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A MAGNIFICENT STRUGGLE

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Editorial

WITH THEIR BLOOD, the kisans of Punjab have written one of the most glorious chapters in the history of the Indian

kisan movement. Their heroism, their unflinching steadfastness, their all-embracing unity have evoked the admiration of all sections of people and focussed the attention of the whole country on their just demands. It has wrung from the Government the assurance that every effort would be made to meet these demands.

It was the biggest struggle conducted by kisans in recent years in any part of the country. Cutting across loyalties and affiliations to various parties, it united the kisans of all shades of opinion. Although a partial struggle on an immediate economic issue, it breathed new life into the communal and faction-ridden political life of Punjab.

No effort had been spared by the Kisan Sabha before launching the struggle to convince the Government about the inequitous nature of the betterment levy. Putting forward concrete proposals by which the cost of the Bhakra-Nangal project could be met, without imposing additional load on the already heavily burdened peasantry, the Kisan Sabha strove its utmost to reach a settlement. Its efforts were frustrated by the adamant attitude of the Government.

In the course of the struggle, seventeen thousand kisans offered satyagraha. Eight persons including three women were shot down in cold blood. One person died as the result of beating by the police. Two died in prison.

A reign of terror, surpassing in ferociousness what Punjab had known during the days of Jallianwalla Bagh was established. Indiscriminate beating up, shooting, looting of villages on the plea of realisation of fines and other methods of intimidation became the order of the day.

Important observers, including many Congressmen and even newspapers which support the Government, have protested against the brutal measures adopted by the police.

All this failed to cow down the kisans.

Several Ministers of the Government, including the Chief Minister, conscious of their failure to curb the movement, and of the growing democratic support for the kisans indicated in their speeches that they were willing to consider the demands of the kisans and do everything possible to reduce the burden on them but could do so only after the struggle was withdrawn. On March 20, on the basis of the appeal made by the Speaker of the Punjab Assembly and the promise of the Chief Minister that he would be responsible, the Kisan Sabha decided to withdraw the struggle.

Thereby the Kisan Sabha has knocked off from the hands of the Government its last argument. It has created the atmosphere in which negotiations can start between the Government and the Sabha. The decision of the Kisan Sabha puts the professions of the Government to test. It is to be earnestly hoped that learning from the events of the last six weeks, the Government of Punjab will move speedily in the matter. The first step in this direction must be the release of all prisoners, without any distinction, the withdrawal of all cases, the refunding of fines, compensation to the families of those who were killed and the institution of judicial enquiry into the firings.

Also, the basic issues involved in the struggle cannot be delayed. They need to be settled immediately. Any half-heartedness or delay would entail regrettable consequences for which the sole responsibility will lie with the Government.

Paying homage to the martyrs of the movement and congratulating the kisans of Punjab on the magnificent struggle they have waged, we assure them that we shall strive our utmost to mobilise democratic support for their just demands and ensure their speedy realisation.

(March 26)

NEXT WEEK

On April 5, the Communist-led Government of Kerala completes two years. To mark the occasion, next week's NEW AGE will carry special material on Kerala—on the policies of the Communist Ministry and its achievements and the role the Opposition parties and their leaders have been playing.

★ ★ ★ AGAINST THE U.S.-PAK PACT ★ ★ ★



A sectional view of the militant demonstration which went to the office of the U.S. Information Service in New Delhi on March 20 to protest against the military Pact which the USA has signed with Pakistan. A note handed over to USIS officials on behalf of the demonstration organised by the Delhi Committee of the Communist Party, said that the Indian people viewed with concern this military Pact and were determined to defend their freedom and independence against all intrigues of the imperialists.

PANTJI, YOUR FACTS ARE ALL COCK-EYED

SAFE within the precincts of Parliament House, protected by all the privileges which a Member of Parliament enjoys in our country, Union Home Minister Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant made the statement that the Kerala Government had given a loan of Rs. 50,000 or Rs. 75,000 to the Malayalam Communist daily Deshabhamani. The impression Pantji was seeking to create was that the Kerala Government was using public money to subsidise Communist journals.

If what the Union Home Minister said was correct, it would indeed have been a serious charge. But unfortunately for him, his story is as

cock-eyed as many of the stories his followers in Kerala have spread about the Communist-led Government.

For Pantji's information, here are a few facts:

ONE, the Deshabhamani daily has never asked for a loan either from the present Kerala Government or from any other Government.

TWO, the party which has applied for a loan, and which has been sanctioned, is the Deshabhamani Printing and Publishing House, a public limited company in which both Communists and non-Communists are shareholders. All that the Deshabhamani

daily has got to do with this firm is that the paper is printed in its press and the printing bills are paid regularly.

THREE, there was no favouritism involved in sanctioning this loan. It was done under the State Aid to Industries Act and the sanction was given by a board on which are represented the Leader of the Kerala Opposition, Sri P. T. Chacko, and a Congressite industrialist, Sri P. B. Kurup.

FOUR, the loan has not been sanctioned because it is any Communist front organisation. It has been sanctioned against a security of the company's landed properly valued

★ SEE BACK PAGE

Their Tears Over Tibet

THE whole country was deeply agitated over the new U.S. military aid pact with Pakistan. The American Lobby stood badly isolated. It is at such a psychological moment that the friends of U.S. imperialism within our country have seized upon the Tibetan situation to attack our friendly relations with China.

It is common knowledge that the People's Government of China respects Tibetan customs and autonomy to an extent that it is not even introducing the reforms and social changes that are being implemented in the rest of China. It should not be difficult for honest patriotic Indians, with our own national experience as the background, to realise that the exile Kuomintang and foreign imperialist circles would seek to link up with the reactionary elements within Tibet and stir up trouble. This is just what has happened.

Anglo-U.S. foreign correspondents have been mis-using the hospitality of our country to send out false and exaggerated reports about happenings in Tibet against which the Government of India had to warn them and of which the Prime Minister spoke in our Parliament. They, however, not only persisted in their efforts but linked up with the Right-wing Indian Press to build up a terrific Press campaign against People's China.

They were so confident of the success of their counter-revolutionary agents within Tibet that they have themselves set out the story of imperialism, foreign intervention in Tibet.

Trouble in Lhasa took place on March 20. On March 19, Sydney Smith of the London Daily Express, from the Tibetan frontier with India, sent the story under the caption, "Chiang Joins Battle—his planes start air-drops to help fight against Red Chinese Garrison," and stated, "Aircraft of Chiang's Kuomintang forces made three air-drops to aid Tibetan fighters who have surrounded one thousand Communist Chinese troops fifty miles south of Lhasa. Chiang is said to have chosen this battle as a 'second front' to Quomoy and a much better chance to make his long-sought contact with Communist Chinese forces. So far the air-drops have been of light weapons, ammunition and a handful of technical advisors and radio operators."

On March 24, Reuter broadcast from Taipei the appeal of Mr. Li Yung-shin, Chairman of the Mongolian and Tibetan Affairs Commission of the Kuomintang rump, to the "free world" to support the insurgent Tibetans. He admitted that the Kuomintang Government was maintaining contact with Tibet.

On the 25th, PTI reported from Kalimpong that fighting had stopped in Lhasa. The same day, Kuomintang sources told Reuter in Taipei that rebel forces had left Lhasa. A foreign-inspired rebellion could not last longer!

AMERICAN LOBBY IN ACTION

These critical days, however, were desperately used by the well-known "friends"

of the USA to rush the Indian Government change its friendly policy towards People's China and make India the moral-political base of their worldwide reactionary imperialist campaign.

The PSP moved an adjournment motion in the Lok Sabha. It was over Tibet itself that the Panch Shila doctrine was first proclaimed to the whole world by the Prime Ministers of India and China together. The Speaker rightly ruled it out on the ground that the internal affairs of another country had been never discussed in the House before and were not going to be discussed now, and amidst applause from the Congress benches stressed our "best of relations" with China, "a friendly State." The Prime Minister made it clear: "We have no intention of interfering in the internal affairs of China with whom we have friendly relations."

The National Herald in its editorial of March 24 has neatly summed up the position: "Mr. Goray, Mr. Masani, Mr. Asoka Mehta represent only people who get excited over anything that happens under Communist regimes. This is not a correct attitude and certainly not the attitude which the people and the Government have been following in international affairs."

Undaunted, these warriors of the American Lobby are keeping up the fight. The PSP has called for a Tibet Day. People's China is strong and stable to look after its own safety and security. What we have to note is that the leaders of the PSP, in alliance with Masani and other reactionaries, seize every opportunity to challenge India's independent foreign policy.

The shameful role they are at present playing is to divert the mounting suspicion of U.S. policy towards our country into a provocative campaign against our friendship with China. This serves the U.S. game and not India's interests. It is no accident that they are silent over the British man-of-war hovering around Maldives to impose a naval base, despite the opposition of the Maldivian Government. They are also not worried over the U.S. proposal to plant a U.S. fleet in the Indian Ocean. It is worth recalling that when the U.S.-Pak Pact was being discussed in Parliament, it was the same Asoka Mehta who had opined that there was nothing new, nor much to worry about, but new thought should be given to Tibet!

