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THE role of the Yahya Khans and the Chogyals which this subcontinent throws up is to provide Mrs Gandhi with a pretext for external adventures in the name of democracy. Is there any genuine democracy in Sikkim under the new constitution? The Chief Executive, an Indian, is the real boss there, with powers to override the decisions of even the most docile ministers one can think of. The famous elections in which the Sikkim Congress won 31 of the 32 seats were held in the massive presence of the Indian army—a permanent fixture—and para-military forces, and by parties and personalities whose role is becoming increasingly quizzical, now that verbal opposition to a figurehead amounts to demagogic distraction. The Chogyal was cut down to size, but the people of Sikkim were not upgraded to genuine democracy this summer under a constitution drafted by Indians and accepted by leaders who have now reduced the democratic process to a mockery by their unseemly haste to neck and hug New Delhi.

The constitution, drafted in haste, has loopholes. For instance, the request for Sikkimese representation in the Indian Parliament should have been forwarded through the Chogyal. In India questions have been raised as to the propriety of admitting a monarchy into a republic, and whether the 'Associate State' status will not be claimed later by, say, Tamil Nadu, Nagaland or Mizoram or Kashmir. But Mrs Gandhi's Government is seldom checkmated by any argument.

This time the reaction in China and Nepal has been instant and sharp. Some Indian property has been damaged in Kathmandu and the Indian Ambassador has angrily protested, more than once. The fact that Nepal, a landlocked country, depends to a large extent on India for aid and trade will restrain her criticism, if not her silent resentment. Another restraining factor is the fear that Nepali Congress leaders sheltering in India may be encouraged to do something. Nepal has had enough trouble with the Khampas on the Tibetan border, some of whom are said to have moved into Sikkim. The U.S. connection with the Khampas is not broken yet.

China sees in the latest Indian action another instance of Russian encouragement. In Sikkim a huge Indian army faces the Chinese and a Power interested in keeping China at bay should also be interested in India's tightening her grip over Sikkim. It is also a curious fact that New Delhi, despite its professed desire for tranquillity in South Asia, is often upsetting the balance there

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deliberately. The reverberations of the May explosion had hardly died down when it acted over Sikkim, creating a furore and a setback to the prospects of better relations with Peking. Is it because the economic situation in the country is getting so desperate that desperate actions, by way of distraction, have to be staged? This cannot be the whole explanation. The arrogance of the Indian Government, based on the Russian umbrella, has of late become more reckless because the USA is indulgent towards a New Delhi throwing

its weight about. Something is smelly. Why, by the way, should Republican Senator Percy spend some time with the Indian army in Ladakh and go to Bhutan? As for his remark that the Indian army is so good that it needs no external assistance, he seems to have forgotten the Russian aid and advice which keep it going. However, Mr Swaran Singh will feel and bargain better in the Kremlin with the Sikkim feather in his cap. But what's cooking really? That is the question.

about Watergate. The deputy minister of State in an part of India, not to speak of the Prime Minister, can take quite a few Watergates in his stride any day.

Little To Eat

For the twenty-seventh year in succession since 1947 one again sees the annual syndrome of drought, famine, and massive exodus of rural people to the cities, making a mockery of the Government's food and agricultural policies. The failure of the food policy, which was framed at the direction of vested interests, has now brought famine to the countryside of West Bengal, as elsewhere. There are reports of starvation deaths in several West Bengal districts, particularly in Bankura, Purulia, Midnapore and Murshidabad. Some parts of the Sunderbans are also facing starvation. The rationing system does not exist in the villages. Rice is not to be had there since the rice stock has been lifted in the name of procurement by the government procuring agents to feed Calcutta and other urban areas. The West Bengal Governor, Mr A. L. Dias, during his recent tour of Midnapore villages saw people in the countryside eating grass instead of any kind of food.

People are dying from starvation. At least nine people including five men died so during a week in Bankura. Hundreds of starving people are leaving their homes in search of work and food. Conditions throughout the countryside in Bankura, Purulia, Midnapore and Murshidabad remind one of the famine of 1943. The Government is yet to admit that its food policy has been anti-people. The complacent rulers and the Congress leaders are blaming the many deaths on malnutrition rather than on starvation. What is the difference? Nearly 75 per cent of the 1.6 million people in Purulia district have forgotten the taste of wheat for months. They have been living on one meal a day of a paste of grounded maize, milo or seeds of a type of grass grown in the district. Never before in the history of Purulia

Nixon's Cross

It is the Christmas spirit. The new U.S. President has granted, in a message throbbing with compassion, full and absolute pardon to Richard M. Nixon, whom some misguided Americans call one of the major criminals of this century. "Mr Richard Nixon and his loved ones will continue to suffer, no matter what I do, no matter what we as a great and good nation can do together to make his goal of peace come true", says President Ford. Nixon's goal of peace! Ask Indochina. Great and good nation? Think of what the dope-addict GIs and Marines did on the ground, sea and air over many countries in the past 20 years. However, this seems to be a premature season for forgiveness, and Mr Nixon has been contrite enough to tell the world that he will bear the cross of Watergate to the end of his life.

But what about some of the great and good people who surrounded the President and served him and who are now in deep trouble, because of that? President Ford will perhaps extend his compassion to them.

These men got into trouble not because they set in motion some of the most obnoxious operations against the fundamental rights of radical individuals and groups fighting for the cause of the people, but because they looked upon their near rivals, men of their own class and temperament, as enemies. By doing this the ex-President violated the rules of the game.

The Democrats were not real enemies of his class, but he used some of the means against them which his predecessors and his own organisations have been using against radical groups, white or black. Let us not speak again of the crimes Mr Nixon and his predecessors committed in their external policies. (The day Mr Ford announced his pardon coincided with the disclosure of Mr Nixon's CIA aid to topple Allende.) These, except for brief periods, did not stir the American liberals out of their sleep. What did upset them was that Mr Nixon should classify as his enemies men like Thomas Watson of IBM, Edwin Land of Polaroid, James Reston and McGeorge Bundy. This was the fatal flaw of the Nixon Administration, and not, for instance, clandestine programmes drawn up by the FBI to "expose, disrupt, misdirect, discredit, or otherwise neutralise the activities of black nationalist, hate-type organisations and groupings, their leadership, spokesmen, membership, and supporters". These did not goad the liberal press to protest overmuch and take on campaigns of exposure.

The departure of Mr Nixon does not mean that the U.S. administration will not continue to be criminal when it suits it, at home and abroad. Mr Nixon was blunt. But the dovish cooings of Mr Ford will not tame the hawk or the eagle that is symbolical of the vicious American power. As for a cleaner administration, let us not bother

had the price of rice shot up to Rs. 5 or Rs. 6 a kilo. During a period of food shortage, many people die after taking things not fit to be eaten. But such cases are not officially regarded as starvation deaths. Midnapore, where such deaths often occur, is India's third largest district, having a population of 5.7 million. There are nearly three million landless peasants, only one-tenth of whom are covered by the modified rationing system. The rest have to fend for themselves.

That the food policy of West Bengal has been a corrupt one is admitted even by a section of the Congress leaders. Last week, at the general council meeting of the Pradesh Congress Committee, they wanted to know why responsibility of procurement was given to rice mills who had "failed" to collect even the 25 per cent of the levy (3.5 lakh tonnes) they were supposed to procure and hand over to the Government. The rice mills, they said, were allowed to procure a huge stock of paddy and divert it to their secret godowns. Since the Government had no control over the operation of husking machines in the countryside, the hoarded stock of paddy was processed by these and sold on the blackmarket. No action was taken against any of the rice millers in the State because they contribute to the Congress party fund.

