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## BRIBING WEST BENGAL ?

SUDDENLY it is oh, Calcutta all over. The Plan allocation for the city's development goes up, literally overnight, from Rs. 40 crores to Rs. 140 crores; octroi, which was till yesterday supposed to be a very bad form of taxation and could never be permitted in the case of Calcutta, gets enshrined as a respectable generator of revenue; projects gathering dust since 1960 in a twinkling become live propositions. The people of West Bengal are, in other words, being offered the allure of hard cash so that they might be cajoled to defect. It is the *bania* principle—the highest edict of morality Aryavarta can offer—at work. New Delhi portrays others in its own image. The Americans, after all, have successfully purchased affection in Taiwan and other assorted places in the Far East. Simultaneously, they have rolled their armour and poured their napalm to liquidate the recalcitrants. A combination of *bania*-yankee devices ought to do the trick in West Bengal too.

Or so they hope in New Delhi. And since hope springs eternal in allegedly human breast, let them. Even with ten years of sustained lobbying, the Planning Commission could not be persuaded that Calcutta's plight deserved more than the paltry allocation of Rs. 8 crores annually; to allocate more for the city would disturb the integrated, delicately coordinated structure of the Fourth Five Year Plan. Now that the allocation has been raised to the average level of Rs. 28 crores annually, the Commission has of course been revealed as the ass that it is. The bureaucrats in the Ministry of Finance, who could permit the levy of an octroi for both Bombay and Delhi but not for Calcutta, have their cussed bias against West Bengal exposed. Predictably, the American foundations have made a bee-line to join the ranks of the would-be saviours of West Bengal, and, equally predictably, Mrs Gandhi's Government has welcomed this accretion of strength. The deadline is pretty close; a revolution has to be ushered in between now and March 1972. Collect the cash and bribe the people of the State to the hilt. Collect the cash, and such geniuses as the Dhavans and the Ghoshes and the Basus and the Kidwais and the Sens and Sivaramans would splurge it with such imaginative abandon that communism would beat a hasty retreat in West Bengal.

All this is rollicking entertainment. If money plus bureaucratise

could usher in a socio-economic transformation in this part of the country or, for that matter, anywhere, the processes of history would then have become irrelevant. Of course, given the level of efficiency of West Bengal's present administrators, the bulk of the money will not even get spent, and whatever is spent will go in large measure to augment the sundry earnings of engineers and contractors. But that is not really the issue. Even assuming that the proffered bribe to West Bengal is spent 'wisely', will it really matter at all so far as the mind of the people in this State is concerned? Scan the newspapers, and the overwhelming impression is of a government that is currently at war with a restive population, a population which can scarcely be trusted, which is hostile, sullen, given to occasional terrorist outbursts. And now go back forty years and let your eyes flit over the headlines flashed day in and day out in the early 1930's in that eminent imperialist newspaper, *The Statesman*. There is a certain eerie similarity in the news as purveyed and displayed; bomb outrages, police *bondobast*, hundreds of young men and women arrested in pre-dawn swoops, harassed confabulations among the colonial bureaucrats over the problem of law and order, continuous exchange of advice and opinion between Calcutta and New Delhi—and London. And also, as a 'constructive' venture, doling out of special subsidies to individual groups—landlords, bar association presidents, Rotary Club idlers, etc.—who were supposed to save Bengal from the extremists. Even to the last detail, history is kind of re-enacting an earlier episode.

Once more, an assorted crowd of colonials and their cronies are working overtime to rescue Bengal. Once more, the wires are buzzing between Calcutta and New Delhi and, if not London, Washington—or, as some versions have it, Moscow. Once more, the spectacle of the abject helplessness of marauders from outside on coming face to face with the historical process, which would hardly re-

verse itself merely because Rs. 100 crores of extra money is being intended to be spent on lubrication.

## Spittism Unlimited

The hobgoblin of spittism has caught left politics in West Bengal in its grip. The fall of the UF Ministry was only the beginning of a process which is continuing relentlessly, destroying the precarious unity of the left parties in other spheres. In how many groups the 14-party Front will divide itself is not clear yet. Already there are three. In his Brahminical ire Mr Ajoy Mukherjee is ploughing a lonely furrow. He seems to have cast himself in the role of a Chanakya determined to weed out the CPI(M) from the soil of West Bengal by his solo effort. In a fit of megalomania he has arrogated to himself the entire credit for the decay of the Congress in West Bengal, disregarding utterly the claims of the left parties still spoony upon him. The CPI(M) is another lone hand, though it has managed to set up an apology for a group consisting of breakaway and paper parties. The third group of eight former constituents of the UF may appear more impressive, but it is riven with dissensions; its relation with the Bangla Congress remains indeterminate, and it cannot decide whether it would give up efforts for an alternative coalition and resign itself to fresh elections on an early date. But such evasion may not enable it to avoid a split. The dissident PSP has already served notice that it may have to walk out if the eight-party combine does not seek the participation of Mr Ajoy Mukherjee in its holy crusade against the CPI(M). At the Maidan meeting the leaders of the eight parties spoke in too many voices; the unanimous resolution could not paper over their differences. These three major divisions apart, there are parties like the RSP and the Lok Sevak Sangha, which are yet to show their cards.

Some of the parties themselves

have fallen a prey to this prevailing mood to split. The major parties have not been affected so far, but the smaller ones have been. The 14 former partners of the UF have multiplied themselves to at least 17. There are now two Bolshevik and two Revolutionary Communist parties. Of course, these parties can divide any number of times without making an iota of difference, for a zero divided by anything produces another zero only. The Bangla Congress is split formally; with some honesty the breakaway group has chosen to call itself the Biplabi Bangla Congress and not tried to parade as the parent party. A similar situation is nascent in some other parties, though their leaders may have been able to prevent it from showing through ambivalence and evasion; these parties will break up whenever circumstances force a firm commitment on their leaders. The state of the mass fronts is worse. The requiem for the All-India Trade Union Congress is being sung by the two communist parties through tireless slandering of each other, and it is only a matter of days for the organisation to break up formally. Not a tear has been shed over the disintegration of the oldest trade union centre in the country, nor any genuine concern expressed at the disruption of the labour front that will follow. Cantering for a split in the All-Bengal Teachers' Association has begun, again at the instance of the two communist parties. Most of the mass fronts are divided already; the few exceptions are now falling in line.

Obviously, the two communist parties are consolidating their forces for a confrontation. What form that confrontation will take is still unclear. The CPI(M) has firmly opted for a mid-term poll because it realises that it will never be in a position to form a ministry in the present Assembly. But the CPI has not lost all hope; it can count on the Bangla Congress, but what stands in its way is the attitude of some constituents of the eight-party front which are still opposed to any collaboration with the Congress for tactical, if not



ideological, reasons. It needs time to wear out the resistance of these parties. Hence the reluctance in the eight-party resolution to demand unconditionally another mid-term poll to end President's rule as has been done by the CPI(M). The movement proposed by the eight parties is aimed at preparing for the ground for a ministry without the CPI(M); if the response is not encouraging, the confrontation will be at the polls. Both the communist parties want President's rule to end, and both have pledged to start a Statewide movement to achieve it. But instead of joining forces, they are dividing them. Their movements, if launched at all, will cancel each other out and help in the indefinite continuance of President's rule in the State.

## Odissi Sequence

Is Dr Hare Krushna Mahatab's honeymoon with Orissa's Swatantra princelings coming to an end? The State Swatantra bosses apparently think that the end will be bitter for Dr Mahatab but they themselves will have no reason for regret. It may well be true that Mr Singh Deo has succeeded in making the Jana Congress feel that it is no more than a very, very junior partner in the ruling coalition. But the Swatantra's present posture, though discernible only through inspired newspaper leaks, that it can do without the Jana Congress may have been dictated more by necessity than by political choice. After all, less than a month ago Mr Masani told the Orissa Swatantra convention that the coalition was a model for the whole country and distributed generous certificates not merely to his own partymen but also to Messrs Mahatab and Pradhan. Of course much has happened in the meantime. And since what has happened is mainly Mr Biju Patnaik, the resulting convolutions could not but cause a general upset.

Mr Patnaik was always a doubtful asset in Mrs Gandhi's camp. Apart from the notoriety he has acquired

from some of his dynamic ventures, his support to the Prime Minister had to be viewed against the background of his close links with some Syndicate stalwarts. And for the support given he started demanding too heavy a price; not unnaturally the Congress(R) General Secretary complained that Mr Patnaik had been running Orissa Congress affairs "as if he held its wholesale agency". Even so Mr Jagjivan Ram acquiesced; apparently the Prime Minister's feelers to Mr Mahatab transmitted through Mrs Nandini Satpathy some weeks ago had not been wholly fruitful. In point of fact, Babuji seemed ready even to forget the Rajya Sabha by-election affair; but the Patnaik group's open defiance at the Utkal PCC executive meeting was another matter. Perhaps each side knew what the other was going to do; perhaps a tentative deal had already been made with Mahatab Babu before Mr Jagjivan Ram decided to act against Mr Patnaik and his retailers. That Mr Patnaik himself probably knew what was coming is clear from the decisive swiftness of his riposte; no less significant was the welcome Mr Mahatab promptly gave to the split within the Congress split.

