Birlas and jotedars are not known to be quaking in fear of the CPM, although many progressives croak in delight whenever the party is named.

The CPM dream—a nightmare for many—may not come true when the counting is over. The vote defies logic. If there is no one-party supremacy, there is not much possibility either of the two leftist combinations being most willingly forced by the popular verdict—or by Mr Dhavan this time—to assume power, as in 1967. Will there be then

a combination of the Congress, Bangla Congress and their fellow-travellers—the CPI and the rest? We have almost exhausted the options, like most other political commentators. We wish we could say that we are no prophets just because here's no great matter. But about one thing there is no room for doubt: whoever forms the government will go all out to fight the 'anti-social elements'. We know bloody well what that means, and that this is about the most immediate and concrete part of any election programme, providing the best means of preoccupation to the rank and file. The number of conspirators to fight will be legion. Of course there will be sweet talk of moderate relief and employees and workers will gain a few rupees and some selected peasants some land. As they have no longer the great expectations of 1967 they may well be content with whatever they gain. The rich know that no storm is looming to overwhelm them; they know that giving away something is better than losing everything. The tragedy of it all is that vasses masses of people with a fighting tradition and potential are being taught to resign themselves to a fitful existence based on hoax and small doses of relief. The poison of petty bourgeois leadership is most potent. Relief through elections—that is the way to socialism. And these days you do have elections often enough, which means more frequent doses of meagre relief. These elections are the opium of the people and the aphrodisiac of the leaders.

To boost the morale of the rank and file there will be talk of confrontation against the Centre. A ritual general strike now and then and a few air trips to New Delhi will do.... By the way, the army is here. Anyway, the show will go on. For how long?

Something Cooking ?

Massive combing operations are now a daily feature in Calcutta and elsewhere. Curfew is often imposed, troops cordon off a big area, some-

times with barbed wire, while the police search almost every house, 'seize lethal weapons', including Maoist literature, and take scores of people to thanas for interrogation and, if necessary, detention. The 7½-hour resistance by the boarders of one Jadavpur hostel on Sunday morning was something new. At the end the CRP entered the hostel "under cover of gunfire"; thirty students were injured, four seriously, "in lathi-charges". In the later stages of the fight the army was involved. The first clash with the army has taken place at Ashokenagar.

The character of the police is known to most people. But the naive look upon the army as an instrument of defence against external aggression. Experience is now teaching them the truth as they come face to face with the most organised form of repression which the rulers use whenever the situation tends to get out of control. True, the army has not yet been accused of barbarities like their junior partners the police and CRP, but the sight of men with their fingers on the trigger everywhere has lent an ominousness to the scene. Their masks are not yet off, though the mailed fist is exhibited. They have been sent here to ensure free and fair elections, to prevent inter-party and other murders. The CRP, let us recall, was sent here to protect the Central Government property.

It will soon be obvious that the benign explanation for the sending of the army is not all. The authorities are apprehensive that the violence, often inter-party but also directed against the police and vested interests, might snowball into something else. That is why they want 100,000 troops to be deployed in West Bengal; more CRP and other forces from other States will soon swarm into West Bengal. Such a mobilisation of armed strength in peacetime has never taken place in the history of the country. The whole thing looks like a dress rehearsal of something much bigger, a contingency plan of the American type.

Hume, who fathered the Indian National Congress in the last century,

wrote that he was alarmed by thousands of reports collected by informers, which all pointed to the conclusion that a spontaneous, unplanned upheaval was imminent. People condemned to poverty and starvation were thinking of desperate remedies. All sorts of elements, including anti-social ones, were planning to attack the rich and their institutions in a wave of anarchy. Hume feared that these scattered outbreaks, like water drops on lotus leaves, would merge and form bigger and bigger drops and the concerted violence then would paralyse the administration. At that moment people from the intelligentsia would join in, and the foundations of the British Raj would be shaken. His way out was the Indian National Congress.

Are the Humes of today having bad dreams and falling back on the army? To stretch our suspicions further, has the Yankee-like mobilisation also something to do with the widening war in Indochina where an attack on North Vietnam may lead to Chinese intervention?

East Is East

The army is all, President Yahya Khan knows it in his hardened bones. The people forgot this after the December elections in Pakistan had resulted in spectacular victories for Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and Mr Bhutto. President Yahya Khan was praised to the skies for his desire to hand over power to the civilians. In the deadlock that followed over the Six Points of the Awami League he assumed the role, like Lord Mountbatten in 1947, of a mediator between the two warring wings, meeting Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and Mr Bhutto in turn. The impression had strengthened even in East Pakistan that the President was impartial. Preparations were complete to hold the National Assembly session. The Awami League leader, with a massive majority behind him, told the doubters in the western part of the country that if they so wished they could delegate greater powers to the Centre and that each view would

be considered in the Assembly. With the exception of Bhutto and Qayyum and their followers most of the West Pakistan leaders had assembled in Dacca and the curtain was about to go up on constitution-making when President Yahya Khan made the surprise announcement, his voice tinged with sorrow, that as the two wings had not been able to agree on the outlines of the Constitution, the National Assembly could not meet. It now appears that the leaders had to agree on the Constitution and not thrash it out during the session. By his threat of boycott Mr Bhutto has won.

The chips are down and East Pakistan will be in turmoil. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman believes in democratic processes but he says that unless the indefinite adjournment order is reversed, or some indication of change is given by March 7, he would announce the details of the proposed protest movement. In the hour of crisis he has decided to meet, among others, Maulana Bhasani who wants an independent East Pakistan.

The Pakistan of 1947 was a geographical incongruity, but a sort of emotional bond, though tenuous, was there because of the bloody massacres that had preceded it and because the Muslims had genuine grievances. But in the interim years, the naked face of the ruling classes of West Pakistan became much too disgusting in East Pakistan. And let us face the fact: Islam could provide no enduring bond. The Muslims of East Pakistan, a colony, were looked down upon by the Muslims of the north; they were considered converted and therefore spurious Muslims. The emotional bond had disappeared. What could be preserved was the facade of a State. Mr Bhutto and President Yahya Khan have now started a process which might lead to a final severance. Of course, by not dissolving the National Assembly, President Yahya Khan has kept his options open. But, as reactions to the hijacking in the two wings of Pakistan showed, the east is east, the west is west; and the controversy over control of taxation, foreign trade and

aid has too much to do with the apparatus of exploitation to enable the twain to meet.

The Reverses In Laos

Almost every American escalation in Indochina has been presented as a sort of final blow to bring the Vietnamese down to their heels. From the bombing of North Vietnam in 1964 to the latest plunge into Laos it is the same story all over. American columnist Stewart Alsop who terms the latest adventure "Tchepone Test"—a final bid to choke off North Vietnamese supplies at the Ho Chi Minh trail junction of Tchepone—however, believes it to be decisive in either of the ways. If successful in their attempt the Americans might go home victorious and if not Saigon would soon be renamed Ho Chi Minh city. And after a month of disastrous hammer blows suffered by the Americans and their South Vietnamese puppets nobody is in doubt about the outcome of the Tchepone test.

Richard Nixon continues to put on a very brave, undaunted face but the way his grin has turned into a grimace reveals much more than his tough rhetoric. Two days after the invasion Nixon said: "I am proud of what we have been able to do." But in the weeks that followed, the truck traffic on the Ho Chi Minh trail, American sources in Vietnam admitted, had just doubled. South Vietnamese paratroopers who were dropped in Laos were encircled and decimated neatly. In one base last week a whole South Vietnamese battalion was wiped out by the Pathet Lao. According to American pilots, *Associated Press* reported, "one big problem is that when they landed, South Vietnamese troops tried to cling to the landing skids to get out of the base. Door gunners said they had to kick some able-bodied South Vietnamese soldiers off so that the helicopters could get off the ground." But helicopters to which the puppet troops clung so pathetically were also having a hell of a time. A total of 201 helicopters were shot down as one swats off

Notice

*Monday, March 8,
Wednesday, March 10
and Friday, March 12
being holidays, it will
not be possible to bring
out Frontier on the
13th. So the next issue
will be
that of March 20.*

summer flies. Not without reason American pilots at the jumping-off base at Khe Sanh were refusing to fly helicopter missions into Laos.

But the spokesman at the White House tried to look very cheerful. The day after the 39th Rangers battalion was wiped out he breezily said that the operation in Laos was "going well". Yes, a battalion was wiped out but that was foreseen by the President and his advisers. Rather in the President's view, he said, the South Vietnamese Army "is performing well". Two more paratroop bases in Laos have fallen since. And the South Vietnamese command has announced that its forces had no intention of moving any further into Laos. One does not hear of Tchepone any more. A new explanation is now being offered for the invasion of Laos. It was not intended to strangle the Ho Chi Minh trail at Tchepone or anywhere else in Laos but to foil the communists' "dark scheme of occupying the central provinces" of Vietnam to improve their bargaining position at the Paris talks. So even after the rout of the South Vietnamese forces on Hill 31 early this week the American commander, Lt-General Sutherland, could glibly talk of a "very successful" operation in Laos.

Indeed so successful has been the invasion that 15,000 more South Vietnamese have to be brought at Khe Sanh as reinforcement and the Pentagon had to declare publicly its intention of sending American ground combat troops into Laos with the avowed purpose of rescuing U.S. airmen and helicopter crews. This would probably be described as the last act of the Vietnam war. And if ground combat troops can be despatched into neutral Laos for rescue operations why not send them into North Vietnam as well where a much larger number of American pilots have been lost? The way the American and South Vietnamese troops are massing along the 17th Parallel and the Seventh Fleet closing in on the area, the possibility of a desperate thrust into North Vietnam cannot be ruled out. At least Nixon has not ruled it out in his last press conference and the jackals in Saigon and Phnom Penh are trying to be one-up. Last week, with General Lon Nol safely packed off to the U.S. and General Do Cao Tri, commander of the South Vietnamese forces in Cambodia, shot dead by communist anti-aircraft fire, the morale in Phnom Penh was at an all-time low and the Cambodian Foreign Minister, Koun Wick, made a pathetic attempt to restore it with a call to North Vietnam. In desperation Nixon and his minions must have forgotten the standing Chinese offer to send one million volunteers to North Vietnam as a first instalment the moment Hanoi asked for it.

East Africa

The three East African countries, Uganda, Tanzania and Zambia, which maintained close political ties till the coup in Kampala ousted Dr Apollo Milton Obote have faced political crises of a similar nature in close proximity. Mature reflections on the Uganda coup have disproved most of the allegations of General Idi Amin against Dr Obote over which the Western Press were seen gloating. The banning of the

opposition Democratic Party was the least that the President could do to contain tribalistic feud and separatist tendencies and any criticism on this basis that he was showing signs of a dictator was purely tendentious. Even though on many occasions Dr Obote said that the Uganda People's Congress had a particularly important role in the country, he was not able to correct its structural weaknesses. It is important to refer to certain developments during the period 1965-66 when the UPC was becoming numerically stronger through defections from the Kabaka Yekka and the Democratic Party but showing signs of a division in the leadership. The time for a decisive move by Dr Obote came when a KY member of Parliament encouraged by a section of the UPC parliamentary group implicated him in a gold smuggling operation. An inquiry commission was instituted to placate this section but at the same time the Constitution was replaced by a new one which further centralised the administration by abolishing the monarchical institution. But this was also the time the Army and the police started meddling in politics. It is not unlikely that the Israeli military advisers encouraged the Amin clique to engineer the coup while the President was away. This cannot be said to be a real army coup but a single-man operation. The Langi who come from the home town of Dr Obote and also the Acholi fear large-scale persecution as General Amin has explained the coup as a counter to their representation in the Army. So long as the burly general is in the saddle Uganda's journey will be backward. Plans are there to bring King Freddie's body home for a State funeral; it will not surprise if the kingship is also restored. As allegations of theft against the President would have failed to convince, Dr Obote's associates were accused of financial misdemeanour. Dr Obote had made enemies in the country by being progressive in domestic affairs as well as in foreign relations. The Common Man's Charter and the decision to partially nationalise local and ex-

patriate-owned companies earned him the displeasure of vested interests. Dr Obote had been more forthright than Kenneth Kaunda or Julius Nyerere in criticising the proposed sale of British arms to South Africa, but this was at home exploited by General Amin. The new administration has already said that it wants good relations with the UK; in contrast, Dr Obote said that he would leave the Commonwealth if Britain sold arms to the apartheid regime and that he might not be able to guarantee the safety of British citizens in Uganda.