Our suspicions against the U.S. are justified because the U.S. Government is adopting a tricky imperialist policy towards our country. Our bonds with China are traditional, unbreakable, based on common anti-imperialism and Panch Shila.

INSIDE CONGRESS

THE State Congress Presidents and Secretaries Conference, held to discuss the implementation of the Nagpur resolutions, has not carried forward the position at all and there was enough to disturb progressive Congressmen who genuinely seek to clear the hurdles and know that their own Right is the big hindrance.

NOTES OF THE WEEK

All the top leaders spoke but none went beyond generalities. Without spelling out the specific implications of Nagpur, there is no pinning down the Right. Hence Morarji Desai could claim that his Budget paved the way to Socialism.

More. He popularised co-operative farming as the only alternative to the Communists taking over. Is there not enough bitter experience of the past for anti-feudal, pro-peasant Congressmen to recall that when even land reforms are linked with anti-Communism, that is a sure sign of the coming appeasement of the rural rich?

After long and laborious statistical research, Sri Shri-man Narayan has found out that more land can be had for cultivation by abolishing the boundaries of fields through co-op farming than through ceiling legislation (Times of India, March 22). This is enough to show that there is no hope of land to the tiller through ceiling legislations if Shri-man Narayan, Member-in-Charge of Food and Agriculture in the Planning Commission, has his way. And there are many more like him in very high places.

Pandit Nehru, Sri Dhebar and Mrs. Gandhi—all spoke eloquently on the significance of the Nagpur line and that there was no place for its opponents inside the Congress. These reactionary gentlemen are, however, well-known. The coming Congress elections would have been an ideal opportunity for the Congress rank-and-file to clean out the reactionary Right or at least demote them from positions of vantage. The Congress elections, however, were postponed on the ostensible ground that the coming months should be devoted to the popularisation of Nagpur resolutions.

The truth is that the Congress High Command knows better than anybody else that internal dissensions inside the Congress organisation have reached a stage that elections would have inevitably led to a sharpening of the factional fights in some State organisations.

All-India tours of top Congress leaders have been announced. The first sample was the Delhi PCC reception to the Congress President where the Hindustan Times announced the audience to be one lakh, the Times of India thirty thousand and the Statesman fifteen thousand. A Press build-up cannot save the declining fortunes of the ruling party as long as it carries on in the old way, despite new phrases and slogans.

Enough has happened after Nagpur for progressive Congressmen to note that Nagpur has become the new mantra for the old leadership to carry on as before, there is no serious effort to work out new concrete policies on their basis, that the most innumerable opponents of the Nagpur line, the Right within the Congress, has not been touched at all and retains its strategic posts in the Government and party hierarchy, that so far as the top echelons of the leadership are concerned, it is as yet a wordy battle, the old patch-up continues undisturbed.

RESPECT FOR DEMOCRACY

HOW loud are the Congress leaders in their championing of democracy against Communism! Enough has been stated this week inside the various legislatures to show up how the Congress leaders treat Indian democracy when they themselves constitute the ruling circles.

The high-powered Law Commission's report was discussed in the Lok Sabha and it had stated that the independence and status of the judiciary were endangered by the Congress Ministers' interference with the appointments of Judges to the Supreme Court and State High Courts under caste, communal, regional and political pressures.

The Home Minister sought to dismiss the findings of the Commission as mere allegations. Congress M.P. Thakurdas B. Hargava, senior-most Member of the House, himself a lawyer of 50 years' standing, indignantly exclaimed that the Report was "the highest condemnation of the Government."

The Preventive Detention Act was again passed despite strong opposition. The official apology that there were only 72 detenus at the end of 1955 as against 1,855 in 1955 is all the more reason for removing this Black Bill from our statute book. Even the Hindustan Times (March 23) has stated editorially, "Patently, this temporary measure to cope with an emergency is out-of-place and out-of-date today."

Since the last General Elections, 110 Ordinances have been promulgated by the Union and State Governments and this when there has been no national emergency and the legislatures have been meeting as usual. Such is the respect that the Congress bosses have for the proper functioning of Indian democracy.

On March 17, the Speaker of the Lok Sabha had to openly rebuke the Government for "ignoring the House" when the important budget discussion was on and most of the Ministers were absent. "It is rather strange that this House is not treated properly... What is it that we are doing here?" Such was his caustic comment.

The Communist-led Opposition of West Bengal set a new record when it compelled the Speaker to choose between the Speakership of the Assembly or the Directorship of a company which was getting aid from the Government. The strength of popular feeling for a clean healthy political life in Bengal was vindicated when the Speaker ultimately announced his willingness to resign the directorship.

The record of the PSP in U.P. has been exactly the opposite of the Communists of Bengal. The PSP group in the U.P. Assembly voted with the Government on the budget and defended its action on the ground that it was following the British practice of parliamentarism. The Tories and Liberals were two parties of the same class and they developed the convention of moving cut motions, etc., on spe-

cific issues but voting for the budget as a whole in the end. The servile Labour Party has continued this old practice of the parties of the bosses.

The PSP, in their stronghold of U.P., has also obviously come to the conclusion that there is no difference between their party and the Congress on basic policies. This new development, the PSP ceasing to play the role of a real opposition party, needs to be carefully noted.

PEOPLE IN ACTION

IF the Asoka Mehtas and Masanis seek to divert the nation's attention in the wrong direction from above, the common people down below are in action in the right direction, struggling to change the unpopular policies of the Congress Government and themselves getting into the arena more and more.

The magnificent struggle of the Punjab Kisans has concluded and entered the critical stage of negotiations.

From the various Districts of Bihar, 25,000 workers, peasants and employees staged before the Assembly what has been termed as Patna's biggest political demonstration since Independence. The eight-mile-long market of the State capital expressed its solidarity by observing complete hartal and 15,000 rickshaw-pullers also observed a complete strike.

They pledged to face the Government with a Statewide mass movement if their demands for immediate ceiling legislation, adequate food-grains supply, against forcible realisation of loans, etc., wage boards for major industries and the just call of Jamedar workers were not heeded within a month.

The white-collared employees are getting really restive. The U.P. Government non-gazetted personnel expressed its discontent by refusing to observe Holi. In accordance with the existing formula of the Pay Commission, the Central Government clerks have demanded an interim relief of Rs. 15 and trade union rights.

The powerful Federation of Bank Employees has denounced Abid Ali's undignified efforts to split their ranks and has put the Union Labour Minister on the defensive. They have given notice of the termination of the old Award and demanded negotiations for a new settlement to meet their demands. The employees of the banks must have better service conditions and increased emoluments.

Calcutta students got excited, faced with an unduly stiff examination paper. It is a sign of the times that the Calcutta Students' Federation condemned the behaviour of the handful of rowdies who disturbed the exams. The Calcutta University Union has also disowned rowdism. The student organisations, while defending the rights of the students and pleading with the University authorities to be just, have boldly begun to fight anarchic and unseemly tendencies in their own ranks. This is in the best tradition of the student movement.

—P. C. JOSHI (March 26)

WEST BENGAL

By J. N. BIKASH HOITRA

OPPOSITION WINS A SIGNIFICANT VICTORY

Speaker's Assurance In Assembly

CALCUTTA, March 22 — The debate on the no-confidence motion against the Speaker of the West Bengal Assembly, Sri S. D. Banerjee, on March 20, ended in a significant victory for the Opposition.

THROUGHOUT the motion, the Opposition had sought to focus attention on the fundamental question as to whether it was proper for a Speaker to be associated with a commercial organisation, particularly one which had received financial assistance from the Government.

The debate took a dramatic turn when the Speaker announced amidst thunderous cheers from Opposition benches that if he continued as the Speaker, he would cease to be a director of the National Sugar Mills.

After this categorical statement, the Opposition felt that the very important principle for which they had been fighting had been amply vindicated. There was, therefore, no point in pressing the motion to vote.

The motion was tabled by the Opposition on February 17 last. An Opposition member had made an allegation on the previous day that the Speaker was connected with the National Sugar Mills (situated in Birbhum District of the State) in the capacity of a director and that the company had received considerable financial help from the Government.

The Speaker repeatedly turned down requests from the Opposition to vacate the Chair until the grave allegation against him was cleared. The entire Opposition then walked out in protest and later on jointly sponsored the no-confidence motion in order to raise a discussion of the code of behaviour that a Speaker must follow.

The motion disapproved of the conduct of the Speaker and stated that in view of his association with the National Sugar Mills, he "is incapable of applying an unbiased mind to the deliberations of the House."

After Sri Sudhir Roy Choudhury (PSP), who opened the debate, had finished his speech, an amendment expressing confidence in the Speaker was sought to be moved on behalf of the Congress Party. The Opposition took strong exception to this procedure and contended that the amendment was out of order.

Ready-Made Ruling

The Deputy Speaker, who was presiding, read out his ruling from a sheet of paper, rejecting the Opposition contention. Comrade Jyoti Basu, Leader of the Opposition, then got up and asked him amidst peals of laughter from the Opposition benches, "We have just now placed our case challenging the admissibility of the amendment. How could you prepare your ruling in the twinkling of an eye? When did you write it out? Who typed it?"