Mr Singh Deo and company could not have been unaware of the inner goings-on either. And if they are going to lose Mr Mahatab's support anyway, why not precipitate matters before the opposing forces can organize themselves? Hence the inspired leaks about a mid-term election. Never mind what the Election Commission thinks about a mid-term poll merely to oblige a Chief Minister who fears that he may soon lose some of his friends. Never mind the Centre's refusal to oblige the political parties in West Bengal who are demanding a mid-term election with much greater justification. Will the Centre concede what the Orissa Swatantra party reportedly wants? Ordinarily the calculations would have been predictable. If the Requisitionists could win over the Jana Congress without splitting their own ranks, there would have been no question of a mid-term election; the

toppling exercise would have been as neat as anywhere else. But Mr Patnaik proved to be the joker in the pack; he still is. Mrs Gandhi could not have both him and Mr Mahatab. It looks as if she has chosen, or has had to choose, the latter. But Mr Patnaik remains a potential threat to both the Swatantra and the Congress(R). Much of what he is now saying is no more than amusing bombast, but his appeal to regional sentiment may not go unrewarded. Both Mr Singh Deo and Jagjivan Babu must act before this happens. Neither can be sure how to act, or whether the action will be decisive. The probings, intrigues and stratagems will now be both hectic and dirty; this will at least serve to end the fiction of political and administrative stability in a State under rightist rule.

## Cricket Off

Those in India who had been much worried over the threat to law and order in Britain because of the scheduled Springbok tour are now set at peace. The British Cricket Council has withdrawn its invitation to the all-white South African cricket team, thanks to the Cambridge zoology students (who had been nurturing locusts in their labs to set them over cricket fields, in case the Springbok whites came up to play there) and the host of like-minded chaps in England. Whatever was the reason that induced the Cricket Council to withdraw its invitation, it was certainly not Mr Wilson, who reacted to the Cricket Council's Unilateral Declaration of Independence much as he did to Rhodesia's. There were many diverse reasons, potent enough to cause misgivings among the MCC diehards, who knew which side of the bread was buttered. The BBC said it would not run a commentary on test cricket; a section of the Press would boycott these games; a section of the police would not volunteer their services, London teachers would not take their wards to the

cricket grounds; many, even excluding the Africans and Asians in England, would have thought many times over before turning up to see the matches. The cricket fields in England are not ideal at the best of times—little patches of uneven soil with no sidescreen on most grounds—and with barbed fence to ward off demonstrators ready with glasses to deflect the sunray, it would have been a hell of cricket. The Cricket Council, adding up the scoreboard, must have found the losses frightening and called it a day.

That is however their business. The episode did its teeny-weeny bit to expose the sports moghuls in India as well. Raja Bhalindra Singh, president of the Indian Olympic Association, was grievously hurt by the Union Government's threat to boycott the Commonwealth games at Edinburgh. It was his opinion that the unofficial cricket tour should not have been mixed with the official Edinburgh games. In other words, cricket should not have been mixed up with athletics just as sports should not have been mixed up with politics. Such neat compartmentalisation would have served best the Raja and his friends who do not wish to miss the English summer at government expense just because of anti-apartheid sentiments.

It was the height of audacity, again, for Mr P. N. Kaul, a mere High Commissioner in London, to stick out his nose and say that the Indian cricket team would not have visited England next year, nor would India have entertained any team from England if the Springbok tour had materialised. The Cricket Control Board in India must have considered the unauthorised declaration as sheer impertinence. The Board, which would not mind any third-grade foreign team to play in India so long as it could mint money, would have shuddered had it been asked to follow up the High Commissioner's noble feelings. Asking Farook Engineer not to play against the Spring-

boks had not hurt the Board; it would merely ruin Engineer's prospects in playing county cricket. But

to lose money by boycotting the English team is altogether a different matter.

### *View from Delhi*

## Arm-Twisting

FROM A POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

SOVIET military aid presence in India would seem to be the function of a metaphysical relationship—the same as between the donor and the recipient of CIA funds. The Soviet Union had emerged by 1968 the principal, and almost the sole, source of military hardware supplies. It could be that India accepted Soviet military aid because it was in agreement with the donor's domestic and foreign policy objectives. Or it could be that the Soviet Union gave aid to India because it was in agreement with the recipient's domestic and foreign policy objectives. The pattern of India's voting at the United Nations on various occasions from the mid-50s up to 1967 at best provides the example of a correlation between a country's source of aid and voting behaviour rather than an instance of cause-effect relationship.

The Defence Minister, Mr Swaran Singh, however, implied something else in Parliament last week, faced with criticism of India's growing dependence on the Soviet Union for military hardware. He said the two considerations that governed the policy here were that the military supplies should be without any strings on their use and they should be on reasonable terms. Mr Swaran Singh implied that the Soviet Union had accommodated both these conditions in India's case.

In the post-Stalin era, arms diplomacy has been an instrument of foreign policy, and not of ideology, with the Soviet Union. A recent study (*Arms for the Third World: Soviet Military Aid Diplomacy* by Winfred Joshua and S. P. Gibert, The John Hopkins Press, Baltimore and London) establishes many things

that the smug policy planners in New Delhi's Foreign Office are not altogether unaware of. But when Mr T. N. Kaul leads the Indian delegation to this year's Indo-Soviet exercise in Moscow next week, the leverage will be entirely with the Soviet side and India's options will be few.

The growing Soviet influence over our decision making is the price of the massive economic and military aid. The Soviets may not be able to provide all our development aid needs. But as for military aid there is no difficulty because the conventional weapons that become obsolete to the Soviet Union could still be sophisticated weaponry for India.

India has become one of the most privileged Soviet arms recipients because of her key position in the Indian Ocean and because of the challenge of Chinese influence in the continent which the Soviet Union wants to "contain".

The Soviet Union has been giving arms aid to 21 countries of the Third World but what is its attitude to wars of national liberation? To the aid-givers, the attitude and policies of recipient countries towards indigenous communism are of minor importance. Possibly more significant but still not of great concern to Soviet decision makers is the question of socio-political orientation—whether the recipients are ultra-left, moderate-leftist or rightist. The more important consideration is which side is likely to win and an understandable propensity to back the winning side. As the book referred to elsewhere says, "By all odds the paramount consideration for the USSR, in engaging in arms diplomacy, is whether



support for wars of liberation will weaken the position of the Western powers, bind the recipients closely to Moscow, and reduce and eliminate the influence of Peking. The USSR does not intend to contribute to the success of a war of liberation if that success results in a Chinese—rather than Soviet-oriented — regime.” Though the Soviet Union supports the theory of wars of liberation, in practice each case of arms aid is considered on its merits.

The approach has been pragmatic and opportunist in nature. As long as Iraq was unfriendly, there was tacit support to the Kurdish tribal insurgency. But the point came where Iraq moved closer to the Soviet Union and both Iran and Iraq got Soviet arms and it is certain that Iraq was using the arms against the Kurdish tribes. In some instances, Soviet arms aid programmes developed in response to the challenge of U.S. military aid to a strategic country. The response took the form of similar aid to a neighbouring country. Often, the refusal of the U.S. to give aid to a strategic country led the Soviets to move into the vacuum. The emergence of China as a rival to the Soviet Union has added an important dimension to Soviet arms aid initiatives.

Voting trends in the United Nations suggest that as more countries become recipients of Soviet military aid, there will be a tendency for these countries to become greater political allies of the Soviet Union in world politics. They are more likely to identify with the Soviet side on colonial issues, which is quite understandable and logical. But they will also tend to defer to Soviet opinion on political and security questions affecting the nations generally. The defence debate in the Rajya Sabha missed much of the real implications of Soviet military aid and turned out to be a mere tirade against the growing dependence on the Soviet Union.

In the Lok Sabha Mr Chavan wound up the resumed debate on the communal situation and Mrs Gandhi who had scrupulously avoided attack-

ing the Shiv Sena appeared to have succeeded in her manoeuvre, of getting the Home Minister to antagonise Mr Bal Thakre. Mr Chavan went for the Shiv Sena and that could be the beginning of the break with Mr V. P. Naik whose links with the Sena are open and whom Mrs Gandhi has been building up against Mr Chavan.

The Prime Minister's attempt to call a conference of Chief Ministers was a flop. The Southern States are free from the danger and their Chief Ministers saw no point in attending the conference. But the refusal of the Chief Ministers of States afflicted by the evil—Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan—to attend the meet was indeed significant. The few who attended reached a consensus on methods to combat communal violence but there was nothing new to it. It looks as though the Prime Minister is trying to isolate Mr Chavan, exploiting the recent Maharashtra flare-up and the privy purses issue. The princes' lobby did not force a division at the introduction stage of the bill on their privileges and privy purses and the Government survived the critical stage. The time between now and the eventual passage of the bill in the monsoon session is supposed to be utilised for negotiations with the princes.

The CPI(M)'s pressure on the Centre to have an early election in West Bengal has eased. In fact, the all-India leadership of the party is not keen on an early poll whatever the State leadership might think. The Centre does not take the CPI(M)-led front's agitation threat seriously. It is odd that the CPI(M) Members of Parliament from West Bengal who are parties to the agitation threat are busy lobbying in the Central Secretariat for getting the men of their choice appointed as the Inspector-General of Police, the Deputy Inspector-General, Intelligence, and the Commissioner of Police, Calcutta. The Centre cannot be expected to take the party seriously in these circumstances.

May 24, 1970

## Naxalite Fireworks

ASHOK RUDRA

THE stage left by the CP(M) has been taken over by the CP(ML). For the past several weeks it is the Naxalites that people have been talking about. The newspapers have been giving an amount of space to their activities and to the steps being taken or contemplated against them that easily makes them a major political force. The lying low of the CP(M), once the Home Portfolio was lost to them, was predictable. What was unpredictable, and remains somewhat inexplicable, is the curious offensive launched by the Naxalites in Calcutta. What on earth are they after? By what Marxist or Maoist logic our schools and colleges are citadels of feudal and imperialist forces and how are headmasters and principals their representatives?