The coup has threatened the East African Community as Mr Nyerere has refused to sit at the same table with the 'murderer'. Kenya's attitude to the Amin regime is rather uncertain; although Jomo Kenyatta has not said anything, newspapers in his country have welcomed Dr Obote's ouster. The dispute between the Bemba tribe and others at this time can only divert Mr Kaunda's attention from the moves to sever economic relations with the white-ruled south African States. But the mobilisation of the Bembas for gaining majority recognition continues in spite of the decision to institute a commission of inquiry into Bemba allegations. The plotters who made a bid to overthrow President Nyerere were sentenced to life imprisonment by Chief Justice Telfer Georges. The court has found evidence that Western countries which did not like the Arusha declaration and Nyerere's relentless policy against the segregationist south African regimes gave abetment to the plotters. Experiences of these African States show that introduction of progressive measures becomes of little value if people are not properly politicised.

Berhampur

A correspondent writes:

Very few of the real facts regarding the killing of Naxalite prisoners in Berhampur Central Jail on February 24 have come to light. Having visited the town personally after the

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event, this writer is in a position to testify to what happened.

The information this writer gathered from the February 27 issue of the local weekly *Janamat*, from two civil inspectresses of the Central Jail and from other sources indicates a clear resemblance between the latest happening and the two earlier massacres of Naxalite prisoners in Midnapore Central Jail. *Janamat* reports that after the head warder, Niranjana Karal, had been stabbed and the alarm bell had started ringing, between 200 and 250 warders, policemen and others hurled themselves on the prisoners and attacked them indiscriminately with bayonets, lathis and bamboo poles. Four of the prisoners were battered to death on the spot and three others died in hospital. Two more succumbed later. After the assault 16 seriously injured prisoners were taken to hospital; according to unofficial sources, 13 others are also in hospital with serious injuries. Two civil inspectresses of the jail, Mrs Ipsita Gupta and Mrs Gauri Chatterji, who visited the jail after the incident, found the Naxalite ward spattered with blood and, examining the wounded in hospital, they found that the severe injuries they bore were in the head, face, the shoulders and the hands.

Karal, who was stabbed by a Naxalite from behind the bars of a cell, is already recovering. The other warder, Chhetri, was only slightly hurt. Where then was the need of launching this brutal mass assault on the prisoners? The suspicion of deliberate planning is deepened by another fact. It was reported in *The Statesman* of 25 and 26 February that 14 warders had been seriously wounded. Yet when the civil inspectresses and others visited the jail, they found only two injured warders and failed to trace the other 12 supposedly wounded warders. People would undoubtedly recall in this context the recent cold-blooded murder of five Naxalite youths in Beliaghata where the police tried to cloak the real nature of the incident by the fiction of a bomb attack and of several policemen being seriously injured.

This writer has no idea of how the Midnapore citizens responded to the two killings of prisoners there. But during his two days' stay at Berhampur he saw a wave of fierce mass indignation sweeping the whole urban area. There were huge crowds all the time at the hospital gates and people were defying Sec. 144 in a most reckless manner. At times it seemed that direct clashes would take place between the military and the masses of the townspeople. Countless military trucks with sten-guns at the ready were patrolling the streets day and night.

Under orders from the West Bengal Government, relatives are not being allowed to meet the prisoners.

It appears from the impressions formed by the inspecting personnel and other groups including journalists that this head warder, Niranjana Karal, had made it a regular pastime to provoke the prisoners by frequently referring to Mao Tse-tung, Charu Mazumdar and the CPI (ML) in extremely abusive terms, and that this was what finally infuriated the Naxalites on the day of the event. If this is true, the pattern again closely corresponds to that of the second massacre in Midnapore Jail where too the warders were reported to have similarly provoked the Naxalites.

The fact that the Warders' Association in the jail is CPM-led has further complicated matters. The local CPM leaders appear to have alienated many people by commenting that the warders certainly had the right to defend themselves though, of course, they shouldn't have been so ruthless.

The RSP is making brisk political capital out of the event. Many people think this event and the CPM's attitude will enormously help the CPI (ML)'s political mobilisation in the area. At least one gets this impression from the countless "revolutionary" posters on the walls everywhere. What is surprising is that a large number of posters bearing inscriptions like "Don't give votes, give blows" and "Boycott elections", "Avenge the deaths of the revolutionaries" do not bear any party stamp.

Vote And Revolution

ARUN KUMAR ROY

REGIS Debray in one of the two rare interviews permitted from the prison in Bolivia where he was serving his 30-year term is reported to have hailed the victory of the Marxist President Allende in Chile as the "first great victory after that of the heroic Cuban Revolution". This remark coming from an exponent of armed struggle has struck a new note and created a stir specially among the Latin American revolutionaries. Can the vote be revolutionary?

This is of practical interest in India today with an election taking place and the Naxalite challenge. There is suspense and tension in the political air. C.R., the spokesman of the extreme right, has called this election a "referendum". C.M., the extreme left Naxalite leader, has called for boycott. Not only all political parties but the vote itself has been questioned. Universal suffrage, supposed to be no mean achievement for a newly independent country like India, has become answerable, as is clear from the weariness writ large on the faces of the people during the election campaign. Increased percentage of polling does not indicate victory of the politics of polling but only greater consciousness and less inertia, narrowing the zone of the non-political. In the organisational subdivision political parties may be many and their number, specially near elections, increasing, but politically they are only reduced to two: those who believe in the vote, and those who believe in revolution. The vote means no revolution: this is the Bomb the Naxalites have thrown in the politics of India.

History does not help much. No country with universal suffrage has faced revolution or handled "vote boycott". Lenin opposed the 1905 Duma election no doubt but only in the context of armed uprising and there was no universal suffrage. In *The History of the CPSU* Stalin described the situation:

"The workers' recourse to mass political strikes and demonstrations, growth of the peasant movement, the armed clashes between the people and the police and troops, and finally, the revolt in the Black Sea Fleet, all went to show that conditions were ripening for an armed uprising of the people. This stirred the liberal bourgeoisie into action. Fearing the revolution, and at the same time frightening the Tsar with the spectre of Revolution, it sought to come to terms with the Tsar against the revolution; it demanded slight reforms 'for the people' so as to pacify people, to split the forces of the revolution and thus avert the 'horrors of revolution'. 'Better part with some of our land than part with our heads', said 'the liberal landlords' (page 65).

It is in this context that the Tsar "instructed the Minister Bulygin to draw up a project for such a Duma, stipulating, however, that it was to have no legislative powers" (ibid), which the Bolsheviks boycotted.

However when the "deliberative" Duma was replaced by the legislative Duma Lenin considered its boycott a mistake in his *Leftwing Communism. An Infantile Disorder*:

"The boycott of the 'Duma' by the Bolsheviks in 1906 was, however, a mistake, although a small and easily remediable one".

And the Bolsheviks decided to take part in the elections to the Second Duma, though:

"The Tsarist election law was, of course, anti-democratic. Elections were not universal. Over half the population—for example women and over two million workers—were deprived of the right to vote altogether. Elections were not equal. The electorate was divided into four curias: the agrarian (landlords), the urban (bourgeoisie), the peasant and the worker curias. Election was not direct but by several stages. There was actually no secret ballot." (*The History of the CPSU-B*, page 89.)

Thereafter in Russia the struggle for the vote was combined with that for revolution as its logical continuation and conclusion so that even six months before the November Revolution in 1917, the Bolsheviks participated in the Soviet and Duma elections.

In the pre-war Germany the Communists participated several times in elections between 1920 and 1933 till that country was handed over to Hitler. But the Comintern under the guidance of Lenin and then Stalin never asked for the boycott of elections. The communists were the chief architect of the "Popular Front" ministry in France creating a revolutionary upsurge through elections, though ultimately that slipped into capitulation under Petain. In Spain elections led to the civil war. Even the liberation struggle in Vietnam started not by boycotting the vote but only when the referendum assured at the Geneva conference was denied. The bourgeoisie believes in the vote so long as it serves its interest. So the USA opposed elections in Vietnam.

There was no vote in Cuba and a dozen of people landed there to make revolution. The same was the case with China except that the civil war there was long drawn. But elections were a "treason" to the cause of revolution in France in 1968 when a near-insurrection fizzled out at a poll which pulled the country further to the right.

To sum up: in Russia there was election and revolution; in Germany and France (pre-war) election and capitulation; in Spain election and counter-revolution; in Vietnam denial of election and liberation struggle; in China and Cuba no election but revolution; and in France election and no revolution. So no easy generalisation is possible except that the vote is revolutionary if it sharpens struggle, reactionary if it dampens it.

What They Said

It is curious to note that Marx, Lenin, Stalin and Mao do not endorse the theory of "vote boycott" or counterpose the vote with revolution. In

the article, "The Boycott", Lenin wrote:

"It would be ridiculous to shut our eyes to realities. The time has now come when the revolutionary Social-Democrats must cease to be boycottists. We shall not refuse to go into the Second Duma when (or if) it is convened. We shall not refuse to utilise this arena, but we shall not exaggerate its modest importance; on the contrary, guided by the experience already provided by history, we shall entirely subordinate the struggle we wage in the Duma to another form of struggle, namely strikes, insurrection etc. In the event of election taking place, it will be necessary to enter into an election agreement with the Trudoviks". (Selected Works, Vol. II, page 177).

The Trudoviks were a petty-bourgeois group formed in 1906 in the First State Duma headed by the Socialist Revolutionary intellectuals. So the tactics of the UF today have the sanction of Lenin.

Lenin even refuted the contention that the communists could not participate in a bourgeois government without committing the same mistake that the French Socialist Millerand made:

"In France it was a question of socialists taking part in a reactionary bourgeois government at a time when there was no revolutionary situation in the country, which made it incumbent upon the socialists not to join such a government; in Russia, on the other hand, it was a question of socialists taking part in a revolutionary bourgeois government fighting for the victory of the revolution at a time when the revolution was in full swing, a circumstance which would make it incumbent upon the Social-Democrats to take part in such a government in order to strike at the counter-revolution not only 'from below', from without, but also 'from above', from within the government". (*The History of the CPSU*, page 77).

However, every time the objective should be clear. The Bolsheviks

should join the Second Duma, for

"History has shown that when the Duma assembles opportunities arise for carrying on useful agitation both from within the Duma and outside". (Selected Works, Vol. III, page 396).

And,

"The Bolshëviks did not go to the Duma for the purpose of carrying on 'legislative' work with the Constitutional Democrats but for the purpose of utilising it as a platform in the interest of the revolution". (*The History of the CPSU-B*; p. 94).

Stalin was very harsh with those who refused to use the legal cover available to build up mass bases:

"In 1908 a number of Bolsheviks demanded the recall of the Social-Democratic deputies from the State Duma. Hence, they were called Otzovists who started struggle against Lenin and Lenin's line. The Otzovists stubbornly refused to work in the trade unions and other logically existing societies. The Otzovists were driving a wedge between the Party and the working class, tending to deprive the Party of its connections with non-Party masses; they wanted to seclude themselves within the underground organisation... The Otzovists did not understand that in the State Duma, and through the State Duma, the Bolsheviks could influence the peasantry and could expose the policy of the Tsarist government and the policy of the Constitutional Democrats, who are trying to gain the following of the peasantry by fraud. The Otzovists were therefore "liquidators inside-out". (*Ibid*, 143).

