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PARTNERS, IN OPPOSITION

THOSE who are fond of using communist language may yet use it when it concerns the CPI. For example, they might yet say that the West Bengal unit of this party has deviated from the party's Cochin Congress line, that the new tactical line of dissolving the PDA in West Bengal was reached after a bitter inner-party struggle, which still continues; that the CPI is about to take up the mass line after its "break" with the Congress and so on.

But it will be more natural if one uses the language of soccer with reference to the CPI game in West Bengal. It is evident that the Congress is not playing well even after bolstering the team with stalwarts hired from the CPI. Though the right-outs of the CPI have a fine understanding with the left-ins of the Congress, the right linkmen of the Congress are not at all co-operating with the left linkmen of the CPI, thus leaving yawning gaps in the defence. Therefore, a reshuffling of the team is in order. The Progressive Democratic Alliance is dissolved. The CPI and Congress are now entirely two different teams, and as the Maidan-goers are familiar with the phenomenon, they will play their respective games seeing that one does not hurt the other's interests. They will be partners, in opposition. It will be a more progressive democratic alliance.

Therefore, there is no need to speculate that Mr Rajeswara Rao left the State Council meeting in fear that such anti-Congressism will cost him the Order of Lenin, a bonus he recently earned. The State Council voted for guided anti-Congressism, not blind anti-Congressism. Mrs Gandhi's hope is that the West Bengal CPI will support the WB Congress on issues. And by now it is clear that Mrs Gandhi's expressed hope is a directive, or let the CPI beware.

The dissolution of the PDA has of course scared the chicken-hearted and the cushy section of the WB CPI, specially those 36 MLAs who got through the election under the PDA signboard. They are dashing to and fro, between Delhi and Calcutta, between the Congress office and the CPI office, to convince the Congress that there was no love lost in between. The CPI daily from Calcutta blacked out the news on Friday (in company with "The Statesman"), even though other bourgeois papers made the headlines with the PDA dissolution story. Perhaps it expected that the resolution would be revoked or watered down or rejected at higher levels. It was surely not a comfortable position to find the Congress umbrella removed just at the outset of the monsoon.

What is slightly curious, however, is the attitude of Mr S. S. Ray. He

thinks that the CPI-led Congressmen (who leads whom, begad) are conspiring to oust him and his followers, and the dissolution of the PDA is just the beginning (or is it the culmination?) of the end. But it is slightly unclear why Mr Ray who had no love for the WB CPI and always threatened the Congressmen hobnobbing with the CPI should so direly miss the PDA. Can it be that Mr Ray is suffering from persecution mania and whatever happens without his consent is construed as a

weapon to wreck his opportunist career? With the leftist movement now in total disarray, let him not lose his cool. Now that the CPI has succeeded in losing its chains (and by Marx, it had nothing else to lose), we can expect that the CPI will make appropriate noises regarding the price rise, corruption, black money, et cetera and call that a mass struggle. Since when has mere noise demolished houses, even if they are under the supervision of Calcutta Corporation or the Indian Congress?

Emergency and the DIR to establish one-party democracy in this country, and so long as that objective is not achieved the hobgoblins of fascism, subversion and conspiracy will continue to be raised.

One-Party Democracy

The Socialist Party chairman, Mr George Fernandes, may be wondering at the sudden inflation of his revolutionary stature in the eyes of the Congress Government. He was arrested under the Maintenance of Internal Security Act a week before the railway strike, and in defence of the detention the Railway Minister had hinted at a deep-laid conspiracy which he could not disclose probably in the interest of the country's security. Mr Fernandes has been released and the conspiracy theory has been buried; it may be exhumed if there is a threat of fire next time. Within weeks he has received a second tribute—this time from the Bihar Government which has externed him from Bihar for two months under the Defence of India Rules. He was ordered back from Patna airport; the State Government seems to have apprehended that the very quiet State of Bihar would go up in flames if Mr Fernandes was allowed to proceed to the city centre to confer with his party colleagues and victimised railway employees and address a few meetings. All these are legitimate and legal political and trade union activities in which, our holy constitution says, every citizen has a right to participate.

Before Mr Fernandes, it had been the turn of the irrepressible SSP leader, Mr Raj Narain, to be externed from Bihar. It is ridiculous to suggest that either of them is dedicated to a revolutionary transformation of society. The sole aim of their projected visits was to reap some political advantage from the Bihar

situation so that their parties may get some more votes in the next election. This very innocent and respectable aim was thwarted by the Bihar Government by invoking the DIR. The attitude it struck when the CPI chairman, Mr Dange, visited Patna is in sharp contrast. Mr Dange got all cooperation from the Government in organising a rally against the current agitation; maybe the rally consisted mainly of Congress supporters. Evidently, anyone striving for the prolongation of a thoroughly discredited regime is a defender of democracy and everyone who tries to end that rule is a fascist who deserves to be muted under the DIR. So firm is the commitment of the ruling party to democracy that it does not hesitate to take to fascist methods to preserve democracy.

A corollary of this attitude is that the Emergency and the Defence of India Act and Rules should continue as long as there are opposition parties in the country. The Prime Minister has sought to justify the continuation of the Emergency on the ground of the economic crisis. As long as this Government lasts one crisis will follow another. There may be a political crisis, there may be a war, and there may be an economic crisis. In their unending cycle the Government will have no occasion to lift the Emergency and revoke the Defence of India outrages. They will continue to erode the already tenuous allegiance of the ruling party to the rule of law and push it along the dictatorial path. The Government is using the

The Aid

The agreement on \$1,400 million assistance to India at the Aid India Consortium's recent meeting at Paris must have immensely pleased New Delhi. The amount not only represents a \$400 million increase in the pledged quantum over the past year's level but finally puts at rest the nagging fear that the donor countries might cut down assistance in view of India's "impertinence" in going in for a nuclear explosion. But the gnomes of Paris know better. They are aware that for all the big bang that New Delhi has made, the Indian economy has seldom been in a worse condition. And to all indication, the crisis is bound to get worse before it turns any better. They are not sure that the economic ills will not finally trigger a different type of bomb, not in the lonely deserts of Rajasthan but right in the heartland of the country, upset the status quo, and throw the economy into a vortex of uncertainty. As it is, India with all its poverty remains one of the finest places for making a quick buck and its potentiality as an emergent market for the second-hand, outdated machines and consumer goods not usable in the developed nations is rated very high. A large dose of foreign assistance is one of the means of insuring against an undesirable political upset and it is just as well that the bourgeois leadership of a bourgeois society should be propped up at any cost.

But the question of foreign aid is not something that concerns the leadership alone. It concerns everybody with an iota of self-respect. Already nearly three-fourths of gross aid is being used to meet repayment and interest obligations. And unless the country calls a halt to all this murky business of swapping national dignity and sovereignty for a few thousand million dollars, a time might soon come when the outflow will

exceed the inflow and the country will be forced to pay for all the lending of the past through its nose. New Delhi is evidently not perturbed over such a possibility now; as a matter of fact, it does not seem to be perturbed over anything at all. But where do we go from here?

No Enquiry

The Supreme Court of India has finally dismissed the appeal of Mr B. D. Sharma, a former Chief Minister of Haryana, praying for a writ of mandamus to institute an enquiry into the acts of the present Chief Minister, Mr. Bansil Lal, showing alleged undue favours to the promoters of Maruti & Co.

At one stage the Chief Justice confessed that the court could not compel the Government of India to institute an enquiry in terms of the Commission of Enquiry Act of 1952. In similar cases, the Supreme Court has struck down such provisions of earlier laws and acts as seemed to conflict with the course of justice or equity and declared that the said section or sections were ultra vires of the Constitution. The allegations relating to the Maruti affair have been so various and voiced by so many citizens and, in addition so well documented to facilitate such an enquiry, that the failure or unwillingness of the Supreme Court to expedite the course of justice must remain somewhat of a mystery.