When the Speaker left the House after replying to the charge levelled against him, Sri Sudhir Roy Choudhury wanted to know the Speaker's attitude regarding his directorship of the Sugar Mills. The Speaker returned to the chamber to announce, "If I continue as the Speaker, I shall resign my directorship straightaway." The motion was then withdrawn.

During the debate, which lasted for over five hours, Comrade Jyoti Basu and other Opposition speakers repeatedly referred to the circumstances under which they had been forced to table the motion, and said that they had no personal animosity against the Speaker. Their sole aim in taking the grave step was to create healthy democratic conventions to guide the

conduct and behaviour of the Speaker of a legislature. While some speakers from the Congress benches supported these principles, Dr. B. C. Roy, Chief Minister, tried to throw them overboard.

He contended that since the Government did not hold any of the company's shares, the disqualification clause of the Representation of People's Act did not apply to the present case. Then, he further asserted, there was no convention by which the Speaker could be prevented from being a director of a company in which no shares were held by the Government.

A totally different tone was, however, evident in the Speaker's reply. He said that the office of the Speaker was sacrosanct and that apart from the legal aspects involved, there was also the question of propriety. Expressing his complete agreement with the principles for which the Opposition

had put up a dogged fight, he said that a body of conventions to guide the Speaker should be evolved. The debate, which was exciting all through, was one of the liveliest in recent years. Galleries were packed beyond capacity, and during the entire period of the five-hour debate the interest of the visitors never flagged.

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Reception Committee

Leading figures in the literary, artistic, cultural, scientific, educational, medical and political fields in West Bengal have joined the Reception Committee. Among them are Dr. Triguna Sen, Mayor of Calcutta Corporation and Rector of Jadavpur University, who is the Chairman of the Reception

COMMUNIST Kisan Leader MURDERED

ANOTHER martyr has fallen in the cause of the West Bengal peasantry — Comrade DHIREN GAYAN, a member of the 24 Parganas District Council of the Communist Party, who was brutally beaten to death by jotedars' goondas in village Goberia of the District in the night of March 14. His colleague, Comrade Sukra Sardar was seriously wounded.

Comrade Gayan was in the thick of the grim struggle which the sharecroppers are now fighting against mala fide transfers of land by big landlords and jotedars and for the immediate

implementation of land reforms. Comrade Gayan himself was a poor sharecropper. He earned membership of the Party in 1954 in the course of the peasants' struggle against famine and evictions. He was elected to the District Council at the 24 Parganas District Party Conference in January last.

The West Bengal Committee of the Communist Party at its meeting on March 17, adopted a resolution condemning the dastardly murder of this heroic son of the people and sent its heart-felt condolences to the bereaved family.

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Calcutta Gets Ready For Afro-Asian Solidarity Conference

THE All-India Conference for Afro-Asian Solidarity, scheduled to be held in Calcutta from April 2 to 5, has evoked good response from all sections of the people here.

Workers, peasants, students, youth, women, are all coming forward to listen to the message of the Conference. Scores of sectional, group and mass meetings have taken place. Local conventions are being held and Preparatory Committees with prominent local people on them, are being set up in Calcutta as well as in the Districts.

The General Secretaries of 19 College Unions in Calcutta, including the Calcutta University Students' Union, have issued a joint statement supporting the Conference. Representatives of trade unions and of student and youth organisations, and councillors of the Calcutta Corporation have already met. A meeting of women social workers and representatives of women's organisations will be held on March 25. The response from the Calcutta High Court Bar Association and the Bar Library has been very encouraging.

Ready-Made Ruling

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world culture, the histories of imperialist exploitation and freedom movements in these countries, etc. Seminars on peace, freedom and solidarity of Afro-Asian peoples; proper utilisation of national resources, raising of the standard of living, character of foreign aid; education and culture, etc.

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PEOPLE'S VERDICT ON ANDHRA RICE DEAL

Should The Kerala, Government Still Resign?

WHILE the Opposition leaders in Kerala are frantically trying to whip up a campaign to demand the resignation of the Ministry on the basis of the findings of the Andhra Rice Deal Enquiry Commission, the people of one municipal town in the State have given their verdict—and it has gone against the Congress-PSP-Muslim League-RSP leaders.

The Communist Party and supported Independents have won nine out of the 16 seats in the Muvattupuzha Municipal Council, while the Congress and its Independent have won the remaining seven seats.

Muvattupuzha was only recently converted into a municipality, earlier it used to be a panchayat. In the last elections held to this panchayat, all but two of the seats went to the Congress and these two seats went to Independents. Later in a by-election, the Communist Party secured one seat. Both the seats in the Assembly from the area which has been converted into the mu-

nicipality are held by Congressmen. So when the Communist Party now wins a majority in this town, it can certainly be considered as a vote of confidence of the people in the Communist-led Government.

It was the Congress leaders who gave more meaning to it by making the Andhra Rice Deal an issue of these elections. All their speeches were on the rice deal "suicide" demanding that the Communist Ministry resign. From Congress General Secretary Sadiq Ali down to the local Congress bosses—the Chackos, Panampillys and Damodara Menon—all made such speeches and demanded such speeches and demands. The Congress rice deal expert, Sri T. O. Sava, prosecutor of the Kerala Government before the Rice Deal Enquiry Commission, was pressed into service to explain to the Muvattupuzha people how the Communist Party had swindled public money.

But with all this, the Congress lost. They had themselves raised the ques-

tion of the Andhra Rice Deal. If they have any honesty left, they should accept the verdict of the people. But it is doubtful whether any such good sense will dawn on the Congress leaders.

Their first attempt was to make out that their vote had increased. Even conceding for argument's sake that their figures are correct, it has to be remembered that this time it was a combined Congress-PSP vote while last time the Congress had fought single-handed. Most of the Muslim League votes also went to the Congress this time though the League did not openly call for support to the Congress.

Now it seems that the PCC President, Sri Damodara Menon, has found the right explanation. He says that if the Muslim League had supported the Congress, the Congress would have won a majority. An editorial in a Malayalam daily has commented: "It is fortunate that this gentleman did not say, we would have won if the people gave us votes."

Another Opposition Gamble Ends In Fiasco In Kerala

THERE was quite a tense atmosphere in the Press gallery in the Kerala Assembly on March 24 just before the House began its session.

Vice-President Radhakrishnan was scheduled to arrive in Trivandrum at 11.20 that morning, but the Correspondents of the important newspapers and India's premier news agency had not gone to the airport, they were all in the Press gallery. Some of them at least had some inkling of what was coming.

What they were expecting happened soon. When the debate on the grant for Irrigation Department was over, the Congress mover of the cut motion pressed his motion to vote.

This was strange, to say the least, since the procedure is generally to press to vote only the cut motion on general administration. Moreover, this was grant for a department which is usually adopted unanimously.

Why then was the poll demanded? Enquiries brought out the interesting story of the latest attempt of the Opposition to strengthen their demand for the resignation of the Communist Ministry.

The Opposition leaders had thought that the Ministers, expecting no poll in the usual course of events, would have gone to the airport to receive the Vice-President and with the strength of the ruling party thus depleted, they could get a snap vote and defeat the Government.

The plan had been laid deep, for twenty-four hours talks had gone on in the Opposition camp and its fullest mobilisation in the Assembly had been arranged. Some Pressmen had also been given the tip-off and rather than going to the airport for the Vice-President's arrival, they decided to wait in the Assembly Chamber to re-

port the history-making event of the Communist Ministry's first defeat in Assembly voting.

When the poll was demanded, many of the seats in the Treasury Benches became bright. But not for long. The Treasury Benches began to get filled up. Ministers who were actually leaving for the airport heard the Division Bell and came back to the Chamber. The voting figure was 62 for the Government and 57 for the Opposition.

The Ministers went to the airport after this poll and were able to reach in time to receive the Vice-President because the plane itself was late by a few minutes.

One of the first things the Vice-President asked the Ministers was whether there was no session of the Assembly. It was the Governor who replied, yes. There was a division also. What did the Vice-President think then, particularly when he looked round and did not see one of the Opposition leaders of the Assembly there to receive him?

In fact, the Leader of the House, the Chief Minister, is reported to have suggested to the Leader of the Opposition that the House should be adjourned for an hour to enable the members to go to the airport. But the Opposition Leader is said to have rejected it saying that he was not prepared to create the precedent of adjourning the Assembly whenever anybody comes to visit the State. For the Congress Leader of the Opposition, the Vice-President of the Republic was just an anybody.

But the real reason was that, he was embarking on a gamble and for his gamble to succeed, the Assembly had to be in session and the Ministers had to be out. With all that, the game did not succeed.

With Asia having sprung decisively to freedom—notwithstanding a few pocket dictators, the turn comes for the African leap forward. All the signs point to the time of climacteric for African resurgence. And all the familiar murderous cruelty of imperialism at bay comes to disgust decency.

THE latest sector of raging battle is Nyasaland, about which background information was given in NEW AGE of March 15. What has to be burnt into the consciousness of us all is that in Nyasaland the issue permits of no prevarication, no hedging. It is a simple issue of a people, black in colour, refusing to submit themselves to the outrages and insults of a domination, alien and heinous in the extreme meaning of the terms.