Another reason for the acute distress in the rural areas is the Government's failure to fix wages in foodgrains under the test relief schemes. The maximum wage is Rs. 2 with which one cannot buy a kilo of wheat or rice on the open market. With limited employment avenues open, the distress of the middle-class people is acute, for they are not covered by gratuitous relief schemes.

Two Worlds

After twenty-three years of planning and three years of garibi hatao, the number of beggars in Calcutta keeps on swelling. Every day thousands of people stream into the city seeking a morsel of food. The ranks of pavement dwellers keep on growing. As for the

villages, the less said the better. As pointed out earlier, those who cannot manage to live on grass and herbs are dying out of "malnutrition". Many villagers have not taken rice for a long time. Fish or milk has become a pie in the sky. They have nothing to eat, nothing to wear. All this is due, we are told, to the blackmarketeers, the rain god and the people's own callousness. Isn't Government doing all that it can, although the odds are formidable? But wait, things will take a turn for the better soon and everything will be fine. How, nobody knows. In the mean time the situation moves towards a blow-up. But neither the popular government nor the honoured legislators have much time to discuss these issues. They spend hours on the import licence scandal but can hardly spare time to find out what, if anything, could be done to alleviate the people's misery. It is now two worlds: one of the people who must suffer and starve, another of those, more privileged, who must go on making all the money and all the noises. But this is an artificial dichotomy, and sooner or later, it will be obliterated. That would be the day of reckoning.

There is no dearth of explanations and statistics to underline why such a situation has arisen. The food crop has not been very bad but the distribution system has failed us. It was all in the public interest that the Government decided to hand back the wholesale trade in wheat to traders, but they have not followed the ground rules. The Government has warned them of the consequence, nothing more. It is not sitting idle, though. Already it has started begging for food once again from the USA and the USSR, and hopes to get something soon. It has not allowed false prestige to stand in the way. And this has happened when we have all the land and the people to produce just enough food to meet our needs. Here again the vested interests are so deeply entrenched that the cultivators get hardly much of the fruit of their toil, the bulk of it being cornered by the rich peasantry. For all these years, we have been talking about doing something about these problems. Must we go on talking for another millennium?

Mizo Problem: The Unknown Dimension

SHUKLA

THE temptation to generalise and over-simplify the issues involved in the troubles on our north-eastern border notwithstanding, it would neither be discreet nor helpful to lump the Mizo "insurgency" with the Naga discontent and equate the two. This only freezes the problem and inhibits an open discussion towards realistic solutions which we foreclose by branding all trouble as insurgency and proceed to deal with the same as a matter of law and order. There is no gainsaying that a part of it has to be, in any case, a law and order problem, but let us add, only a very small part. If the premise is formulated clearly and correctly—not bureaucratically—the exposition can be made multi-faceted and the problem tackled fruitfully.

The Nagas, for instance, have never admitted to be Indians. The greatest hitch in hammering out a solution to the Naga problem hinges on this fact. Their insistence on being regarded historically as an independent entity and never having been part of the Indian polity—Hindu, Muslim or British—deserves sympathetic recognition. Once it is recognised, the other steps towards a solution become somewhat easy. Conceding this claim would not, ipso facto, imply a sanction for secession. Nor, as is projected by the obtuse bureaucracy, would it in any way weaken the position of New Delhi in its efforts at reaching a settlement of the problem.

Words play mischief. They determine attitudes and responses. When Mr Jayaprakash Narayan was associated with the Rev Michael Scott mission engaged in peace-making in Nagaland, he was repeatedly asked by the Nagas if he regarded them as hostiles or patriots. JP saw the sentiment behind the question and did not damn the fighters as hostiles. By branding a fighting people as outlaws we can simplify the penal action and legitimise white terror, but to no avail. For, our behaviour then

can well be described as that of an enemy, our army becomes the occupation army, our locus standi that of an imperialist power or of the successor to another. This makes for hardening of attitudes and stasis. Official self-righteousness is no substitute for statecraft.

This aside on Nagaland is relevant to an understanding of the Mizo question. The same bunglings and the same opacity have characterised the New Delhi moves in the case of Mizoram so far. Whether it was by design or accident—nothing is by accident in matters of state—regrettably and unwittingly, New Delhi has made things difficult for itself in a strange series of wrong decisions. When the Mizoram Chief Minister was in New Delhi, he had to wait for several days before he could receive an audience with the PM and the Home Minister. And what he was told finally to carry home was not much, and nothing to feel happy about. Mr Chhunga's returning empty-handed has helped nothing and damaged much.

It is easy any day to "pacify" a population of 250,000 that inhabits Mizoram. And the Mizos have had repeated taste of the "pacification" offensive launched by our military and air force. The Mizos are the most highly educated among the tribal people. Christianity is the religion of 96.99% people of this State of 8,134 sq. miles. It is such people that are being "protected". From their own people. Just as the Mizos know what "pacification" is, they are learning at a heavy cost to the national fabric, and in terms of pain and blood, what "protection" signifies. But these specifics did not prove effective elsewhere in the world in nearly similar situations. Is there any reason they should succeed here?

Unlike the Nagas, the Mizos have never regarded themselves anything but Indian. They did not even demand secession at any stage or in any constitutional parleys. The British had put firmly down their demand for representation in the Assam Assembly. They were kept beyond the purview of Government of India Acts, 1919 and 1935, and were directly ruled by British officers in the most au-

thoritarian manner. Not even a semblance of political activity was allowed to them. Whenever they sought to be heard they were ruthlessly crushed by the British. Their clamour for inclusion under the 1919 Act and their attempt to form an organisation led to their arrest and long terms in prison.

Mr McCall (1932-1943), the District Officer, realising that the British rule would soon come to an end, floated the suggestion that "the mountainous areas of Eastern India and northern Burma be kept under the trusteeship of the League of Nations". But it needs being recalled that it was his parting kick (we know the plight of South-West Africa under trusteeship) out of imperial spite. The local people had nothing to do with this demand, nor did he deem it necessary to involve them in determining their future. The Mizos had known enough from experience of the British aims and attitudes. Continuation of the alien white's rule through the proxy of the League of Nations could not enthruse them. The proposal died the death it deserved.

His successor, Mr Macdonald, drew up a plan envisaging a constitutional set-up for the Mizo Hills. It was to have included a part of Burma with access to the sea in the Bay of Bengal. It stipulated maximum autonomy for the people except that a few subjects like defence, external affairs etc., would remain vested in the hands of the Government of India. Even though Mr Macdonald succeeded in getting it approved by a rigged-up Mizo Council comprising chiefs and their nominees, all yesmen of the British, bought over with the bait of privileges, the Mizo public, in general reacted to these proposals very sharply and rejected the mischievous document outright.

Coupland Plan

Nearly simultaneously, Prof Coupland, a renowned constitutional expert, formulated a plan for the creation of a Crown Colony of Eastern Agency, independent of both Burma and India, and comprising the hill areas of Assam and Burma. The most influential political party founded after the Second World War, the Mizo Union, turned down the plan and expressed itself in

favour of an autonomous political arrangement for the Mizos within India. It is significant that the rival political party, called the United Mizo Freedom Organisation, which had for its planks secession and a State consisting of the Mizo areas of Assam and East Pakistan integrated with the Union of Burma, failed to sway public opinion in its favour, and its ambition remained abortive. Thus, the Mizo people repeatedly turned their face against any move to cut adrift from India, or join Burma, or become a separate sovereignty.

