

frontier

Vol. 7: No. 7

JUNE 8, 1974

PRICE: 50 PAISE

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PRINTED AT MODERN INDIA PRESS,
7, RAJA SUBODH MULLICK SQUARE,
CALCUTTA-13 AND PUBLISHED WEEKLY
FOR GERMINAL PUBLICATIONS (P) LTD.
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BURYING THE STRIKE

TWO months ago the major left parties of the country had met in New Delhi to explore the possibilities of joint action against the anti-people policies of the Government. The strategies and tactics of the left parties differ so much that complete identity of views was out of the question. Yet a common programme of sorts was drawn up, which included an all-India railway strike should attempts to settle through negotiations the railwaymen's disputes with the Government fail. The 20-day strike is over, and two things that stick out of the fiasco is that the country has witnessed its biggest strike so far and the strike has failed. The left parties are upset, and in their hour of confusion they have dealt a severe blow to the timid prospects of leftist unity. The joint programme was said to have been the first that the left parties could reach in nearly a decade. But the ado has not been worthwhile. The joint action has brought railwaymen face to face with governmental repression on a massive scale and has scattered the left parties in different directions. The dream of leftist unity has been shattered.

The aftermath has been a bout of familiar slandering. The CPI has been blamed by the CPI(M) and some of its associates for wrecking the strike from within. A left leader has described the CPI as a Trojan Horse. With the CPI's known crush on the progressives in the Congress, it could not have behaved differently. If the CPI is really so powerful that without its support no railway strike could be launched or continued, other left parties should have had second thoughts on the strike decision. Perhaps they hoped that the CPI would be a prisoner of the common programme. The CPI has not only escaped from the prison but is also unashamed of the retreat. It has fallen back on its collaborationist line of which last Sunday's by-election in Calcutta's Entally constituency is evidence. The Congress-CPI alliance continues and will continue in West Bengal; so also in Kerala. The alliance is like the Indian soul which fire cannot destroy, nor weapons pierce. The critics of the collaborationist line within the CPI have been humbled. They may become more desperate, but they need have no illusion that the party line will change. The Soviet Union will not allow it, especially in view of the Rajasthan bang.

The CPI(M) is peeved with the Soviet Union for its persistently projecting a progressive image of Mrs Gandhi. Lest the Government of India should construe it as a tilt towards China, the party has embarked upon a much

more virulent attack on China's foreign policy outlines as enunciated by Vice-Premier Teng Hsiao-ping at the recent special session of the U.N. General Assembly. The implications are obvious. The CPI(M) cannot toe the Soviet line for that will be an irretraceable step towards losing its separate identity. Where will be the great leaders but for the party which they lead? The bitter attack on China is a signal to the Prime Minister that for all its criticism of the Soviet Union, the party has not abjured the parliamentary path. The Prime

Minister now knows that neither the CPI nor the CPI(M) is going to vary its policy because of her ruthless handling of the railway strike. That the strike has been unconditionally withdrawn on the tenth anniversary of Nehru's death was an unintended tribute from the daughter to the father who had similarly crushed the Central Government employees' strike in the fifties. No wonder that after the cool performance, the Prime Minister retired for a week to the cooler heights of Simla.

Theories Galore

There is one positive disadvantage of being in a political party and specially in a communist party in that one has to have a theory to justify the party's actions. The Communist Party of India is suffering under this disadvantage rather too harshly. After a series of provocations from the Indira Congress, culminating in the throttling of the railway strike, it is hard put to accept the ruling Congressmen as progressives. So much so that Mrs Gita Mukherjee was reported to have called Mrs Indira Gandhi, at a public meeting, the leader of the monopolists and the big bourgeoisie. However, that was an extreme case and possibly a slip of the tongue. So long as Russia and America co-operate in carving out their respective spheres of influence in India, so long as Russia nods its approval of the Indira Congress, the CPI has to have a theory to trail along the line of the Congress. At the onslaught of the ruling class on the workers and people of the country, the utmost it can do and which it has done is to partially shift its allegiance to the progressive section of the Congress. Which is a curious coinage indeed. The masses, as all communists are taught to

accept, are always progressive and cannot be compartmentalised into Congress, Jana Sangh, Communist, etc. Probably that is too dogmatic a view! By this time, the CPI has developed a great resilience in theorising. It has no faith in the Bihar Government but the Bihar Assembly is all right. The PDA in West Bengal has become extinct but the CPI must stick to it in spite of all humiliations and neglect. It must keep alive the coalition government in Kerala, although the Assembly there has a suspect majority. To keep the theory of progressive Congressites, it must cut its practices to size; the credibility of its practices is an altogether irrelevant category.

We have been so far led to think that a theory grows out of practice. But India is a fertile land where theories multiply as practices become non-existent. The communist parties of India have these days ceased to exist for all practical purposes. They have no programme or action which counts on the national scene. Therefore theories are mushrooming. It seems that there are as many theories for revolution as there are leaders even in the CPI-ML spectrum. Check again the CPI(M) theorising in West Bengal and Kerala. The dissidents are coming forward with new theories in West Bengal and Sri Nambudiripad is concocting new justifications for combining with the Muslim League. An idle brain is indeed a theoretician's workshop.

And Now Wage Reforms

Whatever might be said against New Delhi, perhaps the most preposterous is that it does not try to keep its conscience clear. The aftermath of the railway strike bears out the statement. As soon as it became clear that the Government does not have any moral ground to deny the railwaymen some more money when its own employees in many public sector undertakings are being allowed pay rises, New Delhi started talking of reforming the wage pattern in the country. It was as if one fine morning the leaders woke up in their air-conditioned bedrooms and realised that the wage structure has become too anarchical. Other things followed in the usual style. With exemplary speed a cell has been set up to look into the question threadbare and since the task is formidable, it has been given two years' time to prepare the report. For this period, presumably, we have to bear with the existing pattern, which ought not to prove very difficult as we have been promised a brand new millennium after only 24 months. And official PR men have taken all the care to emphasise the point that the Government means business this time and that it would not stand any nonsense. So, beware, another epoch-making socialist reform is in the offing!

The enthusiasm shown for this proposed rationalisation of wage structure is certainly most impressive. What New Delhi had said during the last one decade and a half that it would do but had been able to do will now be done. And all problems will be over. The exercise will certainly involve highly specialised studies, and it is just as well that none of our leaders who never fail

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to come out with a preview of the type of reforms contemplated has been uncharacteristically tightlipped this time. The reason, we guess, is that even these most prolific promise-makers realise that wage reforms is the last thing that the present government will ever be able

to do. Our economy has too many pressure groups, too many pockets of vested interests to become ever fit for a scientific wage system. That may sound a little cynical, but where is the scope in present-day India to be otherwise?

Less Sugar

Last year the sugar production touched a record high of 4.3 million tonnes; in the beginning of the current season there was the hope that output of the commodity would be around 4.5 million tonnes. Production till now and the fact that most of the mills have finished their crushing operations confirm that total output by September would be much less than what was originally expected. Was the original expectation too optimistic? Did not the millowners themselves claim that given a helpful government policy they would improve on their last season's performance? These are the questions that a layman would pose, but the answer to the crisis in production lies elsewhere. New Delhi has been pursuing a partial decontrol policy in sugar for some years; under this policy 70 per cent of the production is distributed through fair price shops while the remaining 30 per cent is sold by the mills on the open market. A record production in 1972-73 and the prospect of a still better output in the current season had a steady influence on the price of free-sale sugar; the trend persisted for quite some time. Industry and trade circles felt rather uneasy; they were finding it somewhat difficult to make an extra buck. The easiest way to come out of this uncomfortable situation was to put

the brake on production. Besides, they had been advised, in U.P., by the Chief Minister to pay higher prices to the growers on the eve of the elections, which they did. Now they want their price. The report that mills in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar had refused to lift sugarcane brought at their doorstep has not been given much importance by the monopoly Press and for obvious reasons. The Goenkas and Jains have interest in sugar. Unlike some time ago, the mills in many cases have refused to pay anything more than the statutory minimum price. It will not be surprising if because of the forced diversion of cane to gur and khandhari manufacturers and the mills' refusal to compensate the growers for the rise in cultivation costs, the acreage under cane is diverted to other crops. A higher production would have enabled the country to export 500,000 to 600,000 tonnes at a high unit value; last year's export earnings were also a record. The mills complain that the excise duty incentive policy has been wrongly conceived but that is not the fact. What they don't want is that the market is ever flooded with sugar.