Sir Roy Welensky, the Premier of the Central African Federation and one of the more prominent advocates of apartheid, has, naturally enough, seen a "Communist plot" in the Nyasa struggle. This has not fooled even the more obtuse politicians of the Labour Party in Britain, to say nothing of the leaders in Asia.

Moderate Programme

Dr. Hastings Banda, leader of the Nyasaland African National Congress, has not only put forward a very moderate programme and repeatedly called for negotiations, but at the Accra Conference he was one of the vigorous supporters of the non-violent method of struggle and clashed sharply on this issue with some other delegates. He has also repeated the usual slanders against the Soviet Union and Communism, so dear to the very imperialists he seeks to oppose.

It seems obvious that Dr. Banda is a nationalist and a moderate one at that. The fact that such a person is regarded with such distaste and trepidation by the racialists, is a signal of the explosive situation in Nyasaland.

Then there was the "massacre" convocation, delivered with all the necessary mock solemnity by Lennox-Boyd, the British Colonial Secretary, given headline treatment by some sections of the Indian Press.

It seems the "savage blacks" were planning a massacre of the whites in Nyasaland, hence the emergency clamped down on March 3. The absurdity of the charge has been exposed by such journals as the New Statesman. In its issue of March 14, it pointed out that the provocation began with violent break-up of Dr. Banda's meetings. Despite this, from February 20 to February 28, the nationalists in control of the northern province of Nyasaland saw to it that not a single white settler lost his life or his property, or suffered harm in any way.

Further, Sir Edgar Whitehead, Chief of Southern Rhodesia, blurted out that preparations for the emergency regime had been set afoot since last Christmas. And, the strangest happening of all was the declaring of an emergency in Southern Rhodesia on February 26, although the "massacre" was to be in Nyasaland—hundreds of miles away. When declaring this emergency Whitehead bluntly declared: "I hope we shall find the other Governments follow the example that Southern Rhodesia has set." Nyasaland did follow the example on March 3—and nearly a hundred Nyasas are dead, hundreds wounded and still more imprisoned. "Operation Sunrise" they call it.

Behind Their Desperation

What had made these racialists so desperate?

FIRST, the growing consciousness and mass actions of the Nyasa people, who were out to win freedom and break away from the Central African Federation.

SECOND, the most rabid of the racialists of the Federation situated in Southern Rhodesia—and their man in Salisbury, Roy Welensky—were anxious to push through by 1960 their plan of the Central African

NYASALAND

No Communist Plot, But Black Africa's Struggle Against White Domination

by HOHIT SEN

Federation as an independent Dominion, insulated from U.N. supervision and the progressive movement in Britain. They were also scared that a possible Labour Party victory in the elections in Britain scheduled for 1960, might upset their plans.

THIRD, the African-haters of the Central African Federation are thinking of linking up with the Negro-baiters of Washington. Talk was rife of a "baby Nato", of a secure "White" base in Central Africa to cope with the growing African liberation movement. But for this scheme to mature, the first step had to be to crush all resistance within the Federation, to begin with in Nyasaland.

Ferocious Colonial War

And so the war-drums began to beat and the imperialist war band gathered. As Time of March 16 put it, "against the clubs, stones and pangas of the Africans, the Government had bean-guns, sten-guns, spotter planes—even vampire jets—plus the services of the King's African Rifles, the Rhodesia African Rifles, the Royal Rhodesia Regiment, Southern Rhodesia's South African police, the Royal Rhodesian Air Force, the Tanganyika police, the Nyasaland police, and assorted white vigilante 'special constables' from Southern Rhodesia."

A typically ferocious war of colonial conquest is on. Concentration camps have been esta-

blished, about which Labour M.P. Penner Brockway has challenged Roy Welensky, all male Nyasas are being rounded up for "interrogation" and whole villages demolished. So open is the brutality that the British Tory Government has refused the Labour demand for a Parliamentary Committee to make on-the-spot investigation. A Labour M.P. has been unceremoniously bundled out of the country lest he find out the truth and report it.

Nyasa People Fight Back

The Nyasa people fight back. Three million strong and united as one, they refuse to surrender. Breaking the censorship barrier, news trickles through of Nyasa resistance. No sooner do the imperialist troops move into the northern province than the upsurge spills over to southern Nyasaland. From Karonga in the north to Limbe in the south the whole country is aflame.

While reiterating their demand for complete independence, the leaders of the Nyasaland African National Congress have offered to negotiate on the basis of the following immediate demands:

- all troops to be withdrawn;
- the state of emergency to be ended;
- all leaders to be released;
- the National Congress to be allowed legal existence;
- a new and truly democratic constitution to be framed.

There is little hope of any

positive response either from the Tories in Britain or the racialists in Salisbury. The Nyasa people will go on with their militant struggle, go on spilling their blood for freedom. We, in India, must go into decisive action, lending full support to our black brothers.

Nyasaland is no new problem for us. In the U.N. Trusteeship Council, Smt. Lakshmi Menon as India's delegate had repeatedly to protest against the rampant injustice being perpetrated there. As early as 1953, Pandit Nehru in a public speech had rightly described the Central African Federation as "an attempt to give a handful of German and English settlers complete control over the African people in the area."

Warn The British!

It is necessary, therefore, that the Government of India voice the unanimous demand of our people in vigorous tones. It must issue an official and public warning to the British, put pressure to compel negotiations, take the lead in mobilising the full support of all the Bandung Powers for suitable diplomatic and other action.

The front of struggle against imperialism and war knows no frontiers. The world is its arena. Today Nyasaland is the scene of action in which we are all involved. India must not be found wanting.

March 23, 1959.

Assam Faces Serious Problems, But Govt. Shows No Awareness

★ From MADHUSUDAN BHATTACHARYYA

SHILONG, March 22

Much has been said about Revenue surplus in Assam's current budget without any fresh taxation. The general debate on the Budget together with Press comments, however, have made it abundantly clear that this claim is only a cover to hide certain very unpalatable facts.

WHILE the Revenue Budget showed a surplus which, incidentally has been a feature for the last three years, the Capital Budget has been incurring deficits ever since 1951-52, the next year's deficit on this account being estimated at Rs. 2.94 crores.

One would not perhaps grudge this deficit if it were for productive purposes. But a glance at the current year's budget would show that this deficit was adding a heavy burden of debt on this already debt-ridden State. Out of a total provision of Rs. 8.60 crores of capital receipts not less than Rs. 7.37 crores are loans from the Central Government.

Out of this Rs. 7.37 crores, not more than Rs. 60 lakhs would be spent on industries and 92 per cent of the total amount would be utilised by other departments. It is an eloquent testimony of the Government's lukewarm attitude to industrialisation of this State which up till now has not seen a single major industry worth the name.

The total amount of loan taken by the State from the Centre alone stood at Rs. 24.75 crores on March 31, 1957. But in less than two years, the loan jumped up to Rs. 33.75 crores (on December 31, 1958) and that without any industrial development. These loans

carry an interest of three per cent and these interest charges, too, have been mounting. Interest charges which in 1952-53 were Rs. 7.80 lakhs have jumped to Rs. 85.38 lakhs.

Loan repayments eat away a substantial portion of the capital Budget every year. In the current year, provision has been made to repay nearly 42 per cent of the loan taken from the Centre amounting to Rs. 3.38 crores. Thus the State's economy has been caught in a vicious circle of loans and more loans to repay the loans.

Has the budget really given any relief to the people? The Pro-Government Assam Tribune said that the people have no more capacity to bear a fresh burden of taxation. The Shillong Observer points out, "As far as State taxes are concerned, Assam has the unique distinction of being the highest taxed State in India. In 1957-58 the per capita tax collection in Assam was Rs. 13.98 which is the highest for any State in India that year."

But in sharp contrast, per capita income, even after two years of working of the Second Plan declined from Rs. 252 in 1955-56 to Rs. 249 in 1957-58.

What section of people has to bear the main burden of this taxation? Not the richer section, of course. Agricultural

Income-Tax and tax on carriage of goods by roads and rivers, the burden of which falls on the richer section, have declined by Rs. 5.3 lakhs and Rs. 8.4 lakhs respectively. But the quantum of land revenue and sales-tax have increased substantially. Yes, there has been a relief for the white and Indian capitalist-owned tea plantations and the speculator-traders, who have to pay Agricultural Income-Tax and tax on goods carried by roads and rivers. Only the peasantry and the middle classes will have to pay an additional amount of Rs. 61 lakhs as land revenue and sales-tax. Could one with any clear conscience find, in this situation, any "relief" for the people because fresh taxation is absent?

When per capita income has been declining and tax burden increasing, food in the State has become chronically deficit. Food production remains below the 1949-50 level even today. In 1955-56, the total output of foodgrains was 16.66 lakh tons; in 1957-58, it came down to 15.66 lakh tons. This fall of one lakh tons accounts for about ten per cent of the requirements of the State. Apart from other things, this is causing a heavy drain on the financial resources of this State by necessitating foodgrain imports from other States.

The debate revealed that eviction notices were threatening as many as 60,000 kisan households. Even Congress members could not but point out that there was something seriously wrong with the

Government's land reform measure. Communist members made their sharpest attack on this question of land reform. Comrade Nilmony Barthakur felt that judged by the present pace of preparation records in the permanently settled areas it would take at least another 15 years before the Government could implement the Zamindari Acquisition Act.