The other plea which came to the rescue of the Maruti promoters was that the appellant has no locus standi in the matter and so his appeal was dis-

missed. When counsel for the appellant-petitioner sought to know the reasons, the Chief Justice was reported to have said "tersely" that he would give no reason. Perhaps there is no other instance in judicial records of a court in the world dismissing an appeal but declining to give in writing the reasons for such dismissal.

The locus standi of a citizen of India should be self-evident—he or she, as a citizen of India, is vitally interested in the rule of law and purity of administration. If just because a man stands alone and no second man comes forward to back him, will his case go by default on the ground that he has no locus standi? Allegations of corruption among ministers may be in many cases politically motivated. But where irregularities are blatant, where provisions of rules, regulations and other related laws are prima facie circumvented or violated, then clearly they call for a public enquiry with ample opportunities for the complainants to present their case. The Watergate scandal was first started by people with "no locus standi" at all. It was first the ferreting of news by some enterprising press people which made the shocking revelations.

Another implication of the remarks of the Supreme Court is also worthy of note. In effect, the judges consider that the Lok Sabha alone has the locus standi, and if it votes for such an enquiry, the Government would then be bound to order one. But this opening is illusory when the ruling caucus has managed to secure an unshakeable majority. In such an event, even those with a locus standi do find themselves cheated of their rights. There seems to be no remedy for such a tangled web woven by ministers, party bosses and other influential groups to reduce the supreme legislature itself to a mockery.

Liberation Struggles In Africa

(Press Diary, March-May 1974)

NARENDRA SINGH

THIS time we will begin with the latest events. Most dramatic happenings marked April 25 in Portugal when a group of army officers, proclaiming a desire to bring democracy to Portugal and peace to her African territories, seized control of the country and announced the end of more than 40 years of authoritarian rule. Further developments are unfolding within Portugal, in the form of liberalisation of life. As we are more concerned with implications for Southern Africa and the liberation struggles in the African territories, the early responses and reactions there are surveyed here.

The PAIGC, in a statement broadcast over the Guinea-Bissau African Independence Movement's Radio Liberation, welcomed the Portuguese coup overthrowing the fascist colonialist government, thereby giving the Portuguese people the chance to free themselves from the shackles of fascism. It stated that the people of Guinea-Bissau were more than ever resolved to pursue the struggle against the Portuguese aggressors and all who oppose their total liberation. This was the best way in which the forces of independence could help the Portuguese people and the "healthy forces of the Portuguese Army", and hasten the end of colonialism. (London "Times", April 26).

MPLA representative in Brazzaville said on April 26 that the African nationalist guerillas in Angola would increase armed action against Portuguese troops if the junta in Lisbon did not change Portugal's colonial policies. In case of no policy change, "we will take advantage of the situation in Portugal to clean up the situation in Angola by striking harder blows at the Portuguese army". Doubts were expressed whether Portugal's new military rulers would change the colonial policy "because they continue to speak of Portu-

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guese of all races". MPLA would be willing to negotiate with the junta, "provided our personality is respected. We have always been for a dialogue". (London "Times", April 26).

FNLA President, Mr Holden Roberto, said in Kinshasa that any contacts with the new regime in Portugal must be made within the historic context of total independence of Angola. He indicated that a negotiated settlement was still possible, but considered the idea of a federal system out of date. If Angolans had to seize independence by force, all Portuguese would be driven out of the territory. On the possibility of a unilateral declaration of independence by the white Portuguese settlers in Angola, he said that developments were being closely followed. He predicted that such a declaration would fail for lack of support from Portugal and South Africa, and would be doomed to extinction. If, however, white settlers were prepared to cooperate in the development of Angola, they would be welcome and their safety would be guaranteed. (London "Times", April 26).

Frelimo said that it rejected Gen Spínola's proposals for a federation of Portugal and its African territories, and that it would go on fighting. Miss Rosario Tembe, Frelimo's Information Secretary in Lusaka, told a ZANU (Zimbabwe African National Union) rally that there should not be undue optimism about events in Portugal. "We say no to this because we are not fighting in Mozambique to become Portuguese of black skin. We are fighting to affirm and dignify our personality as Mozambicans. The developments in Portugal cannot hinder even for a moment the continuation of the struggle in Mozambique". The Lisbon junta

had to recognise that the overseas territories, like metropolitan Portugal, wanted the fundamental rights of freedom and democracy. Miss Tembe added, "We shall intensify our fight in Mozambique as the best way of supporting our efforts in Zimbabwe (Rhodesia)". Observers believe that the stronger Frelimo becomes the harder neighbouring Rhodesia will find it to maintain control because of more frequent guerilla raids across the borders. ("Daily Telegraph", Britain, April 29).

OAU (Organisation of African Unity) Secretary General said in Gabon that Portugal will not give up the colonies willingly. "What will free our continent is the struggle by the liberation movements, supported by the whole of Africa through the OAU". He added that the OAU would help reinforce the "fighting structure" of the liberation movements. ("Washington Post", April 29). President Kaunda of Zambia called upon the new regime in Lisbon to grant independence to Angola and Mozambique. Making Zambia's first official statement on last week's army coup in Portugal, he reaffirmed his support for the liberation movements in Portugal's African territories. (London "Times", May 2).

There was certainly no gloom in the business community in the Angolan capital, Luanda. For years they have complained bitterly about Lisbon's policy of filching the territory's earnings and giving little in return. Among this community, there is welcome for the greater autonomy, foreseen in Gen Spínola's "Lusitanian Federation" plans, enabling Angola to become one of the richest countries in Africa, with its coffee, oil and beef. ("Daily Telegraph", April 29). A report in the British "Guardian" (May 3) talks of the first open comment by any political group, in the release of a manifesto by the "Civic Democratic Commission", calling for radical constitutional changes in Angola. The commission also called for the release of political prisoners, the closure of detention camps, and the appointment of a representative of the junta to the Angolan capital. According to observers, moderate black Angolans would support the idea of federation.

Also there is talk of unilateral action if the idea of settlement is rejected.

In Mozambique, both Lourenço Marques and Beira have had emotional scenes of jubilation. For the first time in half a century, local newspapers appeared uncensored. But as the euphoria ebbs, worry about the long-term future sets in. A statement issued in the name of Air Force General Diogo Neto, a junta member, said that there was no intention on the part of Portugal to abandon Mozambique. This statement issued in Lourenço Marques and also in Beira, the scene of intense guerilla activity, was to give maximum assurance to the white population, 220,000 in a total of 9 million. (Washington "Post", April 29). The apparent calm was broken by the release of a militantly left-wing pamphlet declaring student support for the junta which "removed the old colonial fascist regime of Marcello Caetano". Demands were also made for immediate demobilisation of student army conscripts. The pamphlet called on "the more progressive factions of the armed forces to suffocate any attempt by reactionary Fascist forces towards a declaration of independence along Rhodesian lines" and also for military and diplomatic action to thwart any such declaration. This seems certain to exacerbate the tensions of whites here who fear a sell-out by Lisbon. ("Financial Times", Britain, April 29). A session of the Mozambique Parliament was abruptly opened and closed within 3 minutes on April 30, after a dramatic confrontation between army officers and demonstrators supporting the military junta in Lisbon. ("Daily Telegraph", May 1). Hundreds of supporters of Frelimo were freed from jail in Lourenço Marques on May 1, on the instructions of the junta of National Salvation in Lisbon. The number of those released is anywhere between 1000 and 2000, leaving many still behind the bars. Some had been detained for as long as 11 years for supporting Frelimo. Many of those freed complained that they were tortured and starved by the jailors belonging to Portugal's feared secret police, the Directorate General of Security.

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ity (DGS). On one side, the release has sent a shock wave of anger through white settler communities, on the other, there were touching scenes as the prisoners, mostly Africans with fewer than 20 Europeans, emerged to freedom from the DGS fortress at Machava, notorious for international reports claiming brutality and tortures. ("Daily Telegraph", May 2).