As for jute, the growers have paid dearly for producing a record crop in the 1973-74 season. Apparently, there is no reason why this should be so. The demand for certain constructions of jute goods fortuitously went up in the wake of the international oil crisis. Overseas buyers of synthetic substitutes switched again to jute goods as they regained their competitive edge. But Indian speculators took advantage of the situation—rather stupidly—to raise the prices of jute goods. As a result, overseas buyers are now showing reluctance to buy. The Government's pleading with

the industry on this issue has not produced any result. In spite of the 33-day strike and power shortage, 1973-74 has been an exceptionally good year for the mills. It was well within their capacity to pay a remunerative price to fibre growers but they did not do that. Many growers had to do a lot of distress selling since they do not have the holding power; this has been particularly witnessed in the past few months. The Jute Corporation of India which entered into a back-to-back contract with the industry has been of greater help to mills than to farmers. Because of organisational drawbacks, the JCI could not procure more than half of the target it set for itself. Moreover, the mills have till now only paid a fraction to the JCI for the fibre supplied by it. With the fibre price touching a low of Rs. 30-35 a maund, the minimum price set by the Government, which itself was not remunerative, became a big joke. Surprisingly, the Agricultural Prices Commission has recommended that the support price be kept at Rs. 125 a quintal for Assam Bottoms delivered free in Calcutta in the 1974-75 season, though in the meantime, the cost of raising jute has steeply increased. Many growers as a result have decided to grow other crops which are commanding more remunerative prices. The mill authorities would say that it is not correct that they had a good time in 1973-74; in support of their claim they would put forward their balance-sheets. But we all know the age-old practice of mills not showing the actual purchase price of fibre in their books.

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The Bomb

R. M.

NOT many have gone into raptures over the exploding of a "nuclear device" on May 18. It is grinding poverty and joblessness from which stems the massive apathy of the masses to all such grandiose displays of power and prestige. Not so the world public; evidence of unfavourable international opinion is there.

The factor worth investigating in this business is its timing. It has been well known since about 1970, perhaps even earlier, that India did possess nuclear capability in embryonic form. It is not a far cry from successfully conducting chain reaction in atomic disintegration from within a reactor to one involved in the bomb. The factor that inhibited the chauvinists and hawks of New Delhi from adding nuclear weapons to their arsenal of conventional weapons was the lack of a matching delivery system. But with a benign super-power at its back, a super-power which has been using India in its drive in South Asia since August 1971, the acquisition of a necessary missile system was not difficult. The October 1973 war between the Arabs and Zionist Israel showed the power and efficacy of Russian missile weapons (ground-to-air, surface-to-surface and air-to-air types). India's present rulers are clever enough to walk on two tight ropes reaching out to U.S.-controlled economic aid and to Russian political and military cooperation and support. It is significant that India's Defence Secretary had had some secret talks with the Russian C-in-C a short while before the atomic blast was conducted at Pokaran in Jaisalmeer district in Rajasthan—a site disconcerting close to the Indo-Pakistan border.

The political aspect of the timing of this nuclear explosion has been guessed correctly by many observers both at home and abroad. The explosion was aimed at silencing the voice of dissent and the tumult of unrest of strikers, sufferers and the miserable of this still-unhappy land. It was a

warmy to China and an exulting assertion of the victor's superiority over Pakistan. Not surprisingly, therefore, its timing followed closely the recent visit of President Bhutto and his entourage to China. If there has been understanding between Pakistan and Chinese leaders over military and techno-economic aid, as India's rulers would like to hint, then its net result will be nullified. Pakistan must never have the temerity to try and be an equal!

The situation now being sought to be created and perpetuated by Nehru's daughter is the very antithesis of an Asia ordered after the Panchsheel of his dream. If the Pakistani rulers feel tempted to imitate this grand, super-nationalistic move of India, they will commit an historic blunder by joining a nuclear arms race among poor and under-developed Eastern nations. It hardly needs mentioning that, despite all the imperialistic machinations of the super-powers and their hypocrisy centring round SALT and the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty, this much-tormented world is not going to see nuclear war. The very deterrence of this ultimate weapon is a guarantee against its use. More, the people in many parts of the world are proceeding towards international brotherhood and are destined to attain this goal through the process of revolutionary struggle and emancipation. Nuclear weapons can but be a mocking reminder to future generations of the high-falutin hauteur of some of their rulers, and nothing more.

Meanwhile, of course, the impoverished peoples of all the developing countries of the Third World must maintain revolutionary alertness and foil or resist every attempt by their ruling-class-complexes to beguile and befool them with super-surcharged nationalistic sentiments and an alluring competition in power.

Technological advance and nuclear research are distinctively separate from nuclear detonations oriented to programmes for military purposes. Surely the Indian Government will not hold the alibi that the detonation was aimed at finding underground water for arid

Rajasthan! Water is presumed to exist in these areas 300 metres below ground level; and the detonation was made only 100 metres down.

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Democracy—WBCUTA Style

BY A CORRESPONDENT

LIKE every other year, college and university teachers from all corners of West Bengal poured into Fakirchand College in Diamond Harbour to attend the 48th Annual Conference of the West Bengal College and University Teachers' Association. They came with high hopes. They came to renew their pledge for united action and to further strengthen their ties of brotherhood with their colleagues so that more militant, more determined struggles for improving their condition can be launched in the future. But unfortunately most of them departed with a heavy heart and with a sense of loss. So many of their demands are still unfulfilled, so many of their rights are being forcibly taken away, and yet not a word of the future programme of struggle was uttered at the conference. Moreover, before their very faces their democratic rights within WBCUTA were brazenly flouted by the leaders.

The conference began on May 4.

The annual general meeting, on May 5, started with the delivery of the General Secretary's report. Quite a number of teachers expressed their dissatisfaction about its contents. Most of them considered it to be incomplete, full of equivocations and deficient in objectivity. They said that it had glossed over the capitulationist attitude of the leadership and its gross failure to lead the militant, struggling teachers to victory. Some of the teachers pointed out omissions and errors of detail. Some others raised more basic question of principle. It was pointed out that the democratic rights of the people are being trampled upon by the fascist rulers. It has become a crime to question the status quo. There are thousands of people languishing in jails where sub-human conditions prevail. It is the sacred duty of every freedom-loving man to oppose this reign of terror. Every democratic mass organization should take up arms against this. The general members of WBCUTA want to fight the oppressors,

but the leaders, for some inexplicable reason, hold them back. WBCUTA should immediately launch a firm and principled movement demanding the unconditional release of all prisoners held without trial. The movement should seek to establish the democratic rights of the people in general and of the teachers in particular irrespective of party affiliations.

This submission was applauded by the general members of WBCUTA for it expressed their innate democratic urge for freedom. But the leaders were unmoved and later events on that very day exposed their duplicity and ingrained spirit of opposition to the true principles of democracy.