Not that various aspects of the brilliantly and impeccably organised pieces of limited violence released one by one in a well-planned schedule, recording a series of complete victory over the forces of law and order, are not open to certain commonsense explanations. But one doubts whether these commonsense explanations have anything to do with whatever might be the tactics of the Marxist-Leninist party that has been behind these events. All the same, let us see what explanations one can think of.

At a purely philosophical level there is no difficulty in finding justification for any extremist action, however absurd. Attacking schools, burning furniture, twisting the blades of electric fans are futile no doubt if they are meant as actions in a class war; but they are as effective as any other action if meant as a symbolic protest against the entire social setup. If absurdity (in the sense of the Absurd Drama) is a glaring characteristic of a social order, then a protest has to take an absurd form to be effective. How else to make the spectators—all those who accept the

social reality as not absurd but making sense—realise the inherent and total absurdity of everything? If one regards the society in which one lives as totally mala fide, if one believes that it is completely rotten, that it has to be completely destroyed before one can build a new one, then one must attack not only those parts of it which are obviously stinking, but also, even more so, all those parts which are regarded by the population as possessing some relative value. By the same token, the presiding saint of that criminal social order has also to be attacked. Gandhi may not be responsible, and certainly not his ideology, for all the ills of our society. But it happens that it is in his name that all the crimes against humanity and liberty have been committed. It is understandable that those who reject the present society in toto will pick upon him as their symbolic enemy.

Can there be any difference of opinion as to the total absurdity of the social conditions in which we live? It is not the extremity of poverty, the degree of inequality, the creeping rate of growth, the ever expanding unemployment, the limited horizon of opportunities before the youth, the crumbling down of traditional moralities that call for the appellation "absurd", but the capacity a section of the population has acquired of being aware of this grim reality and yet not being prevented from enjoying a comfortable life; and the felicity that has been developed by that particular elite which constitutes the political leadership of telling itself and telling others that these conditions are on the way to being changed, thanks to their efforts. Politicians in this country, all of them except the few who believe in pulling down the entire social order, make not an inconsiderable living out of the misery of the people at large. It is by talking about the various things they propose to do to put an end to this misery that they make a living. In this they are ignorant if not downright dishonest and irresponsible. They are either not aware or do not care a bit that all the pres-

criptions that they dish out as political slogans cannot even touch the fringe of the problem of misery in the country. Political parties here are not particularly good at economic arithmetic and they are happy in their innocence. The only people who have carried out any realistic exercises in the calculus of misery in this country are the economic planners. And no economic plan has upto now been found feasible within the present social set-up, that does not clearly indicate, (a) continuing increase in unemployment by millions per year; (b) a continuing increase of inequality in the distribution of income and wealth, and (c) increasing dependence upon American capital.

It is not the fault of our economic planners. There is no one among the economists in any Indian university or among the ever so many American experts who come down to help the country who has made or can make any economic calculations that show a way out of this terrible predicament. Absurdity consists in this that despite this, Indian economists do not give up their profession and resort to kitchen gardening but continue to make a good living in Indian and foreign universities; and Achutha Menons and Namboodiripads continue to abuse each other about national democracy and people's democracy while confining themselves strictly to the activity of bribing MLA's and the electorate to gain an assembly seat here and there. Somebody had to cry out scandal in the face of this scandalous absurdity. And if it is the youth who does it in the streets of Calcutta by throwing bombs at not only police parties but also schools and colleges, it at least records the fact that the prevalent corruption and cupidity of those in positions of privilege and power in the government as well as in the party establishments have not as yet managed to corrupt the entire body of the youth amongst whom pure idealism is still a burning flame.

#### Gains

It is however very much to be doubted that the CP(ML) had this

pseudo-anarchic philosophical reasoning in mind in organising the series of spectacular fireworks in Calcutta. As jotedars are not to be found in the principals' chambers in Calcutta colleges, one has to give up the attempt to find any class explanations for its expeditions in Calcutta. One may however note down a few gains the party has made whether it sought them or not. This requires to be done as there is a tendency among the non-Naxalite left to dismiss the whole thing as so much juvenile delinquency. This dismissal is of course not by the superior powers in the country; evidence of their concern lies in the heavy guns the Central Home Ministry is moving into position to take care of the situation. The very recognition by the Centre as the only political force challenging it and the decision to arm itself with extraordinary powers are a signal victory for the Maoist party on the plane of prestige. This apart, on the local plane of West Bengal, the Marxist-Leninists have successfully given the lie to a particular piece of slander the CP(M) indulged in which must have rankled them a great deal. While holding the police portfolio, the CP(M) was wont to declare that the Naxalites could indulge in their bravadoes here and there thanks only to the lenient police policy of the UF Government. If he were to ask his police to liquidate the Naxalites, they could finish the job in a single day, so declared Jyoti Basu at a public meeting. It is now two months that the Governor has taken over and he has received special instructions from Delhi to contain the Naxalite menace, he has given several ultimatums to the police. Yet precisely during this very period the Naxalites have made Calcutta into their playground. They have struck wherever they have wanted to strike and come out successfully from every encounter with whatever they wanted to encounter. That on most of the occasions the targets have been of a trivial character should not detract from the appreciation of the fact that an army of extremely well disci-



plined and swift moving shock troopers is getting trained somewhere. But to give a demonstration of its budding army may not be the motive of the Marxist-Leninists either. More plausible sounds the suggestion that it is a diversionary tactic. Given that the army and police have been making moves to swoop down on the Naxalites in various rural pockets in Midnapore and elsewhere, the daily provocations are meant to oblige a large part of the police force to remain confined to the Calcutta area and so not be available in the villages. If this were indeed the reason, what targets one chose would truly not matter as long as they were such as could not be ignored by the police.

Reaction to the Naxalite fireworks among CPI and CPM cadres is interesting. Promode Dasgupta went to the extent of suggesting that there was police collusion with the Naxalites. However infamous, the calumny is at the same time a recognition of the non-negligible character

of the extremist activities. The discomfort CPI and CPM cadres feel in the face of the Naxalite challenge has a human explanation which has got something to do with age and generation. The youngest cadres of these two parties belong to the age groups 40 to 45. That is, the youngest age group belongs to that batch of students who in 1948-49 participated in the armed actions of the Rana-dive line of that period. During that period this generation did risk their lives and did damage their careers. Ever since then they have been far away from anything that could mean any risk for their lives or their careers. These cadres have a mixed attitude towards the young boys of today who manufacture bombs and go to the villages. On the one hand they declare that they have known it all and there is nothing the Naxalite boys can do today which they did not do in 1948-49. On the other hand they pretend to have grown wiser and to know that such adventurism would never lead to any revolution. On the

one hand these middle-aged men and women of the forties dismiss the activities of the Naxalites as mere adventurism. On the other individual members of this age group nurse their memories of their own adventurism of 1948-49 with great pride and fondness. As a matter of fact, they rest their entire self-respect on their record of participation in that adventurism. Quite understandably so; for ever since that time, they have taken jobs and entered the family life and acquired a vested interest in peaceful social conditions. They feel uncomfortable before examples of Naxalite extremism. For while condemning them from the vantage point of superior political wisdom, can they be free of all doubts as to how much of their moderation is due to more mature political understanding and how much of it reflects the natural inclination towards the security of middle class existence with its opportunism, careerism and compromises which are at present their life?

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## By-Elections And After

RAMJI

WHILE it would be unrealistic to generalise, on the basis of the results of just three by-elections in the State, it would be relevant to pinpoint certain features thrown up by these elections. The capacity of the CPI to make tall claims increases in inverse proportion to the erosion of its traditional image as a working-class party and its steady isolation from the masses. The issue at Kottarakara, where the CPI Chief Minister Achutha Menon won with a thumping majority, was never in doubt. A big, monolithic chunk of votes held by the Kerala Congress and a lesser, but yet sizable chunk held by the Indicate Congress, went to Menon. It was a victory for the Congress and the Kerala Congress. Yet it has been claimed by the CPI as an index of the upcurve of popularity of the CPI and of the minifront ministry. However, a most disconcerting feature for the minifronters was the unexpected accession of strength displayed by the Marxists. The party candidate had polled just 800 votes in the 1965 election, when it fought it alone. In the recent by-election the voting strength of the CPM has gone up above 19,000, an impressive figure, considering the fact that the party fought against the well-entrenched combined forces of the mini-front in Kottarakara. It is clear that the gain made by the CPM has been at the expense of the CPI, which had some strength in the constituency. There has been a landslide of defections from the CPI to the CPM in this constituency. In Malapuram, the Marxists lost its seat to the minifronters. Although it was plain as pikestaff to everyone that the candidate there was an official Indicate Congress one, the CPI religiously posed as if he was an independent candidate. The CPI was reduced to the level of playing second fiddle to the Congress and the

Muslim League in this constituency. The party men were not allowed by their allies to air its flag while going round canvassing. And the pitiable part of it was that the Congress candidate backed by the CPI was till recently a Jana Sangh stalwart. The voting pattern shows that the Marxists have improved their position slightly in this constituency. It also revealed that the Marxists had not, to any appreciable extent cornered the increase in number of votes since the 1967 elections. It is plain that the Muslim League has mopped this up. Against this background the theory of E.M.S. that association with the Muslim League would help to radicalise the Muslim youth seems to have misfired. It is the other way round. Thanks to their aura of official power, the Muslim League leaders have succeeded in winning over a considerable section of the Muslim population to their communal banner.