It is in this background that Mizo frustration and armed clashes since 1947 should be considered. To their consternation they found themselves not counted but corralled with a show of arms by an invading and occupying power whose ferocity they found shockingly wanton and wholly unwarranted. This shattered their dreams and led to a sad and bitter disenchantment as far as the Indian Government was concerned.

What both the Nagas and Mizos could not reconcile to was seemingly to them a double standard of behaviour on New Delhi's part in its indulgence of insurgency and chronic misbehaviour against the outsiders by the hostiles and the local populace of another ethnic branch of theirs settled in Manipur, called Meiteis. There has long been a sense of injury and resentment against this 'partiality' and it has only exacerbated, albeit ancillary but always, the already tense situation. No tribal has been guilty of misconduct or meanness, cruelty or coercion, as far as the civilian males and females of other linguistic groups in these areas are concerned. Where their ethnic collateral in Manipur valley has never had its insurgency similarly opposed in the Indian press, nor did it draw the

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same reprisals from the Indian army, even though its persecution of and marauding on the outsiders have remained habitual and a daily occurrence. Mizos of Churachandpur, (Manipur) and Nagas in this State and Nagaland bordering Burma and Bangladesh have failed to grasp the rationale behind this invidious 'preference'. They thus saw viciousness rewarded and their nobility and gentleness abused and penalised. If it was divide and rule, it backfired as events have witnessed. If it was solidarity with the Hindus of the Imphal valley, who were "our men" after all, it was wrong on two counts. One, the "conscious" Meiteis have repudiated Hinduism as an alien aberration in several ways, and the veneer of extrapolation has been very thin despite a lapse of centuries. Acculturation or identification with Indianism has been taboo in Manipur, it is vain to conceal it. Not so in the case of the tribals. Those of them who embraced Hinduism, not many though, have done so without any reservations and with a fullness that is surprising. Two, the policy adopted by the Government of India, justifiably suspect as smacking of favouritism wasted on a hostile people has paid, if at all, very dangerous dividends. Besides daily events of discrimination and dishonour heaped on the

linguistic minorities, the Meiteis have year after year held orgies of violence and pogroms against the resident minorities and unleashed terror of a variety unimaginable in New Delhi or the rest of the country. This lethal praxis and 'lack of loyalty', the tribals rightly argue, has never invited the white terror of the Government of India that lesser events of so-called violence in the tribal tracts have done. The tribals—Mizos and Nagas—ask in bewilderment, is it because we are untouchables for the Hindu officials of the Government of India, as we are for the Meiteis, who contemptuously call us Haus. They point out the parallel of Harijan-burning rampant in India, the game of the uppercaste Hindus dominant in our polity.

The issues in north-east India must be stated without slurring or soft-peddalling so that they are tackled meaningfully. The phase of temporising is over. The gerrymandering perpetrated by the British for administrative purposes, best served by keeping the nationalities fragmented geophysically, must be undone now in consonance with the wishes of the people whose aspirations towards cultural and geographical cohesion cannot afford to be spurned as seditious any more. This attitude, as so far, will remain counter-productive, and allow the sores of suspicion and suppression to fester subterraneously. Nobody interested in India's viability as a nation-State can feel but upset and alarmed at the persistence of inflexibility in New Delhi's response to the situation on our sensitive borders. Farsightedness about the national interests would seem to demand a reversal, or at least a revision, of the "get tough" policy that the Union Government recently announced it intended to follow with respect to the most vulnerable and volatile among our frontiers with other countries, friendly and unfriendly. Unless New Delhi evinces the capacity of magnanimity when events warrant it, it cannot demand a change of heart from the Mizos who have been, for all one knows stonewalled. As in the case of Nagaland, this is unfortunate.

Vietnam : The Struggle Continues

(Karrim Essack talked to Madame Nguyen Thi Binh, Foreign Minister of the PRG, when she was in Dar-es-Salaam for the 20th anniversary of TANU).

Q: The Paris Peace Agreement was signed 17 months ago. Why is there no peace in Vietnam?

A: Peace has not been restored and war continues but in a different form. Our struggle is still the same as the national movements fighting against colonialism and imperialism in Africa. At present public opinion speaks little about what is happening in Vietnam. There are those with obvious interests who are ignoring what is taking place, deliberately. But there are those friends of ours in Africa and the liberation movements who believe that the Paris Agreement has already solved the problems facing our country. If they hear of a violation, they think it is one of those flare-ups which soon will be stamped out. But the situation in Vietnam is more serious than what the public believes. It is getting worse.

Q: What is the cause?

A: As you know the U.S. tried by all means to frustrate the signing of the Paris Agreement. It is now trying to create conditions so as to re-raise the contents of the Paris Peace Agreement. Everyone is aware that the aim of the U.S. is to impose a neo-colonialist solution because of South Vietnam's strategic position. This, however, the people of Vietnam are not prepared to accept. The U.S. imperialists believe that once they give up South Vietnam, then the oppressed colonial people in other parts of the world will follow Vietnam's example and strike at their foreign oppressors and exploiters.

Q: How do you see the U.S. policy since the Paris Agreement? Has there been any shift?

A: It is the same policy flowing from the Nixon doctrine of Vietnamisation of the war. It is using the puppet regime of Thieu as its instrument. It still has its military and naval bases in

প্রকাশিত হয়েছে!

অম্ববাদ : অধ্যাপক বিজনবিহারী পুরকায়স্থ

অনুদিত দু'খানি বই

লং মার্চের কাহিনী

[শোভন বোর্ড বাধাই] মূল্য : নয় টাকা

বি, ডি, প্রেখানভ এর

ইতিহাসে বাস্তবিক ভূমিকা

মূল্য : তিন টাকা।

প্রাতিষ্ঠানিক পুস্তক C/o অগ্রণী বুক স্টোর

এ-১, কলেজ স্ট্রিট মার্কেট কলি-১২,

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Vietnam. It uses its military men who have cast off their uniform and have now become advisers. There are over 25,000 of them.

In spite of opposition from U.S. Congress, the Nixon Administration has given the puppet regime one billion dollars in military aid and another billion in economic aid. As you see, this is a very large sum, more than the annual budget of most African countries. Outside Vietnam the U.S. clings to military bases in Thailand and the Philippines. The aim is to attack Vietnam if the puppet regime shows signs of collapsing.

Q: How does the puppet Thieu regime fit into this?

A: The Thieu Administration has been used as an instrument by the U.S. to carry out Vietnamisation. Its policy is becoming more and more bellicose and fascist. It is deliberately sabotaging the earnest aspiration of the people for Peace and National Concord. Since the signing, the Saigon Administration has violated the provisions 300,000 times by its acts of aggression. It refuses to recognise the Third Force mentioned in the Agreement. If it had its way it would also not recognise the PRG.

Seventeen months have elapsed and it still obdurately and stubbornly refuses to release 200,000 political prisoners. Despite all these the PRG proposed on March 22, 1974 six points. These are: Observe immediate cease-fire; grant democratic liberties; set up the National Council of Reconciliation and Concord; hold democratic elections one year after the cease-fire; and mutually reduce armed forces.

The crucial question is whether the U.S. wants to settle the question of Vietnam by political means or by means of war. At present it is one of continuous aggression by the U.S. The struggle for national liberation still continues (the casualties today in Vietnam number more than those lost in Mozambique or Angola and Guinea-Bissau).

Balance of Forces

Q: How do you see the balance of forces in South Vietnam?

A: As you know, we were militarily strong so as to inflict a terrible de-

feat on the U.S. aggressor troops. Now with their withdrawal, we have grown correspondingly stronger. The puppet troops are demoralised. Desertions are soaring. The puppet soldiers, too, long for peace and they are making their way into the liberated areas in their hundreds.