The much hated secret police DGS while being disbanded to Portugal, suffered near lynchings and arrests of their colleagues in Lisbon. But not so in the African territories. The agents of the DGS who played a key role in counter-insurgency, have been given their new roles in Africa within the military structure, according to reports reaching from Beira in Mozambique. They have been told to coordinate intelligence reports, control hundreds of paid black informers, direct the efficient Flecha (arrow) troops and interrogate prisoners. Other functions of the DGS, like surveillance of politically suspect civilians, telephone tapping and checking on students are reported to have been stopped. (London "Times" April 30).

White Minority Regimes

The military takeover in Portugal has left Rhodesians dazed and bewildered by its speed and unexpectedness. How completely Rhodesia was caught off guard is apparent from the fact that her accredited diplomatic representative was on a routine visit to Salisbury. Mr Smith based his attitude towards the Rhodesian security situation on the belief that his country had a cast-iron guarantee of Portuguese support in the common struggle of white Southern Africa against the militancy of black States. His first cautious comment on the coup on April 26 was "Rhodesia does not interfere in the internal affairs of other countries and therefore the political changes in Portugal are essentially matters for the Portuguese. Rhodesia has always enjoyed the best of relations with metropolitan Portugal and her provinces in Africa and we believe these relations will continue". ("Daily Telegraph", April 27). Among the white

population of Rhodesia, anxiety is spreading about the effects of the Portuguese coup. Mr. Smith's statement has done nothing to reassure them that their fears of their country being isolated from the rest of the continent are groundless. It is felt that the new situation will weaken the ties between Rhodesia and South Africa, because with independence or even a high degree of autonomy for Mozambique, Rhodesia would become even more of an embarrassment than she is at present to her southern neighbour ("Observer", Britain, April 28).

South Africa's Prime Minister said in a broadcast that the new situation in Portugal would affect all South Africa intimately, but he was sure good relations would be maintained. Prices on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange plunged as the implications of change of government in Lisbon became more apparent. Any military disengagement in Angola and Mozambique would leave guerilla forces free to move against South Africa and South West Africa. ("Daily Telegraph", Britain, April 27). Newspapers, however, have assured the whites that "there is no question of hasty withdrawal of Portuguese troops from Africa which would throw South Africa's borders wide open to terrorist attacks". The State controlled Broadcasting Corporation has been singing praises of General de Spinoza, as just the right man to deal with the terrorists. South Africa is more concerned with the stability of neighbouring governments than with their colour ("Guardian", Britain April 29). South Africa must wait calmly for further developments in Portugal and "trust that the government there will not fall into the wrong hands", the Prime Minister Vorster said in his second public statement on the coup. This comment reveals the considerable disquiet in his government on the future of Mozambique and Angola. ("Daily Telegraph", May 1).

In Portugal there are two streams, one representing the new regime and the other claiming leftist trends. In the opinion of the Portuguese socialist leader, Senhor Mario Soares, any unilateral declaration of independence by white settlers in the African territories would

lead to disaster. This would result in an "African Vietnam" with the worst consequences for world peace. (London "Times", April 27). The Portuguese Socialist Party, in a manifesto to the nation, has demanded the end of the colonial wars and immediate opening of negotiations with the "State of Guinea-Bissau" and with the liberation movements in Angola and Mozambique, about the rights of their peoples to self-determination. (London "Times", May 1).

General Spinoza, leader of the military junta, said on April 29 that he accepted the principle of self-determination for Portugal's African territories, but he did not think the people there were ready yet to decide their own future. He believed that the territories would not ultimately ask for independence unless Portuguese policy towards them had failed by the time they voted on the issue. He asked for time before introducing any plans for self-determination, as without any preparation, self-determination would lose its significance. (London "Times", April 30).

Organisations like Champalimaud holding huge interests in Angola and Mozambique have been given a simple message by the military government: keep the prices down, particularly in the crucial steel making industry, and your profits would not be affected. Urgent political activity is now taking place around an economic ginger group called "Sedes", most of whose members are young technocrats favouring a more equitable distribution of wealth in Portugal and a phased withdrawal from the territories in Africa. The key point in the economic thinking of these men is that a political solution in Africa would leave huge markets for her cheap manufactured goods, in return for substantial concessions on the import of coffee, sugar and petro-chemical products. ("Guardian", May 3).

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The Fighting

Mozambique. Earlier a massacre of 28 people by Portuguese soliders in Manica a Sofola Province (Chirima near Tambara village) on January 13 was reported in a Frelimo communique. The Portuguese killed them after plundering and destroying all the cops in the region. This action forms part of the intensified terror campaign against the Mozambique villagers, following constant defeats and heavy losses in both men and material suffered by the colonialists. The communique added that between September 1973 and January 1974, Frelimo fighters in Manica e Sofola province attacked posts and concentration camps, and carried out many ambush and sabotage operations. Six trains were derailed and four military vehicles, two tractors and four water pumping motors were destroyed, and thirty Portuguese soldiers were killed.

Frelimo fighters have also been attacking economic targets like timber mills and camps controlling cotton plantations. At one camp they destroyed two tractors, the storehouse and its contents, two cotton planting machines and other farm equipment. The plantation guards were given an explanation of the reasons and objectives for the action, and were left free and unharmed. Manica e Sofola has a large number of Portuguese factories and plantations, operated by exploited Mozambican workers, which is the reason for the latter's enthusiastic support to the Frelimo's advance through the province.

The Anti-Apartheid News, a British journal in its issue of April 1974, gave eye-witness accounts of the Portuguese troops poisoning wells in a new attempt and campaign to stop local support to Frelimo guerillas. In the administrative region of Mutarara in the area round Vila Pery near the Rhodesian border,

over 150 villagers died as a result of poisoning.

A Guardian correspondent (April 24) reports an attack on April 21 as the first strike on the road linking the ports of Beira and Lourenco Marques, killing three white truck drivers. This attack was considered of significance to both the Portuguese and Rhodesian governments. Evidently the increased security arrangements would not contain the guerilla threat and the vital Rhodesian rail link with Lourenco Marques, carrying a large proportion of the latter's oil supplies, may soon be considered unsafe. In the attack, seven heavily armed guerillas opened fire on a lorry and killed the driver. The band then machinegunned a second long-distance truck, but its driver escaped into the bush. In spite of the nearby Portuguese helicopter base and the counter-insurgency units only a little away, the guerillas continued south and attacked another two lorries, shooting both drivers. Evidence was mounting of Rhodesia being drawn deeper into the Mozambique conflict. Not only because Frelimo is threatening its vital supply lines but because these guerillas are helping Rhodesian insurgents with food, bases, training and intelligence. The Portuguese Government has denied that Rhodesian troops are operating deep inside Mozambique. But Rhodesian security sources have admitted that the Rhodesians in fact operate in Portuguese territory against both Frelimo and members of the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU). Beira district was being affected by terrorism for the first time in the ten years of war, and there is much nervousness among the people in the area and the adjacent district of Vila Pery, which stretches to the Rhodesian border.

Most of the Portuguese and Rhodesian farm owners in Vila Pery were armed and provided with special security cover with deployment of civilian militia and reinforcements along the border and around the farms.

South African opposition Progressive Party's Chairman has said that the defence of South Africa's northern borders will take on crisis proportions if the terrorist incursions in Mozambique and

Angola become more serious or if Portugal withdraws from these territories. The South African Defence Minister has stated that as far as unconventional warfare is concerned, South Africa does not need anything from overseas, and that as far as conventional warfare is concerned she is encouraging private industry to manufacture certain weapons domestically (Radio Johannesburg, March 26).

Angola. According to an MPLA (Movement of Peoples for Liberation of Angola) war communique, the MPLA fighting forces attacked the advance post of Portuguese military barracks at Lovua early this month, and put out of action all the troops guarding the post. Intense fire of mortars, bazookas and light automatic weapons caused extensive damage to the installations at the post, situated on the right bank of Semba river on the road from Lovua to Kalunda.