The victory of the Marxists at Madai was a very impressive one. The party, fighting against the combined might of the Congress and the minifronters, won with a margin of over 4000, despite the handicap of putting up a candidate who has no personal charisma and who belongs to the KSP. It is to the credit of the Marxist party that they did not seek an easier way out by putting up their own candidate with undisputed local standing, but preferred to remain loyal to the KSP, which had stood by the Marxist party all along. It may be recalled that in 1960 when the Communist Party put up its own candidate, viz K.P.R. Gopalan, against the combined might of the anti-communist forces, immediately after the 'liberation struggle' the communist candidate lost by 500 votes. Under similar conditions and with the addition of the support of the CPI the anti-Marxist forces could not prevail in the recent by-election.

The defeat of the mini-front at Madai is likely to trigger serious reactions affecting the very life of the ministry. It is significant that the Chief Minister who had been humming and hawing over the issue of

taking further steps on the report of the one-man commission deputed to go into the allegations against the ISP Ex-Minister, Mr P. K. Kunju, has come out suddenly with the statement, immediately after the result of the Madai election was announced, that further action would be taken on the report by the Commission. This is, obviously, an indication that he is no longer prepared to coexist with the uneasy nature of the coalition that now rules Kerala. The breakaway of the Seshan group from the ISP and its emergence as PSP and its claim for representation in the coordination committee and the inveterate enmity between the ISP and the new PSP have made the position very difficult for Achutha Menon. The ISP is dead set against the inclusion of PSP in the cabinet and in the coordination committee. The PSP demands representation in the committee. Menon has to please one group at the expense of displeasure of the other. He might therefore be obliged to make a virtue out of necessity by resigning and calling for a mid-term election, as without the support of both the ministry would have no majority.

Thanks to the fulsome propaganda by the vast majority of the press the minifront administration has been going ahead merrily putting across dirty deals under the label of progressivism. A most 'progressive' step has been the abolition, overnight, of the Revenue Board. Literally it was decided overnight. And it has been projected by the CPI as a proud talking point. However, dirty forces were at work behind this precipitate decision. The contract for running the toddy and arrack shops in Trichur District was given to three individuals who had executed the bond and paid the necessary deposits and gone through all the formalities. It was a closed chapter. But, a CPI leader wanted to favour a friend of his, for a substantial consideration. He influenced the Chief Minister who asked the Chief Member, Revenue Board, to revoke the agreement and give the contract to



the protege. The Revenue Board chief said it was not possible as it would be a violation of rules. The Chief Minister sought the opinion of the other members of the Board who also failed to toe his line. Angry over such disobedience, the Chief Minister ordered the Board to wind up and in pique, transferred its senior member to an innocuous post as chief of the Housing Board. This was the extent of progressivism behind the step. And this is no exception. The CPI elements are making merry at the expense of the State's assets.

Another example of this is the great public hoax of granting permanent pattas or title deeds to the landless. This is conducted on a massive scale, at various centres, when thousands of permanent pattas are distributed to the landless by the CPI Minister, Mr K. T. Jacob. Enormous amounts of money are being spent on these lavish shows and it is learnt that a documentary is being planned, at a cost of over two lakhs of rupees, to depict this. In the documentary the star will be Mr K. T. Jacob. First and foremost, this distribution of pattas is mainly confined to those who have been in possession of government lands for years on end and whom it is not possible to evict. In addition, there is a sprinkling of those who have grabbed land under the Marxist aegis. But the curious feature is that these pattas are not permanent. There are many provisos attached to the title deed: provisos regarding extent, rival claims etc. etc. According to rules, the grant of permanent pattas is a complicated and dilatory process, the formalities being tedious and time consuming. But to satisfy the demand of propaganda, the rules have been temporarily kept in abeyance so that the glittering show might go on. With this stunt the CPI is hoping to burnish up its popular image. But behind this the steady work of boosting of landlords at the expense of agricultural workers goes on. To the CPI this is public service which nets handsome private dividends for the leaders of the party.

## Aspects Of A Strike

A. P. M.

**T**HERE is a possibility that the Birla employees' strike will soon be over. It is reported that G.D. has finally made known his stand. He is firmly in favour of remaining in West Bengal. B.M., the local stalwart, is still sticking to his teach-them-a-lesson attitude. In the process, he is neglecting the latest trend in business, a clear indication that the Birlas' rivals in some select fields, like automobiles, are fast encroaching in eastern India. This has necessitated the Old Man's intervention.

Early this month a few reporters were asked for a quiet morning's tea-snack-chat at L.N.'s residence. Each of them was received with folded hands and touching enquiries about their health and family. The Birlas and their select lackeys present there sounded awfully sad about West Bengal's and Calcutta's ills. Remarks made were decidedly in the spirit of ahimsa. The reporters had a feeling that the lion had, for some obscure reason, shed his skin and opted for that of a milder animal. The atmosphere was unreal to some extent. The theme revolved around the Birlas' undying love for West Bengal.

Meanwhile, undisclosed to the public, the lion's hunting is going on remorselessly on India Exchange Place. The strikers' camp looks depleted in strength. It is not an illusion. The management claims that nearly 80 per cent of the men have rejoined their duties. The strikers concede a much lower figure—50 per cent. The correct figure is perhaps 60 per cent. But it is the story behind how these 60 per cent have gone back to work which is more interesting.

The Birlas are using two tactics in breaking the strike. Almost every late night a police jeep or two suddenly halt before the strikers' camp. The sleeping campers wake up in the midst of lingering sleep, heat, confusion and glaring headlights focused on them. A handful of them are jerked up and shoved into the

waiting cars. Beating starts even before they are brought to the headquarters. Next day, they are hauled before a court on charges of petty crimes. The union bails them out. In the two months of the strike, the union funds have been depleted mostly in this manner. The union has by now been forced virtually to abdicate its responsibility in this respect.

The other way, more effective, is to victimise the relatives of the strikers also employed by the Birla firms. There are reports of people having been sacked in distant provinces because their relatives are striking in Calcutta. Among these victims are some fairly senior executives. When these people are asked to quit, they are given the option of persuading their erring relatives to rejoin duties. If they succeed, they get back their jobs.

And how are the erstwhile strikers doing? Most of them have not been provided with sitting and working facilities in the factories they have reported to. Consequently, they are not doing their normal work. They are not remaining idle, either. As punishment for their revolutionary zeal, they are being forced to do the chores of office-boys.

The Birlas have taken another step, the import of which will be far reaching. Each employee on rejoining duty is made to sign a cyclostyled form, declaring that henceforth he will never participate in any trade union activity. He is also required to send in his resignation from the membership of the union simultaneously.

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## On Lenin—V

### MONITOR

THE seizure of political power by the proletariat in a backward country has its own dialectics. First of all, in such a country capitalism has not completely eliminated the pre-capitalist modes of production. As the bourgeoisie is not interested in such elimination Lenin, we already know, emphasized the necessity for the proletariat to assume leadership even in the bourgeois-democratic revolution. If, however, the proletariat cannot, for some reasons, lead the bourgeois revolution and the bourgeoisie comes to power, and thereby, the tasks of bourgeois democracy remain unfinished, what happens then? That is precisely the situation that developed in Russia after February, 1917.

The February revolution in Russia placed the power in the hands of the bourgeoisie and not the proletariat owing to the latter's "insufficient class consciousness and organization".<sup>1</sup> It was out of the question for the bourgeoisie to complete the tasks of bourgeois democracy. In fact, after the transfer of power, Lenin noted, "the vast landed possessions of feudal landlords have not been abolished" and the new government "is not laying a finger on the landed estates, this material foundation of feudal tsarism".<sup>2</sup> Thus, from the point of view of economics, to put it schematically, the bourgeois-democratic revolution was not completed. Yet, from the point of view of politics, from the point of view of the class content of state power, the bourgeois democratic revolution was completed in as much as the state power in Russia had passed from the hands of the old class, namely, the feudal landlord nobility to the new class, namely, the bourgeoisie.<sup>3</sup> "To

that extent," Lenin emphasized, "the bourgeois democratic revolution in Russia has been completed."<sup>4</sup>

At the same time it would be wrong to say that the bourgeoisie was the only holder of power. There was in fact, the dual power. Side by side with the bourgeois state power had arisen the Soviet power of the workers, soldiers and peasantry, thus realizing "in an extremely original form the dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry."<sup>5</sup>

Thus, though "the Bolshevik slogans and ideas in general have been fully corroborated by history, concretely things have shaped differently from what could have been anticipated (by any one): they are more original, more peculiar, more variegated".<sup>6</sup>

It was on the basis of the completion—in a political sense—of the bourgeois-democratic revolution and the existence of the dual power which "has gone farther than the ordinary bourgeois democratic revolution"<sup>7</sup> that Lenin called upon the Russian proletariat to go forward to achieve the victory in the second—that is, the socialist—stage of the revolution. Most of the Marxist theoreticians of the time—including some of the outstanding leaders of Lenin's own party—completely failed to understand the dialectics of the new situation and thought that Lenin was 'mad' and 'raving' in calling for a socialist revolution in a backward country like Russia.

Lenin, of course, was careful to point out, again in a profoundly dialectical way, that his call for a socialist revolution did not mean immediate introduction of socialism in view of the incomplete economic tasks of the bourgeois democratic revolution. "It is not", Lenin emphasized, "our immediate task to 'introduce' socialism but only to bring social production and distribution of products at once under the control

of the Soviets of Workers' Deputies".<sup>8</sup> In other words, it would be a socialist revolution in so far as it would mean the seizure of state power by the proletariat from the bourgeoisie, but in view of the inadequate material conditions for the immediate transition to socialism only steps such as confiscation of the landed estates and merging of all banks into one national bank which "are not yet socialism, but a step towards socialism"<sup>9</sup> would be taken.