A lecturer from Naihati narrated how an old and experienced lecturer of his college is being forced to retire before his time. When the Teachers Council called a meeting to discuss the issue the Principal, the ex-officio President of the Council, forced them to stop the discussion by referring to an article in the University Regulations which puts a limit to the powers and functions of the Teachers Council by clearly saying that the Council can only advise the Principal on academic matters which does not include the question of service security. (The Calcutta University First Regulations, 1966, Chapter III, Clause 18). The teachers once again tried to raise the issue, but they were forced to abandon the discussion again, because of the same objection.

The General Secretary, Prof Dilip Chakrabarty, happens to be a leading member of the Governing Body of the College. The speaker expressed his surprise how such a thing could happen in a college despite the presence of the Secretary himself. He demanded that WBCUTA take up this case and solve it without delay. He also emphasized the necessity of altering the University Regulations so that the Teachers Councils in various colleges can become more democratic and more able to safeguard the interest of

the teachers. As WBCUTA had some say in formulating the University Regulations in the first place, it is also its duty to see that the shortcomings are removed.

Immediately after this speaker another lecturer from the same college took the floor and after feigning some diffidence he accused his predecessor of telling lies, though the language of the charge was veiled. He went on to say that WBCUTA was not duty bound to do anything for the victimized lecturer for he is not a member of WBCUTA and he waved the copy of a letter at the audience to prove his contention. The assembled teachers were so angry that they would not allow the speaker to continue. This correspondent still remembers the jab of a bony but hard elbow on his ribs when he tried to pacify an angry young teacher. The President of the meeting, Prof Rabin-dranath Bhattacharya, however, stopped the altercation by disallowing the discussion.

A few words about the question of service security of the teachers. The authorities of a college can retrench the teachers with very little notice and almost without showing any cause. The relation between the authorities and the teachers closely resembles that between master and servant. The teachers, if sacked, may ask for compensation, but cannot, legally, demand reinstatement. This gives unscrupulous people who run colleges a lever that can be used to keep the recalcitrant teachers on leash. WBCUTA has fought to change this intolerable condition and the Government promised to pass a Bill that would ensure security of service for the teachers. Like many other promises made by the Government this also is yet to be fulfilled. But the WBCUTA leadership is, as usual, neglecting to press the Government on this vital issue. The incident described by the lecturer from Naihati is typical.

After the teachers finished their criticisms, the General Secretary made his reply. His speech was marked by lack of content. Prof Dilip Chakrabarty is an able speaker, but even his gift of the gab could not make the

patchwork of platitudes and half-truths convincing enough. After his explanation, the meeting was adjourned for the lunch break.

Election

When the lunch, an excellent repast, was over the teachers once again assembled on the floor. The election of the office-bearers was about to begin. A rumour was in the air that there would be no contest for the posts of the President, the two Vice-Presidents and the Treasurer. There will be a mock contest for the post of General Secretary. Two names, one of which would be a dummy, would be announced, the dummy would withdraw and so this post would also be filled without contest. The teachers were angry. They felt that such a mock election was not only unprincipled, but also motivated.

However, first the President officially announced the names of those who were newly elected to the Executive Committee. Then Prof Rabindranath Bhattacharya was re-elected President, Professors Santosh Mitra and Sourin Bhattacharya were elected Vice-Presidents and Prof Mrinmoy Bhattacharya was elected to the post of Treasurer. The decisions were unanimous.

Then the President announced that the Executive Committee, after much deliberation, has recommended two candidates for the post of General Secretary and the meeting must elect one of them. The candidates were Prof Amitosh Chakraborty and Prof Ajoy Bandopadhyay. At this juncture Prof Pijush Dasgupta took the floor to raise a point of order. The teachers, he said, being a part of that handful of people of our country who have had the benefit of higher education, have a special duty to uphold democratic principles. So they must not allow anything that was undemocratic to fester within their own organization. According to the WBCUTA constitution more than one name must be proposed by the Executive Committee, as had been done. But it was not specified how many names could be put up and it had become customary to propose two names, one of which usually

was a dummy who, following a pre-arranged plan, withdrew his candidature in favour of the other person. This was not very democratic, since the lack of clarity was used by some to further their own ends. There was another thing which went against the democratic spirit. Why should only the executive have the right to propose names for this extremely important post? Why should the general meeting be deprived of its right to choose its own candidates? What would happen if both the candidates recommended by the Executive Committee were rejected by the floor? Until these questions were answered the election about to take place was not valid according to democratic norms. The President, Prof Dasgupta said, should invite names from the meeting.

The President almost immediately ruled out this point of order. The election was valid according to the present constitution and was enough. Then Prof Ajoy Bandopadhyay took the floor. He wanted to withdraw his candidature. The General Secretary ought to be elected unanimously, he said, and a useless contest would impair the strength of the organization. The delegates could no longer contain their anger. "You cannot withdraw, the floor will not permit this sort of irresponsible behaviour", they cried. The President in the face of such fury had no alternative but to say that Prof Bandopadhyay could not withdraw. It would be unconstitutional. Several teachers went to the dais and angrily told the President that this kind of play-acting was downright dishonest. This election was a farce, it was illegal. Many people had many things to say about this, they must be given a chance to speak before the meeting. Amend the constitution immediately. It could be done easily, for the most powerful body, the house, demanded that. This cry was immediately taken up by the general members and they asked for an explanation from the leaders.

The leaders were impervious to the general anger. They maintained that the President's ruling was supreme and no one would be allowed to speak on this issue. The election would go on

in spite of what the delegates said. They called upon the members to collect ballot papers and to vote peacefully. Meanwhile Prof Ajoy Bandopadhyay had once again come to the mike and said that he would not withdraw as the delegates and the President would not allow him. But please, he appealed to the audience, do not vote for me, choose Prof Amitosh Chakraborty. This incensed the teachers even more. Why was such an unwilling person recommended by the executive, they wanted to know. Besides, he did not seem to know that campaigning from the dais was illegal.

Boycott

By this time there was quite a crowd before the dais. Every one was demanding that those who wanted to express their opinions ought to be allowed to speak. The leaders said, no, the President had ruled otherwise. Then why, people asked, was Prof Ajoy Bandopadhyay allowed to have his say? Still the leaders remained obdurate. Prof Dilip Chakraborty kept calling upon the teachers to stay calm, to obey the President and not to disrupt the proceedings. But no one listened to him and no one went forward to collect the ballot papers and to vote. The leaders and their lackeys tried to drown the voices of protest by shouting slogans like 'Long Live WBCUTA' 'Long Live Unity' etc. But the teachers were not fooled. They continued to voice their anger. The notion of boycotting the election was already half-formed in the minds of the delegates and when some teachers raised the slogan of boycotting, the cry was taken up right away. Many people left the meeting. Several knots of teachers, arguing and gesticulating with anger in their faces, could be seen everywhere. Slowly but surely delegates started leaving the meeting. Many stayed on to witness the rigmarole as polling began sluggishly.

When the polling was over and the votes counted it was found that about 450 votes were polled out of about 1800 eligible voters present. Only 422 votes were found valid even and the rest were deliberately cancelled. The general

The Sunderbans—II

Jotedars And All

BY A CORRESPONDENT

IN a letter from Tilman Hinckle to Warren Hastings as quoted in the District Handbook of 24-Parganas of the 1951 census, there is evidence that the British rulers decided to reclaim land from the Sunderbans area in order to increase production of foodgrains and to fetch revenues as well. Perhaps the famine in the country at that time also encouraged them to proceed with such reclamation.