A survey of different MPLA war communiqués reveals intense guerilla activity and Portuguese losses. MPLA has warned that "imperialist interests in Angola are in serious danger, as MPLA will destroy all the forces which are contributing to the continued exploitation of our people". In this the main reference is to the exploitation of the offshore oil deposits by the Portuguese with the aid of the U.S. Cabinda Gulf Oil Company, which subsidises Lisbon's war effort in Angola.

On April 25, MPLA leaders held a press conference in Brazzaville to present five Portuguese prisoners captured by the MPLA in recent fighting in the Cabinda administrative district of Angola. It was announced that the MPLA prepared to exchange prisoners with Portugal for MPLA members detained in areas under Portuguese control. ("Daily News", Tanzania, April 26).

Guinea-Bissau. A PAIGC (Party African for Independence of Gujaea Bissau and Cape Verde islands) communique on March 29 reported the 40th Portuguese plane being shot down within a year. A Fiat G-91 was brought down on March 16; on March 10, 4 Portuguese were killed and a number wounded at a military installation at Catio town; on March 11 the Bedanda

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camp near Catio was attacked, inflicting heavy damage and casualties on the Portuguese; heavy losses were also suffered by the Portuguese during the first two weeks of March, on the Bafata-Gabu front; 18 Portuguese soldiers were killed in an ambush near Gabu town on March 22 and 5 lorries were destroyed.

Another PAIGC communique in Conakry reports the killing of 70 enemy troops, destruction of 13 heavy enemy lorries, and capture of large quantities of weapons and ammunition in attacks against the Portuguese aggressors in the second half of March.

According to a feature article by Basil Davidson in West Africa (Nigerian Journal) of April 29, Portugal's final defeat in Guinea-Bissau may be closer than commentators outside or even inside West Africa generally appear to think. He has quoted a qualified representative of the new State as saying; "We have now entered the last phase of the war". In matters of this kind, the PAIGC representatives are accustomed to weigh their words. Other remarks also clearly hinted at a major military breakthrough within the next twelve months or thereabouts. So the military indications on the ground. After a survey of the last one year's developments, there appears to be little doubt that the PAIGC will continue to dictate the further unfolding of events. Just how soon they will evict the Portuguese is their own secret; all that appears certain is that they can now do it when they want to.

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The Sunderbans—IV

The Jungle Goers

BY A CORRESPONDENT

THE British rulers were interested in the Sunderbans because they could raise revenue from the area. As soon as other prospects were in sight, they had second thoughts. The Sundri timber was considered useful for railway sleepers. Construction of railways at that time got the first preference, and so the preservation of the Sunderbans, full of Sundri trees, became the policy of the rulers and reclamation policy was going to be abandoned. About 1874, "an experiment was being tried for employing Sundri timber in the manufacture of railway sleepers, while other trees supplied firewood and fuel to Calcutta and to many other towns, the needs of which could hardly be supplied otherwise than by the Sunderbans" (Bengal District Gazetteer, Khulna, by O'Malley).

Even before this period, timber was collected from the area. This was necessary material for house building in the locality. But most of the timber was used as fuel. As soon as the importance of this timber was discovered, profit-makers came forward. O'Malley writes, "It is believed that...bulk of the material available being bought by wealthy 'mahajans' of Backergunge, who in addition to purchasing for their own requirements, export this timber to Dacca and other districts in the north." (Bengal District Gazetteer, Khulna, by O'Malley). Since then the forest has never been devoid of the wood-cutters. Thousands of people are busy there all through the year with this job. Most of them are hired labourers and in many cases there are men who are collecting timber without any licence. Most of the wood-cutters are from outside the area. Yet a considerable number of them are from the inhabited areas of the Sunderbans.

Most of the land in the forest areas which covers two-thirds of the Sunderbans is low and is washed away by the

ebb-tide. It is full of estuaries. The trees and plants of those varieties which can resist heavy salinity grow here. The forest is dense. No portion of it is easily accessible. And it is also known to be the habitat of Royal Bengal Tigers. These tigers are man-eaters. During reclamation the danger from these tigers was limited by a time-span. But to the jungle-goers danger can never be eliminated. Life is always at stake in the forest. Yet they must go. They have to take all sorts of risk to ensure their existence.

The West Bengal part of the Sunderbans is less than one-third of the Sunderbans proper. Here the Sundri tree is rarely found. An experienced jungle-goer, originally from erstwhile East Bengal, comments that the forests in this area are going to wither away. According to him, the Sundri trees are only to be found in the border area and their number is so meagre and the attacks on them are carried on with such vigour that soon there will be no Sundri tree in West Bengal. 'Garan', 'Kaora', 'Geon'—these are the trees which supply timber. The timber is collected from an area marked by the Forest Department. But this is only for the licensed wood-cutters. Unlicensed wood-cutters collect timber from any part of the forest. They collect any sort of timber, useful either as fuel or as building material. Government officials are fully aware of this fact. But to prevent the system is to block the extra income of so many employees. Money is made not only in the form of bribe, but from the confiscated boats and the collected material too.

The mahajans (the employers are also called by this name), are generally from Calcutta. They send big boats with hired coolies. Many of them are from Orissa. But the number of such coolies is never adequate. The boats come to the locality of the Sunderbans

and local coolies are collected. Mahajans with a small capital are generally from the local areas. All the coolies in their boats are local. The unlicensed woodcutters are generally financed by the local moneylenders. A major portion of their income is taken by these mahajans. The area marked by the Forest Department for collecting timber is generally avoided by the tigers, because of the large rallies of woodcutters, but sometimes the danger comes suddenly. The whole day is spent in collecting timber. In the afternoon all return to their boats and prepare meals. In the evening the river looks like a big trading centre ('gaunge'). Hundreds of boats converge. Some of the men sing, some have their simple recreations. But life for them is not all that idyllic. Driven by hunger they go to the forest, they have no other means to maintain themselves and their families. Affected by floods some of them came here from Midnapore. They thought they would be able to earn enough in his 'bada' area. They had heard so many tales about bright prospects. But they were betrayed and driven to the jungle. Some others had their plots of land. But now they prefer jungle life to begging, having lost the land. Some of them, traditionally day-labourers, cannot find any job and the lure of the jungle seems irresistible.

Tiger, Tiger

A man who escaped narrowly from a tiger and who is no more a jungle-goer said that in the forest there was no dearth of food. Large quantities of fish and crab are available and one may go without rice for days. This man now with his son maintains with hardship a big family. His statement reveals that sufficient food is not available now for him and his family.

A man from Katakhalī stated that at least four men were killed by tigers before his eyes and many others from his village were killed by these ferocious beasts. But he must go to the jungle as he has no alternative. If any of them is killed by a tiger, members of his family get no support from any quarter. Only a flag of torn cloth is placed by his comrades by the

riverside near the spot and that is for warning other parties. A peculiar silence is maintained regarding the bereaved family. The mahajan is always blind to this problem. But when a boat laden with timber comes back, he becomes particular about his share. His capital with interest has to be repaid. He has his share of boats. Above all in most cases he arranges the sale of the materials and thus makes an extra middleman's share of profit.

When house material or fuel are collected without licence, the jungle-goers cannot demand any reasonable price for it. They must depend on the mahajans for the sale of these goods. Fixation of the prices is anybody's guesswork. Moreover, the mahajan has every right to ask for the best timber for his own use. One must keep him satisfied and the question of price does not arise.

'Moules', the honey-collectors, have the least security in the jungle. The history of their jungle going is the oldest of the lot. A 'moule' has to follow a swarm of bees or a single bee alone and without any guard. A woodcutter is equipped with an axe. But a 'moule' bears only a stick of which even a cow may not be afraid. They are the easiest prey of tigers.

The time of honey-collecting is from the middle of March to the end of June. Many of the 'moules' go to the forest without any licence. The police and the departmental guards are very active during this period. Not that they are eager to increase the revenue of the government. Only a boatload of 'moule' without licence will fill their pockets. Sometimes in a short period a large quantity may be had. Sometimes it takes more time.

Observation reveals another feature. These jungle-goers generally come from castes traditionally exploited, and always driven away from habitable places to places not fit for habitation.