The fact that it is not the bourgeoisie but the proletariat that can, after the seizure of power from the bourgeoisie, really and genuinely complete the tasks of bourgeois-democratic revolution only while advancing towards socialism was reiterated by Lenin four years after the October Revolution. "We have consummated the bourgeois-democratic revolution", he wrote, "as nobody has done before. We are advancing towards the socialist revolution... knowing that it is not separated from the bourgeois-democratic revolution by a Chinese wall, and knowing too that (in the last analysis) struggle alone will determine how far we shall advance, what portion of this immense and lofty task we shall accomplish, and to what extent we shall succeed in consolidating our victories.... We solved the problems of the bourgeois-democratic revolution en passant, (in passing), as a 'by-product' of our main and genuinely proletarian-revolutionary, socialist activities... the first grows into the second. The second, in passing, solves the problems of the first. The second consolidates the work of the first."<sup>10</sup>

The above paragraph, together with the discussion preceding it, convincingly shows that there is absolutely no logical contradiction—contrary to the contention of the eclectics and the philistines—between what Marx had written in his preface

<sup>1</sup> *The April Theses* (1917), no. 2.

<sup>2</sup> *The Tasks of the Proletariat in our Revolution* (1917), articles 1 and 2, our emphasis.

<sup>3</sup> *Letters on Tactics*, First Letter (1917).

<sup>4</sup> *The Tasks of the Proletariat in our Revolution*, article 2. Lenin's emphasis.

<sup>5</sup> *Letters on Tactics*, First Letter.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, Lenin's emphasis.

<sup>7</sup> *The Tasks of the Proletariat*, article 6.

<sup>8</sup> *The April Theses*, no. 8.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, nos. 6, 8 and *Letters on Tactics*; First Letter. Lenin's emphasis.

<sup>10</sup> *The Fourth Anniversary of the October Revolution* (1921).



to the *Critique of Political Economy* about the objective conditions of a revolution—referred to earlier—and the Socialist Revolution in Russia. Not to speak of exhausting the possibilities of expansion of the productive forces, the Russian bourgeoisie was even *hampering* the development of these forces by compromising with feudalism after coming to political power. In such a situation it was only the proletariat that could liberate the productive forces from their feudal chains by completing the bourgeois-democratic tasks. It is in this sense that Lenin characterized the Revolution of October, 1917 sometimes as a "bourgeois revolution".<sup>11</sup>

### The State

In connection with the proletarian revolution Lenin attached supreme importance to another question, the question of state—the nature of state and the proletarian revolution. For "the basic question in any revolution is that of state power."<sup>12</sup>

The question of state has always been confused and complicated by the bourgeois scholars because it affects the interests of the exploiting classes most vitally. Secondly, the Marxist doctrine on the state was suppressed and distorted out of all proportions by the "revisionists", that is, those who, in the name of Marxism itself revised Marxism and made it 'up to date' by omitting, obliterating and distorting the revolutionary side of its doctrine, its revolutionary soul. It is in this background that Lenin took upon himself the task of restoring the true teaching of Marx and Engels on the state. Needless to add that as in every other field here also Lenin enriched Marxism in course of expounding it.

What is the state? It is a product of society at a certain stage of its development, at the stage where society has become entangled into irreconcilable antagonisms of its conflicting classes. Thus the state arises

when class antagonisms cannot be objectively reconciled and conversely, the existence of the state proves that the antagonisms are irreconcilable.<sup>13</sup> Though the state arose with the rise of conflicting classes it did not arise as an instrument for the reconciliation of classes but as a machine for maintaining the domination of one class over another. When there were no classes a special group of people, specially selected to rule and dominate over the rest of the society did not arise. But with the rise of classes it was "impossible to compel the greater part of society to work systematically for the other part without a fundamental apparatus of coercion—the state."<sup>14</sup> For instance, in slave society there were various forms of state such as monarchy, aristocracy, democracy etc., but despite these different forms the state of the slave epoch was a slave state, a state for exploiting the slaves on behalf of the slave-owners. Even though, under capitalism, "the bourgeois republic, parliament, universal suffrage—all represent great progress from the standpoint of the world development of society",<sup>15</sup> the state under capitalism continues to be an instrument of exploitation by the ruling class—the capitalists—over the toiling masses because the liberty it proclaims is basically nothing but the liberty of the property owners and the equality it preaches is just a cover for perpetuating inequality inasmuch as between the exploiters and the exploited, between those who possess the means of production and those who do not, equality is impossible. Thus "the forms of state may vary: capital manifests its power in one way when one form exists and in another way when another form exists—but essentially power is in the hands of capital, whether there are voting qualifications or not, whether the republic is a democratic one or not."<sup>16</sup> It follows that the liberation of the oppressed classes is

impossible as long as this instrument of coercion remains and that the oppressed classes, in order to win genuine freedom, must destroy this apparatus.

Lenin quoted from Engels' *Anti-Dühring* the famous passage concerning the 'withering away' of the state. The burden of the passage is that after the proletariat seizes political power from the bourgeoisie, puts an end to the latter's state and after its own state takes possession of the means of production in the name of the whole society it abolishes itself as wage-labourer, as proletariat, and at the same time, abolishes all class distinctions and class-antagonisms. Consequently, there no longer remains any necessity for the existence of a special repressive machinery which is the state, as there is no longer any class to be repressed. State interference in social relations becomes, in one domain after another, superfluous and the state 'wither away', it ceases to exist. Engels had spoken of the *withering away* of the state in opposition to the anarchists' demand for *abolition* of the state 'overnight'. It meant that whereas the anarchists, in the name of freedom, stood for abolishing the state—the instrument of coercion—overnight, the Marxists recognized the necessity for the proletariat of maintaining the State for a period of time in order precisely to use this instrument of coercion to crush the resistance of the exploiting classes and organize social production along rational, scientific lines. This was distorted by the revisionists and other opportunists who held that there was an *absolute* opposition between the anarchists, who stood for the abolition of the state at all costs and the Marxists who were for the retention of the state—including the bourgeois state—almost at all costs only later to let it 'wither away'. This was tantamount to, as Lenin observed, "the hazy conception of a slow, even, gradual change, of absence of leaps and storms, of absence of revolution".<sup>17</sup> As a matter of fact, in the passage

<sup>11</sup> *Theses and Report on Bourgeois Democracy and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat* (1919).

<sup>12</sup> *A Dual Power* (1917).

<sup>13</sup> *The State and Revolution* (1917), ch. I.

<sup>14</sup> *The State* (1919).

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, our emphasis.

<sup>17</sup> *The State and Revolution*, ch. IV.

referred to above, Engels spoke of the bourgeois state being "put an end to"—that is, violently destroyed—by the proletarian revolution while the words about the 'withering away' refer to the remnant of the proletarian state after the socialist revolution. "The doctrine of Marx and Engels concerning the inevitability of a violent revolution refers to the bourgeois state. The latter cannot be superseded by the proletarian state (the dictatorship of the proletariat) in the process of 'withering away'; as a general rule, this can happen only by means of a violent revolution".<sup>18</sup>

### "Violent Overthrow"

The question of the relation of the proletarian revolution to the state which lies at the very centre of Marxism was elaborated by the founders of scientific socialism over a period of many years, on the basis of the solid historical experiences of the class struggle of the proletariat. In the *Communist Manifesto* (1848) Marx and Engels spoke of the "violent overthrow of the bourgeoisie" that "lays the foundation for the sway of the proletariat." They pointed out that the first step in the proletarian revolution was to raise the proletariat to the position of the ruling class and added, in this context, that the state would be "the proletariat organized as the ruling class". These lines show that the class struggle as applied to the struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat leads, as a natural consequence of the victory of the proletariat, to the political rule of the proletariat. In other words, the proletariat will need the state, this special organization of violence, to suppress the bourgeoisie and to overcome its resistance.

In the *Manifesto* Marx and Engels, however, did not give a clear answer as to how and through what process the proletariat is to build its own state. That answer came from Marx's pen four years later, on the basis of the experience of the Revolu-

tion of 1848-51. In the *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, (1852) he wrote that all revolutions up till then took the existing state machine intact and perfected this machine "instead of smashing it up".

Basically, the bourgeois state machine signifies two of its most important characteristics — bureaucracy and the standing army, which are connected with the bourgeoisie by thousands of threads. During all the numerous bourgeois revolutions in Europe this bureaucratic and military apparatus was being constantly strengthened as a special repressive force against the toiling masses in general and the revolutionary proletariat in particular. Hence the task of the proletarian revolution was "to concentrate all its forces of destruction" against the bourgeois state machine and "smash it up." (Marx).