At first small plots, and from 1830 onwards big ones were leased out to individuals. The plots were reclaimed in part. Even to this day these plots can be recognized by numbers like Satjelia 7. The trees were beheaded but not uprooted. Small plots of land were then leased out to the rayats by these new zamindars. Most of them were from the middle class. These can be inferred from a Bengali satire by Trailakanath Mukhopadhyay. Damudaran Charit. Some of these zamindars were British, like the Morell brothers in the early period (Morellgunge in Khulna in Bangladesh) and David Hamilton (lately Gosaba in 24-Parganas).

Most of the native zamindars were absentees. They were happy with the revenue. Small plots were sold to the rayats. Farming was not so easy. These rayats then had to uproot the beheaded trees. The land could not be ploughed at first. Very small plots were cultivated with spades. Naturally none but the most poor and hardy came forward for such bleak prospects. The value of the land was not very high. People who witnessed these methods in the last phase of reclamation in areas like Gosaba, Satjelia, Monmathanagar, Amalameti, Ramgarh, etc. are still living. The last named place was reclaimed only a few years ago.

For the reclamation of forests these grantees employed a number of labourers who were Sunderbans wood cutters, coolies from Chhotanagpur and Mugh coolies (pp e x District Handbook of

members had virtually boycotted the election to register their protest against the high-handed behaviour of the leadership. Prof Amitosh Chakraborty was "elected" General Secretary. The leaders and their lackeys were highly elated.

After the various newly elected office-bearers addressed the meeting, one of the teachers who were opposed to this fraudulent election went to the dais and congratulated the new General Secretary, saying that as long as the new Secretary was elected, he was welcome. But it must be remembered that democratic norms were not observed at the meeting. The President's ruling was grossly unjust.

Soon after this speech the annual general meeting was over. On this day, once again the leadership of WBCUTA proved themselves ruthless opportunists.

On the next day, May 6, the open session of the annual conference began in the morning. A very small number of delegates were present and the college grounds looked empty and deserted. Various topics were discussed and related resolutions were adopted unanimously.

The new 700-1600 pay scale was discussed in great detail from different angles. Its implementation, its repercussions, its feasibility, and particularly its possible effect on the duties and responsibilities of the teachers—all these were discussed. The contention that the teachers should become more dutiful and that their social position is improved, was severely attacked by every one present. But it was not clearly pointed out that the new pay scale was a bribe with which the rulers were trying to buy up the intelligentsia.

The critical condition of the education system in India was also discussed in detail. Several teachers actively participated in this discussion; finally it was resolved that WBCUTA would formulate a line concerning a healthy, correct, living and socially conscious education policy and discuss it with various mass organizations, political organizations and student bodies, seeking their opinion so that a comprehensive attempt can be undertaken to rebuild the structure of education in our country.

Many other resolutions were adopted at the conference out of which a few deserve special mention. One condemned the diabolical design of U.S. imperialism which in connivance with other imperialist powers has decided to set up a military naval base in Diego Garcia and demanded immediate abolition of the base and complete withdrawal of all forces from the island. Resolutions were adopted demanding protection of the democratic rights of the people, immediate and unconditional release of all political prisoners, abolition of all repressive and illegal acts. It was also resolved that WBCUTA would struggle against the fantastic price rise and demand that the Government take steps to lower the price level. The conference condemned the attacks on the teachers by anti-social elements and urged the Government to take effective measures against such acts of hooliganism. The conference also adopted a resolution supporting the struggle of the railway workers and promising to stand by them.

After the discussions were over the President of the Conference, Dr Ashok Mitra, spoke to the assembled teachers with great emotion. His speech was quite moving. After him several teachers, including a representative of the host college, addressed the meeting and then the conference was over.

All the resolutions adopted by the conference are necessary and militant in spirit. But what is going to be done with them? Would they also go the way of all the past resolutions adopted in past conferences? In the words of a young teacher, "We shall see. The leadership would of course be reluctant, but if we can fight to strengthen our organization we are sure that the opportunist leaders will be swept away and our just cause will triumph. As you have seen, the leadership deliberately neglected to formulate a plan for our future struggles. So it is evident that they do not seriously intend to struggle to win our demands. But we shall alter all this. We intend to fight for our economic, democratic and political demands. We intend to struggle to build up a united front of teachers, non-teaching staff and students. We are confident that our united effort shall be successful".

24-Parganas, Census 1951). Tribals were brought for embankment even by Hamilton. Those of the tribal men who settled here got special treatment from him. Their land could not be bought by others. Dayapur, a village on the Hamilton estate, is recognised in the 1961 census as a tribal village. But those who settled in this area before Hamilton's period were not a few. In Sandeshkhali, out of the total population of 1,24,204 the number of the tribals was 31,830 (1961 census report). In Damudaran Charit the Santhals (a general name for the tribal men) are mentioned. Most of these tribal men are now found as day labourers.

Hamilton also brought Oriya people for embankment work. None of them are found in the area as permanent dwellers. But these Oriya people can not be neglected in a study of the Sunderbans area. The jungle-goers say that even now wood cutters consist of a large number of Oriyas. In the last phase of deforestation none was required to be brought from outside the area. It was already inhabited by so many have-nots who would risk anything to ensure, their existence. More will be said about them in connection with jungle-goers.

During reclamation hindrances were not only from nature. The zamindars of the adjacent areas tried to occupy by force the reclaimed areas and/or its products. Tilman Hinckle, the first commissioner of this area, had to take measures against this dacoity. This is mentioned in O'Malley's Bengal District Gazetteers. This and natural hindrances caused the native zamindars to be in general, out of the picture. Their 'nayebs' and other subordinates had to do odd jobs. Subsequently the British rulers were disinterested in the reclamation work. This is easily seen in the fact that the area was not well connected with the mainland. A fair communications system was never organised. It became rather a secluded area. British law and order was never strictly imposed. Full of islands as the area is and with very bad communications it became a secluded area. Thus the feudal system prevailed in a very crude form. The newly created jotedars play-

ed a most vital role as the power-holder. Here began a very old story.

The Jotedars

The jotedars as observed may be classified in three main categories. They are either cultivators with big holdings, or moneylenders or businessmen and smugglers. Those who cultivated land in small plots with spades bought new plots at a cheap rate. They employed the 'have-nots' as day labourers and went on increasing their property. Some of them as soon as they became well-to-do became extravagant at the same time. They were not very particular about the care of the land. A day labourer who is the grandson of one such jotedar said that his grand-father did not believe that the embankment would stand. He would sell portions of his land on any occasion. In some cases it has been observed that the children of some jotedars are now poor, but some of his hired labourers are jotedars in the same area. These jotedars are mainly from the toiling people and, as such, though they are sharing power, their role has never been vital.

The second class of jotedars is from moneylenders. As soon as the area became cultivable and habitable, businessmen and mahajans were not late in coming. In the post-cultivation period dearth is a common feature for the cultivators. The moneylender is there, ready with his money and other requirements as the god-sent rescuer. The thumb-impression can never be denied. One such money-lender took away nine bighas of land from a cultivator who had borrowed only nine rupees. This man, now a owner of a cinema hall, once made almost all of his villagers his serfs. His saying was the law. He followed his father's tradition. The father had been a tout of the zamindar. The man is even now a terror to the people of his village. A dacoit from this village demanded that the father be beheaded even if nothing could be had from his house. By chance murder was averted.