Lastly, Mao Tse-tung's thought also does not approve of vote-boycott. According to Chairman Mao, revolution is the product of counter-offensive retaliation by the masses that loses battles but wins war. Mao's concepts of "liberated zone" and "people's war" are also based on defensive battles. The out-fitted shell is to be shattered by the developing content only in defence of its growth.

The idea is: the offensive of the rulers provides the moral compulsion to the masses to rally behind the revolutionaries to strike back. So the more the repression, the more resistance and more struggle, and fish would always remain in water. On this footing denial of the vote and not the boycott of it should be the starting point of the revolutionary struggle rallying the non-committed behind the Party.

'New Left Variety'

In this respect Naxalites are more an Indian variety of the New Left of the West rather than a serious communist party, and their vote-boycott slogan is the slogan of the offensive. The revolutionaries must not wait for the revolutionary situation but create it by taking the initiative. The bourgeoisie may not wind up its vote-show; we have to smash it. The very existence of exploitation is a perpetual offensive of the ruling class. So, why await a new blow before striking? Strike the iron while it is hot. But now times have changed. The call of the day is: strike the iron by making it hot. So boycott the vote, do not wait until it is denied.

Fifty years back this would have been an "infantile disorder" in the words of Lenin or "liquidators inside-out" to quote Stalin, but with man on the moon and one-third of the world under the red flag, the whole thing deserves serious rethinking. Quoting scriptures whether from Lenin, Stalin or Mao has little meaning where the quantity of time has changed the quality of the situation. Revolution is an international phenomenon, and today international capitalism, in crisis and turmoil, is on the defensive. So the revolutionaries should swing into offensive. The defensive struggle on the Chinese model needs a vast country, vast numbers of people and a vast period of time in possession. But today everything is in a hurry. Speed is the most important factor. With war technology the "political technology" of the Establishment has also advanced, making it more elastic, manoeuvrable and shockproof. Now to be on the defensive is to invite defeat. It

is suicidal to wait for all the symptoms of an ideal revolution to appear before striking. The non-committed mass is already committed in favour of revolution as it has learnt from the historic events of the last fifty years. So what is needed is not so much generation of circumstantial pressure to set it on but to provide the new light and conviction. Terror is the only deterrent left with the Establishment. And Power begets terror. And so power is to be smashed, and offence is the best defence. And so the vote must be boycotted. Arms are to be snatched, guerilla zones created and power captured. A shadow of benevolence is the biggest shield for the existing order, and the status quo is only disturbed when the brute comes out in its brutalised form as is the case in West Bengal with the army, the CRP and the PVA Act. Today any attack helps revolution, and so what is needed is the initiative to attack.

The speed and vigour with which Naxalism has spread in India and the stir and impact it has produced speak unmistakably of its vitality, and vitality is always associated with truth. Classical Marxism changed in the hands of Lenin and the "Problems of Leninism" were answered by Stalin, and now after Mao Tse-tung, who knows this New Left may be the real representatives of the revolutionary communists out to change the world in this rocket age while others are busy interpreting it?

So it is easy to negate Naxalism with the help of classics but it is not so easy to answer the questions it has raised, specially on the vote and revolution. The modern State is a three-storeyed building, ministry, bureaucracy and the army. The vote can change the ministry but not the others. Despite popular swings the class composition remains the same and so does the class character of the machinery. So even if the ministry starts intensifying class struggle, the bureaucracy and militia are bound to be at loggerheads with it. And in no time there would be an Indonesia or at least a Spain.

Armed Forces

In the ultimate analysis State power means essentially the politics of the armed forces. The vote cannot smash it. On the contrary it can only alert it. Lenin called a soldier only a uniformed peasant. This is true, but even that peasant is selected from the ruling section of the village society, conservative in outlook and unenthusiastic about any radical change. That is the stronger section of the society; the dominant minority always makes up the bureaucracy and the armed forces. Mr Jagjivan Ram may be the Defence Minister but the proposal to have a "Chamar Brigade" created furore and was strongly resented by the Establishment. So there can be only "Rajput Brigade" but no "Chamar Brigade". The percentage of the backward, Harijan, Adivasi and other sections of the society who create wealth by dint of their physical labour, is very small even among the sepoys. So the Establishment wants to part with neither the pen nor the sword. This is not the case with semi-feudal countries like India alone. In the U.K., the traditional birthplace of capitalism, Attlee may be the Prime Minister but the Army remains under Lord Mountbatten.

However, this does not mean that the poorer strata of the ruling class constituting the militia are immune to class struggle. Militant peasant movements have no doubt an effect on them, but the defection and disintegration of the militia starts only after it has been hammered and put to pressure by the people's militia. And the people's militia cannot be formed without starting partisan warfare. Polls and partisan war are poles apart.

The difficulty with the vote is that it tells how to mobilise the masses but does not tell how to mobilise force. And force is the midwife of any change. What is more, elections expose the party organisation before the enemy so that at any moment it can swoop on it. And what is most important, the vote is a non-class instrument and its users are bound to develop a non-class outlook and orga-

nisation. Even if everything goes alright, by the time state power is exclusively in the hands of the communists, the communists would change into bourgeoisie, making fundamentally no change. Are not Marx's nearest Social Democrats ruling Europe today living further from Marxism?

The fundamental difference between reform and revolution is not the quantity of benefits available for society but the extent of structural change effected in society. Reforms do not change the ruling class but only induce it to tackle differently the ruled, may be more, benevolently. But revolution overthrows the ruling class first, substitutes it by another and then settles down for reforms as the new order of the new class of rulers with a new philosophy. The struggle for the vote may be carried to revolution, but the vote as such only empowers reform. The very aim differs. Armed struggle aims at "through Revolution to Reforms", while the vote "through Reforms to Revolution", but, for the latter, revolution never occurs. The time needed for the quantity of reforms to bring about qualitative changes amounting to a revolution in society through the vote, and various legislation is sufficient to enable the old ruling class to adjust itself to the new wind, penetrate into the new ruling class and halt the march of quantity before it is transformed into quality to satisfy the ideal conditions of classical Marxism. Revolutionaries participate in elections to "wreck the Constitution from within" but it mostly results in "wrecking the Party from within". The vote transforms the Party before the Party transforms the state.

Participation in the parliamentary system moulds the class character of the Party. The vote gives the Party an essentially middle class character, as a basic sophistication is needed to handle the rules, procedure and techniques of parliamentary politics. When the party approaches power its class character changes to upper middle class. And when it assumes

power the bourgeois and feudal lords penetrate and gradually usurp the leadership. During the second UF government many jotedars turned Marxists and butchered refugees in North Bengal. One of the reasons why the landgrab movement in India failed is that most of the middle land-owners are communist leaders.

In the ultimate analysis the struggle is between the dominant minority and the dormant majority. Feudal lords, at least many of them, would not mind if they are allowed to rule the society as capitalists, socialists, communists or revolutionaries. What is important, they must rule. They must have the authority and amenities of the rulers in any system. They must get the time and opportunity to change the signboard and adopt the new code to rule in a new way. The vote gives them time. Reforms help in transformation. The dominant minority remains dominant for ever. To be precise, reforms benefit the society from the top, while revolution from the bottom. Reforms relieve the ruled, while revolution liberates them. The vote is the road through reforms.

Today's Compulsions

What are the compulsions to discuss revolution today before heading for the polling booth? The conditions for any revolution, as Lenin put it, are (a) that the rulers should not be able to go on ruling as they used to; (b) that the ruled, in their misery, despair and fury, should refuse to go on living as before; and (c) that there should exist a revolutionary party determined and able to seize the chance. The very fact that

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a midterm poll is to be held, the PVA Act had to be introduced, the CRP had to be called, indiscriminate shooting is resorted to, shows that the rulers are unable to rule in the old way—brutalisation is the barometer of their weakness. Secondly, the bourgeois system never necessitates direct intervention of the masses in social events but only indirectly through their representatives and an offer of choice in elections. It may be noted, changes of a minor nature can be accommodated in this way within the normal flexibility of the social system. But when the social base itself is to be changed it requires direct participation of the masses. In the words of Trotsky: "The most indubitable feature of a revolution is the direct intervention of the masses in historic events. The revolution is there in their nerves before it comes out into the street". (*The History of the Russian Revolution*). In India today the questions of land reforms, bonus or pay commissions demand direct action by the masses. Gherao is the midwife of social justice denied cunningly by the "rule of law". The people have refused to be ruled in the old way.

At this critical juncture what should a revolutionary party do? What is to be done? Should people boycott elections? The well-known Maoist dictum is, war is to be fought when the enemy does not want it and is to be avoided when the enemy wants it. So the vote, if considered a type of war, is to be boycotted when the ruling class wants it and is to be fought when the ruling class wants to avoid it. In this manner the vote in Pakistan was revolutionary; so it would be in West Bengal where

the Establishment is hesitant. In Tsarist Russia even the limited franchise was revolutionary as it had to be snatched from the reluctant Tsar. But in France under De Gaulle in 1968 the vote was reactionary as it was desired by the Establishment to prevent the upsurge from becoming an insurrection. In India whether the mid-term poll is revolutionary or reactionary deserves some serious analysis, for, here although a part of the Establishment under the Congress (R) has offered elections, only haltingly as a leap in the dark finding no way out, the other section of the Establishment led by the Swatantra-Jana Sangh-Congress (O) distinctly opposed it and wanted an alternative government at the Centre instead, removing Mrs Indira Gandhi. There was a clear uneasiness that the status quo might be disturbed.

However the duty of a revolutionary party does not end only in ascertaining the context for contesting polls. It must guide the contest. Those who boycott elections and take up arms have their logic. Those who boycott arms and take up polls have their logic too. But for those who would take up polls, to take up arms, use the vote in the cause of revolution, the task is like "walking on razor's edge". There should be a distinct difference in the mode and code of the election campaign by the revolutionaries. Stalin wrote about the election campaign for the Fourth Duma held in the autumn of 1912:

"*Pravda* organised the advanced workers on the eve of the election to the Fourth Duma. It exposed the treacherous position of those who advocated an agreement with the liberal bourgeoisie. *Pravda* called upon the workers to vote for those who advocated the 'full and uncurtailed demands of the year Five', that is, the Bolsheviks. The workers understood that this meant the revolutionary slogan of the Bolsheviks, namely the overthrow of Tsardom, democratic republic, confiscation of the landed estate and eight-hour day." (*The History of the CPSU*, page 160).

What will be the "full and uncurtailed demands of the year Five" in this mid-term poll being held in India in a near revolutionary situation? What slogans would combine the vote with revolution? Clearly the stress on the federal system instead of the present unitary one, curtailment of the power of the President, weakening of the Centre, discrimination against West Bengal etc. are not slogans that would polarise the people for the higher struggle ahead. It may be noted that there is a fundamental difference between India and Pakistan. In a Marxist definition of a nation as clearly stated by Stalin Pakistan cannot be a nation because of the geographical discontinuity; and so, the sooner it disintegrates the better for the development of the revolutionary forces. So there regional autonomy would focus the revolutionary cause, and a struggle for autonomy would soon change into a liberation struggle. But this is not the case with India where it will only strengthen the hands of the reactionaries by inciting regionalism.

The only slogan that can put this vote to the cause of revolution is the call to the people to reject the Constitution based on the right to property as the fundamental right and to substitute it by one based on the right to work as the fundamental right. This will bring a revolutionary polarization: on the one side people with property and on the other people without work. All the political parties will be exposed. As the Naxalites have divided Indian politics into two—Vote or Revolution—the issue of private property would divide the parliamentary politics into two—Vote for Revolution or Vote for Reform—and would turn this election into a referendum.