Even some Congress members felt that the Adhir Conciliation Boards had been, a sheer failure. Their only suggestion was cooperative farming and only a few of them having vested interest in land could be so shameless as to demand more eviction.

The extent of actual damage to food production caused by this eviction drive has never been assessed by the Government. But it does not require much straining of imagination to realise its devastating effect.

It was this eviction drive which led the demonstration of kisan representatives in

front of the State Assembly on March 14. This policy has again led the kisans of Jorhat in the Shillong District to launch a mass satyagraha from March 16. On the first day of the satyagraha, according to reports reaching here, 103 satyagrahis were arrested. Yet the Finance Minister would not recognise the basic reason for the shortfall in foodgrains production in the State, he blames nature.

The industrial and agricultural policies of the State Government has resulted in growing unemployment in the State. Urban unemployment, according to official admission, has risen from 10,354 in 1955 to 20,215 by the end of last year. In the tea industry alone, the number of unemployed, according to the Minister's own admission, is 66,400, 11,600 being in one district alone.

The Finance Minister's reply to the debate evaded all the basic issues, there was no indication of any serious effort to tackle the State's problems.

MALDIVES

—Struggle against a British base—

HAVING lost the Trincomalee base in Ceylon, the British imperialists desperately hoped to salvage their position by building a base on the Gan atoll of the Maldivian Islands. Hence the present trouble in the area.

In 1887, the Sultan of these islands "voluntarily" gave Britain the right to conduct Maldivian external affairs in exchange for British "protection" of Maldivian shores from external aggression and an "assurance" against interference in the internal affairs of the country.

Now, in an official communique of the Government of the Maldivian archipelago the 70 years of old "protection" are summed up as "protection from progress of any sort in any field. The islanders remain as primitive as they were in 1887."

Further, when 10,000 peo-

ple died of starvation during the last war and in 1955 when 6,000 people were rendered destitute, Britain gave no help. Moreover, the "imperialist curtain" effectively stopped any sort of aid coming from other countries or even the United Nations.

To add insult to injury the British have just refused to recognise the sovereignty of the Maldivian Government when it asked the Royal Air Force to suspend base-building operations on Gan, pending the end of the negotiations which had been going since last January in Ceylon. Hagglng over money, resorting to the worst blackmail tactics, the British were enraged that a small nation should dare to assert itself.

Threats having failed, open subversion has begun. In the very base (Gan)

where the Royal Air Force had been active for two years, a so-called rebel "Government" of the Suvadive State has been proclaimed. Headed by Abdul Afeef, this Government has immediately asked for recognition from Britain.

The Maldivian Government has declared W.W.A. Philipps, Liaison Officer for the RAF, persona non grata, since he had openly aided and abetted the rebellion. The Government has further asked the British not to continue to distribute arms and ammunition to the rebels. It has finally asked that British troops immediately withdraw till the negotiations are concluded.

Not only have the British imperialists arrogantly brushed aside the Maldivian demand but they had the insolence to protest when

the Government of Ceylon decided to appoint a representative to the Maldives to strengthen relations. When the British High Commissioner in Ceylon objected, Bandarnaike quite rightly strongly protested that as the Prime Minister of a sovereign State he did not need the permission of any external Power to appoint representatives.

Particularly outrageous, however, is the British claim that the base in Gan is required for purposes of Commonwealth defence! And since we have the great honour of belonging to this mystic union, that includes India. When this was mentioned in the Lok Sabha Pandit Nehru firmly stated, "we want no such defence." He went on to add that India "considers bases as completely wrong."

The base at Gan is the last positive response either from the Tories in Britain or the racialists in Salisbury. The Nyasa people will go on with their militant struggle, go on spilling their blood for freedom. We, in India, must go into decisive action, lending full support to our black brothers.

Nyasaland is no new problem for us. In the U.N. Trusteeship Council, Smt. Lakshmi Menon as India's delegate had repeatedly to protest against the rampant injustice being perpetrated there. As early as 1953, Pandit Nehru in a public speech had rightly described the Central African Federation as "an attempt to give a handful of German and English settlers complete control over the African people in the area."

It is necessary, therefore, that the Government of India voice the unanimous demand of our people in vigorous tones. It must issue an official and public warning to the British, put pressure to compel negotiations, take the lead in mobilising the full support of all the Bandung Powers for suitable diplomatic and other action.

March 23, 1959.

★ MENACING SILENCE
★ Economy In Doldrums
★ Another Stab At Democracy

THE past ten days in Pakistan have been remarkable, first for the studied official silence on the U. S. assurances to India that the recent bilateral Pact was not aimed at her. Mr. Baig had earlier brushed aside all these assurances. Since then the Pakistan Government has kept mum, presumably on Washington's orders and, perhaps, "assurances". It is very much a menacing and unreal silence.

Heralding The Storm

As if to herald the storm, however, came the remarkable performance of Mr. Bhutto, the Commerce Minister of Pakistan. On March 13, this well-known landlord angrily declared that the "worst and strongest enemy" of Pakistan was not in the Socialist camp but in the neutralist bloc. It was against this "enemy" that protection had been requested and, according to him, had been granted. He went on to emphatically include "economic aggression" among the many "aggressions" committed and threatened by India!

Developing his case with unusually lucid logic, Bhutto pointed out that Pakistan was protected against the "Communist menace" by SEATO and the Baghdad Pact. In order to supplement these two agreements, the bilateral Pact had become necessary, to cover "non-Communist dangers" as well. He ended his revealing speech by quoting the example of the American landings in Lebanon last year. "Where was Communism involved?" he rhetorically asked. To supplement Bhutto's outburst came the Pakistan fore-

ign policy review which was released to the Press on March 15 and then officially withdrawn after publication. In that review, India was named as the only Commonwealth country with whom Pakistan's relations were strained. The Kashmir and Canal Waters disputes were referred to as the most grave of all the problems facing Pakistan and Ayub's pledge to settle these questions "by all possible means" was solemnly quoted. And then came the heart of the matter when it declared with a flourish that as a result of these disputes "a situation might arise which would threaten the peace of the whole subcontinent and that of the world." No aggressor could have spoken more sharply, more pointedly.

It is necessary to note in this connection the first indications of the new American game. Having promised arms to Pakistan and promises only to India, the U. S. now seeks to come forward in the garb of a conciliator! Averill Harriman in Karachi on March 10 stated that the U. S. could mediate in the Indo-Pak dispute if both sides agreed.

Aggressors' Language

Backing him up came the comment of the Washington Post of March 10—prominently published in Dawn, among other Pak papers. This comment cites the recent agreement over Cyprus and states that the U. S. could bring about a similar "happy" conclusion to the conflict on our sub-continent. These comments indubitably show that the bilateral Pact with Pakistan has first and foremost the aim of extending American control over India. It is this that has to be fought with all the re-

sources at India's command and not gentlemanly phrases banded about. We must be on our guard more vigilantly than ever, especially as the arms Pact has been followed by the visit of Mr. MacIntyre, U. S. Under-Secretary for the Air Force, who on arriving on March 13, plunged into secret talks with dictator Ayub.

Planning Abandoned

THE economic situation in Pakistan continues to be grave. News of the upward push of prices comes from all the major towns. Blackmarketing is also back fully in business. And the response of the great "cleaners-up" came from Qadir, the Foreign Minister, who stated that all this was "basically a matter of individual conscience." The Plan Evaluation Committee has reported that the Pak national income rises only by two per cent a year, barely keeping pace with population growth. In physical terms targets of the Plan are likely to be fulfilled only up to 50 per cent, with the public sector coming off the worst of the lot.

And the response of the ruling clique has been to announce a virtual abandonment of planning. On March 14, the Pakistan Industrial Development Corporation (PIDC) inaugurated its declared policy of "disinvestment". Two sugar mills were handed over to the private sector and the PIDC director stated that more such "hand-overs" were in the offing.

Talking in the same vein, Shoaib, the Finance Minister who has just returned from economic aid talks in Washington, declared on March 17 that substantial American private investment in the field of manufacturing consumer goods, particularly, for export purposes. He went on to say that Pakistan's new industrial policy—of unhampered and incentive-stimulated, private enterprise—had resulted "in a greater disposition in Washington to help Pakistan."

Here we have another cause for concern. The more the economic difficulties mount, the more the economy is left uncontrolled and at the mercy of the private sector, the more likely some sort of anti-Indian provocation to "cement" Pakistan around the military dictatorship.

A Draconian Order

IN the meantime, the anti-democratic armoury is perpetually being replenished. A

recent notification (March 11) makes it possible for government servants to be dismissed even without a charge-sheet and with no right of appeal. Calling this a "Draconian order", the Pakistan Times of March 14 opined that "many government servants will feel that the normal security of service is being denied to them."

A hint that prisoners under detention might be released brought an immediate denial from General K. M. Sheikh, while his travelling companion Qadir—the two are on a "mass contact tour through the first two weeks of March—has called for a constitution based on an education-restricted franchise. The reason? He found that the peasants dislike the electoral system! And no date of the future elections was divulged by either of the "mass contacters."