The cultivator would reap a good harvest and yet not a single corn could be consumed by him. All the harvest

was taken away by the moneylender. Subsequently he would lose his land and become a day labourer on his own land. It was very hard to go away from his familiar land and the mahajan who had become a jotedar would not allow him to leave. He would get advance money from the mahajan and foodgrains would be supplied to him whenever necessary. This picture is not uncommon even now in the interior of the area. This kind of serfdom prevailed everywhere in the British period. Even on an estate like Gosaba managed by Hamilton where money-lending was prohibited, this semi-serf system could not be totally checked. Sometimes the whole village was under the control of this moneylender cum jotedar.

Businessmen-Jotedars

The regime of the mahajans is not yet over. But in all the prominent places in the area businessmen-jotedars are now in the forefront. This change took place in the post-independence period before the eyes of the author.

Such a secluded area was an ideal place for unscrupulous businessmen. They would make any sort of margin from an article. There was no competition. In the meantime smugglers who smuggled prohibited commodities from and to the then East Pakistan took help of these businessmen. Many of them earned a lot as middlemen. The area is also an ideal place for smugglers. The police, it is said, never stand in the way. Only dividend is to be paid to them. A police officer, it is said, earned one thousand rupees from these smugglers in a night. Hasnabad, Kumirmari, Mollakhali, Gosaba and Basanti had been the centres of these smugglers. One would find a small hut with a grocer's shop, but he would hardly suspect that the grocer has a capital of at least fifty thousand rupees. Sometimes these smugglers were totally deceived by these businessmen. Sudden new big shops could be seen at market-places. Petty businessmen were driven out of the place. Adulterated commodities were brought to the market. Black-marketing took a deep root. Ultima-

er. nd vn ay arld et nd m is e-f-sh. oa y-rf d. er m
only these notorious businessmen became wholesale dealers of the area. Huge amounts of hard cash in their hand were a blow to the moneylending mahajans in the proper places. Within a very short period this section gained power and proceeded towards buying land. But sure enough, business remained their main source of income. Big plots of lands are subsidiary.

The higher price of rice and its hoarding, though a common feature of the country, could not establish the power of the moneylending jotedars. The businessmen only changed their commodity. Rice became their own weapon.

The appearance of these business-jotedars was a blow to the semi-feudal system. The have-nots now could sell their houses at prominent places to these businessmen at high prices and after selling they moved into the interior. Their lot did not improve. Only the hard cash gave them comfort for a few days.

Now, everywhere in the Sunderbans area at key places the businessmen-jotedars have the power. In the interior area the money-lending jotedars have still the upper hand. The role of the cultivator-jotedars is not positive, though very often they are used as political representatives.

The role of the moneylending mahajans and the influence of black money may seem common to all parts of the country. Only in this secluded area, this has been more crude. Money here does not get any new scope and no economic development has so far been possible. Accumulation of money in a few hands has not led to any new economic effort. A few years back, a very rich medical practitioner saw jotedars who kept currency notes folded within a 'Panjika'. Probably some of these notes are now outdated. The amount which remains in the area is kept either in the iron-chest or in some other place where it is soiled. The exploitation, however, goes on unabated. The luxurious living of the exploiting section is only a current phenomenon, following an improved communications system. But luxury also drains out money from here.

(To be continued. Part I appeared on May 25).

Kerala

Class Betrayal In The Countryside

K. VIJAYKUMAR

WHEN one has worked for over fifty years on a piece of land one tends to know each particle of it with the intensity and passion of a long love affair. One remembers the good harvests and the bad ones, the rains that flooded and the ones that failed, with nostalgia bordering on tenderness. The land takes on a personal colour; one becomes a part of the soil; the soil grows on you. But all this does not fit into the concepts that rule our countryside. To be precise, the semi-feudal, semi-colonial countryside. The land may take on a personal colour, you maybe a part of the soil, but the land by law belongs to the landlord, and he does not care for such sentiments. To him, over fifty years of employment does not count; what matters is the age, and over fifty years means slower movements and less work done within a specified period of time. Thus the question is not between service and age, but between age and production. The landlord prefers the latter and the worker finds himself unemployed at the age of sixty-five.

At first nothing is comprehensible. This cannot happen, not after tending and tilling the same piece of land for so many years. Slowly realisation dawns. The benevolent mask of the landlord is ripped off. What the worker sees is a monster. Meanwhile the Agricultural Workers Union, controlled by the CPI(M) and a member of the CITU, takes up his cause. The workers decide to prevent the landlord from carrying out the agricultural operations which he intends to do with new labour from the neighbouring village.

The next day ploughing begins. The landlord brings in his tractor and the new workers. They are young and willing to work. The vast army of the unemployed is in the service of the ruling class in the absence of class-conscious politicisation. The police are also

there. And as if to supplement them the landlord has also brought in his private army of thugs and hoodlums. They stand on one side with short, thick sticks in their hands. They are full of bravado and arrack. They proclaim that the sticks are the first line of defence and pat their waists to emphasize the long knives. The police are amused. They have really nothing to do. The long knives would do their work more efficiently and neatly. All that they need do would be to pick up the pieces and arrest the workers to maintain law and order a la garibi hatao.

The tractor begins to move. At first nothing happens. The landlord has given the workers the option to make the first move. They are confused. On one side the police with their boots and lathis. On the other the landlord's men out to kill. Slowly a procession is formed and slogans are raised. We have heard them before. Nevertheless "Inquilab Zindabad" has a magic in it, the magic which turned many into a million! The procession moves forward. Violence waits on the wings watching out for one wrong move. The workers, one by one, picket the tractor. The landlord smiled. The battle is over before it has even begun. The tractor is driven slowly and carefully, stopping every time a worker falls in front of the vehicle. One by one the picketers are removed. They go unprotesting the moment the police condescend to ask them. Once in a while a slogan rises in the air to fall back into the pitying silence; the swan-song of a tragi-comedy. One never knew that Inquilab Zindabad could sound so plaintive and that too in a village with a long tradition of peasant struggles. Yet within the context of the betrayals that have plagued the Indian communist movement the debacle of this village too, has some sense.

The struggle over, the landlord gets his work done. He has lost some money

on the police and the thugs. But who cares, doesn't he look more powerful than before? In the evening, as if to justify the 'struggle' or the humiliation, the union calls a public meeting. The loudspeakers blare film songs. Anybody who fails to see the flags would mistake the affair to be a wedding, temple-festival or some such thing. The songs are full of love and romance reduced to the level of vulgarity: the cancerous growth of a comprador-culture. The people gather. The leaders arrive. The meeting begins. All the old phrases, the catchwords, the verbal gymnastics are repeated ad nauseam. It is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing. Caught up by history the CPI(M) can only react like this. More legal than the 'guardians of law and order', the CPI(M) can only protest when the bourgeoisie bares its fangs. And when the jackboots start marching, as it happened in West Bengal, much-vaunted mass organisations would collapse like a house of cards. Truly it is said, correct tactics follow from correct class analysis! The outdated CPI(M) is now facing the judgment of history for having cheated the Indian working class.

And in this village in Kerala, make it any village, anywhere in India, tonight there will be feasting and merry-making in the landlord's camp. Tonight an unemployed, sixty-five-year-old peasant, racked with cough, would wonder about how to survive; how to pass the long night of oppression and betrayal that stretches out before him. But even within the darkness of the night a faint glimmer is visible. The vanguard of the Indian proletariat, having shaken off the coils of the dead and wasteful past, and learning new lessons, and having learnt new lessons, is forging weapons of struggle in the purifying fire of Marxism-Leninism Mao Tse-tung Thought. The night may be long, but the dawn is inevitable, and one can say with confidence: Comrades, the East is Red!

The Problem Of 'Left Unity' In Kerala

RAMJI

THE attempt by the CP(M) to forge a left unity front in Kerala against the ruling clique has run into trouble, mainly because of the contradictions in the basic line of approach.