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The C P I (M) Election Manifesto

MONI GUHA

THE CPI(M) Election Manifesto runs into 32 pages. Hence it is not possible to review it in detail in a short article.

The Manifesto says that "the great goal of Peoples' Democracy leading to socialism cannot be achieved within the framework of the present bourgeois-landlord Constitution". So it urges the people to develop "mass sanctions to scrap the present Constitution and replace it by one enshrining the sovereignty of the people".

What strikes one is the liberal lamentations over the failings of the Constitution. In vain does one search for an exposition of its class character though it has been characterised as a "bourgeois-landlord Constitution". A few stray lines from the Manifesto: "The Fundamental Rights are now *reduced* to sanctity of private property". "Freedom of the Press *really has meant* freedom of the Goenkas, Tatas, Birlas" etc. "A public *bonfire* is being made of all the Fundamental Rights." "The Centre *uses its hold* over the all-India cadre of the bureaucracy to over-ride the elected Ministers." In the name of Independence of the right of the judiciary to interpret the Constitution, "*unheard* of powers are claimed by public officials paid from the common treasury" etc (italics added). As if all these acts are new and are occurring only in case of the Indian Constitution. It is well known to Marxists that all the bourgeois constitutions, including the Indian Constitution, bear a dual character in order to conceal the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. As all bourgeois constitutions are two-sided in character, this can be used by both conservative-reactionary and progressive forces. Marx said of the French Constitution of 1848 that "every one of its provisions contains its own antithesis—utterly nullify-

ing itself." The Indian Constitution also, with its beautiful, high-sounding preamble and with some provisions granting civil liberties and rights, followed by restrictive and nugatory provisions and prerogatives, has both progressive and reactionary aspects and "contains its own antithesis". Marxist-Leninists do not lament, like liberals, over "these failings", as these are not really human failings but the manifestation of class character. That is why it is necessary to expose the hypocrisy and duality of bourgeois constitutions and at the same time utilise some of their provisions as weapons against the bourgeoisie. Instead of exposing the Constitution from the viewpoint of the proletariat the Election Manifesto of the CPI(M) demands of the "bourgeois-landlord" government that the concept of the role of the court and its organisations be completely changed. A thorough reorganisation of the judiciary by replacing those who are *demonstrably prejudiced* in favour of the vested interests by those who are committed to rapid changes in the socio-economic set up in the country is advocated. "*Courts must be deprived of all powers* to set at naught legislation in regard to removal of social injustice, inequality and oppression."

Ultimately the CPI(M) warns the people that "unless the economic and political power of the capitalist and landlord classes is attacked (only attacked?), *unless the masses are able to secure their demands, the way to real freedom and democracy will not open*". (emphasis added). The demand of the masses must be secured first in order to open the floodgates of "freedom and democracy"! And that is perhaps why the advice is given that the "economic and political power of the capitalist and landlord classes" should be "attacked" not overthrown, to secure the demands first and thus "open

the way to real freedom and democracy". This is nothing but the advocacy of structural reform of Togliatti, the late arch-revisionist of Italy.

The immediate demands are put before the people in a way as if, by realising the proposed "profound reforms" of the Constitution envisaged in the Election Manifesto the CPI(M) would be able to change the present power grouping of the "faithful followers" of imperialism and decidedly stop "the bankrupt policy of the capitalist path" which has reduced the country to the position of a beggar going all over the world for "aid" and on such terms as no self-respecting nation can accept. Of course, the Election Manifesto remained spectacularly silent as to which anti-capitalist path it will follow after the realisation of immediate demands through structural reforms. Would it be a "non-capitalist path" as was suggested by Rubinstein, the Russian revisionist, or the "socialist path" of the CPI(M) variety! The socialist path of Marxism-Leninism definitely rejects any anti-capitalist or non-capitalist path within the "reformed" or unreformed bourgeois constitution and bourgeois dictatorship.

The CPI(M) further "hopes" that the people of all parties "would see that unless a complete break from the present policies is made, the nation's economy, political and cultural life and all those values which we treasure are in danger of being submerged in the barrage launched against it by the imperialist powers and their faithful followers in the country." (emphasis added). Thank God! At last the "independent industrial bourgeoisie" of the Burdwan Plenum has become "faithful followers" of "the imperialist powers". One step more, comrades! From "faithful followers" to "willing servants" will, undoubtedly, ease the situation.

The Cat is Out

How is this "complete break from the present policies" to be made? Perhaps it will not be amiss to stress here that our ruling classes are not only the victims of imperialism but are also their willing servants. As such, "complete break from the present policies" is only possible by the political, organisational, and military defeat of the ruling classes whose interests are quite contrary to those of the Indian people as a whole. The CPI(M) on the contrary, thinks that provided a majority in Lok Sabha and Bidhan Sabhas is achieved, it would be possible to "break" "completely from the present policies" and "enshrine" "the real sovereignty of the people in place of the sovereignty of the vested interests".

How simple! How easy! Of course, to our great relief the CPI(M) "wants to assure the people that everyone of its candidates if elected, either to the Lok Sabha or to the State Legislatures, will fight for these policies and *that the Party organisation outside will supplement this fight inside Parliament and State legislatures, by a powerful mass movement outside*" (emphasis added).

So long we have been taught by the authorities of Marxism-Leninism that participation or non-participation in election and parliamentary struggle, under no circumstances, is *independent* of the main form of struggle of the day. The form of *utilisation* of parliament and parliamentary struggle *must bear an auxiliary character*, and *be entirely subordinated* to the task of the main form of the struggle of the day. But now the CPI(M) assures us that "the Party organisation outside will supplement" the parliamentary fight" by a powerful mass movement outside"! It means that the "mass movement outside" will remain subordinated to the task of strengthening the hands of the parliamentarians. It means that the mass struggle outside will bear an auxiliary character while the parliamentary struggle inside will bear the principal character.

To demand and assure "powerful

mass movements" is, of course, a good thing and one should feel happy about it. But the pity is that the CPI(M) leadership looks at mass movement as a supplementary movement to strengthen the hands of the parliamentarians. The masses raise demands, within the limitations of parliamentarism, and then Parliament satisfies them, such is the formula of mass struggle and class struggle of the CPI(M). One may most reasonably ask: what difference is there between the CPI(M)'s formulas concerning mass movement and those of the CPI and other parliamentary parties?

The experiences of Kerala and West Bengal proved beyond doubt that the powers of the bourgeois Lok Sabha and Bidhan Sabhas are given by the bourgeoisie themselves. Owing not only to their relationship to the people, but also to the complex mutual relations within the various groups of the bourgeoisie themselves, they are forced to have some of their policies passed through parliament and State legislatures, where various cliques haggle for power. The extent of the power to be given to the Lok Sabha or Bidhan Sabhas is decided by the bourgeoisie according to their own interests. No matter how much power the bourgeoisie allow, parliament can never become the real organ of power of the bourgeois state. This is ABC of Marxism. Yet the Election Manifesto of the CPI(M) boastfully says, "remaining loyal to the people, standing firm against the exploiting classes, our Ministries boldly declared that the police would not be used to suppress the toilers; *they implemented this promise and gave every protection to the toiler's struggle*" (emphasis added), while remaining silent about the High Court judgment and "their Ministers" docile acceptance of the punishment on the very issue of not detailing the police force against the "toilers' movement". What does this boast mean? Unpleasant facts like Naxalbari, Gopiballavpur, Debra and other things apart, it means that a false and illusory idea is being purposely encouraged that everything "progressive"

is possible through the bourgeois Lok Sabha and Bidhan Sabhas provided there is will and determination, provided there is mass movement. It means suppression of the truth that the real organ of power of the exploiting classes, is not parliament, but the bureaucratic, military and police apparatus. If you do not make the people conscious of the real organs of power of the enemy, taking advantage of each and every single day-to-day event then you keep the people really unconscious about the necessity of properly equipping themselves and there is no difference between the CPI(M) and the revisionists.

Elections

The CPI(M) Election Manifesto urges the people to vote them to power. Undoubtedly wars as well as elections bring people of all sections into the vortex of politics. One of the most direct political approaches the communists can make to the people is an electoral appeal at every level. People do not vote for revolution, nor are they urged to vote for revolution even when they are deeply dissatisfied with existing conditions. Parliamentarians and constitutionalists urge the people to vote either *in protest* against the "misdeeds" of the existing government or for *specific reforms*. This is what we call the politics of keeping the people within the parliamentary precincts. Communists take part in the parliamentary struggle as one of the methods of legal struggle, which the working class should *utilise in certain conditions*. In certain conditions communists do take part in government or form a Ministry, in certain other conditions they urge the people to boycott elections and disperse parliament. As such the question of participation or non-participation in elections is not a question of principle for the communists but one of tactics, of practical expediency. There cannot

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MARCH 6, 1971

be any hard and fast line in this matter. The question must be approached from the point of view of living facts of the situation prevailing at a particular time.

What are the living facts today? The class struggle in almost every country of Asia, Africa and Latin America has either already entered or is entering the phase of civil war; the deep and widespread economic and political crises are beyond solution by palliatives; the contradictions among the ruling classes and the imperialists are acute; the centre of gravity of political life *as a whole* has completely and finally gone beyond the limits of parliament; parliament today can in no way serve a struggle for reform, for improving the lot of the people; it is an epoch when the revolutionary initiative is in the hands of the people and the tide of revolution is rising. In this period to fight for petty reforms for improving the lot of the people in the assemblies and parliament, to make parliament an arena of struggle does mean not only creating illusions in the minds of the people that a peaceful development of revolution is possible since "our Ministers" are there, but also means turning the political struggle for capturing power into sheer economism. In this period, Communists *may* detail its "scouting party" in the assemblies and parliament—which is the enemy camp—to obtain information about the enemy's weak and strong sides to utilise the contradictions of the enemy in order to facilitate the destruction of parliamentarism itself. In this period, communists must not take the responsibility of policy-making by way of accepting or forming Ministries.

The CPI(M) tries to draw a parallel and cite the analogy of the Popular Front governments in France and elsewhere, of the directives of the Seventh Congress of the Communist International. That was a period when the working class, due to the betrayal of the Social Democrats and failure of the Communists, had lost the initiative to the reactionaries, when even a section of the bourgeoisie had

come in open opposition to the reactionary section of the bourgeoisie and joined hands with the working class. It was a *policy of detour*, going one step back, to re-seize and snatch the initiative from the hands of reactionaries and then to go forward two steps. But, now the time is quite different. The initiative is now in the hands of the people, and reactionaries are on retreat.

We should like to ask the CPI(M) if they would be able to: (i) take over the closed and badly managed factories; (ii) slash down the soaring prices; (iii) tackle the problems of galloping inflation, land-hungry peasants and restive unemployed youth. All these are the direct effect of the colonial and neo-colonial policies of our ruling classes. We are afraid, the CPI(M) would not be able to solve any of these problems and they know it. Still they promise to their voters that they are in a position to solve the two major maladies i.e., unemployment and soaring prices. What will be the consequences? Overburdened with misery and poverty, disappointed with their false promises, the people will resort to independent and spontaneous action. Undoubtedly the people will raise demands and will try to implement those demands themselves. Would the CPI(M) not then be "forced", reluctantly or otherwise, to restrict those mass movements, as these, instead of "supplementing" the parliamentary struggle and strengthening the hands of their ministers and parliamentarians, will pave the way for the destruction of parliamentarism itself? Are they prepared to take the responsibility of policy making and thereby of the numerous crimes of suppression of the people's spontaneous and organised movements that would be perpetuated by the bureaucracy, the police and military? Since they claim a share in policy-making, they would not be exonerated from the charges of committing crimes on the people.

Marx in one of his letters to Danielson wrote: "To delude others and by deluding them to delude yourself—this is: *Parliamentary wisdom* in a nutshell." How prophetic!