Today we control over three-quarters of South Vietnam. Our liberated areas extend from the 17th Parallel right up to the southern tip in Ca Mau province. We are much nearer Saigon than 25 km. which Western papers report.

Politically and diplomatically we have made headway. We have a just cause and therefore we have had worldwide support. The urgent implementation of the Paris Agreement reflects the urgent desire for peace of the people of Vietnam. The Paris Agreement has become our political and diplomatic weapon. For 30 years the Vietnamese people have known no other way of life but war. The desire for peace then is an urgent and burning question. It must become a torrent. There is no question, the balance of forces is definitely developing in favour of the patriotic forces.

Q: What is the position of the people and political parties in areas still under the control of the Saigon regime?

A: The people are not following Thieu. They are with us politically. The people's political movements continue to develop and this creates the conditions where it is possible for us to launch military operations right from within the areas of the puppet regimes.

The latest reports that we have received are that there are "Teach Ins" by students and youth in cities like Saigon and Da Nang. These are calling for "Peace, National Concord, and implementation of the Paris Agreement". This rising wave of people's protests is frightening the Thieu regime. The result is more and more oppressive measures against those who oppose the military regime. One thing is now clear. The people are beginning to see that it is Thieu and his regime which is standing in the way to peace in Vietnam.

The economy of the puppet regime is in dire straits. It was essentially geared in the service of the U.S. troops. With the withdrawal, its foundation is

no longer in existence. Another reason is that the Thieu regime's economic policy is not aimed at improving the living standards of the people. In fact they are just looting and pillaging the people's lands and their properties.

Q: What is the political line of the PRG vis-a-vis the Paris Peace Agreement and construction in the liberated areas?

A: As you know, the PRG stands for independence, peace, democracy, a neutral South Vietnam and an eventual peaceful reunification of the country. Our immediate standpoint is that we are resolutely implementing the Paris Peace Agreement. We want the puppet Saigon regime and the U.S. to do the same. However, if the Thieu Government wants to wage a war of aggression against our liberated areas, then we decide to resolutely punish them. This is to show the people that while we want peace we shall all the time protect and defend their areas. Punishment is also to serve as a warning to puppet troops that such acts of aggression will lead to heavier and more ignominious defeats.

We are going ahead with our ask of reconstruction in our liberated areas even though they have been subject to barbarous and savage attacks.

Q: Kissinger has accused the DRVN and PRG of violating the Paris Peace Agreement. What do you say to this charge?

A: One thing is very clear. He who created obstacles to the signing of the Peace Agreement is one who is sabotaging the Agreement. Kissinger has not only violated the Agreement by deeds but recently in reply to Senator Kennedy said that the Paris Agreement poses new commitments by the U.S. to South Vietnam. This means more military and economic aid for the puppet regime in gross violation of the Agreement.

Q: What message have you for the American people?

A: The Vietnamese people appreciate and value highly the valiant and heroic efforts of the American people in the anti-war movement.

Talking About Population—II

ASOK MITRA

NOTHING at all, said C, as he took up the thread of his argument. On the contrary, you have done well in pushing me to discuss the choices and implications straightaway. Let us for argument's sake imagine that right from today India's population just stays put, that is, India's fertility rate dramatically comes down to the bare replacement point; in short the Net Reproduction Rate equals 1.0.

What is this Net Reproduction Rate you speak of, asked L.

This Rate or NRR as it is called by demographers, put in M, is a rather complex measure reflecting both current fertility and mortality conditions. In fact, it is rather a hypothetical construction which, elusive in itself, yet helps to get the hang of certain trends. But before I come to the NRR let me briefly mention what demographers call Age Specific Fertility Rates, the Total Fertility Rate (TFR) and the Gross Reproduction Rate (GRR).

Age Specific Fertility Rates indicate the level of fertility of women of specified ages, usually on an annual basis. For instance, that age specific fertility rate of women of age group 25-29 is arrived at by dividing the number of liveborn children of mothers 25-29 years of age by the total number of women of that age group. The fraction usually worked out to three decimal places is expressed as so many children per thousand women of that age group. The Total Fertility Rate is derived by adding up the age specific fertility rates in 5-year age groups from 15 to 49. And because they are annual averages for 5-year age groups, they are multiplied by five. The TFR thus represents the number of children a woman would bear during her entire childbearing age, on the assumption that her performance in childbearing would be the same as that of the cross section of women at the time of observation. It is thus a useful measure of the level of fertility and refers to the total number of

children, sons and daughters, whereas the Gross Reproduction Rate (GRR) includes only the number of daughters born in a specific year. A simple way of computing GRR is to multiply the TFR by the proportion of female among liveborn children (i.e. the fraction of daughters born

(—————)
sons and daughters born

which is reasonably a stable ratio, usually about 104 to 106 or 107 boys are born to every 100 girls.

This is rather interesting, said L. warming, up. I can see how these rates help demographers to look into the future more closely than crude birth rates.

Thanks, L. for conceding that demographers occasionally help to understand the problem. But the more useful index for looking into the future is what one would call the Net Reproduction Rate (NRR). It is a refinement on the AFR and GRR and represents the number of daughters who would be born per woman and survive at least to the age of their mother at the time of their own birth. The NRR gives the rate at which

you take fright or comfort at the thought! NRR of 1.0 is often referred to as fertility at the replacement level, that is, every mother today is lined up at the rear with only one daughter to replace her in her performance of child bearing. On the assumption that of every two children born, the probabilities are that one will be a boy and the other a girl, an NRR of 1.0 will mean a boy and a girl born to each pair of parents and no more, in consequence of which the population will be replaced one for one. An NRR of less than 1.0, say 0.9 or 0.8 means less than one daughter lined up behind each mother, in other words, a population below the replacement level, or an eventually dwindling population.

Now tell us about the possible application of these handy tools, said L.

We might begin, interposed C, by taking a rough measure of where we stand among our neighbours. Here is a table of as good guesses as can be knocked up, by Tomas Frejka, allowing for inadequacies in our data.

How complex the paths traversed in the future can be, if the TFR and mortality pictures are different to start with even if two countries achieved the same NRR at the same point in the future, has been shown with respect to India and Bangladesh. For instance, in this chart,

Basic Demographic measures 1965-70	India Bangladesh Pakistan Iran Ceylon				
	Total Population (in mil) 1970 ..	534	69	57	28
Female crude birth rate ..	40	44	39	44	32
Female crude death rate ..	16	14	14	15	7
Total Fertility rate ..	5.6	6.8	6.2	6.8	4.5
Gross Reproduction Rate ..	2.7	3.3	3.0	3.3	2.2
Net Reproduction Rate ..	2.0	2.5	2.3	2.5	2.0
Female average annual growth rate (in %)	2.4	3.0	2.5	2.9	2.5
Female expectation of life at birth (e:)	49	52	53	52	65

the current generation of mothers is being replaced by a future generation of potential mothers. India has an NRR of about 2.0, which means that every mother today has waiting behind her two potential mothers in the shape of her daughters. It depends on whether

I have just shown you, India's TFR is 5.6 and e: is 49.0 while Bangladesh's TFR is 6.8 and e: is 52.0. There may be difference of opinion on the accuracy of these figures but let us, for the sake of our argument, accept them. Even if we assume that the future fertility and

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mortality patterns of these two countries will be identical, the initial differences, along with differences in other characteristics such as the age patterns of fertility, can cause a significant difference in the population growth potential of these countries. For instance, even if we assume that both would achieve an NRR of 1.0 by the end of the century, India's population would grow by less than 80% and Bangladesh would more than double her population. If we further assume that both countries would reach an NRR of 1.0 around 2040, the population of India would double in 2040 from 1970, while Bangladesh would have that year 2.7 times its population of 1970. I have extracted the following chart from Frejka:

Indices of population size (1970-100),
India and Bangladesh on the assumption
that in both countries NRR will be 1.0
in (1) 1970-75; (2) 2000-2005; (3)
2040-45

Year/ assumption	India		Bangladesh			
	NRR=1.0 1970-75	NRR=1.0 2000-05	NRR=1.0 2040-45	NRR=1.0 1970-75	NRR=1.0 2000-05	NRR=1.0 2040-45
1970	100	100	100	100	100	100
2000	135	177	206	146	218	269
2050	164	256	455	185	347	764
2100	167	263	542	188	357	961

That means, put in L, even if you make good right here and now today, the past will still extract its toll from you for a long while in the future.