Though the woodcutters and the 'moules' are the majority of jungle-goers, they are not professional. Exploitation drives them to the jungle. But with the fishermen, jungle-going is an essential part of their profession.

(Concluded)

'Conspiratorial' Writers

C. VENKATAKRISHNA

IN the morning of May 22, 1974 All India Radio of Hyderabad announced that P. Varavara Rao and Charabanda Raju, both members of the Revolutionary Writers Association, have been arrested. Varavara Rao had been arrested a few months ago under the MISA along with two other comrades. They were released by the High Court of Andhra Pradesh which allowed the writ petition filed by them. The latest swoop of the Government was not known for a day or two. Later it turned out that several other important writers like T. Madhusudhan Rao, Secretary of the RWA, M. Ranganathan, editor of 'Pilupu' and M. T. Khan, publisher of 'Pilupu' have also been arrested. Prosecution alleges that they were involved in a case of conspiracy filed against K. G. Satyamoorthy, K. Sitaramiah and 44 others. It is alleged that K. Sitaramiah, one of the leaders of the conspiracy along with other accused, operated from New Bhoiguda and other places in the twin cities of Secunderabad and Hyderabad; that the arrested writers took up the work of indoctrinating the students and unemployed youth cadres in villages and of aiding the other accused in carrying out the objects of the conspiracy, for which they wrote and published revolutionary material of highly objectionable and inflammatory nature, calculated to bring into hatred and contempt and tending to excite disaffection towards the Government etc. Prosecution further alleges that they, under the guise of "Viplava Sahitya Gosty", encouraged revolutionary activities in the struggle area for the implementation of the "armed struggle programme" and further held study circles and meetings to educate the people about the ideology of violence, etc.

The merits of the case may not be gone into at this stage as it is before the Court but it may be recalled that in 1971 Jwalamukhi, Nikhileshwar and

JUNE 22, 1974

Charabanda Raju were arrested under the Preventive Detention Act for allegedly writing and delivering speeches of a seditious nature. When they challenged the allegation in a writ petition, it was allowed by the High Court.

In 1973, Varavara Rao, Charabanda Raju and M. T. Khan were arrested under the MISA and once again the High Court set them at liberty, allowing their writ petition. Some of the works of the Revolutionary writers have been proscribed by the State Government. Is there really anything like fundamental rights? The Government seems determined to crush the rightful activities of the writers.

It is interesting to note the genesis of the Penal Code that is being applied day in and day out to suppress the liberties of the people. As long ago as 1837 the British Government constituted a commission to draft the Penal Code. Macaulay was one of the important members of the Commission. For reasons best known to the British Government, it shelved the Code for more than 20 years. In 1857 a revised draft was prepared. The Penal Code was enacted as law in 1860, i.e. three years after 1857, the first armed revolt of the people against British imperialists.

It is amusing to note that the 'sedition' clause in the present Penal Act was in the Draft Code of 1837. It is said that the clause was omitted in 1860 because of oversight. Ten years later in 1870, the present clause of sedition was introduced by way of an amendment. Under this section of sedition 124A several leaders like Bala Gangadhar Tilak and Savarkar were hauled up for writing and preaching 'freedom' against the British Government.

The present Congress Government is following the same Penal Code enacted by the British imperialists to protect their rule and suppress popular movements, agitations and revolts. It is necessary to think about the fundamental rights guaranteed by the Constitution and the effect of MISA, DIR and some of the provisions of the Penal Code that strangulate the freedom of the citizen.

Gloriana Yes, Gloriana No

INDU

THIS is the season of choristers. They are numerous, active, and thriving. They are pundits of semantics and sociology, economy and ecology. They are editors and analysts; better still, constructive critics. They are regaling the land with learned litanies on democracy to which we all by some stupid consent seem wedded. Their only worry is how to make it stable, its viability never having been in doubt.

But the Book of Apocrypha says that with the reign of Queen Gloriana (thank god, she was only a Faerie Queen), critics will be known by a polysyllabic word criticasters which will be interchangeable with choristers. (So be it. It is no mean comfort, however, that this Spenserian decathlon of virtues remained incomplete. Mercifully, to the benefit of us all.

But Mrs G is alive and kicking, a reality. According to a section of opinion she is our best bet for democracy. The choristers are playing a game quite popular in North India. It is called Qawwali Dangal, or a match of vocal and versifying prowess. Along its lines, quite as entertainingly, is currently being staged the criticasters'/choristers' match, the two parties seeming to extol or excoriate Gloriana. Hurrah, cavaliers!

One set of critic-wrestlers equates her with democracy itself and expounds at learned length how democracy has flourished so far, particularly under her benign shadow, how the system has been made weatherworthy and stability brought nearly within reach, how if she goes there will be deluge, how she alone can hold India from falling, apart having already shown her mettle in that direction, how her charisma like that of the pied piper casts its spell and makes mute the Indian masses, the intelligentsia in particular, how she has only to call the tune and see the effect.

The other set of polemical pugilists cries itself hoarse that the rot set in

only with her advent, that democracy was blooming gay until her canker entered nibbling at it, that the system is fine and the only one our genius can conceive and concede, that she is smothering democracy which needs a multi-party wet-nurse to suckle it to health and life. That with her on the scene democracy is in danger and national interests in jeopardy, that all democratically inclined people in the land should guard the infant democracy against her villainy and witchcraft, that her ouster is our safest and surest bid for democracy.

Curiously, among her champions, are also the gallants of the left. They have thrown round her a protective cordon to ward off the evil influences of slander and censure coming from the rightist reactionaries. They have raised round her a mystique of progressivism, socialism. Had she not earned the nation's gratitude by abolishing the princely privy purses, nationalising the banks, rescuing Bangladesh and Ceylon and finally by presiding over the atomic blast for peaceful purposes, thus seating India in the elitist nuclear club of five?

The rightists admit Bangladesh and nuclear explosion to be twin feathers in her versatile cap of tricks, but fee sore over the privy purse, banks, grain levy etc., for these, according to them violate the freedom of the individual in a democracy.

And both, curiously, quite neatly agree that the System she presides over is worth preserving and that every Indian has a stake in it. Here is the rub. This gives them away as puppets.

If the System she defends uphold her, she will uphold it and herself. Except the parasitic, predatory, urban intelligentsia no one else has a stake in the System. The rural kulaks, and the nouveau riche in the cities belong to the same class of bandits, appropriating the national wealth by dint of privilege and prerogatives. The feudal-colonial

wheel of exploitation goes on grinding. The barbarians—army, police, bureaucracy, profiteers, adulterators, academic lotus-eaters, commercial chess-players, contractors, tycoons, parvenus—rule the roost and will defend the System to the last drop of their blood when the crunch comes. They constitute the System—the Priests and Pretorian guards, the Patricians and Pro-consuls. Mrs G is part of it, hence its protectress. Who, if not this system, needs the Lady (Protectress of the Common-wealth)?

While the left soft-headedness eulogising her is sickening, the right obsession with her personality proves her indispensability if she is the System. That both are hypnotised by the populist/nationalist cant invented and superbly orchestrated by her courtiers is appalling. One championing her and the System, and the other championing the System without her, are not very different quantities. If the System continues, it will find another like her, if necessary, she being only its creature. Those demanding her ouster are paying her a well-deserved compliment as the System's sentry, albeit left-handedly. As for the besotted opportunists, none grudges them the decorative label of leftists if it brings them money and favours from the Durbar. At this price they must swear by Gloriana and appear to be her pages and knights-errant. The age of chivalry is not dead. Nor is medieval darkness from India gone, therefore.

Sycophancy and scholarship have acquired new sophistication in the process. The raised fist of angry criticism in a jute baron's paper from three metropolitan centres, arrested at the proper moment, acquires the beauty of a frieze. The writer gets a prize for writing exquisite prose. The scowling censure in a Capital daily on Mrs G's performance gets frozen as a Shangrila piece, and preserved as such. All this show of freedom is within the permitted limits. The clever old game of daddy permitting the young bumper the outlandish indulgence of a kurta on the pant as a radical concession! Whom does it hurt? It is all in the commer-

cial ambit, mutually agreed upon, mutually advantageous.