Kerala

Ends And Means

RAMJI

THE stock allegation against communists by the votaries of democracy is that to them the end justifies the means; implying that the violent, revolutionary means advocated and adopted by communists are reprehensible irrespective of end-results. Against this background, it is a tribute to the ingenuity and newlook character of Mr Achutha Menon and his party in Kerala to have pitched upon a pluperfect ultra-sanctimonious means, which could wring praise from the most ardent Sarvodayite, to achieve the noble end of election victory. For the first time in its history, the mammoth annual religious, Christian convention, organised by the Marthoma Church, known as 'Maramon convention', rated to be the second biggest meet of its kind in the world, was attended and addressed by a non-Christian, non-religious personage: no less a person than Mr Achutha Menon, a hidebound Communist and top leader of the CPI. The means harmonised most respectively with the end, when Mr Menon addressed the mammoth assembly from a platform exclusively reserved for Christian religious heads. Christian votes are a deciding factor in most constituencies in Kerala and this liberal cum religious outlook by a godless anti-religion Communist leader could swing a lot of Christian votes in favour of the party and its allies.

Achutha Menon's Government can do no wrong. This is the premise on which the entire Congress-backed minifront administration has been built up through incessant propaganda by almost all the newspapers in the State. Naturally, these papers are at pains to hide the gross acts of nepotism and corruption which this Government has been sponsoring and executing. Thus the current tendency of Ministers to do electioneering at public expense has gone unchallenged by any section of the

press. But the facts are there. All the Ministers, notorious for setting records by way of TA and DA bills with their unending tours crisscrossing this small State, flock to preside over trivial functions. They have intensified this main preoccupation of theirs.

The CP-led minifront-Congress (R) combine is putting up a bitter fight against V. K. Krishna Menon, in support of the PSP candidate, in Trivandrum constituency. However, Mr Menon has succeeded in securing the support of quite a big section of influential persons in the locality who have ignored party lines in the process. His chances of success are fairly bright.

In Palghat where A. K. Gopalan, the Marxist leader, is contesting, all non-Marxist parties, including the Congress (R) and Congress (O) groups, have ganged up to defeat this common enemy. A Jana Sanghi turned 'Independent' now enjoys the support of all non-Marxist parties who are determined to topple this hitherto undefeated Marxist leader.

To the Marxists too, the means are irrelevant and in three constituencies, at least, they have adopted means that violate their avowed policy of equidistance from both Congress (R) and Congress (O) groups. In Moovattupuzha constituency the Marxists are supporting an alleged 'Independent' who was till now a Kerala Congress leader. True, he has broken away from his party and has secured the support of a sizable section of those who have recently broken away from the Kerala Congress protesting against the party's electoral alliance with the Congress (R) group. And the Marxists state that he has agreed to toe the Marxist line of opposition to both the Congress and their allies, after the elections too. This remains to be seen. But, in Calicut, the Marxists are supporting a hidebound pro-Syndicate candidate whose label 'Independent' has not taken in anyone; not even the Marxists. At Manjeri also, the Marxists are supporting a confirmed pro-Syndicate candidate who is posing as an Independent. For the rest, the Marxists are contesting ten out of nineteen seats and supporting

radicals in the other seats. The lone adventure by Marxists is likely to cost them a number of seats. From their original strength of nine in the dissolved Lok Sabha, it is sure to come down to five seats at best and one seat, namely Palghat, at worst.

The election scene was beclouded by the most massive-ever strike by government servants and teachers, numbering over three and a half lakhs. The strike was complete. The NGOs had no popular sympathy or support. No political party has succeeded in ridding the NGOs of arrogance and indifference to the public, which are the legacy of a colonial regime. If the strikers are confined to Marxist following it would come in handy for their political opponents to wean away considerable public sympathy and support from the Marxists.

Tripura

The Naxalite Challenge

FROM A CORRESPONDENT

AT a time when the ruling Congress in Tripura was going to settle itself comfortably in power after a major shake-up of the party, the emergence of the CPI (ML) on the scene has considerably damaged the prospect. It was all peaceful and the left political parties, the CPM being the major one, continued to wallow in the peace, waiting for some miracle overnight. The 'economic struggle' the Government employees launched from time to time with the avowed goal of transforming it into an intense 'political struggle' all flopped, in that it only served to alienate them from the extremely exploited peasantry who should have been their major partner in a State like Tripura where feudalism still dominates in its archetypal form. With the peasantry left in a state of frustration, the ruling Congress did not have to take much pains to deceive them into believing that their lot could have been changed radically but for the 'greedy' Government em-

ployees 'who are out to stomach the entire wealth of the State'. With a view to dividing and crushing the employees' unions, which happened to be the mainstay of the CPM, the ruling Congress at the same time also created a privileged section among them. And as the ruling Congress began to find the sailing somewhat smooth, the CPI (ML) appeared on the scene to disturb this apparent stability. Much to their discomfort, both the ruling Congress and the left political parties now find themselves on a common platform in their resolve to crush the Naxalites.

The CPI (ML)'s appearance nearly two years ago was greeted by the political pundits with derision, while some other anti-Naxalite forces pretended not to recognise it as a political force. And the 'progressive' section of the local press satisfied itself by calling it by various vulgar names. It did not occur to them at that time that however hard they might try to denigrate the Naxalites in the public eye, they would soon break the ice.

At the initial stage the ruling Congress thought it prudent to see the Naxalites through the eyes of the 'leftists' and rest content with their efforts to outcast them. But soon it appeared that the Naxalites were not harmless guys just out for an adventure on the fringe. They started to penetrate into the interior of the State in the face of heavy odds peculiar to Tripura and began to achieve considerable success in influencing the tribals within a relatively very short period. This was by all accounts a very difficult task, especially when the ruling Congress had driven a wedge between the tribal and non-tribal peasants with the heavy exodus of poor peasants from East Pakistan, leaving them at loggerheads with each other. Also the time soon came when it became almost impossible even for the CPM to rise above this divisive tactic, as it was the votes of the people that counted most. It must be said to the credit of the CPI (ML) cadres that when it was so difficult to activate both the tribal and non-tribal peasants on the basis of a common programme, they were able to

restored their confidence. The tribal peasants of Tripura, who were till the other day very much lacking in initiative and had always looked upon the non-tribals with suspicion for understandable reasons, have now found in the CPI (ML) cadres some friends who could be relied upon.

The tribal peasants rose in revolt at Maharani, a village under Udaipur sub-division, in December 1969 and killed Elfus, the most notorious tribal jotedar of that locality. This action on the part of the peasant guerillas organised by the CPI (ML) was considered by it as a major breakthrough in the history of the peasant movement in Tripura since 1950.

Immediately after this incident the Government of Tripura sent police and CRP forces to Maharani with permission to go on a spree of killing and torturing the starving peasants. But the fact remains that the police and CRP forces have hardly been able to put down the movement and prevent the poor peasants from rising in revolt elsewhere in Tripura. The Maharani incident rather accelerated the process of activating the peasants against the new feudal lords and their lackeys. Today the peasants in Tripura are extremely restive and determined to shake off their age-old docility which the other political parties have so far exploited to serve their own self-perpetuating cliques.

The CPI (ML) has drawn most of its activists from among the students. With this the general trend of student activism can be said to have radically changed. Student activism which was so long confined to conducting and contesting college elections under different party banners in isolation from the masses has now been canalised into a positive direction. People who were used to seeing students indulging in certain acts in the name of politics without any serious political and organisational outlook today watch them doing hard work with a sense of dedication to the cause of the people, sacrificing their careers and risking their lives. As a matter of fact, they have today stepped into the political vacuum created by others on the so-called leftist front. They are growing in-

creasingly sophisticated and getting embedded in the masses, constituting the main force for spreading Naxalite politics. Despite severe police repression, they are trying to keep telling people of the rationale behind their every action. This new development on the student front has baffled the Government of Tripura. Two years ago nobody could have imagined the direction of student activism.

If there is now anything left for the Government of Tripura to bother about, it is the growing CPI (ML) activities in the State. So it has unleashed massive repression on the Naxalites. Many have already been arrested, tortured and maimed inside police lock-ups. They are rotting in jails with no near possibility of ever being brought to courts for 'trial'. The prominent among them are being slow-poisoned to death behind the bars. The search for Maoist literature is going on in full swing and almost every day scores of houses are being raided by the police. But very little of all that is happening comes to light because there is a conspiracy of silence on the part of the local press, a section of which claims itself to be progressive. The Government is very carefully seeing to it that every news about the Naxalites is suppressed.

What has been the role of the CPM in the face of the CPI (ML) activities in Tripura? As the Lok Sabha election is drawing nearer, the CPM has started a virulent campaign against the Naxalites calling them the 'hirelings' of the ruling Congress. Does it not know how these 'hirelings' are being treated by the ruling Congress? It was the CPM in Tripura which once paid warm tribute to the Naxalite cadres for their capacity to withstand the heavy odds against which one has to work among the peasants in the interior of Tripura. What has now prompted the CPM to be so unkind to them? Is it because the peasants have started losing their faith in the CPM and are coming to rely more on the CPI (ML)? Curiously enough, after Elfus, the tyrant jotedar of Maharani, was killed by the peasant guerillas, he came to be covertly publicised by the CPM as a good man. It is no longer a

secret that wherever the Naxalites have stepped up their activities among the peasants, the jotedars and mahajans are sneaking into the CPM fold because they do not feel secure under the Government protection alone.

In the meantime, Mr Sachindra Lal Singh, the Chief Minister, has been out on educating the masses in certain social truths. 'Langal jaar jami taar' (land belongs to the tiller), 'Jaal jaar machch taar' (fish belong to the fisherman), 'Shramik-i Jatiya Sampader Malik' (workers are the owners of national wealth) and so on are the slogans—whichever suits the occasion—he has started mouthing these days. Lest others misunderstand that he is advocating 'dictatorship of the proletariat' in the tradition of the communists, he is at the same time careful enough to remind people that it is only Mahatma Gandhi 'who has taught the world how to achieve these social objectives.' All these slogans are intended to distract the people's attention from the growing Naxalite activities in the State.

Tamil Nadu

Iconoclasm : Substance And Style

M S P

THERE is something pathetic as well as tragic about the persistence with which the old warhorse of Erode still goes about defying all established values. One cannot help admiring the doggedness with which he has carried on his fight against 'superstition' of every sort. The latest of his cultural revolutionary gestures: a procession of Hindu gods, with the cutout of Rama at the head, being 'beaten with chappals'. Could there be anything more outrageous to the orthodox Hindu mind?

Even though the South takes pride in distinguishing its Dravidian heritage from Aryanism, the people (particularly the upper castes) are by and large even more fanatically 'religious' than their counterparts in the heart-

land. (The observation is true of both the Hindus and the Muslims, and while the South is comparatively free from communal tension, there is also much less contact between them than in the North.) It was against the religiosity of the Hindus of South India, especially Tamilnad, that Naicker led his "Self-Respect Movement" way back in the 1920s. The early cultural revolutionary gestures had a rationale behind them; they were mainly designed to liberate the 'lower' castes from the tyranny of Brahmin priests. Such, for instance, was the rationale behind Naicker's attacks on Vedic marriage rituals, and his plea for a simplified ceremony which dispensed with the priests. But it looks as if the latest goings-on in Salem do not have any kind of rationale (unless one believes that it is a diabolically clever way of harming the DMK, a party Naicker has never reconciled himself to); instead, the events in Salem, both in their substance and in their style, seem to be peculiarly a product of the very religiosity and superstition which they seek to ridicule. The Naicker brigade seems to rebel, but the rebellion itself is within the framework set by the priests. The very priestly class which brainwashes the masses into worshipping Rama, also defines that the chappal, (a most useful object, incidentally) is an 'unholy' object, and so, still within this definition, the greatest insult one could offer anybody is to hit him with a chappal. The very gesture, in all its crudity and contrived emotionalism, is totally out of place in a movement committed to *rationalism*. But Naicker always has specialised in this sort of perversity: employ a highly emotionalised gesture in order to inculcate a sense of rationalism among the masses.