No wonder then that in this atmosphere the appeals of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan and Abdus Samad Khan were turned down on March 19. The two stalwarts, whom all honour for their record of anti-imperialism, who could give a focus to the popular forces in Pakistan, are too dangerous for Ayub and his masters' plans.

—H. S.

(March 21, 1959)

LIFE INSURANCE CORPORATION

A PRESS release issued by the Life Insurance Corporation of India states that a record business of Rs. 344.68 crores under about a million policies was written during 1958. This figure establishes an unprecedented record for new life business and represents 22 per cent increase over 1957. This is also the first time in the history of Indian Insurance that the business written during one year has exceeded Rs. 300 crores.

About Rs. 5½ crores of this business was written outside India and the balance of Rs. 339 crores within India, including Rs. 1.60 crores under the Janata Policy Scheme. The number of policies issued during 1958 totalled over 9,60,000 as against 8,00,000 policies issued in 1957.

The Press Release lists four steps taken by the Corporation during the year.

First, 74 new offices were opened during the year, almost all of them in places where there were no offices. With this, the Corporation now operates through 221 Branch Offices and 95 Sub-Offices within India, in addition to the 33 Divisional Offices and five Zonal Offices.

Secondly, for the first time in the history of life insurance in

India organised attempts have been made to secure business from rural areas. The first attempt was in Rajasthan where, in September 1958, the Corporation, in close co-operation with the State Government, did intensive propaganda in 24 Community Development Blocks and secured over a crore of rupees business from villagers. More areas will be covered in 1959. The Governments of Bihar and Kerala, for example, have assured their full cooperation for the purpose.

Fourthly, intensified work has been done to promote special schemes of insurance like the Salary Savings Scheme and Group and Superannuation Schemes.

A tentative Five-Year Plan has been drawn up by the Corporation to raise the level of national savings through life insurance. Under this Plan which has yet to be considered and finalised by the Corporation, a new business of Rs. 1000 crores has been fixed as the target in the fifth year of the Plan. Thus, the basic objective of the Corporation to offer the benefits of life insurance to every eligible man and woman in the country is hoped to be realised as soon as possible.

The West Bengal Committee had been negotiating for the last two months for the building in which the office of the now defunct Paschim Banga Patrika was housed. When the negotiations had reached the final stage, the Government suddenly appeared on the scene and requisitioned the building.

But Dr. Roy is very much mistaken if he thinks that such tactics can prevent the Swadhinata from coming out as an eight-pager.

The Way Dr. Roy Dispenses Democracy

DR. B. C. Roy's Government is out to do everything in its power to prevent the publication of the Communist daily Swadhinata as an eight-pager.

Some time ago the West Bengal Committee of the Party purchased a rotary machine from China for bringing out Swadhinata as a full-fledged daily.

The machine has arrived in Calcutta. It has, however, not yet been possible to instal the machine due to difficulties in getting a suitable building.

Dr. B. C. Roy's police are already taking a very keen interest in the matter. Comrade Jyoti Basu revealed in the State Assembly on March 4, that the police had visited the office of the firm which had imported the machine, and had asked all sorts of questions.

Again, on March 13, Dr. Hiren Chatterjee of the Communist Bloc disclosed in the Assembly how the Government had thwarted the efforts of the Communist Party to secure a building.

The West Bengal Committee had been negotiating for the last two months for the building in which the office of the now defunct Paschim Banga Patrika was housed. When the negotiations had reached the final stage, the Government suddenly appeared on the scene and requisitioned the building.

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KISAN SABHA & VILLAGE PANCHAYATS

Almost all the States in India have village Panchayats elected on the basis of adult franchise, though not necessarily by secret ballot. The powers given to them vary from State to State. In several States, judicial panchayats with limited powers have been working for some decades.

GOVERNMENT declares that there should be a panchayat in every village and that the panchayat should be the basic unit in a decentralised administration. The Second Five-Year Plan, as well as the Conference of Local Self-Government Ministers of States, recommended that the powers of the panchayats be increased, that they be entrusted with the collection of land revenue, maintenance of village records, administration of land reform laws, etc.

Panchayats have thus an important place in the rural administrative set-up of our country.

Community development schemes are now being extended to all villages in the country and are aimed to cover the entire country by the end of the Second Plan. Village panchayats are to be the nuclei of these community development schemes. Grants will be given for certain schemes, some other schemes will be executed through them. If all the recommendations of the Balwantrao Mehta Committee are implemented, rural development work will be carried out by the village panchayats.

Where such attention has been paid to the work in the panchayats, good results have also been achieved. This can be illustrated by a few examples.

Real Picture

But declarations are one thing and actual implementation another. The panchayats in many cases have become hotbeds of corruption, intrigue, communalism and factional strife. The Congress, wherever it controls the panchayats, is generally making them its preserves. In several cases, landlords control the panchayats and use them as their tools. Some State Governments instead of extending the powers of the panchayats and making them more democratic, are actually curtailing the existing powers and increasing off-

Exemplary Records

Some of the panchayats led by the Kisan Sabha have exemplary records. Here are just two examples.

Irlapadu is a big village with a population of about 10,000. The annual income of the panchayat is Rs. 22,000. No taxes are imposed on the poor people. House-tax is not levied on those who are landless. Since we began administering the panchayat, in a year-and-a-half, works of a value totalling Rs. 50,000 have been executed. Roads have been metalled, tanks have been repaired, as also the wells in Harijan wards. New wells have been dug in the Harijan wards. Reading rooms have been opened. Electric street lighting has been extended to these Harijan wards. Three wells have been constructed exclusively for women and there are proposals for seven more. A park has been laid out. All wards are being supplied with newspapers at the panchayat's cost.

With the aid of the Development Block, four children's parks have been laid out, of

which two are in the Harijan wards. Youth clubs and Mahila Mandals are being functioning.

Some buffaloes have been acquired and sprayers for agricultural purposes have been purchased by the panchayat for common use. Many of the roads were laid through contribution by the villagers in the form of shramdan.

Thus, there has been vast improvement in conditions in the village in the short period of one-and-a-half years.

Another instance is that of the Budharam panchayat. Its annual income is about Rs. 10,000. Within two years of its formation, works totalling a value of Rs. 50,000

etc., in a proper manner, judicious spending of the revenues and keeping their accounts, studying all the schemes of the Government and getting all the available grants, mobilising the voluntary and free cooperation of the villagers for executing works—all this has to become part and parcel of the routine work of the Kisan Sabhas.

For the full democratic functioning of the panchayats, for their proper working, certain institutional defects have to be removed. Officers, instead of aiding the panchayats, are becoming more and more checking inspectors. The executive officers of the major panchayats are

powers and duties recommended by the Planning Commission in the Second Five-Year Plan and their resources increased by more grants, subsidies and matching grants by the Government. The Executive Officer should be the secretary of the panchayat board and not an independent officer overriding the board decisions.

The policy of the Kisan Sabhas with regard to the panchayats have been one of getting the best people in the village who are above communal and sectional feelings and above self-interest and corruption elected to the panchayats, to whatever political party or faith they may belong. As far as possible, panchayat boards should be constituted with persons elected unanimously. Agricultural labourers and poor peasants who form the majority of the rural population should get adequate representation in the boards. The unity of these basic classes must be maintained.

While administering the boards also, the interests of these sections should first be looked after. Taxes should not be imposed on agricultural labourers. Rather than concentrating on taking up big works, small ones like the opening of reading rooms, supply of newspapers and literature, elementary amenities and sanitation arrangements, etc., should be taken up. Grants should be obtained to the maximum extent possible.

Organisational Work

On the organisational side schools should be conducted to train the cadre working in the panchayats. All laws, rules, government orders, etc., relating to the panchayats should be known by all the cadre. Every taluk Kisan Sabha should form a sub-committee of three persons or set apart at least one capable worker to specially concentrate on work in the panchayats.

More Powers

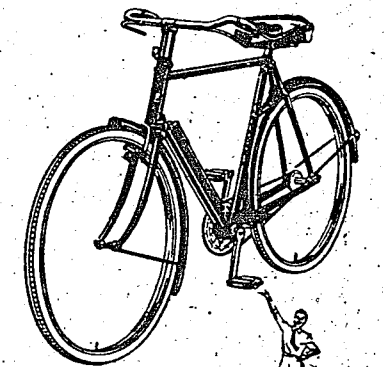
What is most urgently needed is that village panchayats should be invested with all

Where, as in these two cases, the panchayats are administered popularly, village development has to some extent been successful.

Kisan Sabha's Task

Every Kisan Sabha unit has to realise the importance of work in the panchayats and devote great attention to it. Interest has to be taken in the preparation of electoral rolls (voters to the Legislative Assembly are voters to the panchayats also), the division of village into wards, the conducting of elections, proper administration of the panchayats, keeping records,

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Andhra Rice Deal Enquiry Report . . .