For the first time, the Marxist party was able to enlist the support of the steadily growing Congress Radicals' group, during the Kerala Bandh on May 3, which proved to be a thumping success. Also, during the by-election at Irikur, which the Marxist candidate won at the expense of RSP, the Marxists were able to enlist the very active support of the Congress Radicals. Both in the bandh and in the by-election the CPI took up an antagonistic attitude which however failed to cut much ice. For both the Marxists had the support of the Kerala Congress party.

However, the Kerala Congress has not taken kindly to the association of the Marxists with the Congress Radicals. They are now pressurising the Marxists to dissociate from the Radicals. This is natural because both while they were inside the official party and after they were expelled, the Radicals were opposed to the Kerala Congress. Mr M. A. John, the leader of the Radicals, fought against the alliance of the Congress and the Kerala Congress during the Corporation elections in 1969. Thus, any move by the Marxists to come to an understanding with the Kerala Congress is stoutly opposed by the Radicals. There are fundamental differences between them. The Kerala Congress is championing reservation on the basis of economic position, while both the Radicals and the Marxists are for reservation on communal basis, as it now is. Further, the Marxist party's State conference resolutions have pinpointed three vital issues, viz. food, private educational institutions, and the Agricultural Workers Act, which are opposed by the Kerala Congress. When such is the

case, the only uniting factor is anti-Congressism, which the Radicals do not approve of. The Radicals do not feel that the Congress is the main enemy. They feel that the Congress as an all-India party could be forced to play a democratic popular role.

The split in the Muslim League has triggered different reactions in these three parties. Both the Marxists and the Kerala Congress, the Radicals feel, are trying to forge an opposition front with the help of the breakaway section of the League. The Radicals feel that the split is unprincipled and purely based on the personal ambitions of certain Muslim League leaders. The only ostensible difference between the two Muslim League groups veers round Section 68 of the Kerala University Bill which the Marxist party had supported.

The Radicals feel that unity should not be on the basis of issues, merely, but on the basis of concrete, agreed proposals to solve outstanding issues.

The stand of the Congress Radicals in Kerala has helped to create ideological confusions in the leftist opposition ranks.

The Radicals are now engaged in conducting a series of camps for party cadres in different centres in Kerala. While they swear by the basic principles and ideologies of the Congress they are at loggerheads with the official party which they feel has strayed away from the basic tenets. They feel that they could eventually steer the Congress back to principled paths powered by strait-jacketed ideology.

While they could and are having a minimal impact, at least in Kerala, one wonders how their thesis of cleaning the Congress from outside could be implemented at the all-India level, since even a rudimentary form of Radical organisation at the all-India level has yet to take shape.

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JUNE 8, 1974

International Graphics

SANDIP SARKAR

SINCE World War II there has been a revival of interest in various techniques of graphics. It has an advantage over painting or sculpture. It can be inexpensively duplicated quite a number of times. Hence the so-called common man of the affluent West can afford to buy them. Simple economics is the reason for their popularity. Artists also master one of the media of graphics—lithography being the great favourite—because they find the purely technical side challenging. It also helps them to reach a larger audience willing to be sufficiently generous to the artists. But none of these reasons explains what allures many artists in West Bengal to become exclusively print-makers.

There is a loan exhibition of the Museum of Modern Art, New York, touring India with 50 prints by 49 artists done in postwar Western Europe and America. Eastern Europe, which has a tradition in print-making, has been left out. The exhibition in Calcutta has been co-sponsored by the USIS and the Birla Academy and will be on view till June 9.

It becomes quite clear from this exhibition that painters and sculptors are generally the best print-makers and with rare exceptions they all happen to be European modern masters. It follows from this that a work of art is more than just technical skill. It is evident that American technological culture which is capitalistic also, reeks of imbalance and immaturity and sets out to destroy human, cultural and artistic values. The inherent and acquired stupidity of American art—Pop. Op and what have you—is pushed down our throats as art by high-powered salesmanship, Riva Castleman in this case, who as the curator of the Print Department of the Museum of Modern Art, New York, has selected the exhibits. It goes to her credit of course, that the exhibition has illustrated texts which help one to understand the technical side of things.

Frankly speaking I found some of the American exhibits nauseating. Such works as Jim Dine's "The World of Anne Waldman", which uses multiple graphic media has coloured hearts and vegetables but defies any justification for its inclusion. So also Victor Vasarely's "Permutations", a combination of circles and squares, Roy Lichtenstein's cartoon strip type serigraph "Sweet Dreams Baby", Sam Francis' "Untitled Lithographs" and Robert Rauschenberg's "Lawn" mar the standard of the exhibition. If Omar Rayo's "Little Machine", a safety pin done in relief, is a big joke, then Andy Warhol's "Marilyn" is a sick joke.

Braque's "Leaves, Colour, Light" is poetry which is simple and yet profound. It is a portrait of a vase with flowers, the artist's usual white binding lines demarcating areas. If Braque is sophisticated, then Picasso is bursting with energy. His "Picador and Bullfighter" is robust while his "Owl on the Chair" has been subtly constructed with vigour. Leger, Miro and Matisse do not seem to be in their elements. Chagall's blue dominant "Kamalkamara Elopes with the Princes" has the flourish and the charm of the Arabian Nights. Jean Arp's lithograph "Configuration" shows a feel for sculptural rhythm and volume. Sebastian Matta's "Bus" has the quality of child art in it. Dubuffet's "Carrot Nose" and de Kooning's "Minie Mouse" and Hayter's "Sun Dance" are aesthetically satisfying.

The Modern Masters have all imprinted their character on their prints which makes it dead easy to identify their work, for it is in no way different from their serious work. The exclusive graphic artists choose this medium because they have not been able to work out an identity. Calcutta also produces similar works which are technically excellent but aesthetically unimpressive. Beware! Americans maybe like the Martians are invading us with superior technology and soulless junk.

Foreign Influence On Tagore Music

BY OUR MUSIC CRITIC

OF the three week programme of Tagore's birthday celebrations under the auspices of Rabindra Sadan most of the time was taken up by dance, drama and music composed or adapted during the poet's life-time, the solitary exception being the invocation to the controversial and mysterious Lady of foreign shores referred to in some of his poems. The late Buddhadev Bose provoked a storm when, some years back, he contended this foreign influence on Tagore and referred to the rowing Lady of "Niruddesh Yatra". But his argument was not convincing since the imagery of the young boatman from afar has been a traditional feature of Bengali folk songs.

The script written by Mr Bhaskar Basu and recited by Mr Pradip Ghosh seemed not only superficial but highly unconvincing. It referred again and again to the poems of "Purabi" and the Argentine Lady, Victoria Okampo, who had come into intimate relationship with the poet when he was in the Argentine capital. Granted that the kind Lady had rendered passionate service to the poet and thereby won his heart, it is not understood how these extraneous incidents came to have any direct bearing on the songs composed during that period or soon after. To prove his fanciful contention the script-writer made indiscriminate reference to such songs as contain the words "bideshi" (foreigner) or bideshini (foreign lady) regardless of the fact that the tunes and tonal structures concerned do not contain even the remotest Western influence. It is one thing to suspect an influence without ever ascertaining it and quite a different thing to prove and show it in the language of music.

The first part of Mr Basu's experimental programme was devoted to citation of Tagore songs containing the reference to the foreigner and was initiated by "ami chini go chini tomarey"

as harmonised by Indira Devi Choudhurani and sung in chorus by members of the Triveni music circle in their programme of "ogo bideshini" at the Sadan on May 13. The song of course was well sung but it is highly doubtful if these abstract improvisations go happily with Tagore's music. This harmony was composed not less than thirty years before the death of Tagore but he never interested himself in getting any more of his songs harmonised by his capable niece. Because in music as in religion Tagore was the votary of one god—not many.