Exactly, said C, Family Planners in their eagerness to promise salvation, would have you believe that all troubles end for the nation as soon as you stop having more babies than two. But that is entirely in the future. Those that are already born will have to grow older, receive education, adequate nourishment and find employment in the next twenty or twenty-five years. They in turn will marry, produce children who will in their turn etc., etc.

But let us come down to earth, continued C. India's NRR is still 2.0 and Bangladesh's 2.5. There is no knowing when India's NRR will come down to 1.0. As the chart we have just examined tells us, depending upon varying speeds of fertility decline in India, we could

have by the year 2050 a population as much as 1.6 to 4.5 times as large as it was in 1970. It is difficult to comprehend the enormity of this range unless we use a simpler and more personal yardstick. L was complaining a little while ago of people getting into each other's steam in Bombay. It may not be such a mild thing as steam any more in Bombay or even in Poona in 2050 with our present rate of growth, but boiling oil or molten lead, even with a much slower rate of growth. Bangladesh in 1970 had one of the highest densities in the world—485 persons per sq kilometre—that is a little less than three times India's density of 164 persons per square kilometre. In comparison, the population density of Japan was 290 and the

Netherlands' 320. In the happy event of India attaining an NRR of 1.0 in 2000-05, this density would rise from 164 to 418. In the more likely circumstance of the NRR reaching 1.0 in 2040-45 the density would be 744. On the fair assumption that a city like Bombay or Poona would normally continue to grow at least at twice the overall rate for India, Bombay's density in 2040 would, on a fairly optimistic view of the future, will be nothing less than five times of the present. People would literally have to hang out of windows like the day's washing in Tokyo, Hongkong or Singapore.

Don't reach out for your doodling pad just yet, L, interposed M. There are a few more things to worry about. Supposing India reached an NRR of 1.0 in 2000, it would mean the crude birth rate would decline 5 to 6 points each decade for the remainder of the century. If

NRR of 1.0 were to be reached by 2040 this fall would occur at the rate of 2 to 3 points each decade.

But the mortality, too, would decline all the time and, on the present trends, should decline to about 9 per thousand population around 2000. That means even a rapid fertility decline would result in only a moderate decline in the rate of population growth, whereas a moderate fertility decline (NRR=1.0 in 2040) is unlikely to generate any decline in the rate of natural increase whatsoever, the decline in death rate closely following the decline in birth rate. Turn the page for a chart again from Frejka for India.

The annual increments of population expressed in absolute numbers are quite mind boggling. The entire population of an Australia, which is about 13.3 million in an area more than three times the size of India, is added every year to our population by natural increases. Even if India's NRR became 1.0 in 2000, this annual increment would still remain between 13 and 14 million throughout this century. If India's NRR were reached in 2040 the annual increment would increase very rapidly, indeed, to about 18 million per year in the beginnings of the 1980s, and to between 25 and 30 million additions every year in the beginning of the twentyfirst century.

Our age structure, M's voice palpably thickened at this point, is extremely young. Our median age for females, for example is only 19. And this fact provides the built-in inertia for rapid population growth. About 40 to 42 per cent females today in India are under 15 years of age. These are the potential cohort of mothers in the next 15 years. If they in turn continue to have high fertility, they will produce further huge cohorts of potential mothers 15 to 30 years hence. Therefore, even if India attained

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Year	Crude female birth rate		Crude female death rate		Rate of natural increase for females	
	NRR=1.0	NRR=1.0	NRR=1.0	NRR=1.0	NRR=1.0	NRR=1.0
	2000	2040-45	2000	2040-45	2000	2040-
1965-1970	40	40	16	16	2.4	2.4
1975-1980	35	38	13	13	2.4	2.5
1985-1990	29	35	10	10	1.9	2.5
1995-2000	23	32	9	9	1.4	2.4

NRR=1.0 in 2040, the median age of the female population around the year 2000 would still be only 21 in place of the present 19. Only with NRR=1.0 by 2000 would this median age be 24.4 in 2000 and 36.5 in 2050.

Don't be so relentless, cried out C and L. Enough is enough. And yet your figures sans merci 'hath us in thrall'.

If there were no fertility decline till 1985, continued M, India will have a population of about 808 million in that year, on the assumption that mortality would remain constant. But mortality is bound to decline from its present level of 17 per thousand, so that even if fertility declined by 3 points per decade ((NRR=1.0 in 2040) the matching decline in mortality would still keep the rate of growth at the present level of 2.5 per cent per year.

C took up at this point: This means that except for our age structure which will ever so slightly change, all our attributes and problems will grow double in magnitude in the year 2000. For three censuses and more running, our ratio of persons dependent on agriculture to the total population has stood around 68 to 70 per cent, which means that the pressure of population on the land will be at least double in 2000 of what it is today. The ratio of our urban population to the total has ranged from 18 to 20 per cent. Fancy two human bodies in 2000 in place of every one on the streets of Delhi now. Already we are supposed to be short by millions of urban housing units; imagine how short we would be in 2000. As for employment and production we must do something profoundly different and drastic to successfully keep Maithus out of our door. That means we must have to do something about our income distribution or we bust. We cannot obviously go on merrily with our present vast disparities in income distribution, not

to speak of our regional disparities, the removal of which will be far more strenuous and challenging.

But one thing seems certain. At the present level of fertility or even with NRR=1.0 in 2040, our present pattern of households—the 1-member, 2-member, 3-member etc. and multichild family—will still hold fairly firm in 2000. If only we can firmly establish an NRR=1.0 in 2000 will the reality of the twochild family begin to exert itself at the turn of the century; there will be distinctly more of 1-member, 2-member and 3-member households and less and less of households with more members. The fabric of society will begin to change, but only begin to do so.

One of the important things that will show signs of welcome change with NRR=1.0 in 2000 is the dependency ratio, that is persons below 15 or 19 years of age, who generally consume without entering the production area: on whom we must spend more and more by way of education, health services, clothing, housing and other social overheads. We have missed the bus so far as attaining NRR=1.0 in 1970-75 or even in 1980-85 is concerned. But let us assume that we shall have it either in 2000-05 or 2020-25. Let us then have a look at what the age structure is likely to be from today. Here is a chart of our likely approximate age structure in India worked out again by Frejka:

Approximate Age structure of India's population in selected years (in percentages) 1970-2045, with different assumptions when NRR=1.0 will be reached.