When on April 5 next the people of Kerala will celebrate the beginning of the third year of the Communist-led Ministry in the State, leaders of the Opposition parties—the Congress, PSP and the Muslim League—have called for the observance of the day as a day of protest against what they call the “Andhra Rice Deal Swindle.” The leaders of these three parties will not be satisfied with anything less than the resignation of the Ministry. The Kerala RSP to whom the people of the State were not kind enough to give even one seat in the Assembly has also added its voice to this demand raised in the name of safeguarding the purity of our parliamentary democracy and public life.

ALL of them talk in the name of the people. Some of them have even flung the challenge that if the Communists did not get out on their own, the people will throw them out. To mobilise the people, action committees are being formed and a State-wide agitation is in the offing. This is not the first time that the Opposition parties are threatening an agitation against the Communist-led Government. They have launched quite a few in the last two years but unfortunately for them these agitations have had a tendency to recoil on their own heads.

Their agitations in the past have failed not because any agitation against a legally-constituted Government must fail, but because theirs had nothing to do with the people and their legitimate demands,

because they have not behaved as a responsible Opposition ought to.

The people and their aspirations have not meant anything to them, otherwise the writing on the wall must have been clear even in this short period. The Devicolam by-election did not have any lessons for them, the many panchayat elections that have been held did not teach them anything, and even the Muvattupuzha municipal elections which they fought on the question of this very rice deal and lost have not brought them to their senses.

This time, again, the Opposition leaders of Kerala have seized on an issue on whose merits they cannot justify the demand for resignation of the Ministry.

No Evidence To Prove Charge Of Communist Party Pocketing Money

When the Kerala Government bought rice in the Andhra market in August-September 1957, the first charge that was raised by Opposition leaders was that the whole transaction had been put through with the intent of financially benefiting individual Communist leaders and the Communist Party in Kerala and Andhra. Figures had been mentioned—the fantastic sums of Rs. 16½ lakhs and Rs. 18½ lakhs.

Even the Commission could not concede that this charge was substantiated: “But I might say there is no evidence in support of the suggestion made by the A party (Sri T. O. Bava, Congress MLA who took upon himself the role of prosecutor of the Government on behalf of the Opposition parties) that the prices which the Madras firm purports to have paid are not the real prices and that the firm made a secret profit which it shared with a number of others not excluding the mills themselves. B. Ws. (witnesses for the Kerala Government) 7, 8, 9 and 11 represent eight mills which between them supplied 79 wagon loads out of the total of 250 wagon loads. Their evidence is that the entire price shown in their invoices in Exhibit B-71 series was paid to them by the Madras firm within a few days of the despatch of the rice and that they did not share any portion of the price with anyone else. The cash books, ledgers and stock registers of four of these mills were sent for and examined, and it was found that entries therein were in agreement with the entries in the invoices.” (Para 79) Sri Bava also tried to prove

his charge of conspiracy by another suggestion—that an inferior quality rice had been supplied and the Kerala Government had been charged for a superior one. On this, the Commission's report says: “The A party has a suggestion that, in all probability, the rice actually supplied was huller polished (inferior) and not come polished (superior) But the suggestion is opposed to the evidence, and having regard to the fact that almost all the mills were holding large stocks of rice which they were unable to sell, I do not believe that they would have milled further quantities of hulled rice even if it be that they could pass off the cheaper huller rice as the costlier cone rice” (Para 81). And later, “Although I do not believe that there is any basis for the suggestion that the rice supplied was huller polished . . . etc.” (Para 83)

On the quantity and quality of rice, the Commission has found: “Even if we accept his (A party's) evidence, there is no knowing that the defect noticed by him was not due to long storage under unsatisfactory conditions and it is not possible to say, on the strength of that evidence, that the rice was defective in quality. At the same time it is not possible to assert that the entire quantity of rice supplied was of standard quality. In fact, there is evidence to show that at least five (out of 250) wagon loads were not.” (Para 84)

“B. W. 14, the Second Member of the Board of Revenue and ex officio Commissioner of Civil Supplies took samples from one or two bags (out of 68,000) when he visited the Palluruthi godown where part of the rice was stored, on the 7th September.

He had the rice tested for water content by the Central Government laboratory in Cochin and was told that the water content was 12.0 per cent, as against the 12 per cent found in Burma rice and that the rice would not therefore keep too long. (By Exhibit B-117 (a) dated 31st May 1958 the Central Government fixed the free tolerance limit of moisture in Andhra boiled rice at 14 per cent. Beyond this cut is to be imposed on a prescribed scale in the price of the rice. This shows that 12.6 per cent cannot be regarded as excessive.”) (Para 84)

“Regarding the quantity, the records show that there was no deficiency and that the 2002 lb. of rice short-supplied was not paid for. The shortage in transit owing to shrinkage worked out to only 1.1 per cent against the usual 2 per cent allowed under this head.” (Para 89)

It was clear that the Opposition's charge that the Communist Party or Communist leaders individually had financially benefited from the deal was not substantiated. When the Commission recorded its verdict thus, the Opposition leaders changed their front. They attacked the Government for not making this charge a specific term of reference to the Commission. This change of front does not provide even a fig-leaf to cover the fiasco the Opposition has suffered. Though it was not a term of reference to the Commission, the Opposition leaders cannot obliterate the fact that Sri Bava had tried his level best to prove this charge before the Commission.

Unprincipled Stand

Sri Bava, a rice trader himself in the past which trade is now being carried on by his father, in his first evidence before the Commission had said: “A person in whom I have confidence told me that the Madras Company (through which the Kerala Government purchased the rice) had donated Rs. 50,000 to the Communist Party through its Secretary, Sri M. N. Govindan Nair. I believe that it is because of the help they gave the Communist Party by, this and other means that they were enabled to make two rupees profit on every bag. It is my information that the Madras Company has also paid many others who are not Communists who gave them help. I estimate that the State has lost about three to four lakh rupees due to this deal. Even after all the public criticism the Government has again entered into contracts with this Madras firm. By now at least a total of Rs. 15 lakhs must have been lost.” In his cross-examination, Sri Bava said: “I went to Andhra only to collect evidence for the statement I submitted before the Commission. I had not included in that statement all the information I had received. Only those which I thought were important and relevant were included.

I did not include those which I was not sure of proving.

“It was in January 1958, in Madras, that I was given the information about the Madras firm paying Rs. 50,000 to Sri M. N. Govindan Nair. Though this was important, since I was not confident about abducting the necessary evidence, this information did not form part of my statement. I informed my lawyer of this and he advised against including it in the statement. I did not talk even to my Congress colleagues, because I wanted to collect the necessary evidence before releasing the information. I had spoken about this to some business and political friends in Andhra and had asked them to explore the possibilities of finding out more details and concrete evidence. But till now I have not received any further details or tangible proofs.”

It is these same gentlemen who later in the Assembly and in public meetings have been saying that because the Government did not include this charge in the terms of reference to the

Commission they were not able to give evidence on this matter. Before the Commission they say they did not have any evidence to substantiate their charge, in the Assembly and before the public they say they were prevented from giving evidence and proving their charges. So much for their truth, so much for their principles.

After they had raised the charge that the Communists had pocketed money out of the deal, when they had no evidence to prove the charge and when the Commission itself rejected their allegation, they had one honourable course before them. If they really were champions of parliamentary democracy and crusaders for the purity of our public life, and that was to make their apologies publicly. But the Opposition leaders of Kerala are not known for taking any honourable course. They persisted in their campaign of slander and if truth had to become a casualty for this—well, truth was not as important as throwing the Communists out of office.

Commission Disregards Facts, Bases Itself On Surmises To Find “Avoidable Waste”

So the campaign continues. Though they repeat the charge of corruption and the Communist Party benefiting financially from the rice deal, after the performance of their spokesman before the Commission and the findings of the Commission, they know there is little chance of the people taking this charge very seriously. So they are now pinning all their hopes on the findings of the Commission on “avoidable waste.”

The Commission's findings on this count are (Para 104): “...the price paid by the Government was at least a rupee a bag higher than the price at which the rice could have been obtained, the total loss on this account being at least Rs. 68,000.”

“On the purchase of cone polished rice, which would have served the purpose quite as well, Government suffered a loss of eight annas to one rupee a bag, in other words of Rs. 34,000 to Rs. 68,000.”

“The incidental expenses inclusive of the margin allowed to the Madras firm were very probably two annas a bag in excess, and that comes to Rs. 8,000.”

“...it would appear that nearly six wagon loads of rice and about 2500 gunnies were defective and, on a very rough estimate the loss on this account would be between Rs. 2,000 and 3,000.”

It is necessary to see how the Commission came to these conclusions. Let us take the question of price. What was the evidence before it? “...the prices recorded by the various officers of the Central and Andhra State

Governments and by institutions such as banks and Chambers of Commerce, etc., and such records obtained from over twenty different sources have been placed before the Commission. . . . The prices obtained from two of these sources agree more or less with these prices. For the rest the prices are appreciably higher.”

One would have thought that when responsible persons like officers of the Central and Andhra State Governments and respectable institutions like banks and Chambers of Commerce had recorded higher market prices than what the Kerala Government had actually paid, that would settle the argument. But in the eyes of the Commission, “They can hardly sustain the argument that in fact, the Madras firm was able to obtain the rice at a price appreciably lower than the prevailing market price.” “Many of them, perhaps derived from the same primary source, can be of little use” to the Commission “in deciding the question whether the price paid was excessive.”