"Se din du janey" was very commendably sung by Tatyana Morozova (she is really a voice!) but it was not pointed out in what respect it was influenced. So was the case with the first two songs sung by Mr Devabrata Viswas. "Sakaruna Venu" refers to a boat from afar; was that enough evidence of foreign influence? Perhaps Mr Basu forgot to take note of the imagery of a woman going by a village lane to fetch water with a pitcher held against her waist. Does it really happen in the West? Indeed, Western influence on Tagore music is too deep and subtle to be so superficially located.

The second part of the programme was better planned and executed. Some Irish and Scottish originals were sung by Mr Reginald Jacobs and the Tagore adaptations were sung by Mr Viswas and Mrs Sumitra Sen and one in chorus. Nancy Lee and Robin Adair could not be sung for lack of original notation. Nineteenth century songs have already become obsolete in England while we in India regale ourselves with repetitions of feudalistic songs of the Great Mogul period.

Although an unsuccessful attempt the programme was solitary departure from the stereotyped variety programmes of these days. Mr Bhaskar Mitra deserves credit for the background music of the second part which was participated in by Mr Moolky (piano), Mr Bobby Banks (saxophone), Mr Dilip Roy and Mr Rabin (violin), Mr Viswanath Dey (cello) and Kumar Virendranarayan (flute). Mr Devabrata Viswas was short of breath. He gave his own interpretation of the Tagore songs.

To Dream In Blazing Clarity

BY A DRAMA CRITIC

"PURBARANGA" has proved itself a powerful exponent of committed theatre in its production of "Professor Mamlock". Its latest offering "Panchjaner Gappo" (based on a short story by Manik Bandopadhyay) has confirmed the earlier impression and it has come out with a higher degree of showmanship and technical expertise. The story of an average lower middle class family, their frailties and noble traits, their ambitions and frustrations, their courage and cowardice, has been told with imaginative objectivity and with an unerring eye on emotional and physical details. The family is almost archetypal in character; the old father, a symbol of decaying idealism, the couple representing middle class values with all their virtues and vices, the Mephistophilean millionaire "friend" who wants to purchase their souls by tempting them into a degenerating affluence and the young son as the spirit of revolt against the existing order of things. There is also a one-man chorus dressed as a clown who introduces and interprets the action in the play. The drama is built around a constant tug-of-war between the rich "friend's" lucrative baits to entice the family into his bargain and the family's struggle to withstand the pressure. In the process, the playwright-director brings many facets of the human character to the fore. The director knows his social set-up inside out and the characterisation is always forceful and thoroughly adult. The human beings are shown from the point of view of socio-economic relationship without of course, their emotional identity being lost at all, and the stage becomes, in Martin Esslin's language, "a laboratory of revolutionary enlightenment".

The playwright-director Ranjan Ghosh has adapted the Brechtian technique to illustrate his view-point and the "estranging" devices have been employ-

ed with imagination and ingenuity. In the construction of the play, he has deliberately rejected the conventional patterns of the traditional well-made plays. The story does not reach to a suspense-ridden climax but is told in a series of different situations and whenever the audience is liable to be engrossed in the narrative, the chorus is there to halt the action and to dispel the cathartic illusion. The director has used songs to interrupt the action and to explain the motivations of his characters and events and there is also a sequence of movie-film projection, a documentation of hunger and poverty stalking the country. Lighting and stage decor have done a great deal to highlight the director's style.

Not that the production is faultless. While the playwright-director's conception is clear, he has been a little handicapped in the execution mostly by the poor performance of his acting crew. Apart from the actress playing the mother who combines professionalism with an intellectual understanding of the character and the director himself in the role of the rich friend presenting a cameo portrayal of sophisticated cunning, the others are either self-conscious or listless and the chorus is just amateurish. The film-projection needs better synchronisation with the accompanying song. The introductory portions should also be cut down to the minimum and the chorus interruptions should be less. But with all these obstacles it goes to the credit of the director that he has mostly succeeded in projecting his message, in keeping his spectators wakeful and watchful and in putting across Brecht's idea of letting the audience "dream in blazing clarity".

For Frontier contact

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JUNE 8, 1974

Letters

Journey To Nowhere

My name was recently in the news along with others as a member of the Kotnis Memorial Committee delegation to China. SITA World Travels, Delhi, informed me of my selection by post and telegraph, with the evident approval of the External Affairs Ministry. I made an air-dash to Calcutta at their bidding only to discover at the Passport Office that the External Affairs Ministry had cancelled endorsement for China in my passport. I am not a rich man, and I am not used to squandering my money. The External Affairs Ministry is welcome to disapprove of my selection. But it could have displayed a little sense of decency in the mode of conveying the decision.

DR HIREN GOHAIN
Gauhati University, Assam

The Great Betrayal

Once again the Indian working class has been betrayed—thanks to the petty-bourgeois and revisionist leadership of the two communist parties. Especially the role of the CPI and its affiliate the AFUC in the railway strike should serve as a warning to the workers before they launch strikes against the present fascist dictatorship of Indira Gandhi. The CPI, after Brezhnev's visit has been playing the role of an agent-provocateur in breaking working class movements in a systematic manner, without arousing any suspicion. But now the lid is off! The CPI has successfully sabotaged the railway strike from within. The railway workers have been subjected to the utmost humiliation—even without getting their arrested leaders released, they were forced to call off the strike. This is a final warning to the entire working class that strikes and dharnas are not going to improve their lot, not even their voting the parliamentary-communist parties to power. They have to look towards a party which has no illusions about the so-called parliamentary democracy that

we are witnessing. Only when all the Revolutionary Communists in the country unite will the struggle for the emancipation of the working class succeed.

ELKAY
Hyderabad

Against Writers

The Andhra Pradesh Government has once again proved the nature of its feudal and fascist rule by arresting the revolutionary writers, T. Madhusudan Rao (Secretary), K. V. Ramana Reddy, Varavara Rao, Cherabanda Raju, M. T. Khan (Executive Members) of the Revolutionary Writers Association, Ranganatham (Editor 'Pilupu') and others. This time the rulers conspired against the prominent members of Virasam through its intelligence department and foisted a so-called conspiracy case on 46 comrades. We condemn this uncivilized and fascist act of the Government and demand immediate release of our comrades.

NIKHILESWAR
JWALAMUKHI, Hyderabad

Mathura Arrest

A statement signed by over forty people in Delhi says:

Intellectuals—writers, journalists, artists, theatricians, lawyers and teachers of the Capital—have for some time been greatly disturbed by the anti-people policies of the Indian Government. We have seen and heard of instances where the Government has resorted to threats and violence to quieten the voices of those intellectuals who are connected with or committed to the revolutionary working class. Many comrades have been made the target of police atrocities, some have lost their lives in democratic struggles and countless others have been victimised in other ways.

The recent arrest in Mathura of the well-known Marxist thinker, Professor Savyasachi, under the DIR is yet another case in point. We voice our strong protest against this.

Savyasachi's collection of poems "Subah hone se pahle", his book, "Ham kya Karen" and the Hindi literary quarterly edited by him "Uttarardh", are against the interests of the ruling-exploiting classes. His arrest is an attack on the fundamental rights of freedom of expression.

We are distressed to note that the DIR and MISA—acts that should be used against black-marketeers, zamindars, monopolists and anti-social elements, are being used to quell the voices of progressive intellectuals.