The second part of Naicker's revolutionary call is equally amusing: "Freedom to covet my neighbour's wife". It is difficult to imagine what aspect of sexual tyranny *this* was supposed to be a gesture of revolt against. That our sexual lives need to be rid of a lot of hypocrisy, nobody can dispute. But here again, the 'revolt' is very much within the framework established by the conventional society. The priest tells us: marriage is sacrament. The fact that it is also a sordid commercial transaction—and in most Hindu marriages, the sordidness of it all is quite open—this of course is conveniently ignored. Naicker accepts this definition and indeed furthers it when he brutally treats the woman as a commodity, to be 'coveted', now by one, now by another. But coveting somebody else's wife might only result in what the civilised Americans have so charmingly characterised as 'swinging'. Orgies and compulsive adultery are the 'revolutionary' alternatives to the 'reactionary' institution of marriage.

It is indeed a depressing thought that the most notorious iconoclast of our times seems, on close analysis, to be so hidebound in his thinking that even his iconoclasm is *derived* from orthodox thinking. This is because, in essence, Periyar rebels against himself, or his older, earlier self, who was totally sold out on Brahminism; and so, each gesture is only a partial repudiation of a poisonous past. Naicker's rejection of Brahminism is highly emotional, which is both its strength and weakness. To the extent it forces people to think, even while employing shocking tactics, it is a valid piece of social criticism. But the absence of a sustained attempt to analyse the objective and subjective reasons for Brahminical tyranny in Hindu society makes the gestures remain merely gestures; it can even be argued that by working within Brahminic definitions, Naicker is indirectly strengthening the masses' subservience to Brahminic values. It is for these reasons that the movement of Naicker has remained essentially weak, having only periodic fits of activity when it shocks all 'decent people'.

The Closure Game

A. P. M.

"BRAITHWAITE & Co. (India) Ltd., it now appears, was not over-eager to avert the closure of its Clive works, the nation's major wagon unit near Calcutta, employing 5,000 persons in a region saturated with unemployed." This is how a financial daily commented on the Braithwaite closure at the end of January. To date, while the Press all over the country has been publishing similar reports of a quasi-accusing nature, the Company itself remains silent, and even when prodded to speak in self-defence, prefers to be uncommunicative. This is rather a strange posture, because economic journalists will testify how sensitive companies are to adverse publicity and how often journalistic proprieties have to be made subservient in the interest of a resourceful manufacturer.

The truth is that the cat is out of the bag. The Braithwaite management decided to close the works not because they could not get hold of enough steel and funds, but because all of the 5,000 men on the pay-roll could not be accommodated any more. But retrenchment was out of the question; for one thing, it would have been an awfully messy operation. The surest way to get rid of the surplus men would be to do something which would attract the sympathy of the bosses in New Delhi and Writers' Buildings and of those citizens who educate themselves by reading large-circulation dailies. By way of reasoning in this manner, the board soon arrived at what local business circles later christened a master stroke. Closure of the Clive works was decided upon and the excuse to be utilised on the occasion would be that of the steel shortage.

Before we analyse the financial position of the works at the time of the closure, one or two points need clarification. It has been stated above that retrenchment was more or less inevitable. This is true, despite the possi-

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bility of a contradiction from the 5,000 men who are suddenly out of job. Sales of the Clive works dropped from Rs. 807 lakhs in 1968 to Rs. 468 lakhs one year later. This is a matter serious enough for any organisation which exists for the sole purpose of profit-making and not for helping people earn their livelihood. It is the sheer size of the Company which facilitated another year's running. It may be argued that the closure was an extreme step and could be avoided. This is true; but the closure game is played not for being faithful to workers. It is a game played with such cunning and precision that trade unionism, by its very nature slow of movement, is caught unprepared. Each recent closure, since the Birla employees were turned out of their office-rooms in early 1970, has been a success in the sense that it could be forestalled.

The ICICI files have revealed an interesting story of half-hearted attempts by the management to keep the works running. The Company itself belongs to the Jardine Henderson group, one of the 75 big houses listed by the Monopolies Commission. The present story begins with Braithwaite having entered into negotiations with the ICICI for backing a Rs. 64 lakh convertible debenture issue, carrying an annual interest of 8.5 per cent. The ICICI people took a lot of initiative in the matter, and approached the IDBI and UTI on their own. It was agreed that the IDBI would subscribe Rs. 24 lakhs, and the UTI and ICICI Rs. 20 lakhs each. Before actually subscribing, these institutions told Braithwaite that the first charge on its assets vested in the Commonwealth Development Finance Co. of London, should have to be vacated first.

This was where procrastination on the part of the Company began. While removal of the first charge continued to be delayed, the cash position of the Company deteriorated fast. It was the time when business in West Bengal was shouting to the world at large of the maltreatment it received at the hands of the financial

institutions. Bombay and New Delhi were therefore sufficiently alert. The IDBI agreed to hold a second charge on the assets and subscribe its share accordingly. It instructed the State Bank of India to advance Rs. 24 lakhs to the Company even before the debenture issue could be formalised. There are few instances of such an emergency operation undertaken by any of these institutions.

Meanwhile, the Clive works closed its gates. Bombay was literally stunned. It continued to be so when it subsequently learned that Braithwaite had drawn the advance from the SBI before closing the works.

There has been wide speculation about what the Company intends to do in the aftermath of the closure. The time-limit for submitting the report of the enquiry committee is over. It is assumed that the committee will recommend government take-over of the works. If this happens the management may not be entirely unhappy. As a matter of fact some business circles in Calcutta maintain that this is precisely what the closure is intended to achieve. Since the financial institutions will have to rescue the work by lending cash and since the management has unilaterally withdrawn itself from the job of running it, it is just possible that the loan will be sought to be converted into equity participation in the ownership of the Company by the institutions. An authoritative estimate puts the size of the loan at Rs. 2 crores.

The manner in which the Clive works has been closed and the rumours about the impending closure of a few other big engineering units in the State indicate a disturbing trend of thinking in the engineering industry circles. These elephantine works have suffered from bad business since 1966 when the Railways suddenly became market-shy. Till 1968 they made efforts to get back on their feet. Guest, Keen, Williams, for example, went in for an extensive rationalisation in both the manufacturing and operational processes. Old divisions were merged into new, more stream-

lined ones, many people became surplus, and the luxury of a sprawling air-conditioned city office was regretably done away with. Braithwaite too went in for diversification in a big way; there was rationalisation here too. So did Jessop, and a good many others.

Recently, however, the men in charge of these units are displaying a decidedly pessimistic outlook. Simultaneously, there are reports of engineering orders going to Bombay which have traditionally come to Calcutta. Just as the local men are seemingly losing heart, there are fresh aggressive sales victories elsewhere. If one asks why this is happening, this is what one is told: what use securing fresh orders when shop-floor indiscipline and sabotage ruin possibilities of delivery in time? There is no reason to believe that this is bluff. There are many instances of orders not having been honoured because the men struck work or did some such thing. But ask the men in charge why no attempts are made to forestall possibilities of work-stoppages and go-slows. They can never answer satisfactorily. It is evident that most managements, especially belonging to sahib establishments, are just not interested in running their businesses.

One explanation for this apathy being offered is that the sahib establishment men have secured enough pelf for a comfortable future at the cost of the viability of the units they have been running. It is now of little interest to them if the units close down. At any rate, public money is always there to fall back upon. Therefore, loot as long as you can, and then retire in good grace. Don't let the bloody coolies and baboos have a chance to worry you. Government interference in private enterprise? Pooh, never heard the word. That's for the Free Enterprisewallahs of Bombay.

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Calcutta Diary

GYAN KAPUR

SOMETIME during the election campaign before the formation of the second United Front Government in West Bengal Mr Jyoti Basu stated in reply to wild statements about disorder in the State, that the people went about their jobs and even got married and feasted. Or words to more or less the same effect. It is no doubt praiseworthy to keep one's way of life come what may, as it usually requires courage. On the other hand it may be that one has become just callous to what happens to other human beings. Mr Basu, however, was having something else in his mind altogether. He was only trying to emphasize that things were pretty normal in the State.

We have travelled a long way since then and at least in Calcutta and certain other parts of the State terror stalks. At this time, therefore, it is strange to observe that the feasting and merrymaking among the locals, of all people, goes on unabated. If the Bengali middle class had a conscience, it has put it into cold storage, shutting its eyes to death and misery all round. All that has happened is a few marginal adaptations.

Marriages among Hindus take place invariably at night or earliest in the twilight period, whereas daytime weddings are the rule in most other societies. Ancient India also followed the same rule as far as we know and the system of marriages at night most likely evolved during the period of Hindu subjugation, when it was considered safer to take the bride away at night. Hindu marriages in Bengal are no exception from the rest of India, and marriage and other feasts are also held at night. For marriage feasts to take place during daytime was unthinkable. But the present uncertainties of transport and sporadic violence in different parts have wrought a big change. Other feasts are now held more and more in the daytime. Or they start in the

daytime for those coming from far off and go on into the night for those staying near. Marriage feasts still are tied to the dark but they start at an early hour unheard of in the past. It is not inconceivable that if things continue much longer as at present something or the other will be found among the Sacred Texts of the Hindus to justify daytime marriages and the wheel will have turned full circle.

A certain nervousness has gripped those who throw these feasts. They have listened with shaking heads and long faces to reports of how a score or so of uninvited and unknown young men suddenly appeared at some feast or the other and calmly announced their intention to sit down to the meal and did it too. There are other stories too which they recollect with fear where the young men not only had their fill of food but also insisted on a few hundred rupees as the price of a peaceful parting of the ways.

Whatever these young men may think of themselves, in fact they are doing nothing high and mighty fine. To put it bluntly, they are simply helping themselves to a free meal at the best and just extorting money at the worst. But they can rightly plead that they are no greater offenders than those who hold these feasts. Such is the respect for law of those respectable personages that there is hardly any feast in the whole State of West Bengal by any one who considers himself worth anything, which does not flout the law on entertainment of guests in all respects. All the prohibited things are served and invariably the permitted number of guests is exceeded. The higher the family in the social scale, the more blatant the flouting of the law. And it is these people who express the greatest anxiety at the breaking down of law and order in the State. Party affiliations and ideologies do not count here.

The iron seems to have entered the soul of the middle classes of the State, making it impervious to anything. And it is from these classes that most of the executives come, whether they work in commerce or

industry, or party work. Perhaps I am just plagued with weak nerves or plain squeamish. But there is one incident which always comes to mind when I hear of a marriage or any other feast.

An old acquaintance whom I had not seen for years dropped in out of the blue and made me promise to go to his daughter's marriage and the wedding feast. It was, of course, the usual thing with beggars outside waiting hungrily for scraps while inside helping upon helping was being piled on before each guest whether he could eat it or not. Actually, many of the guests could not finish even half of what was set before them and the hungry wolves waiting outside were fully aware of this. The diners, however, were seated in the grounds of the house and only a few yards away was the open gate which could not be kept closed. As a result each time the diners got up and the leavings were gathered up and put into buckets for throwing outside there was a rush and the wolves scrambled around the buckets. Gradually, they became bolder and bolder till some of them made a rush at the table no sooner than the diners had started getting up.

All this no doubt made the host, his family and their guests rather disgusted. And they tried to shoo off the wretches so that they should not again come inside the grounds. There were all sorts of people there—businessmen, executives, ordinary employees and even retrenched people who were finding it hard to carry on. But what was strange is that all that they felt was disgust that the poor beggars should have come in. All of them would consider themselves as men of sensibility and in fact they mostly are so in other respects. But none of them uttered a single word to show that he pitied the poor wretches or that he felt even the faintest qualm of conscience.