Marx's and Engels' ideas on this question were further enriched by the experience of the great Paris Commune (1871), so much so that they 'corrected' their earlier position in the *Manifesto* in the light of this experience. This 'correction' appeared in the last preface to the German edition of the *Manifesto*, jointly signed by its two authors, almost a quarter of a century after the first edition and one year after the Commune. They noted that the *Manifesto* "has to some extent become antiquated" and added, "one thing especially was proved by the Commune, viz. that 'the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery and wield it for its own purposes'." In other words, the existing bourgeois ready-made state machinery must be destroyed before the proletariat sets up its own state. In fact Marx had earlier (12.4.1871) written to Kugelmann that "the next attempt of the French revolution will no longer be, as before, to transfer the bureaucratic military machine from one hand to another, but to smash it."<sup>19</sup>

The Commune also provided a clear answer to the question as to

what is to replace the smashed bourgeois state machine. In place of the bourgeois state machine the working class will of course build its own state. But it is not just another state, in the usual sense of the term, with its habitual standing army, police and bureaucracy. The proletariat builds its own state, as the Commune showed, by first suppressing these institutions of oppression—smashing thereby the old state machine—and having in their place the masses of the people armed, and all officials fully elected and subject to recall by the masses. "This gigantic supersession of certain institutions by other institutions of a fundamentally different order" amounted to "quantity becoming transformed into quality... democracy transformed from bourgeois democracy into proletarian democracy; from the state (= a special force for the suppression of a particular class) into something which is no longer really a state."<sup>20</sup>

So long the state coerced and suppressed the majority—the exploited—on behalf of the minority—the exploiters. With the victory of the proletarian revolution the immense majority will, for the first time in world-history, use the state, the instrument of violence—though not in the older sense, as noted above—to overcome the resistance of the small minority. And since the majority of the people as a body suppresses the minority no special force for suppression is any longer needed. Basically it is in this sense that Engels spoke of the process of 'withering away' of the state in his polemic with Dühring.

### Dictatorship

This special kind of state that the proletariat builds for itself after the revolution in order to suppress the exploiters and to organize the economy along really scientific lines is called the dictatorship of the proletariat. This expression appears quite early in Marx's writings. As is well known, in his celebrated letter to

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>19</sup> Marx's emphasis.

<sup>20</sup> *The State and Revolution*, ch. III.



Weydemeyer (5-3-1852) Marx emphasized that he should not be credited with the discovery of classes or class-struggles, as they had already been described by the bourgeois scholars before him. "What I did", he added, "that was new was to prove: (1) that the existence of classes is only bound up with particular historic phases in the development of production; (2) that the class struggle necessarily leads to the dictatorship of the proletariat; (3) that this dictatorship itself only constitutes the transition to the abolition of all classes and to a classless society."<sup>21</sup> Later in his letter to W. Bracke (5-5-1875) he wrote the following passage: 'Between capitalist and Communist society lies the period of the revolutionary transformation of the one into the other. There corresponds to this also a political transition period in which the state can be nothing but the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat [die revolutionäre Diktatur des Proletariats]'.<sup>22</sup>

The bourgeoisie and its lackeys in the working class movement—the revisionists—make a great show of defending democracy and condemning dictatorship—implying, of course, that there are such things as 'democracy in general' and 'dictatorship in general'. Marxists, naturally, reject this non-class approach to democracy and dictatorship. They always ask: "for what class is this democracy?" "for what class is this dictatorship?" It cannot be otherwise in a class society. In such a society a democracy is, at the same time, a dictatorship. Thus in ancient Greek society, divided between the masters and the slaves, even the Athenian democracy, supposed to be a 'model' for all time, was a democracy for the minority—the slave-owners and, at the same time, a dictatorship for the majority—the slaves, an absolute, unrestricted rule of the slave-owners over the slaves. Similarly, democracy under capitalism—bourgeois democracy—is a democracy for the capitalists, and a dictatorship for the pro-

letariat—a machine for suppression of the working class by the bourgeoisie. Hence, "bourgeois democracy, although a great historical advance in comparison with mediaevalism nevertheless remains, and under capitalism cannot but remain, restricted, truncated, false and hypocritical, a paradise for the rich and a snare and a deception for the exploited, for the poor."<sup>23</sup>

As a matter of fact every form of state is a class dictatorship in so far as it is an instrument for violently suppressing one class by another. Similarly the proletarian state that succeeds the bourgeois state is also a dictatorship in so far as it forcibly suppresses the class of exploiters. In this respect—in respect of suppressing of one class by another—the proletarian dictatorship does not differ from the dictatorship of the slave-owners in the ancient times, the dictatorship of the feudal landlords of the Middle Ages or the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie in modern times. That is why Engels, criticising those who had—presaging the revisionists—raised the slogan of a "free people's state" in socialism (in the draft of the *Gotha Programme*) wrote to Bebel (March 18-28, 1875) that as in socialism the state is still "used in the struggle, in the revolution, in order to hold down one's adversaries by force it is pure nonsense to talk of a free people's state; so long as the proletariat still uses the state, it does not use it in the interests of freedom but to hold down its adversaries, and as soon as it becomes possible to speak of freedom the state as such ceases to exist."<sup>24</sup>

#### Protracted Struggle

The forcible suppression of the bourgeoisie by the proletariat lasts over a whole historical period. Even if the bourgeois state power is defeated at a single stroke the bourgeoisie as a class cannot be destroyed all at once. It tries, by all means—direct and indirect, open and secret, crude

and subtle—to undermine and destroy the proletarian régime. Hence the proletariat through its dictatorship—which is a democracy for itself—must wage a protracted war on the exploiters on all fronts—economic, political, military and ideological. "The transition from capitalism to communism represents an entire historical epoch. Until this epoch has terminated the exploiters will inevitably cherish the hope of restoration, and this hope will be converted into attempts at restoration."<sup>25</sup>

However, there is a fundamental difference between the dictatorship of the proletariat and the dictatorship of any other class that precedes it in history. Whereas the older dictatorships mean the forcible suppression of the immense majority—the working people, by the small minority—the exploiters of the working people, living on the wealth created by the working people, the new dictatorship signifies the forcible suppression of the minority—the exploiters of the working people, by the immense majority—the working people themselves. Hence, the proletarian dictatorship means, at the same time, unprecedented extension of democracy among the exploited. In this sense it is the first democracy that, at the same time, really coincides with the rule of the majority. It also follows that as the proletarian dictatorship is for the suppression of the tiny minority by the immense majority, there is no necessity of a special apparatus for suppression—like the military-bureaucratic machine in a bourgeois state. To that extent proletarian dictatorship is no longer a state in the usual sense of the term and the victory of the proletarian revolution signifies, at the same time, the beginning of the process of the withering away of the state.

Again, proletarian dictatorship, in so far as it is democracy for the toilers, is also different from the previously existing democracies of the exploiting classes in regard to the new forms that it creates. It does not

<sup>21</sup> Marx's emphasis.

<sup>22</sup> Marx's emphasis.

<sup>23</sup> *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky* (1918), ch. 2.

<sup>24</sup> Engels' emphasis.

<sup>25</sup> *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky*, ch. 9. Lenin's emphasis.

copy the old forms of democracy. "Forms of democracy", Lenin emphasized addressing the first congress of the Communist International, "have inevitably changed in the course of thousands of years... In the ancient republics of Greece, in the mediaeval towns and in leading capitalist countries, democracy has had different forms and different degrees of application. It would be utterly absurd to imagine that the most thorough-going revolution in human history, when power passes for the first time from the exploiting minority to the majority of the exploited, can take place within the old framework of the old, bourgeois, parliamentary democracy, can take place without the sharpest break, without generating new forms of democracy and new institutions embodying the new conditions for its application."<sup>26</sup> In fact the great Paris Commune—the first proletarian democracy, however short-lived—already fundamentally broke with the bourgeois parliamentary form of democracy, thereby raising the proletarian democracy itself to an infinitely higher level.

First, the Commune suppressed the standing army and substituted for it, the armed people; it also stripped the police of its political attributes and turned it into the responsible and at all times revocable agent of the Commune. So were the officials of all other branches of the administration and the judiciary. From the members of the commune downwards the public service had to be done at workmen's wages. In one word, "the Commune appears to have substituted 'only' fuller democracy for the smashed state machine: abolition of the standing army; all officials to be elected and subject to recall."<sup>27</sup>

Secondly, the Commune showed the way out of parliamentarism. Contrary to the assertion of the bourgeois

sie and its faithful 'Marxist' servitors the real essence of the bourgeois parliament does not lie in doing the actual work of the state—which is done behind the scene, within the confines of the bureaucracy, the police and the standing army—but in deciding, periodically, "which member of the ruling class is to represent and repress the people in parliament", to use Marx's famous expression. Contrary, again, to the bourgeois and revisionist contention that the negation of parliamentarism is the negation of democracy, the way out of parliamentarism is not the abolition of representative institutions including the elective principle but the conversion of the representative institutions into working bodies, from the 'talking shops' to which the bourgeois parliaments are reduced. This is exactly what the Commune did by abolishing the division between the legislative and the executive and, with it, the privileged position of the deputies.

"The Commune", wrote Lenin, summing up this great historical experience and Marx's teaching on it, "demonstrated most vividly the historically conditional character and relative value of bourgeois parliamentarism and bourgeois democracy.... The Commune was not a parliamentary institution. The significance of the Commune, further, is that it sought to break up, to shatter to the very foundations, the bourgeois state apparatus, the bureaucratic, military, judicial and police apparatus, and replace it with self-governing mass organizations of the workers which knew no division of legislative and executive authority."<sup>28</sup>

One thing, at least, is clear from what we discussed above. There can be no peaceful transition from capitalism to socialism. The essence of the proletarian revolution lies in two fundamental processes—closely interlinked, though analy-

tically and, to a certain extent, chronologically distinct—namely, that the proletariat must, first, "smash up [zerbrechen], in Marx's phrase the bourgeois state machine and, secondly, will set up its own state—that is, its own dictatorship—to forcibly "hold down" [niederhalten], in Engels' phrase, its adversary. These two processes, "smashing up" and "holding down", are simply inconceivable without the use of violence. Indeed, one cannot simultaneously claim to be a revolutionary, in the Leninist sense of the word, and a champion of the peaceful path for socialism without committing a gross inconsistency. For the essence of revolutionary Leninism—which is also revolutionary Marxism—is the building up and maintaining the dictatorship of the proletariat in course of the proletarian revolution; and the "revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat" itself "is rule won and maintained by the use of violence by the proletariat against the bourgeoisie".<sup>29</sup> Lenin himself added that this "simple truth" was "plain as noonday to every class-conscious worker" but not to the capitalists and the "social-imperialists of all countries."<sup>30</sup>

(To be continued)

<sup>29</sup> *The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky* ch. 7. Our emphasis.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

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<sup>26</sup> *Theses and Report on Bourgeois Democracy and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat* (1919).