Programme & Actions

My attention has been drawn to an article captioned "More on Andhra Politics" by Mr S. Roy published in your weekly dated 19-1-74. Therein, it is stated: "Lastly, a break in the party became imminent when the jail leaders through their Advocate argued in the court that the arrested leaders had nothing to do with the actions in the Agency area and that Pulla Reddy, Ramana Rasayya and others were alone responsible for the actions".

I happened to be the Senior Counsel for the accused in the court. I am not concerned with internal differences, if any, in the ranks of any party or organisation. I feel it proper to inform you as to what actually was argued. The contentions were either not properly understood or misreported.

Sri T. Nagi Reddy and Sri D. Venkateswara Rao were not represented by any advocate.

The charge against the accused was one of conspiracy to commit dacoities, murders, to wage war against the State, to make preparations for waging war by collecting ammunition, arms etc. Evidence of several incidents of dacoity and murder was adduced to prove the objects of the conspiracy. The prosecution alleged that the conspiracy was hatched in a conference held for three days in April 1969 in the village Atlapragada in Kistna District. Minutes of the proceedings recorded were seized and produced in court. The con-

FRONTIER

tents of a booklet "Retrospect of Political Developments" formed the basis for discussion in the conference. A resolution was passed constituting a committee to draft an immediate programme for implementation. The committee accordingly prepared the draft and got it printed. Several documents in the handwriting of Sri Ramanarasayya were also filed as pieces of evidence in the case. On the basis of the above evidence, prosecution urged that the charges were made out beyond reasonable doubt.

The advocate for the accused felt that the court should confine itself to the contents of the "immediate programme" only to decide whether there was a criminal conspiracy and if so what the nature of that conspiracy was. The actions that took place in the several areas cannot be looked into unless it be established that there was a nexus

between the incidents and the Immediate Programme.

Sri Ramanarasayya himself drew the attention of the State Committee to certain incidents complaining that Sri Pulla Reddy was acting on his own without consulting comrades. Having regard to the discussions that followed and the resolutions passed and the contents of several other documents, the advocates were fully justified in contending that the persons who attended the conference and participated in the same cannot be held liable for the incidents not contemplated under the Immediate Programme. The incidents must be deemed to be the acts of the individuals on their own responsibility. The writing of Sri Ramanarasayya himself furnished the basis to a great extent for the arguments on behalf of the accused who engaged counsel. Under

the circumstances, to state that the advocates were made to argue that Pulla Reddy, Ramanarasayya and others only were responsible for the actions, is totally divorced from the thrust of what was argued. It may also be added that even area committees condemned the incidents that happened in Pagideru etc.

An advocate argues on the basis of the material on record and not to the mere dictates of any client however eminent he may be. In other words he is not a tool in the hands of any one.

I write these lines not by reason of any feeling of indignation but only on account of my anxiety to convey to you the exact nature of the argument advanced.

Sd V. L. NARASIMHAM/
Advocate, Guntur

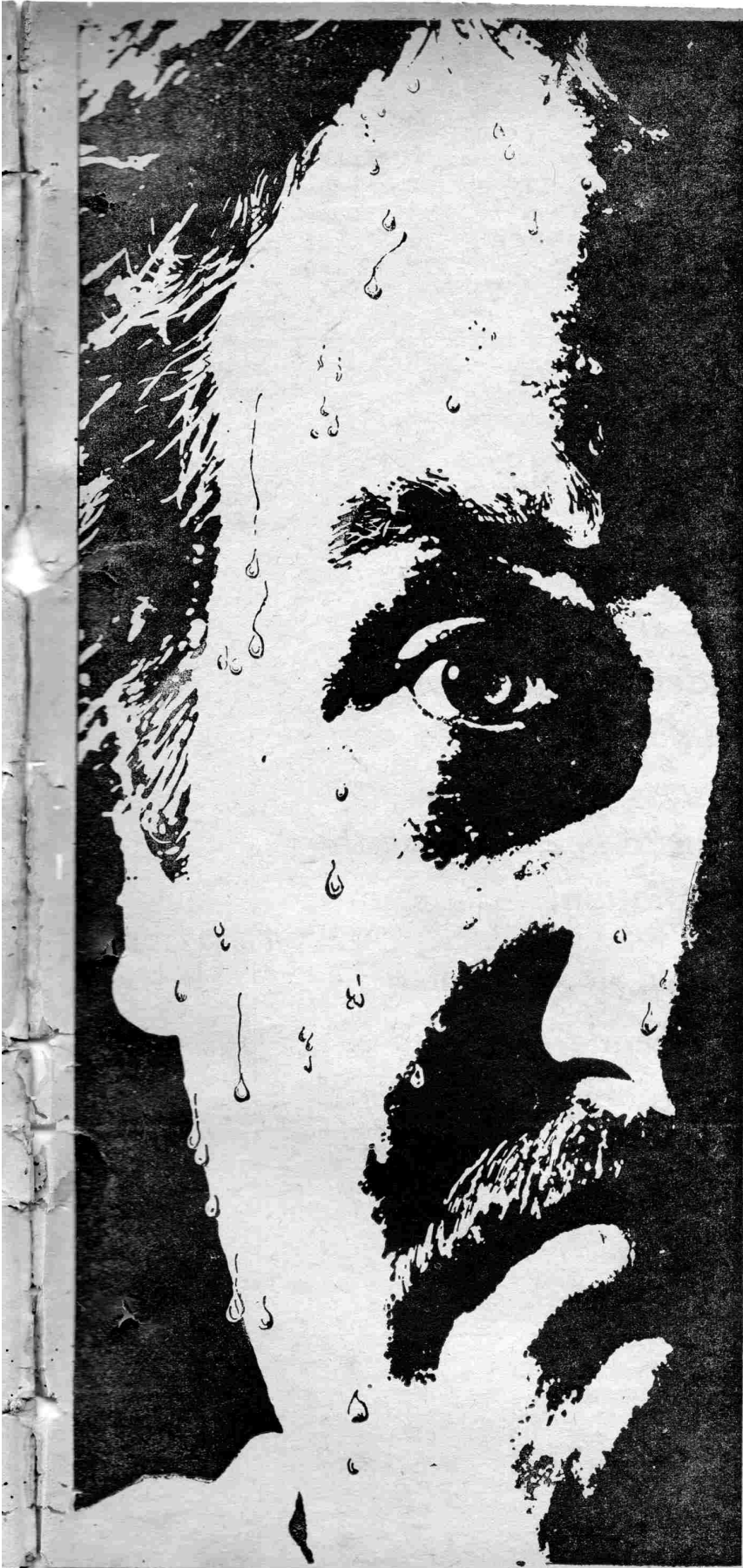
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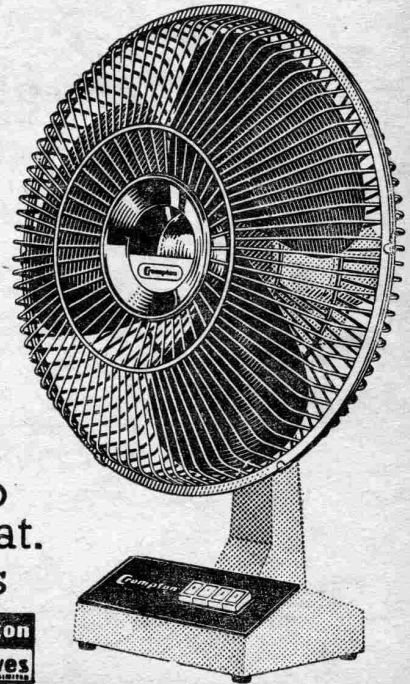
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We are therefore compelled to appeal to our readers and well-wishers for donations to 'Frontier'. We do so reluctantly, for we are aware of the general hardship.