So, should all writing cease? Certainly not. But a little more candour, a little more commitment are in order. How tensely, but trenchantly, Nagarjuna, the Hindi poet of Bihar writes: "The new Durga of the new nation is athirst for new blood. She remains perpetually morose in spite of nine maunds of camphor being consumed at her altar day and night." This is not revolutionary but this is honest. Let the pen-pushers, the professionals among them, be more honest. Let the painters see what Vivan Sundaram has done in a painting as if 'matching' Nagarjun's quatrain. It is entitled "The Famous

Mrs G", exhibited in a group exhibition, 1974.

The seventies are not yet out, nor Mrs G intends to be off. As to the desecration and decapitation of democracy in India ever since 1947; ask any child in West Bengal, a Girijan in Andhra, a Harijan in U.P. and Bihar, the students in Gujarat, the landless labour in Tamil Nadu, the colliery worker, the railway gangman, and you'll get the answer. The trouble is you are not prepared for the shock. It shatters your myths, it debunks your well-built make-believe. So, keep on with Her Majesty's Times and Times of Gloriana, whichever way you look, it is Gloriana all around, all over.

Clippings

Congress Raises "Storm-troopers"

Developments leading to the railwaymen's strike have brought into sharp focus an aspect of West Bengal politics which is causing concern to the left opposition parties and to some Congressmen as well.

Parties like the CPM, which had planned to stage a comeback by exploiting the popular discontent caused by scarcities and high prices, are finding their hopes evaporating.

Some Congressmen feel sore that a new breed of activists, with little commitment to the party's policies and ideology, is being allowed to supplant them.

No longer are they needed for keeping the public transport services moving and shops and bazars open on a Bandh day or even for dealing with a strike. The party leaders now get these things done by a new army of storm-troopers.

It is this army that helped to maintain a semblance of normality not only during the two 'bandhs' on May 7 and 15, but also at Howrah and Sealdah stations during the railwaymen's strike. Its members were also found spearheading the demonstration of what was officially described as "popular resent-

ment" against railwaymen abstaining from work. Their services had to be paid for at rates varying from Rs. 4 to 6 a day.

The mobilisation of such activists during the railway strike was entrusted to three members of Mr Siddhartha Sankar Ray's cabinet. Congressmen got an inkling of the leadership's moves when some senior leaders of the INTUC met Mr Ray during the railway strike.

The two main youth and student factions in the Congress deny any relationship with the activities of this new force of blacklegs. However, they too view its creation as a threat to them.

To make things easy for them, none of the opposition groups has a sufficiently strong organisation to pose a threat to the ruling party.

(Sivadas Banerjee in "The Times of India")

Hungry Thieves

Both the District Magistrate. (of Midnapore), Mr Dipak Ghosh, and the SDO admitted that the crime rate in the subdivision had gone up because of the increasing hardship of the people. There have been cases of persons,

driven by hunger, going straight into the kitchen after breaking into a house. Oblivious of the danger of being caught, they start eating whatever is left in the kitchen and a few have been caught in the midst of their unusual midnight dinners.

("The Statesman", June 8)

The Press

The Searchlight Story

PATRAKAR

BY delisting "Searchlight" and the "Pradeep" and stopping government ads to them just after the notorious arson in the two newspapers' offices on March 18, the Bihar Government has, more than anything else, itself helped to create an air of heroism around the Birla dailies and their editors.

The State Government seems to have acted not only in a huff but also very foolishly indeed. Mr S. K. Rau has emerged as an overnight champion of press freedom and his "Searchlight", which had turned shamefully tame in recent times, has become a martyr for the cause, Mr Bharatiya of "Pradeep" — a staunch Arya Samaji and known for his communally-biased editorials—is busy telling the students about his struggle with the establishment.

After the fire in the Behar Journals Ltd building, housing the "Searchlight", its sister Hindi daily "Pradeep" and the Patna office of the "Hindustan Times", Mr Rau lost no time in giving hints of "a conspiracy in high quarters to suppress and kill the newspapers that do not toe a particular line". He complained against the 'failure' of the police and the authorities to provide any protection to the newspapers. The building was, he said, on fire for more than 28 hours, which destroyed, besides the invaluable 50-year-old files of the newspapers, the press and the machinery resulting in their closure for about two weeks. (Ironically enough, their publication was resumed with the help of a government press).

The attack on a newspaper office is

deplorable indeed and, in the fitness of things, there was wide condemnation of the incident "a blow to the freedom of the press". Both the journalists' unions, the recognised Indian Federation of Working Journalists as well as the semi-recognised National Union of Journalists, rapped the Government for its 'failure' to provide proper security arrangement to the paper. Of the two, the NUJ was naturally more harsh, related with Mr Rau as it is. Information and Broadcasting Minister, Mr I. K. Gujral, was "deeply distressed" and his deputy, Mr Dharmvir Sinha who had worked in "Searchlight" once upon a time, visited the newspaper office and offered all help to it.

However, Mr Rau made no bones about whom he understood to be the culprit. In the campaign that he started to arouse "public opinion against the onslaught on Press freedom", he denied that the Anand Marg, the RSS or the student hooligans were behind the attack. He left, indirectly, two in the dock: the CPI and a section of Congressmen. "It was all pre-planned and the staff was taken unawares", he declared.

Ordeal by Fire

It is true that being an arch rightist, Mr Rau was a bitter critic of the CPI policies. Besides, it is being pointed out, the CPI was planning to bring out a Hindi daily from Patna; hence the fire in "Pradeep". In the first place it is absurd to assume that the Birlas would not be able to find money to replace the age-old equipment with which the papers were being brought out. In any case, the argument does not hold good as the proposed CPI daily would have to face a formidable competition from "Aryavarta", the largest circulated paper in Bihar, and not from the ill-produced "Pradeep".

The reason offered for Congressmen's displeasure are many. Mr Rau is painted as an anti-Congressmen and a bitter critic of the State Government. Nothing can be farther from the truth. The prestige of "Searchlight", in fact, had never been so low. In fact, the only reason behind packing off the erstwhile editor, Mr S. C. Sarkar, is said to be

that he had evoked the wrath of the powers that be by his frank and fearless comments. The then Chief Minister, Mr Daroga Prasad Rai, complained to the Birlas. Mr Sarkar was told to go and Mr Rau was found to be the man 'fit for the job'. Mr Rau performed his job so well that now the rival "Indian Nation", which had the birthright to be conservative owing to its feudal ownership, is now being considered liberal compared to "Searchlight".

Whatever be the 'coverage' side, the editors of "Searchlight" were always known for their integrity. No wonder the paper had in the past incurred the wrath of the Bihar Government off and on. In 1965 the Chief Minister had editor T. J. S. George detained under the DIR because he did not like some of the paper's writings. Under Mr S. C. Sarkar, a man of literary tastes, the editorial page of "Searchlight" was among the most readable among the provincial dailies. Now it is full of agency trash plus some sale-boosting gimmicks like Youth Forum where they print your pic and all that.

Even the exposure of the 'Nagmani scandal', for which Mr Rau has received the Durga Rattan award for best investigative reporting, is said to be motivated by some feud among the top echelons of the South Indian administrative officers in the State. (However, even if Mr Rau was motivated by other than journalistic considerations, he must be congratulated for the exposure and he deserved the award).

The only issue on which Mr Rau seemed to have been at loggerheads with the State Government is the nomination of an assistant editor of the paper to the State Food Committee without consulting Mr Rau. Membership of the committee carries the status of a Minister with all the perquisites and privileges that go with it except the salary. Mr Rau complained to the Press Council which rejected the complaint on the Chief Minister's plea that he did not expect the editor to object to the nomination of a colleague and therefore did not consider it necessary to inform him.