<sup>27</sup> *The State and Revolution*, ch. II.

<sup>28</sup> *Theses and Report on Bourgeois Democracy and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat*.



# The Political Jokers

ASHIM MUKHOPADHYAY

IN November 28, 1969, President Yahya Khan announced that the general elections to the National Assembly in Pakistan will commence on October 5, 1970. Later on, according to the Legal Framework Order, 1970 (President's Order No. 2 of 1970) issued from Rawalpindi on March 30, 1970, it was made clear that the polling for elections to the Provincial Assemblies will commence on a date not later than October 22, 1970.

"The National Assembly shall frame the constitution in the form of a bill to be called the Constitution Bill within a period of one hundred and twenty days from the date of its first meeting and on its failure to do so shall stand dissolved"... "A Provincial Assembly shall not be summoned to meet until after the Constitution Bill has been authenticated by the President, and has come into force" (text of the Legal Framework Order, 1970, pp. 15-16).

These announcements of President Yahya Khan have been received well by some of the political parties in East Pakistan. The ultra-left section of the old National Awami Party under the leadership of Mohammad Toaha (till recently the righthand man of Maulana Bhasani) and Rashed Khan Menon, the pro-old NAP Students' Union leader, are an exception.

Almost all the political parties, both old and new, have started preparations for the coming competition and in towns and villages, in bazaars and residential areas, on roads and rivers their enthusiastic workers are seen pouring many democratic promises into the ears of the common people. But even amidst this seriousness, humour is often created by some political leaders whose gestures and speeches at "maidan meetings" and frequent somersaults from opportunism to patriotism have reduced them to the position of political jokers. This was well witnessed at a meeting of

the Pakistan Democratic Party, held at the Paltan Maidan, at Dacca. It can be a case study.

At 3 p.m. the meeting started under the chairmanship of the PDP leader, Janab Abdus Salam Khan. He climbed up the steps of the dais, proceeded toward the mike and then began saying, "My dear countrymen, before I begin my speech, let me pay homage to the immortal martyrs" (at this moment a section of the people began to cry—"oh you idiot sit down, sit down" (আরে বোকা বইয়া পড়). Janab Abdus remained unperturbed and continued, "Do not say so, we are the men whose sacrifice has forced the tyrant to yield"... (the people "pooh, pooh, sit down, sit down"). Janab Abdus—"the general elections are nearing. Unfortunately I notice signs of restlessness among you, this may hamper restoration of democracy (the people—"no, no we are alright, you please go to the madhouse").

At this moment some young men stood up and hung calendars representing pictures of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Tofajjal Hussain and H. S. Suhrawardy on the bamboo poles supporting the loudspeakers. They raised slogans, "Long live Mujibur", "Long live Chhar Dafa", "Bengal is your country and my country". Janab Abdus made some vain attempt to pacify the youths and said, "Please sit down, please sit down". Then he himself sat down in utter helplessness.

## "The Martyrs"

At 3.40 p.m. Janab Nurullah, another PDP leader, stood up and began to cry at the top of his voice (people say that Nurullah does not need any mike!—"Please remember the martyrs, to lose faith in us is to lose faith in them". (No sooner had he said it than groups of young men replied—no, no, you go back). Nurullah, just like Janab Abdus, ignored these slogans and continued, "Today, at this Paltan Maidan, it will be decided whether Pakistan will remain united or not". (The same groups of young men—"Is it so Mr Don Quixote?" (তাইনি রে নিধিরাম সর্দার). Janab Nurullah: "Those

who are raising such slogans have forgotten the fact that the leaders seated on the dais have secured the release of their leader' (Mujibur Rahman). Otherwise the latter would have rotted in the prison". By that time a large number of the audience had dispersed all over the maidan. Realising that the people were leaving the meeting place Saiyyad Azizul Huq or "Nanna Mian" snatched away the mike from Janab Nurullah. He was heard saying to Nurullah, "You go and take your seat, I shall tackle the situation." He then addressed the audience: "Only two or three idiots are creating noise, please do not pay attention to them, sit down and listen to me" (more slogans were raised at this time and more whistling). Huq Sahib raised his fists in the air and cried, "Believe me, I am ready to take the oath, if you so desire? But for heaven's sake, do not make noise" (more laughter and noise). Huq Sahib lost his temper and cried, "Even Mujibur Sahib will not like this". He then took a calendar representing Mujibur's picture and began saying, "Look at me, I have placed it on my head, now listen to me." This unexpected gesture perturbed other leaders on the dais, because Mujibur is their staunch enemy. Janab Abdus rushed to the mike and tried to snatch away the calendar. The audience enjoyed the scene. Somebody very near the dais was heard saying loudly, "They are sinking the prestige of the country."

In the meantime Huq Sahib resumed his speech, "I am not against Mujibur. I believe that the people of Bengal will awaken from their slumber. Please elect the best leaders and not the worst," etc. But nobody paid any attention to him, the disturbance continued. Huq Sahib said, "I must continue my speech, I must not go back".

Unfortunately Huq Sahib could not proceed further. Several persons climbed up the steps of the dais, began to tear up the posters, flags and pictures. Huq and his colleagues took shelter under the dais. Two or three minutes later men of the EPR firing squad rushed to the

spot. The men on the dais hurriedly climbed down and disappeared. Then the PDP leaders re-entered the dais, and one of them, Mr Farid Ahmad, moved toward the mike. People near the dais stood up and cried, "They have come again, shame, shame!"

Farid Sahib, another seasoned politician, did not care for such insults and said, "My brothers, do not leave the maidan, police have come to protect us. The hooligans will be punished" (brickbats, torn shoes, umbrellas were thrown at him), yet he continued, "We are hard nuts to crack. Islam and democracy cannot be killed by throwing brickbats" (more brickbats and shoes). Farid: "—come, come, throw more shoes but I must not go."

However, the colleagues of Farid dragged him to a safe corner and Janab Rafiqul Husain tried to pacify the mob. "My brothers, you have done enough. Please, do not insult us." (One rotten egg struck him and the audience jumped in joy. Janab Rafiqul: "Oh my father! the country should not be left at the mercy of Hitler" (he meant Mujibur, More rotten eggs). Rafiqul: "Nothing can be done by throwing eggs," (the audience—"Let us see, only the rotten egg is your medicine, you will retire"). Rafiqul: "My dear brothers, punish this Gestapo. They call themselves Bengali, but their character and activities are altogether different. They are both blunt and cruel." (The audience, "Get out, get out". Somebody threw a brickbat and the missile struck Rafiqul). Janab Rafiqul sat down. At this time rain started and the people rushed toward the stadium for shelter. On the dais the PDP leaders raised slogans "Mujibur is Yahya's agent", "Mujibar is a CIA man" etc. (Only a few minutes ago one of the PDP leaders had placed a picture of Mujibur on his head and hailed him as a great leader).

The rain stopped soon and the people again rushed towards the dais. Janab Mahmud Ali, a veteran leader and one of the founders of the PDP, started to speak: "Today, the

people of Pakistan are awaiting the restoration of democracy, but the fascists and reactionaries have conspired against them. If these things continue, Pakistanis will have to bear the curse of military rule for another ten years." (The audience—"down, down with the PDP").

Janab Abdus came near the mike and began to speak in an excited voice, "We know well who serve Yusuf Haroon (Mr Haroon is one of the well-known industrialists of Pakistan) and who work as the agents of India and the USA. Go and maltreat those persons instead of teasing us. We are honest, we are brave, we are"... (Before Janab Abdus finished some people cried in chorus—"you are hypocrites, opportunists, reactionaries".) Janab Samsur Rahman, another PDP leader, who had so far remained more or less silent, began to raise his fists in the air and replied, "Just see, everybody has the right to speak but these agents of the CIA will not admit it".

At 5.45 p.m. some police officers came and helped the PDP leaders to leave the maidan. The officers were seen using their handkerchiefs frequently and pressing them over their nosetips. The smell of the rotten eggs with which the PDP men had so long been greeted by the people disturbed them.

### Book Review

#### COLONIALISM IN EAST-WEST RELATIONS

By Zafar Imam.

Eastman Publications, New Delhi.  
Rs. 40.

**T**HIS is a provocative but not quite convincing study of a controversial topic of contemporary history. The author has collected his materials from three different countries. Those collected from the Moscow archives particularly heighten the value of the book. Traces of original research are strewn all over the book and the bibliography appended at the end is indeed valuable. The main theme of the book is Anglo-

Soviet relations vis-a-vis India which provides a case-study for an objective assessment of the "communist doctrinal claim that the Soviet Union played a crucial role in the break up of the colonial system." In dealing with the main question the author historically traces the "Soviet foreign policy towards India, its effects on Anglo-Soviet relations and its impact on the Government and politics of British India." The author begins with the Leninist doctrine of national self-determination and traces its distortion through succeeding Comintern formulations.