Year Age Group	NRR=1.0	NRR=1.0	NRR=1.0
	2000-05	2020-25	2040-45
1970			
0-4	16.6	16.6	16.6
5-9	13.2	13.2	13.2

10-14	11.8	11.8	11.8
15-19	10.3	10.3	10.3

2000			
0-4	10.3	13.0	14.1
5-9	10.6	12.1	12.7
10-14	10.5	11.2	11.4
15-19	10.1	10.2	10.2

2030			
0-4	7.5	8.3	10.3
5-9	7.6	7.9	10.2
10-14	7.7	8.4	9.9
15-19	7.6	8.6	9.4

2045			
0-4	7.0	7.5	7.9
5-9	6.9	7.5	8.3
10-14	6.9	7.5	8.6
15-19	6.9	7.3	8.6

These figures seem to suggest, exclaimed L, that the ratio of young people under 15 is going to decline sharply from 41.6 per cent to 31.4, provided the NRR reaches 1.0 in 2000-05, but is going to stay pretty high at 38.2 if the NRR gets down to 1.0 as far away as 2040-45. By the way, what are the corresponding general ratios in the developed countries today? And also do tell us how the ratios of the old people will fare if the NRR goes down to 1.0 in 2000-05 and 2040-45.

It was M's turn to speak. The corresponding ratios in the developed countries today, he said, are like this:

Age Group	Age Structure in ratios to total population in 1970
0-4	8.8
5-9	8.6
10-14	8.5
15-19	8.2

That is, already, the developed nations are supporting as far as 26 children under 15 through childhood and schooling against our 42. This enables them to invest their savings more on productive activity than consumption helping the young to grow. In 2000-05 this ratio in the developed countries will range between 21.3 and 22.6 depending upon whether the NRR reaches 1.0 in 1970-75 or in 2000-05.

The ratios for the older ages in India will be something like the following, depending upon whether NRR=1.0 is reached in 2000-05 or 2020-25 or 2040-45:

Approximate structure of the older ages in India's population in percentages) 1970-2045 with different assumptions when NRR=1.0 will be reached.

Year	NRR=1.0	NRR=1.0	NRR=1.0
Age group	2000-05	2020-25	2040-45
1970			
20-29	15.8	15.8	15.8
30-44	16.8	16.8	16.8
45-64	12.0	12.0	12.0
65+	3.4	3.4	3.4
2000			
20-29	18.5	17.5	17.1
30-44	20.6	18.6	17.8
45-64	14.7	13.3	12.7
65+	4.6	4.2	4.0
2045			
20-29	14.1	14.3	16.7
30-44	19.8	22.4	21.9
45-64	25.7	23.8	20.2
65+	12.7	9.8	7.7

I'd be damned if I knew what to wish for, said L, throwing his head back and lacing the palms of his hands behind it, a country full of the young or of the old! Already in many countries in Northern Europe everybody you eyes fall upon seems to be above thirty and you see very few young children. I tell you, M and L, a street in the beautiful north countries, sometimes looks like a beautiful wood without songbirds in them, the air is so still without the sound of young voices, with only the brakes screeching sometimes or the wheels taking a kerb. No laughter of young

children in the beautiful public gardens, either. Only grownup men and women in topcoats, sombre, unsmiling, desperately trying to fill the void of children with their new psychedelic clothes. Could one please tell me which is better? And yet your figures for India seem so awesome, I feel like the Scandinavian painter Munch's figure in "The Strangled Cry".

There is no point in stuffing our heads with more figures today said M. Besides, recent work by Indian demographers with access to ongoing surveys points to welcome downward trends in fertility which cannot be dismissed as mere straws in the wind and may well

Book Review

ON ECONOMIC INEQUALITY

By Amartya Sen

Oxford University Press. Paperback. Price Rs. 12

MR Sen's short treatise on economic inequality is in itself a commendable piece of work for those who revel in pure economic analysis and have, at most, a very superficial interest in the practical implications of such an endeavour. This is so because the author definitely decides at the very outset to leave aside the so-called simple aspect of the problem, which according to him has been responsible in all periods of history for tremendous social upheavals, and engages himself in the study of the complex aspect of the problem, which concerns itself with measurement of economic inequality and examination of the philosophical underpinnings of such measures. Possibly the treatise could not have been otherwise, because it is just a printed version of the Radcliffe Lectures which the author was invited to deliver at the University of Warwick and, as the saying goes, he has delivered the "goods".

The present work consists of four chapters. The first deals with the analysis of the problem of inequality from the perspective of standard welfare economics, both old and new. Since the concept of equality at once involves distribution of income, Pareto and his fol-

lowers will stubbornly refuse to discuss the issue on the basis of inadmissibility of inter-personal comparisons. Hence no comment from economists on the merit of any such issue as repeal of the Corn Law, although David Ricardo, the maestro, could say for certain if lifting the embargo on the import of corn was the need of the hour. The standard approach of social welfare function—a la Bergson, Samuelson and Arrow—fails to throw light on the issue because of its strict adherence to individual welfare ordering, carefully insulated from inter-personal comparisons. Only the old utilitarian school of economic analysis do not labouriously sidetrack the issue of inter-personal comparisons but then they pronounce judgments with strikingly anti-egalitarian results.

accelerate with time. We must discuss them, too; perhaps later. I suggest we have a swim before the pool is invaded by children. By the way, what will happen to swimming in swimming pools in 2000?

You correct me, C, cried L, but your Buckminster Fuller is fond of asking fundamental questions: Why don't we wash our hands with sand jets instead of with water? Perhaps we shall build swimming pools of sand in Rajasthan in the year 2000.

(The first three chapters of a projected but unfinished work of 15 or 16 chapters).

The second chapter takes up measures of inequality one by one. The range is considered first as a measure and discarded, for it ignores the pattern of distribution in between the extremes. Thereafter the author turns to the relative mean deviation or RMD. One definite demerit of RMD as a measure of inequality is its insensitivity to transfer of income from a poorer person to a richer one as long as both lie on the same side of mean income. To some extent this problem also plagues the variance and the co-efficient of variation as a measure. The latter as well as the

standard deviation of logarithm as a measure of inequality adopts the arbitrary squaring formula and suffers from the limitations arising out of considering differences from the mean.

It is for these reasons that economists have recourse to the Gini co-efficient and Lorenz Curve technique. In taking differences over all pairs of incomes, the Gini co-efficient avoids total dependence on differences from the mean, from which variance, coefficient of variation and standard deviation of logarithm suffer. In avoiding the arbitrary squaring procedure, it appears to be a more direct measure too, retaining the property of sensitivity to transfer of income from the rich to the poor. As far as the economico-philosophical underpinnings of the Gini co-efficient are concerned it is evident that the Gini measure implies a social welfare function which is a weighted sum of different people's income, weights being commensurate with the rank-and-order position of a person at the ranking by income level. So the Gini co-efficient is grounded on individualistic social welfare function with, from an egalitarian point of view, a most satisfactory property that transfer of income from a richer man to a poorer man always reduces the value of the Gini co-efficient. This chapter discusses some other measures such as Theil's entropy measure and Atkinson's measure. The author, however, concludes that the Gini co-efficient can serve as the right measure and confirms that in the ultimate analysis utilitarianism and egalitarianism are mutually exclusive.