As it happened that was a meal which I found hard to digest. Even 24 hours after the event and the visit of a doctor the feeling of nausea did not go. Perhaps it was just a stomach upset. But if there is anything to the

theory of psycho-somatic effects, I like to think that it was some part of my mind, not yet dead to the sufferings of others less fortunate than I, that was refusing to allow the meal to be absorbed.

Book Review

What Must Be Done : Jerry Rubin Style—I

DICK KROOTH

THE thousands, perhaps millions, of Jerry Rubins in the revolutionary movement are with us, part of us, until we come to grips with total change or find ourselves submerged in total fascism. Many party-type people hate these Jerry Rubins—they say the Rubins are anarchists, utopians, disruptionists, *ad infinitum* of derogatory terms. Others, a little more flexible perhaps, see the Rubins as crazies—which the Rubins readily admit to—comics, to be tolerated but not taken too seriously. In all the turmoil the Rubins are the only ones who see themselves in their proper historical perspective—they are sure that the weakest link under State monopoly capitalism and imperialism is the youth of America, and they have set about to capture the youth spirit, the youth imagination, the very mind's eye of all young people. This is what Jerry Rubin's polemic *Do It!** is all about—he has written a manifesto for youth anarchism, utopianism, yippism and total love.

Even Jerry Rubin's harshest critics admit he is a beautiful person with beautiful ideas. He understands how capitalism and imperialism work and he hates what this system does to human beings. He sees a land of plenty for the owners of America, a land of poverty—social, intellectual and economic poverty—

for the people. And he wants to liberate the people by placing the means of their existence in their hands.

"The economy is rich," Jerry says, "overproduction is the problem; now everyone can dig life, and we know it. Life can be a trip".

"We want a communal world where the imagination runs supreme, and where human institutions respond to human needs. Feeling and emotion will be unsuppressed. Everything will be free. People will go to museums to look at dollar bills. There will be no nations, only rich communities and rich cultures".

Most revolutionaries share Jerry's dream. But there is violent disagreement over how we can reach it. Jerry says the route is the youth movement in America, a movement that does not distinguish youth on the basis of calendar age, class or race. He foresees the creation of a Youth International Revolution which will undermine all social authority, ideology and institutions. To do this Jerry says there can be no master plan, no master mind behind it all. Every actor on the social stage, every youth—including those with calendar years over 30 or 40, yet with the ideology of youth—must be his own leader, grinding out the daily revolutionary plans *by action alone*. Act the revolution, live it each and every moment, do your thing—that is Jerry's message. This will lead to the complete breakdown of all social authority, and then Jerry says there will be a "take-over" by allies everywhere just waiting for "The Moment."

Jerry is extremely well aware that he is considered an anarchist and a utopian by others on the left. He is proud of it, and regards those who hold him in disrepute in a similar light. He has the utmost contempt for party-type organizations like the Communist Party and the Socialist Workers Party, and *Do It!* is filled with harsh digs about their tactics, their ties and coats, their analytical

literature, their direct appeals to the working class, their possible rigidity after the revolution, their sexual and educational puritanism, their liberality towards dope, their staid middle class ethic. More than these polemics against his enemies in the movement, Jerry thinks that left-wing planning is stupid and a total waste of time. He says:

"For years I went to left-wing meetings trying to figure out what the hell was going on. Finally I started taking acid, and I realized what was going on: nothing. I vowed never to go to another left-wing meeting. Fuck left-wing meetings."

"None of the movement's great historical events—from the Be-in to the Pentagon to Chicago—came out of left-wing meeting. In fact, they would all have been voted down."

Rather than attend such stupid gatherings, Jerry finds that "The longhaired beast smoking pot, evading the draft and stopping traffic during demonstrations is a hell of a bigger threat to the system than the so-called 'politicos' with their leaflets of support for the Viet Kong and the coming working-class revolution."

Indeed, without planning Jerry believes that the youth movement can appeal to every ordinary person, including the working class, by exhibiting youth power and violence against ruling class power and violence—all in a dialectic of power that truck driver types understand. Once the people see this Yippie power in action, they will be more sympathetic to the youth ideology and non-programme. This, Jerry says, will lead towards the future Yippieland, which can only be created with the help of all ordinary people, the workers included. Whatever else may be said about Jerry's non-programme, he sees a definite role for the working class. He foresees clerical workers axing their computers and putting chewing gum into the machines, as well as the workers seizing their factories and beginning to run them communally without profit.

* *Do It!* Jerry Rubin, pp. 256, \$2.45. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1970.

Again, remember, Jerry is saying that all this will happen without a plan—the revolution will create friends everywhere through the youth movement, the non-plan, the do-your-thing activities. Behind all of Jerry's rhetoric, his revolutionary non-plan is a plan, his revolutionary non-ideology is an ideology. His call for action, whatever revolutionary action, emanating from youth will create the underpinning for total social transformation. In one word, Jerry's utopia is rooted in youth anarchism and he is quite certain that this anarchism will make the revolution.

Yippieism plus Total Love

Jerry ends his book with a vision of the new society he is striving to build: "The United States of Amerika will become a tiny yippie island in a vast sea of Yippieland love." In Jerry's lexicon, Yippieland is every man's land, meaning that Jerry is blind to national, racial and ideological boundaries. The United States is only one island of yippieland love, and in the world of tomorrow there will be thousands of these islands, all of them floating in the vast sea of total love.

But don't just wait for future Yippieland love, Jerry implores. *Do it!* now—politics is how you live day to day, not what you do once in a while. There are no part-time revolutionaries, only total revolutionaries immersed in the love of liberating first the youth and then the total society.

For the Yippies and the Rubin youth culture there is no past history, so they advise that we do not waste our time reviewing it in search of solutions in building the new society. Rather, they are convinced that the only vanguard is the vanguard in action, seeking total liberation of man and woman, using legal and illegal

methods to this end, moving beyond "peaceful transition" to violent revolution where people put the only thing they have to lose—their bodies—on the line. The entire Yippie non-programme is, in other words, a historic programme.

Many people would like to write Jerry off as a useless anarchistic and utopian fool. But Eldridge Cleaver's introduction to Jerry's book warns against this.

"There is something wrong with all programmes. They can all be improved. I always try to support the best programme I know about. After the (Black Panther) programme I support, I like Jerry's programme best. So I support Jerry's programme now, because we must keep an alternative near at hand, within easy reach. Humanity cannot afford to get locked into any programme, but Humanity always functions on the basis of a programme. A programme of many scripts, each little group of actors following the script around which they are united.

Like Eldridge and Jerry, one sees the need for many scripts, many actors, many groups, many programmes, many revolutionary acts of love that together will bring total transformation to our society and will place all power in the hands of ordinary people. One can read Jerry's book which illustrates and elaborates on the acts of one of these many groups in the movement. You need not agree with Jerry's programme to learn something from *Do It!* But to learn from it you must remain infinitely flexible, recalling that Jerry is the herald of troops from the white middle-class youth and that he intends to charge them into total war against Amerika. As Jerry put the matter in his Academy Award of Protest Acceptance Speech on receipt of a federal indictment for the Chicago Conspiracy, "the major result of these indictments will be to excite every young kid across the country to want to cross state lines and become a 'rioter' by the time he's a teenager. Yippie!"

What Must Be Done : Jerry Rubin Style—II

M. S. PRABHAKAR

IT would have been very easy to do a heavy-handed review of Jerry Rubin's book *Do It!* The book is meant, deliberately designed, to outrage what one might loosely describe as bourgeois, liberal sensibilities. Perhaps the word 'book' itself is a misnomer; the impression one has as one reads is of a prolonged excursion into a world of drugs: a helluva trip on acid, as Rubin would put it.

It is essentially a personal account of Jerry Rubin's doings and wanderings since the days of the Berkeley Free Speech Movement in November 1964, up to date, recorded of course, in an extremely personal idiom.

In some ways, the greatest merit of the book is its language. Rubin has been able to convey all the nuances of conversation, self-introspection, group discussion &c, characteristic of the New Left in the USA. The idiom of a whole sub-culture comes alive in the pages of the book. Much of the language is deliberately shocking and offensive, but for those who have been a part of this sub-culture, the miracle of a spoken language being used effectively in writing should provide some pleasure and satisfaction.

It is very difficult to summarise this book; it is a book that should be read, preferably aloud, and in company. Essentially, it is a continuous cry of alienation, Rubin, who describes himself as a 'child of Amerika', emphasizes both his Americanness as well as his Amerikanness in the account of his doings. A nice, clean, middle-class Jewish boy, who has all the predictable American tastes (and presumably, vices too), one of the great moments of whose adolescence was getting himself photographed shaking hands with Adlai Stevenson, a clean, white kid with a respectable liberal background who could have conceivably grown up into an Alexander Portnoy; but

Our agent at Varanasi

MANNALAL DAS

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instead, he went to Berkeley to do graduate work, and dropped out; dropped out not merely from Graduate School, but from the American system itself. From then onwards, America became Amerika, and he, in consistently spelling his country's name thus, only underlines his own total alienation from the mainstream of American life.

And this is what Rubin seems most anxious to establish that he has dropped out of the system, that he is no party to Amerikan crimes, that he is committed to destroy the monster. But in his choice of the method of confrontation, Rubin shows himself to be either brilliant, crazy, original, or whichever word one might prefer. Rubin realizes that after all, his discovery that Amerika is a monster is not exactly a very original one. There had been attempts earlier to confront Amerika, to change it to more civilized ways. But none of these attempts succeeded. Joining the party system, organizing labour unions, starting a Communist party—all these have been done, and all these have failed to tame Amerika, which has only continued to grow, extend its tentacles across the oceans. So, to confront Amerika in our times, to confront it in every living room on colour TV, one has to employ stirring guerilla tactics, a kind of a pop guerilla rhetoric. Audacity, more audacity, perpetual audacity—such is the creed of our modern revolutionary, and if one takes into account the sense of outrage and shock he has caused, one has to agree that Rubin has succeeded in his enterprise. The book is an audacious, outrageous book.

A highly personal account of FSM, International Days of Protest against the Amerikan War in Vietnam, Encounters with the HUAC, the March on the Pentagon, Democratic Convention, Chicago (spelt Czechago), Peoples' Park, Berkeley—the whole thing narrated in a language that is almost god pure in its uninhibited use; and the whole book interspersed with a series of photographs and sket-

ches presenting in their totality a picture of modern Amerika—a group of hippies unshamed in all their hairy nakedness; a close-up of Mayor Daley, the archetypal Big Daddy; Nixon talking to Fidel; Crazie Sharon in glorious nakedness serving severed pig's head to a party of very well dressed, but startled middle class ladies and gents; a burly black man, his face and shirt covered with blood, being dragged away with his arms pinioned behind him; brilliant montages of Amerika entitled APOCALYPSE, FUCK AMERIKA; and a neat, nearsquare (10 cms by 10 cms) with the word FUCK printed 468 (36 × 13) times; a whole portrait of Amerika in the 1960s emerges out of the words and pictures of *Do It!*.

But the book is not merely reportage; it is a call for action, as the title self-evidently, shriekingly, proclaims. So, the book has to be examined politically, even though Rubin makes no secret of his total contempt for 'politics' and 'political people' of the conventional kind, including the conventional 'leftist' variety.