From the turn of the present century Lenin was systematically developing his attitude towards the colonial question in Europe as well as in Asia even amidst his preoccupation with the impending revolution in Europe. After the Bolshevik Revolution when enthusiasm was still running very high it was agreed at all hands that "Europe was running towards the proletarian revolution at a breakneck pace." The Comintern leaders declared that "the hour of proletarian dictatorship in Europe was to be the hour of liberation of the oppressed people in Asia." However as the possibility of the revolution receded, the demands of the first socialist State gained preponderance over the ideology of proletarian internationalism. As long as Lenin was alive and was able to take active interest in Comintern affairs a "judicious or revolutionary" balance was struck between the alternative claims of championing liberation movements in the colonies and gaining economic or political concessions from the Western imperialist powers. Considerations of ideology were properly dovetailed with the demands of an effective foreign policy. But Stalin began to equate world revolution with the safety and security of Soviet Russia. Comintern formulations accordingly became more rigid and not even remotely relevant to the actual situations in Asia. This proved particularly devastating for the left movements in India. And despite early promises the whole communist movement was confused, disrupted and

MAY 30, 1970



isolated, slowly drifting towards sectarianism. Stalinist policy towards India, according to the author, was determined in the main by two considerations—"To avoid direct clash with Britain and at the same time to exert pressure on her to extract economic concessions." Naturally Soviet Russia which professed to champion the cause of national self-determination of the people in the colonies and the semi-colonies failed to understand the historical events leading to the retreat of the old-order-imperialism in the wake of World War II. To be precise, the Indian national movement gained only by Soviet professions while the Soviet practice disrupted the left movement. However, as the author admits, Russia as the champion of the colonial liberation movement helped to project itself on the world scene. As the first socialist country it also provided new direction and content to the freedom movements. In brief, Soviet impact on the colonial movement was only incidental or catalytic.

If all this appears to be too glib, well it is there.

In fact, the author's claims to objectivity may be seriously challenged if readers refuse to equate history with a mere narration of events. Foreign policies are never made in vacuum whether by a Lenin or a Stalin. It will appear from the book that a mutation of the communist movement called Stalinism was responsible for all the sinister and diabolical developments that gripped Russia in her external and internal policies. Or was it the communist double-standard all through? In the latter case portion of the blame should be shared by Lenin as well.

On the other hand we get a picture of a Great Britain queasy and almost harmless, over-anxious to hide her imperialist possessions from the red bear, so much so that she fails to see that her adversary had neither the means nor the intentions to fulfil her commitments beyond her boundaries. Instead Britain helps to create the Russian image by shouting from the house-tops about the Bolshevik machinations. While the British policy in

India should have been to ignore the communists and let them wither, the Government of India did exactly the opposite, thereby magnifying them beyond proportions and helping them to grow. Clever analysis no doubt!

S. K. GHOSE

## Whisky And Whores

MRIGANKA SEKHAR RAY

IT's time Salil Dutta got over the false notion that modern society means whisky glasses and cheap cabaret numbers. Kalankita Nayak, his recent foray into the vice-ridden urban set-up, displays the same bankruptcy of imagination and a childish conception of plot and characters as *Aparichito*, another tawdry essay on corrupt civilisation. The story is unbelievably weak, and the things which we are asked to accept without question are too much of a toll on the audience's credulity. Aparna Sen hands over her jewel-box to Uttamkumar to pay off the debt of her husband who is a drunken debauch, and then rushes to commit suicide only to be rescued and sheltered by Uttamkumar. But Uttam's mother sees to it that this intruding nymph is packed off without delay. Aparna disappears, doing, of course, a singularly unfeminine thing, that is, leaving the jewel-box to Uttamkumar. That proves to be a fortune spinner and soon Uttamkumar becomes a millionaire. Years later, when Uttamkumar is happily married with Savitri Chatterjee, Aparna Sen turns up as a top-class call-girl in Delhi, wallowing in sin, but still retaining the inner purity. A sort of platonic friendship develops between the two. Misunderstanding, fanned by the poisonous counsels of a villain, creeps into the family, resulting in a rift between the husband and wife. The climax in the courtroom resolves all the problems and there is a happy family reunion, but Aparna Sen has vanished into the anonymous millions. This long-winding tale is dotted with whys which are never answered and

for the convenience of the film-maker, every kind of impossible situation has been padded into the script. The main protagonist of the story, Uttamkumar is never allowed to speak out, so that things may be straightened up and all the other characters are made equally gullible, so that the villain of the piece may get away with everything he suggests. The relationship between Uttam and Aparna is never carefully examined. Is it love, or just mere friendship? One can never be sure and the way Rosy (Aparna Sen) testifies from the witness box to the high level of Indrajit's (Uttamkumar) moral character, might as well be taken as a slur on his manhood. The film is full of other meaningless digressions, too: Madhumati is there for low box-office appeal; also a silly romantic interlude by Anupkumar and Jyotsna Biswas, complete with the Bombay-type skirt-chasing antics. Of the artistes, only Aparna Sen has acted with maturity and depth, making up the loopholes in the characterisation. Others are just ineffective props.

*Muktisnan* (directed by Ajit Ganguly) describes Savitri Chatterjee's attempts to reform her wayward husband, Anil Chatterjee, and the misery and torments which she had to undergo in this process are almost beyond human endurance. But she must not grudge since she is the heroine of a Bengali film. The husband in the long run comes back penitent, after the wheel of melodrama has turned the full cycle.

## Letters

### Bad Policemen Beware !

As it was only to be expected, our great leader, the reddest sun in our hearts, Comrade Jyoti Basu has seen through your mischievous game and has wisely skirted round the booby trap you laid in your innocent-looking suggestion in an editorial about forming self-defence units to resist police oppression. On the face the suggestion is alright but to take it seriously would have landed our party

in the same adventurous course as followed by the anti-social Naxalites. In a speech in Krishnanagar last week Comrade Basu has instead given us the inspiring call to note down the names of policemen who indulge in beating our comrades so that Comrade Basu can teach them a good lesson when he again becomes the Home Minister of West Bengal. The handful of police who have not yet abandoned their anti-people role after nine months of politicalisation done by Comrade Basu will no longer be pardoned. Let them beware.

T. C. NAG  
Calcutta

## Gandhism

There is no doubt that Gandhism is the philosophy of a class which is the enemy of the toiling masses. So every Marxist must combat Gandhism. But it should be fought politically, intellectually and by mobilising the struggling masses against the forces that uphold Gandhism. How can bonfires of Gandhian literature help intensify the class struggle against the economic structure of society, the real basis on which the social superstructure is erected? Such activities of a particular group of Naxalite students can only strengthen the forces of reaction and revisionism and energise the repressive and coercive forces of the State to maim the struggling workers and peasants.

BASUDEV SENGUPTA  
Calcutta

## 'AIR, Agartala'

An apology of a radio station at Agartala, started in January, 1967 goes on the air only in the evening

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and, but for a 30-minute agricultural programme, relays some noise from Gauhati and Delhi. The ten kilowatt medium-wave transmitter it has, and which is patently unsuited to the hilly region this station is meant to serve, can radiate nothing but noise. Thanks to the megawatt transmitter recently installed near Calcutta to carry the External Service from Delhi, the noise is now larded copiously with cross-talk. The jumbled din is, mercifully, totally inaudible in most of the districts of Tripura.

This solitary radio station in the whole of Tripura (as against, for example, six in Assam, NEFA and Nagaland) is, avowedly, not meant to present the life, literature or culture of the region, not even to project the activities of the Government of Tripura, for whatever they are worth. It provides hardly any opportunity for the immense local talent, specially among the various tribes, inhabiting this ancient land. True, this station doles out some songs by local artistes as part of its agricultural fare but the station does not have a single music band or instrument and the artistes have to fend for themselves. This station has no authority to select lyrics. Even the usual arrangement for audition at a radio station just does not exist at Agartala. Artistes and speakers have miles to go to get to the remote and inaccessible Ranirbazar where a corner of the transmitting station, by a breath-taking technical ingenuity, is also used as an all-purpose "studio." Those whose business it is to look after the programmes repose at a safe and respectable distance in their "City Office" at Krishnagar.

Although growing foodgrains over the air is, evidently, the sole preoccupation of this station, believe it or not, all the community receivers in Tripura are permanently tuned to AIR, Calcutta because, one is told, Agartala broadcasts nothing during the day and the listeners must have something on tap all the time! The queerest part of this costly farce is that a "Programme for Tripura," lumping together in a matter of 15 minutes, music, talk, news, weather

report and what-not in Tripuri as well as Bengali which AIR, Calcutta, started long before a radio station in Tripura was thought of, still emanates daily from the Eden Gardens to be relayed and duly reduced to cacophony by AIR, Agartala. Curiously, nothing Tripuri ever originates from the radio station in Tripura itself!

Even the neighbouring centrally administered territory of Manipur boasts a full-fledged station at Imphal headed by a Station Director and has regular morning, midday and evening transmissions. But Agartala, after more than three years of its existence, still remains under an Engineer as a decorative appendage of AIR, Calcutta, relaying blithely even the latter's local news as its own. An "auxiliary centre" of All India Radio is situated in the same State as the parent station; but Agartala has the unique distinction of being an "auxiliary" to Calcutta. This station has also distinguished itself by dispensing with all manner of Programme Advisory Committees which are a "mus" for every radio station and by managing its agricultural programme all along with the help of three so-called Staff Artistes, all on a casual, no-work-no-pay basis, something inconceivable at other AIR stations. Unsurprisingly, the only broadcast for half an hour this station puts out on its own is not exactly thrilling.

It should be instructive to find out how much this totally useless radio station at Agartala costs the taxpayers; for this is a typical example of AIR's recent spree of unplanned and unprincipled empire-building.

SUDHIR DEBNATH  
Agartala

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