Another point which goes against the theory of "Searchlight" being a selective target is that the "Indian Nation"

building was also attacked that day. However, there the mob had to beat a retreat in face of stiff resistance by the employees who were in an advantageous strategic position thanks to the fort-like architecture of the building.

With all these factors in view, Mr S. K. Rau's 'campaign' notwithstanding, one could, at the most, only sympathise with "Searchlight" for the calamity faced by it.

However, the Government itself gave the episode a nasty turn by delisting the papers without having assigned any reason.

Tailpiece

According to informed sources the timid Birlas would not be able to withstand the pressure, if any, from the Government, as it can have financial implications as well—the State Government is reported to have withheld payment of over Rs 10 lakhs to the papers—and the fate of Mr Rau seems uncertain. He should have known the Birlas better.

Book Review

NEW WRITING IN INDIA

Edited by Adil Jussawalla
Penguin Books, 1974. 45p ((U.K.))

JUSSAWALLA'S "New Writing in India" purports to introduce modern Indian literature to English-speaking readers. It is an anthology of some of the recent Indian creative writings, mostly extracts, translated into English. The editor has picked up, a bit haphazardly, not less than forty young writers from different linguistic groups. He does not claim to represent all the major languages in India, nor does he intend the anthology to be linguistically representative. As he said, "Three pages of Amrita Pritam don't represent Punjabi writing any more than 43 pages represent Bengali".

In the introductory note Jussawalla refers to the views of Cyril Connolly, that Indian literature is tedious, otherworldly, and irritating; and that non-violence, wisdom, poverty, erotic

love and over-crowding are the annoying features of this nation. Jussawalla objects. He says that all these might have characterised traditional Indian society of the distant past but today India is no more 'non-militaristic', otherworldly or an 'erotic paradise' and "with very few exceptions, the contemporary Indian writer's images of sex are ugly and violent". There is no more secular-erotic Kamasutra or religious-erotic love, and devotional poems are totally outdated.

With this reformed, apparently anti-traditional vision, Jussawalla presents in his anthology the writing of the last ten years or so in three separate parts.

The first part contains writing engendered by certain internationally recognisable political events on the subcontinent, such as partition, regional chauvinism, the Sino-Indian war of 1962, the Indo-Pakistan war of 1965, communal violence and the events in Bangladesh. The second consists of writing that deals with the changing social and political structure in India. It covers broadly phases which reflect the feudal as well as capitalist forces at work in rural India, the changing family and class structure of the growing small-town bourgeoisie and specially the paralysing contradictions and dilemmas of the urban petty bourgeoisie. The third part consists of writing which the editor names 'personal', i.e. which reflects subjective states of mind of the writer and explores existential problems.

Categorising the writings in such a way seems somewhat mechanical and without significance. 'National Bird', 'The Traitor', 'Chorus' or any writing of Part I, from this standpoint, are topical. Yes, we have no doubt they are topical. But do such writings differ fundamentally from those of Part II which reflect the social-political forces operating in our country? A poem on the struggle in Vietnam, it may be labelled topical, but is that all? Should not the poem also help to ascertain the attitude of the writer towards his life, the dialectics of the poet? Judged in this perspective, Sandipan's 'Revolution and Rajmohan' (although very much superficial and depicting surface realism only) and Badal Sircar's 'Ebam Indrajit',

placed in Part II, are not qualitatively different from "the tragi-comic antics of the ruling party" in Doodhnath Singh's allegorical 'Chorus', placed in Part I of the anthology. Incidentally, it is queer that in this collection the editor has not included any writing on Vietnam.

The editor does not prove himself very judicious even in his selections. His primary intention is to acquaint the non-Indian readers with 'contemporary' Indian literature. (Although the word 'contemporary' has been used in the introductory note, what the editor actually wants to mean is modern literature. This is very much implied in the explanation of the editor about the purpose of the book). Why does he then choose the period of the last ten years or so? Is it not a fact that the last ten or fifteen years of Indian literature is absolutely barren, morbid and hopelessly in the midst of confusions? Should a critic have any hesitation to name this decade a 'dark age'? Even though an anthology of the period may be significant as portraying its hollowness, should that be represented as modern Indian writing as such? Unfortunately Jussawalla has overlooked the question, and prepared the anthology without going properly through the history of modern Indian literature.

It will not be out of context to say that this hollow, morbid literature of the decade is no accident. It is very much natural, or should one say, historically determined—determined broadly by socio-economic forces. The period that we have just crossed and the society in which we are gasping today are horribly decadent and in utter confusion. The whole social life has become colourless, stagnant. Although changes in the social patterns are visibly frequent—revolution all around—we know that these are apparent and not at all able to direct our life substantially to any creative world.

Contrarily, we have had, relatively speaking, a positive heritage of modern literature in the thirties. Then the traditional writing began to gain ground; the young writers refused the overwhelming influence of Tagore as the long-established image of eternal life and all that. During the Second World War,

i.e. in the forties, this movement acquired a new dimension; the wave of anti-fascist thinking and in most cases the left-wing commitment (generally Marxism) of the writers throughout India shattered all the residual legacies of the traditional tranquillity of Indian literature. The writers tried to narrate objectively the actual life of constant suffering, strains and tensions and tried to paint the revolutionary hero who saw the new life in a struggle for a better state of society. Jussawalla's stand on this point is quite different and thought-provoking too. He says, "... it is extremely difficult to find a body of good Marxist writing in India. Many Indian writers, like the 'progressive writers' of the late thirties and early forties have professed one or other kind of leftist ideology, have been members of the Communist Party of India before it split, but generally speaking, I have found the content of their work romantic rather than Marxist" (Introduction, p. 31).

Whatever that might be, right up to our political independence and a very short period thereafter, i.e., the fifties, the spell of this literary movement had been very much intensive, fruitful, deep-seated and distinctive in character. But soon in the sixties and seventies, the writers, in general, lost all vigour and the sensibility to create a new epoch. They have fallen into a complete vacuum and written nonsense. Thus the writings of the last ten years cannot represent modern or 'contemporary', as the editor used the term, Indian literature especially when this anthology is meant for non-Indian readers who have the knowledge of Indian literature only in its classical form.

K P G

For Frontier contact

People's Book House

Cowasji Patil Street,

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JUNE 22, 1974

Letters

Fall-Out

The explosion by the Indian Government of a nuclear device is said to presage greater technological development. The Indian people, however, are not a whit nearer to the age of abundant energy resources, nor even to an optimum, for less full utilisation of human labour potential.

The Government recently dealt with the strike of railway workers by declaring it illegal (although it was duly notified in accordance with existing laws on trade union functioning), by suspending the Payment of Wages Act on the strength of an ordinance and thus denying payment to the workers of their lawfully earned wages of April and by employing to the full the State's executive powers to coerce the strikers, force them to join duty—under the severest sanctions of arrests, dismissals, evictions (from residence), torture and gratuitous insults. There is the other evidence of success of India's ruling class which has impressed public opinion both at home and abroad. The working class in India will hereafter have no freedom to counterpose their economic rights and interests against unfair and bureaucratic practices of executive authority, not to speak of the right to strike, the Constitution and the laws notwithstanding.

It is said that the "nuclear device" exploded on May 18—when the strikers' morale was at the highest and needed to have been overawed—was a clean affair; there was little or no radioactive fall-out. But the Government's blitzkrieg on the workers has left a pall of misery, privation and suffering.

R. P. MULLICK
Lucknow

In Jail

Of late we find that the Congress and CPI leaders have become anxious to 'save' the lives of some 'Naxalites' in jail. This came almost immediately after some 'Naxalites' in Krishnagar

broke jail and returned to the mass of poor and landless peasants shouting such slogans as "Long live Chairman Mao", "Long live the immortal martyr, our respected leader, Comrade Charu Mazumdar".

In other jails you have 'Naxalites' who struggle in the Gandhian way to press their demand for what they themselves rejected yesterday as mere rubbish, that is, the status of Class I prisoners with more facilities.