Last Meal

When one discusses Amerika's role in today's world, it is not enough if one merely states that Amerika is a rapacious, imperialist power; a mere iteration of a formula will lead one nowhere. One has to analyse the most blatant examples of Amerikan imperialism right now; as in the whole of Latin America which the U.S. is finding increasingly difficult to treat as its backyard; as in Indo-China, specially in Vietnam; and within its own boundaries, in its treatment of its black citizens. Throughout Rubin's book, there is an implicit understanding of Amerika's role vis-à-vis these three issues. But in the final analysis, Rubin seems to be much more interested in what one might vaguely call 'the salvation of Amerika', its return once again to its pristine state of purity—America—, than in any correct analysis as to why it has become Amerika. "I am a child of Amerika. If I'm ever sent to Death Row for my revolutionary

'crimes', I'll order as my last meal: a hamburger, french fries and a Coke. I dig big cities. I love to read the sports pages and gossip columns, listen to the radio and watch color TV. I dig department stores, huge supermarkets and airports. I feel secure (though not necessarily hungry) when I see Howard Johnson's on the expressway. I groove on Hollywood movies—even bad ones. I speak only one language—English. I love rock 'n' roll." Thus, Rubin. But hamburgers and french fries (A & P Stores), Coke (Coca-Cola Company) can't be separated from imperialism; nor for that matter the prosperity that is implied in big cities, colour TV, department stores and supermarkets and expressways and Hollywood movies. One is what one is. But Rubin protests. No, he has dropped out; he is outside the system. He is a Yippie. He is part of an elite sub-culture which lives outside the money system. In fact, a whole chapter of Rubin's book is devoted to money in which Rubin exhorts his readers to burn money, to eat it, to smoke it. The advice of Rubin is: repudiate money, repudiate conventional sex which is invariably devoid of love, being tainted by money. Instead, loot, make love, shit, whatever, wherever, whichever you feel like it. A Scenario from Rubin: Go into a bank, business or office and demand to use the toilet. You'll be told, 'No public bathroom here.' Stand on one leg and whine loudly, "I gotta doo-doo." Tell them that if they continue to refuse, you'll shit on the floor. SHIT ON THE FLOOR! No, the way I cite, the way I attempt to summarize his message hardly conveys the utter absence of self-consciousness and hypocrisy with which Rubin exhorts his readers to join him in 'total revolution.' But certain questions still remains unanswered.

Probably what annoys and disturbs a non-American reader of the book is its continuous highspiritedness. Perhaps, it is only a mask, concealing an indignation bordering on hysteria;

but I should say that the indignation seems to be very well concealed. For Rubin, it almost looks as if the war in Vietnam has come as a godsend, because it has caused so much alienation among the Amerikan youth. Rubin constantly returns to the theme of perversely *supporting* repression. It was *because* of Clerk Kerr that the Berkeley kids were pissed off and the FSM could gather such strength; so, Clerk Kerr is a *friend* of the Movement. HUAC finances revolution by paying for Rubin's trip to Washington. Vietnam has radicalized Amerikan youth; so create one, two, many more Vietnams, not because it is the way to destroy Amerika in the way Che envisaged it, but because it would lead to more and more Jerry Rubins. 'If there had been no Vietnam war, we would have invented one. If the Vietnam war ends, we'll find another war.' (Nixon, one might add, has already found Cambodia; so Nixon is a *friend* of revolution.) 'The revolution,' Rubin informs us, 'is a battle between symbols. Fuck, what's Vietnam anyway? The United States doesn't give a shit about that little piece of real estate.' Do you want to have a real understanding of American imperialism? Here's Rubin, ready with an explanation: 'Puritanism leads us to Vietnam. Sexual insecurity results in a super-masculinity trip called imperialism. Amerikan foreign policy especially in Vietnam, makes no sense except sexually. Amerika has a frustrated penis, trying to drive itself into Vietnam's tiny slit to prove it is The Man.' Yes, who gives a shit about Vietnam, anyway? Reading Rubin, one has a feeling that at least sections of the 'peace movement' in God's Own country definitely don't give a shit about Vietnam. Or rather, Rubin does, to the extent that Vietnam has made it possible for him to 'liberate' himself from the American mainstream. Perhaps, it is a small price, the devastation of a whole country and the slaughter of a people, to pay for the 'liberation' of a nice, white, clean, middle class American kid, and his metamorphosis

into the hairy ape, sheer, animal, magnetic, stoned. Shit, what's Vietnam, anyway?

Liberated?

But one final question yet remains to be asked: that is, is Rubin really 'liberated?' Does he really stand apart from the American mainstream? Alas, in spite of the devastation and slaughter that has gone into making Rubin and his tribe feel so alienated, one must regretfully conclude that Rubin is not really separated from the mainstream. Notwithstanding all his protests about his dropping out of the system, Rubin is very much part of it, as the very publication of the book eloquently testifies. It is here perhaps that the most horrible aspect of the Amerikan (or Amerika, for it makes no difference to *me*) experience becomes evident. Rubin might protest over and over again, but he too is co-opted. One might not have jobs or reputations to lose; one might be worse than a Communist, anarchist, traitor or motherfucker. But even these, the total outcasts who repudiate everything, even they are part of the American landscape. Even physical or spiritual exile has now become modish, very hip. There is room for everyone in the Great Society. Do you believe that it is fire this time, that it is fire *now*? Okay, here's a comfortable place from which you can tell us of your ideas. Do you have apocalyptic visions of white and black Americans engaging in mutual slaughter? You too are welcome. Are you disgusted at what is happening in Vietnam, Chicago, at the back of your mind? Come, let's have a panel on that. You have fantasies of homosexual and incestuous orgies? Lie down and tell us all about it. Do you want to Do It? Write a book and we will collect our percentages on it. This is a big country, and the deviate, the non-conformist, the hippie and the yippie, the Hell's Angel and God's Lil Chillun, all are welcome. Don't worry. Nixon is not going to be there for ever, and we liberals will return. An American is an Amerikan is an American.

Letters

Beliaghata

Indeed, what a country! ('Beliaghata Again', February 20, 1971). And what a Marxist party! *Ganashakti*, the daily organ of the CPM, has not even cared to publish any news of the latest Beliaghata killing. *Kalantar*, the daily organ of the CPI, published the news but did not say that the police who are playing a very cynical game with human lives are directly controlled by the Centre, by Mrs Indira Gandhi. That would tarnish the progressive image of Indira and of the national democratic front. The surprising thing is that the CPM which considers itself the only revolutionary party against Indira can ignore such news as would expose Indira to the hilt! The surprising thing is that the CPM can fail to publish the accounts of gruesome police torture inside lock-ups and outside perpetrated on the Naxalites that has no precedent in modern Indian history.

There is yet another and more profound lesson to be drawn from this. It is a lesson of class struggle. It shows that at present the mass of the middle class, which the CPM leadership personifies, which until recently was democratic and even revolutionary-minded, has now turned its back on democracy and revolution. There is nothing accidental in this; it is the inevitable result of the development of class-consciousness on the part of the middle class which has realised through experience how close is the moment when the camp of reaction and the camp of revolution will confront each other and has realised through experience which side it will have to choose when the moment comes. But in the present-day world, revolution can be opposed only in the name of revolution. That is why there is sham opposition to Indira in order to cover up real collaboration. The CPM leaders are wrong if they think that the criminal game they are playing will not be seen through by the people.

SUSHANTA ROY
Calcutta

'Politics Of Murder'

I do not know what measures Mr De proposes to 'explore the revolutionary potentialities of the masses', but certainly it is not to take up arms and fight, because he is a proponent of the age-old thesis: "time is not yet ripe". But to the great anger of philanthropic gentlemen like Mr De, Charu Mazumdar has declared an all-out war against the "four mountains" and has correctly applied the theory of "learning warfare through warfare" as proposed by Mao Tse-tung. And possibly by his 'bureaucratic leadership' Charu Mazumdar has been able to make a revolutionary Communist Party that has succeeded in launching armed struggle almost throughout the country, which has taken a popular and massive form in at least three States!

No to our surprise, at the end, Mr De fails to conceal his total ignorance of Charu Mazumdar's explanation of the recent uprising of the urban students and youth. Mere stringing of terms like 'Cultural Revolution', 'superstructure' and 'base' into syntactically correct sentences is not enough, at least when one wants to prove something related to a revolutionary upsurge. It is quite natural that Mr De is unable to evaluate and appreciate the absolute correctness of the line ("annihilation through attrition") inside the party or of the timely formation of the people's liberation army.

Mr De's shedding crocodile tears for 'hard, ardent and dauntless revolutionaries' on the one hand, and for the "valuable lives" of the kulaks, moneylenders, blackmarketeers, police beasts and fascists with red scarves around their necks on the other, is something really worth citing as an example of a "real, unbiased, humanist" action!

SHARAD SENAPATI
Allahabad

The supply of cow's milk from Haringhata may be scarce nowadays, but the milk of human kindness, so far as *Frontier* is concerned, seems to be flowing aplenty. As is becoming

usual now, the Naxalites are getting more than their share of it.

The latest example of this is your Drama Critic's review of Utpal Dutt's play *Borgi Elo Deshe* (February 20). The critic grinds the customary Naxalite axe, and then proceeds to accuse the CPM of "massive ratting on the Naxalites". After the recent murder of two Naxalites by the police, he professes, "the unspoken attitude of some CPM-swearing friends of this critic was—'served them right'. *Unspoken attitude!* My! Frankly, Sir, we never knew your Drama Critic was also cultivating the art of thought-reading.

The death of a revolutionary is always a sad event. But what sort of a revolutionary is the average Naxalite now? To the man in the street, he is no longer the dedicated intellectual fighting for an obscure but lofty cause. Ask any man here—he would say that today's Naxalite is a plain killer. When the local Naxalite writes on the wall that "class struggle can be sustained only through a programme of annihilation of the class enemy" he means it. And who is his class enemy? The privilege of priority goes, of course, to the cadre of the CPM, which, understandably, prepares to retaliate. The inevitable question is: whose ends are served by this game of mutual elimination?

Your Drama Critic could also benefit immensely by a visit to the Baranagar-Dum Dum area where he can discover for himself who is ratting on whom. It is no longer a secret that the Naxalites on the eastern fringes of Baranagar have struck a deal with Ajoy Mukherjee, who, in his turn, gave his new-found comrades a certificate of good character in his first election speech on February 19.

A. BASU
Calcutta

Lest We Forget

The mid-term poll is round the corner and shameless cat-fighting over seats is going on. We wouldn't have cared if the cats, one and all, perished in the fight. But these cats are being fattened on the milk of the poorest of the poor. Lest the com-

mon man forget, let us remind him that whereas his average yearly incomes does not exceed fifty rupees, the amount spent on a Central Minister every year approaches nearly four and a half lakhs. That, whereas nineteen paise per day is the average income of crores of Indians, the daily allowance paid to these "representatives" of the people in Parliament is fifty-one rupees. Whereas most of our countrymen haven't even seen a telephone (let alone use one), each "representative" of the people can make telephone calls to the sum of 5,400 ruppees to be paid from the State exchequer. Moreover, hundreds of rupees are spent so that our MPs can keep up their worthwhile correspondence, not to speak of the other free amenities afforded them. Added to all this there is of course the question of foreign exchange.

More money, more socialism, more elections. Let the people ask those who come for votes what they have been doing all these years, how the gap between the rich and the poor has widened and why when most of the people's sufferings have increased tenfold, the privileges of this class have multiplied. We are sure they'll have no answer. And yet, shamelessly they'll ask for the people's mandate.

DIBRUGARH SOCIALIST FORUM

'Indonesia'

Reactionary elements with the help of the Centre are preparing to enact another Indonesia in the very heart of West Bengal. It will not be surprising if the murder of Mr Hemanta Basu is followed by the assassination of a few more top political leaders. Naturally there will be public resentment against the CPM and other progressive leftist parties and the people will be asked to rally behind the Centre (Mrs Gandhi) to wipe out the 'anti-national and undemocratic' parties. As soon as the opportune moment comes, the Centre will unleash the police, the CRP, the army and hordes of goondas on the people to crush their fighting spirit.

KANU CHOWDHURY
Calcutta

MARCH 6, 1971

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