In the third chapter, the author discusses some important limitations of the measures of inequality. For example, the Gini measure of inequality which takes into account the difference between the line of absolute equality and the Lorenz curve may fail to rate two distribution situations when Lorenz curves for them intersect one another. This is a pointer to the fact that measures of inequality cannot furnish complete ordering, inasmuch as there are such situations with inequality indices according to one or the other measure of inequality that the indices cannot be ordered. Thereafter desirability of a

lower index of equality compared with a higher index i.e. the desirability of a higher Lorenz curve—one closer to the line of absolute equality—compared with a lower is proved in terms of additive, separable and strictly concave social welfare function; that is to say, inequality not as a complete ordering but as a quasi-ordering is established. This result, which is due to Atkinson, is then generalised by dropping one by one additivity separability and the strict concavity assumption. The author spares no pains to underline the necessity of shedding additivity and separability assumption in terms of the need for adopting paternalistic welfare judgments in order to mitigate the lack of exact and complete information regarding individuals' welfare ratings. Even this quasi-ordering relation is plagued by the problem of change of population and change of prices. The author suggests some interesting ways to take care of these problems too. Again quasi-ordering, according to some mean-independent measure, say, Gini-co-efficient and mean-dependent measure such as co-efficient of variation, may be intersecting. To put it in plain words it may so happen that according to the Gini measure India shows a more equal distribution than Sri Lanka but according to co-efficient of variation Sri Lanka shows a more equal distribution. The author thus points out the limitations of a logically definite and therefore rigid framework for analysis of inequality and advocates the necessity for supplementing rigorous analysis in terms of one measure or the other by the descriptive method.

Needs and Desert

In the fourth and final chapter the author considers income and non-income determinants of welfare and finally discusses a very interesting problem pertaining to the criterion of distribution. He quotes extensively from Marx's vitriolic criticism of the German Workers' Party's programme to bring to the fore a very important fact: although the principle of desert has a great role in the determination of value, distribution of value, particularly in a socialistic framework, should take place

according to the needs principle rather than the desert principle in view of the fact that distribution according to the desert principle has strong anti-egalitarian implications. However, during the initial phases of socialism, when the 'birth-marks' of capitalism are still there, the desert principle may have its sway. The author, at this place, refers to one most important aspect of the great debate—one of the most important polemics of the international communist movement. This concerns the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in China. During the GPCR distribution more and more according to the needs principle was upheld and the principle of desert was decried. Some so-called Marxists as well as socialist countries spared no pains to show that the GPCR was a concrete practice of ultra-leftism with the unequivocal purpose of defeating the cause of international proletarian struggle. The author steers clear of this polemics. He discusses the problem of criterion of distribution during the period with a view to underlining its relevance to the analysis of inequality.

While non-technical readers will not be put off by formalities—indeed if one is ready to forget the question of usefulness, the present work is a pleasure to read—they will find the entire analysis rather quixotic. Particularly when at the end of the third chapter, the author speaks of insuperable problems that plague any rigorous analysis of inequality and in the fourth chapter he discusses some very pertinent issues of our time independent of his rigorous analysis in the previous three chapters, readers will find this celebration hardly worth while. The reasons for the total uselessness of such endeavours lie on the one hand in incorrect identification of the problem and on the other in proceeding from dubious assumptions regarding individual and social welfare functions. Again the whole analysis is theoretically unsound, for the problem of distribution and inequality is studied absolutely in isolation from the problem of production. One recalls in this connection the current enthusiasm among economists over fixing the poverty line and suggesting measures for

eradication of poverty in India. Apparently these efforts are utopian in character but then they are absolutely reactionary in intent inasmuch as they divert attention from the question of genesis of poverty in our society. It is from a correct understanding of the latter alone that one can have an idea of the right course of action for eradication of poverty. The present work will, however, serve as a handy theoretical manual for the kind of work on poverty we come across in our journals these days.

The discussion of the GPCR particularly in the perspective of Marx's Critique of the Gotha programme, suffers from eclecticism and leaves readers amidst uncertainty regarding the author's attitude towards it. While as a method of avoiding any comment on one of the very significant events of our time, this is possibly the only line the author could take, one can hardly feel satisfied with the perfunctory manner in which the problem has been treated. While adoption of the needs principle in matters of distribution during the GPCR may appear to be early, particularly in view of Marx's Critique of the Gotha Programme, it is also good to remember that the critique was within the general background of the genesis of capitalism in Western Europe. Marx, while discussing the problem of transition to socialism in Russia, insisted on the fact that the analysis given in "Das Capital" is not exactly relevant in this regard. The reason why he maintained this stand is that in the East where the idea of private property has never consummated in the way it did in the West, the problem of transition to socialism becomes different from what it is in the West. Lenin also referred to this aspect of the problem of transition to socialism in eastern Russia when he spoke of the non-capitalist path of development. Mao Tse-tung has studied this problem in great detail and his thesis of New Democracy is one very significant work in this respect. The Great Leap Forward as well as the GPCR has to be understood particularly in this context.

J.P.C.

Clippings

The Sikkim Affair

I am a member of the Sikkim Congress and was an active supporter of the 1973 movement. I have regarded recent decisions on the future of Sikkim with dismay, I wonder if the Sikkimese people really want to be represented in the Indian Parliament. Since New Delhi offers this as the only reason for its move, the wishes of the Sikkimese people should be ascertained through a referendum.

My experience from leading the students' movement in Gangtok, and also from political work in our villages, is that our people are not interested in "political participation and representation" in the Indian system. This would have become clear if, after winning 31 out of 32 seats in the Assembly. Mr Lendhup Dorji Kazi had bothered to ascertain public opinion on the question. He was elected on the mandate of representative government and domestic reforms: his election manifesto, which we supported, did not say anything about participation.

The Assembly's 11th May resolution about new forms of association with India took us by surprise. The Assembly members were never given a chance to discuss the resolution—drafted by an Indian officer—whose legal terminology is not easily understood in Sikkim. It was read out once in English, which 80% of the members do not understand and then passed by a show of hands. Protesting against this haste, the method of ensuring passage and the contents of the draft, six Assembly members refused to sign the resolution. They were Mr Ramchandra Poudyal, Mr N. K. Subedi, Mr Tsa Tengy Lepcha, Mr Kusu Das and Mr B. P. Kharel of the Congress and Mr Kaizang Gyatso Bhutia of the National Party. Two Congress members, Mr Poudyal and Mr Subedi, even resorted to hunger-strike outside the Assembly gates.

I was in Gangtok at the time and was a member of a Youth Congress delegation which went to India House the next

day to ask the Political Officer, Mr K. S. Bajpai, about the political and constitutional implications of participation. He told us that it only meant that we Sikkimese could watch the functioning of Indian democracy as "observers" and that there was no question of Sikkimese members in the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha. But now the Indian public and MPs are being told that the Sikkimese demand such representation and that this is a natural outcome of the Government of Sikkim Act and the Assembly resolutions.

Since the Constitution was enacted our hopes of truly representative government have been frustrated. Law and order and other vital matters remain in the hands of the Indian nominated Chief Executive, and not with our Ministers. The separate identity of the Kingdom, guaranteed in the 1950 Indo-Sikkim Treaty, is now about to be abolished, at least in practice.

The Sikkimese public have not been kept informed of these decisions. In fact, following widespread protests against the new Constitution, Mr Kazi and other senior Congressmen addressed a mass meeting in Gangtok on June 26 and assured us that eight clauses in the Constitution (including the reference to participation) had been amended. We now find that this is not so.

Perhaps our leaders have fooled us. Perhaps they themselves have been fooled. But, as a supporter of democratic administration and close ties with India, I am convinced that both could have

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been attained only under the 1950 Treaty and the tripartite agreement of May 8, 1973. This is also the view of most of our supporters. The ruling party cannot exceed its mandate or act in defiance of the people's wishes.

In the circumstances, it is essential that the Indian Parliament's implementation of the Constitution Amendment Bill be postponed until a referendum is held in Sikkim and our Assembly is authorized to pass a fresh resolution on the basis of what the Sikkimese people desire.—K. N. UPRETY, Representative for Gangtok. Sikkim Youth Congress, in *The Statesman*, Calcutta, September 5, 1974).

Letters

Knack

I'd like to suggest to your correspondent of the *Knack* (August 10, 1974) fame that his audience constituted a very developed and intelligent one.