R. ROY
Krishnagar, Nadia.

Delhi Writers Protest

In a well-attended meeting of writers, teachers, students, journalists and artists sponsored by four literary organisations, Hiraval, Sahitya Sabha (J. N. University), Sarvanam and Mukti Forum held at the School of International Studies, New Delhi in the first week of this month, the capital saw the first organised effort of its intellectuals to mobilize against the terror unleashed by the Congress Government on citizens daring to dissent. To judge by its proceedings it was the first in a series of meetings to be held all over Delhi soon not only to make it broad-based but also to take up concrete problems and fight for them. But it will remain a cultural front shunning sectarian politics on the one hand and overt political affiliations on the other to ensure that it goes ahead with its twin objectives of educating and enlisting the masses while learning from them and thus strengthening itself.

The speakers condemned the fascist character of the government and dismissed the politics of memorandum as obsolete and juvenile. Political murders since 1967, they pledged, would not go unexposed or unavenged.

The resolutions passed at the meeting condemned the terroristic and unconstitutional use of DIR and MISA against writers and political opponents and deplored the murder and wholesale arrest of writers in Andhra Pradesh, Panjab, West Bengal, Maharashtra and elsewhere, expressed solidarity with the proletarian writers under attack, con-

gratulated the railwaymen on their brave fight against their suppression, welcomed the AIR artistes' and workers' protest against the Government's misuse of the radio and television in propagating lies and slanders against the hapless railmen, and appointed a committee to launch a drive on the cultural front in order to mobilise all categories of citizens so that the white terror of the ruling party could be challenged and checked.

A disquieting side. The organisers should show maturity in issuing invitation. If it was an open meeting, the street corner or market square would have been the apter venue. A pretentious bunch of pseudo-writers, supposedly wedded to a party now frantically seeking a character certificate from the Kremlin, failed in its bid to wreck or sabotage the meeting. But the threat of infiltration still looms. Let the organisers beware of this clique. Its closeness and identification with the Establishment, so glaringly evident, and its previous record should be enough to warn the organisers against the deadly association. Complacency or generosity in the matter will prove suicidal.

A CORRESPONDENT
New Delhi

Protest

We condemn the arrests of the revolutionary writers Comrade T. Madhusudhana Rao, Comrade Cherabanda Raju, Comrade M. T. Khan and Comrade Varavara Rao by the Andhra Pradesh Government. We warn the Government to release them immediately.

K. U. S. RAO
Secretary, U.P.S.F., M.P. Unit
Bhopal

Bengalis In Canada

It was through unusual circumstances that I came to know about your magazine. Robert Hardgrave in his book "India" had given you a left-handed praise by calling "Frontier" "well edited and quasi-Maoist". However the pur-

pose and position of your magazine will be judged by the coming Indian revolution.

Indians in Canada are alive and well and too concerned with Hindi movies, pujas, and forming clubs to worry about revolutionary praxis (in studying Indian conditions) and confronting racism (especially the institutional kind) which does and will affect them and their children.

The Bengali community of about 5000 in and around the Toronto region had two Durga images brought from Calcutta for 1973. Why two, why spend hundreds of dollars!! Well I believe it is proverbial that one or is it three Bengalis that make two clubs, so with 5000 Bengalis, two is not bad. The money could have been put to better use—surely—some of the suggestions were—having artists brought from India; building a Bangla library (preposterous!!) even a party.

So the bhadrakok, a child of colonialism, tries to fit into the Canadian ethnic mosaic, an illusion of his and the Canadian government's making. [The Canadian government officially says it will encourage ethnic cultures] and an occasional trip home to let people know he has made it—he has passed into the First World—but mostly because it feels good to be amongst brown people. The black revolt in the U.S. had some impact on his psyche.

The brunt of this load will be carried by their children, unclear of their heritage and ill-prepared for the racist-capitalist society.

B. GHOSE
Canada

Medical Representatives

If some members of WBSMRA think that CPI(M) supporters rigged the election of the executive committee members of WBSMRA, they ought not to come out in the open with a letter (April 20-27) containing wild charges and allegations. Can these members of the WBSMRA state exactly what political axe the CPI(M) might have liked to grind winning such a small election? I cannot think that a party like the CPI(M)

can have any vested interest in WBSMRA. Elections can only be rigged by those who are supporters of vested interests or vested group interests.

The authors of the letter you have published should have held their patience. Otherwise the present form of attack will amount to nothing more than a vilification campaign. But are there not a few who enjoy such vilification campaigns?

ANIL KUMAR SAHA
Krishnagar

The letter by "Some members of WBSMRA" (April 27) presents a very distorted picture. The outcry about the denial of voting rights at the Purulia election is unreal. According to the constitution, only people with at least six months' membership are entitled to vote. This rule has been effective for years. The presiding officers at the Purulia election who are not medical representatives but are office workers of Pfizer and also office-bearers of the Pfizer Employees Union have been co-operating with WBSMRA in various ways in our struggle against the Pfizer management, which is actually for the cause of medical representatives. These gentlemen have proved to be our comrades by struggling along with us under the banner of AICAPEF (All India Chemical and Pharmaceutical Employees Federation). Was it not justified to appoint these men, who have earned our confidence by their deeds, as presiding officers?

The next claim by "Some members" that "at the time of counting they allowed nobody but their own men" is also palpably false as "Some members" opposed to the CPI(M) stand but with leanings towards other established, 'respectable' political parties were also present.

If one has to voice any objection, then it has to be on the programme, not by distorting facts and spreading falsehood.

A MEMBER OF WBSMRA



**We know how you feel.
So here's a great way
to turn off the heat.**

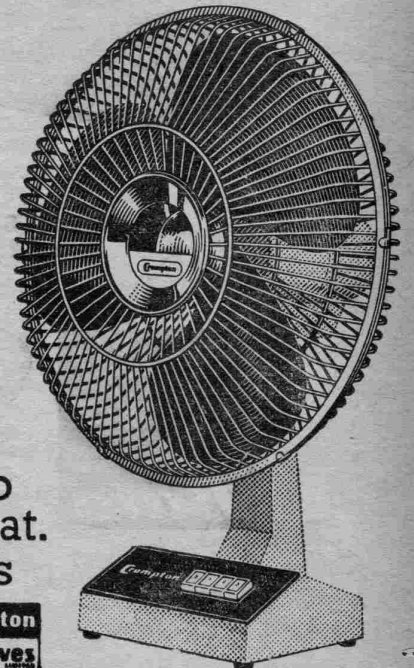
*Get a table fan this summer
that's more than just good
looking. Buy one that has a
totally enclosed motor
(only one brand has it).*

*Buy one that with
reasonable care will last
for the next twenty years.
Buy one for which you may
have to pay a very little
extra today, rather than pay
heavily for in repairs later.*

*Buy a table fan custom-
built by the makers of
India's most wanted ceiling
fans. Their table fans have
a reputation to live up to.*

Buy Crompton.

*Not just
because you need a table
fan. But because you
want the best.*



**No
sweat.
It's**

**Crompton
Greaves**

AIYARS-CG-279



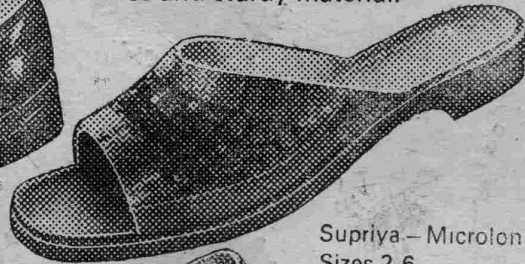
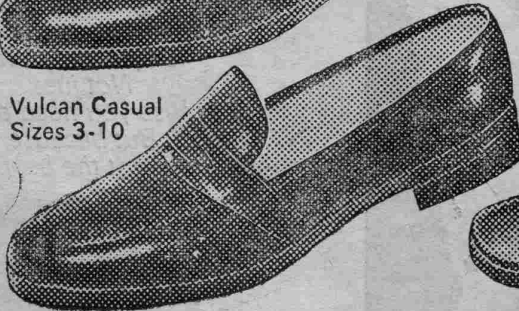
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