Obviously the only comedy that C(C for correspondent) lauds is that of the slapstick variety as purveyed by Laurel & Hardy. Now if you want to forget your cares etc. for some moments and just want a good laugh, laughter for its own sake, as an end in itself, then slapstick is just what you want. However, there is something called thought provoking comedy or comedie pensee. The audience should see itself involved with the character in his ludicrous, absurd, or ridiculous situation and should be able to laugh at itself. And when they so laugh, a feeling of uneasiness is definite to prevail among them. They say to themselves: so that's how the world sees me: am I really like that? So ridiculous? By Jove I am! Then sets in the catharsis: purging themselves of the abnormalities they possess which are reflected in the antics of the character they see on the stage. They definitely saw themselves as characters in the play they were watching, at least if C is to be believed on this point. In fact, considering the amount of uneasiness they showed: the strained laughter, the embarrassed glance at the neighbour, they seem to be more developed and intelli-

gent than many of the audiences I have come across, of whom more later. However, after seeing themselves so, was there a catharsis? I don't know. Even C can only speculate on this. He himself seems to undergo no catharsis. For though, with the same unease that he shares with the audience, he acknowledges his faults, he does not do anything about them but cuddles up further into his cocoon. Actually the only thing that has some substance in C's 'criticism' is the reasons he offers for that audience's patronage of such plays. To the audience the play was just a play and was not going to bite them in any way. Go ahead, say what you want on the stage, disparage the system, preach revolution, criticise, be cynical. So long as it is just confined to words, okay.

C's audience at least felt uneasy about themselves: the audience I know here in Bombay do not even feel that. They constitute the sophisticated elite, fashion conscious and snobs. To whom a play is an evening at the theatre, a meeting of societywallahs, decked up, resplendent in their finery. If you listen to their conversation after the play you would hear things like 'Vijay Krishna acts dash well' or 'Pearly Padamsee's direction is superb' or the stage setting was excellent etc. The content of the play itself, its didacticism, passes by them like a river by stony banks. They will laugh at some slapstick or see slapstick in the wryest of humour. Sometimes (as in Ah Norman!) they'll laugh inanely. As Salinger puts it, 'people laugh like hyenas at things that aren't even funny'. That too is part of their in-ness: what will my neighbour think if I don't laugh? That I have no sense of humour. So: ha ha!

I don't see how C can disregard factual situations as he avowedly does—'Regardless of the factual situation in this respect in India'—and yet claim that he is pointing his finger at the truth. He suggests that just because seduction is taboo in that particular society a play touching on it (seduction) should not be seen by it oblivious of the fact that seduction actually exists there. Which is a really crass argument. Effective art is that which impinges on the

consciousness of the viewer and there is no better way of impinging than to make the audience feel that it is one with the character on the stage. If art does not do this it fails in its essential function of bettering humanity and is rendered ineffective.

The time, he says, has come to develop and grow. How? By watching Laurel & Hardy? Isn't the acknowledgment of one's own inadequacies a part of development? Self-criticism? Don't plays like *Knack* aid us here (this from his own writing as I have not seen it myself). Is the problem play to be disparaged because it evokes no care-free laughter but satirises and rubs in the fun where it hurts us most only to make us realise the existence of a fester there which needs immediate treatment? To say that our C is a very confused person is to put things lightly. Criticisms should be made with confidence: certainly not with reluctance. My dear C, forget the conventional part of it, but let rationality stand on its feet: it is best there.

M. Fernandes
Bombay

Attack On PLT

Newspaper reports describing the attack on Utpal Dutt and his group outside the Star Theatre made depressing reading. The Congress boys who took the law into their own hands and exhibited such contemptible intolerance should realise that the theatre cannot be gagged and the situation in West Bengal is so desperate today that criticism of the Government will be made from all sides—not just the theatre alone.

I wish the young militants of the

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Youth Congress and the Chhatra Parishad would spend more time trying to pin down hoarders and blackmarketeers and take an uncompromising stand against the dreadful inflationary spiral that threatens to exterminate the middle, lower middle and working classes, leave alone the villagers who are perennially in the throes of drought or floods and up to their ears in debt throughout the year. Instead of fighting amongst themselves, the young hopefuls could very well unite on the basis of a well thought out radical programme and go ahead with all the energy they possess. Trying to interfere with plays which are honest reflections of the common man's woes and brandishing the mailed fist may gain them a temporary advantage but in the long run they will be forgotten and rejected by the people

and given the very treatment that they are now busy dealing out to the Leftist theatre groups which are struggling to make themselves heard.

Mrs Anita Mukherjee
Calcutta

Garm Hava

The contents of the August 24 letter on Garm Hava were discussed with some friends. They are of the opinion that the Hindu society too is bogged down in feudalism, that the situation is only relative and that in feudal-bourgeois politics, the wrath of the ruling circle often fails on the weaker sections of the society. As such, these sections should always be treated with sympathy and understanding.

Leaving aside the exploiting classes, communalism is a contradiction among the people and should be dealt with in a non-antagonistic way, that is, through friendly discussion, persuasion etc. Here painstaking reasoning is preferable to severe criticism. The specific social, economic and other problems of the minority cannot be solved in isolation, disregarding the general problems of the entire oppressed people of the country.

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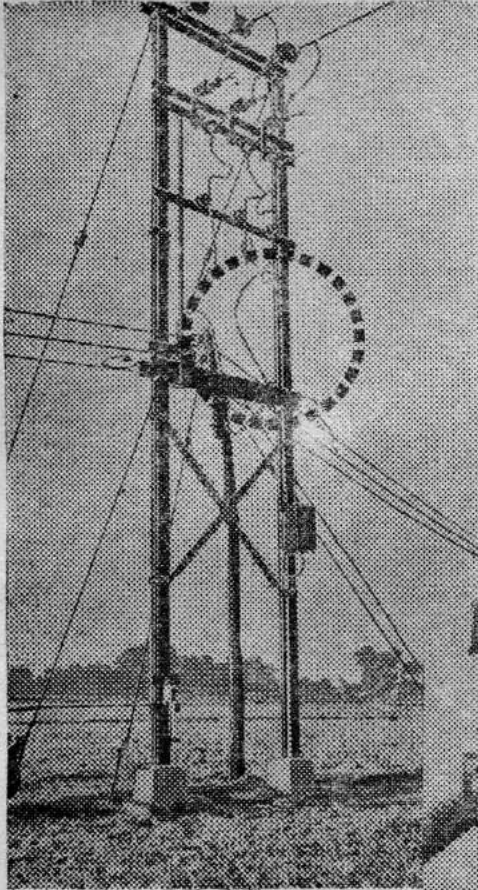
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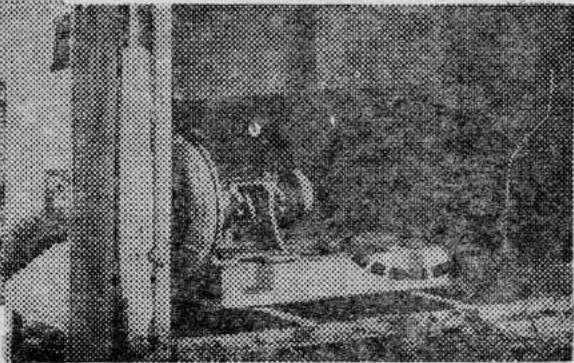
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Both pump and transformer stolen!**

**The result:
no electricity,
no water supply
to the field**



**Who stands to gain by such activity
except the culprit?**

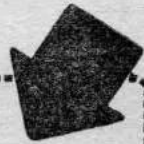
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