Strange Methods

It is difficult to understand what the Commission means. Should the officials of the Central and Andhra State Governments and the banks and Chambers of Commerce, anticipating that some time in the future the Opposition in Kerala was likely to raise a charge of corruption against the State

Government, have bought rice in the same period at a lower price or manipulated their records to show a lower price, so that when the Commission sat to enquire, it would be able to find out another primary source which showed lower prices and so enable it to damn the Kerala Government?

To the question, “What were the prices at which Andhra millers were selling or prepared to sell Dalwa boiled rice between 19.8.1957 and 1.9.1957, the answer of the State Marketing officer of Andhra Pradesh was “that the minimum price at which they were prepared to sell was Rs. 38.8.0 per bag ex-mill (Rs. 36.130 f.o.r.)” (The Madras firm bought rice at a lower rate for the Kerala Government).

The Commission dismisses this evidence, too. Because it seemed to the Commission, that “it is based only on the reports obtained by him from his assistant at Vijayawada that during the period the Madras firm had made purchases at or about that price.”

But the Commission which rejects such authoritative evidence has to believe in some evidence to come to its conclusion. And it does. It takes the words of a few commission agents and Kerala merchants who neither sold nor bought rice during that period.

The Commission admits that there had been no sales, but “in the absence of actual sales during the period in question, the prices quoted by the Andhra commission agents to their Kerala constituents must, it seems to me, give a due indication of the prices at which the Andhra millers were willing to dispose of their stocks.” (Para 69)

To the Commission, the evidence of the Andhra Pradesh State Marketing Officer, “that it is likely that commission agents may quote lower rates in order to attract business enquiries” does not mean anything because it “only states a theoretical possibility and does not pretend to be a statement of actual fact.” And this when at least one instance had been brought to the notice of the Commission, and had been recorded in its report, of a letter from an Andhra Commission agent to a Kerala merchant (who “although the prevailing price of Garki raw rice on the 10th September 1957 was Rs. 37, had quoted Rs. 36.8.0 expecting a fall in prices; but that, in fact, the price had only come down to Rs. 36.12” Still the Commission chooses to believe these agents to come to its conclusion.

To the Commission it is a fantasy to make the charge that “the Kerala merchants (might have engineered a conspiracy) with the Andhra Commission agents out of charge that an inroad should have been made on their preserves by the Government.” It does not at all seem a fantasy to us who have felt and seen the consequences of the conspiracies of hoarders and speculators who sent up the prices of foodgrains even in surplus States like Andhra and Punjab and who presently are

holding conventions under the leadership of Mr. M. R. Masani to oppose State trading in foodgrains.

It is such evidence of the merchants and commission agents that the Commission readily accepts to come to the conclusion that the price paid by the Kerala Government was excessive, while it rejects the evidence of the Central and Andhra State Government officials and of banks and Chambers of Commerce. To say the least, the Commission's behaviour looks strange to any honest person who would have been prepared to believe the worst about the Kerala Government but who wanted evidence and not surmises.

Commission's Unwarranted Homilies

In addition, the Commission, though not asked its opinion about such matters, has taken the opportunity to treat the Kerala Government to a few homilies as to how to run its affairs. The burden of the Commission's song is that the Government should not have been in such a hurry to cut out red-tape and that it should have relied on the sacrosanct system of the competitive tender system when it decided to purchase rice.

The Commission, thank god, does not deny the right of the Kerala Government to purchase rice in the market. It admits that “owing to the high prices in the open market, the pressure on fair-price shops was very great, and the quantities issued to them were entirely inadequate to meet the demand.” (para 18)

And further, “At the time in question, the trade was not bringing in the usual supplies; the allotments by the Centre for fair price distribution were inadequate; and if the Government decided to make a purchase on its own-account either for fair price distribution or for holding in reserve against an emergency, I do not think that anyone can quarrel with the decision.” (para 48)

But while the Commission finds “that the purchase of 5,000 tons of rice by the Kerala Government in August-September 1957 was justified,” it says, “that the purchase on the terms of the present deal was not having

Opposition Leaders Forget Their Own Demand

Even if the Commission took very short memories, it is necessary to draw their attention to the session of the Kerala Assembly on May 10, 1957, when a resolution was unanimously adopted stating that necessary steps be taken to remedy the existing food situation where increased price of rice and inadequacy of supplies existed. Since they behave as if they

by RAM DASS

It is equally difficult to understand the Commission's conclusion that by buying a superior quality rice, there has been avoidable waste. If superior rice was bought it was supplied to the people and one wonders how giving the people better rice can become any kind of waste.

On the question of incidental expenses and the margin to the Madras firm also, the Commission's conclusion is strange when it had itself recorded in the report, “On the face of it, therefore, it cannot be said that the margin of five annas paid to the Madras firm was excessive or that the expenses incurred by the Government on its Rice Officers and its inspection agents was unnecessary.” (Para 91.)

kuttan had said that the Government should be prepared to bear some loss. PSP member K. Chandrasekharan felt the Government should be prepared to subsidise foodgrains supply, and incur some loss on that account. Congress Opposition leader P. T. Chako said that the important thing was to increase the rice stocks of the State. Efforts must be made, he said, to get as much rice as possible.

This was on May 10, 1957. In the last week of June, the Executive of the Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee “criticised the Communist Ministry for not taking precautions to procure and conserve stocks, despite warning that the food situation in the State had deteriorated from bad to worse.” (Hindu, June 27, 1957)

Criticise the Government when there is no food stocks in the State and there is a crisis in the food situation, and when the Government, backed by the demand of all parties, actually buys foodgrains, run a campaign against it for wasting public money and demand its resignation—such a stand is not worthy of a responsible Opposition, it can be the stand of only those who would use any stick to beat the Government with, just because it is Communist-led, who are really not interested in whether the people are supplied with food at reasonable prices or are left to starve and die.

The Kerala Government arranged for the purchase of the Andhra rice only when it found that it could not get the necessary stocks from the Central Government to run the State's fair-price shops. All except those who calculate human lives in terms of rupees, annas, pies would congratulate the Kerala Government for the expedition with which it put through the deal and saved the State's people from the horrors of a famine. But the Commission grouses against the Government for not having called for competitive tenders.

A Commission which talks so pontifically about buyers' and sellers' markets fails to understand—or ignores—a simple fact that calling for tenders would have left the Government at the mercy of the same traders who were responsible for keeping prices high, that they would have formed into a ring and extorted cut-throat profits from the Government. Such a system of calling tenders can be sacred and inviolable only for those Governments to whom the interests of the traders and speculators are more important than feeding the people, and not to a Government whose main concern is to prevent a famine at all costs and reach food to the people as quickly as possible.

The Kerala Government's statement (printed in New Age last week) has dealt in detail with the Commission's remarks on “elementary rules of public administration.” The formulation of Government policies is, in a democracy, the task of the people, the legislature and the Cabinet and no Commission, however important it might

take itself to be, has any business to arrogate to itself the function of criticising these policies which have been laid down. All that a Commission has to do is to take evidence and on the basis of this evidence and not surmise, decide whether a particular action is right or wrong within the framework of the policies already enunciated. This is the position not of the Communist-led Government alone but it is a position accepted even by leaders of the Central Government as in the case of life insurance nationalisation when certain criticisms were raised against it after the exposure of the *Munindra* affair.

What the Commission recommends is a state of affairs in which the management of economic affairs is entirely left to the private sector to do as it likes and the running of the administrative machinery is allowed to go in the good old ways of red-tapism and routine, and this, as the Kerala Government's statement has said, “is a denial of the programme of building a Socialist society.”

If space permitted a more detailed analysis of the Commission's report, many more self-contradictory statements in it could have been brought out. But what has been said here is enough to justify the Kerala Government's stand that there is nothing in the report or its rejection about which it needs to be ashamed.

But the Opposition leaders insist that the Communist-led Government must resign. They would anyway have raised this slogan—if the Rice Deal Enquiry Commission Report was not there, they would have seized on some other issue to raise this demand, because this slogan is only a continuation of their tactics. Ever since the Communist-led Government assumed office, it has been their effort to get it out. The creation of lawlessness and disorder and then appeals to the Centre for intervention have all been part of this game. The people of the State have defeated their tactics and the present resignation cry comes out of the Opposition leaders' desperation.

The background to this “Resign Now” slogan is the Agrarian Relations Bill which is in the final stages, the Panchayat Bill which is being considered by a Select Committee, the District Councils Bill which has been published, the Industrial Relations Bill which has already been introduced in the Legislature. If the Government were forced to resign, all these popular measures can be sabotaged at one stroke. As the statement of the Kerala State Committee of the Communist Party has said, “There can be no greater betrayal of the people.”

The people who have defeated all such games in the past will this time again defeat the Opposition leaders and their tactics born out of blind anti-Communism and lust for power. They will not allow April 5 to become a Protest Day, it will be a day of celebration, bigger than in the last two years.

Soviet Delegation Leaves After 3-12 Week-Visit

N. S. Khrushchov, Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR, in his letter to Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, sent through the Soviet Government delegation which recently concluded its three-and-a-half weeks' tour of India, has conveyed the agreement of the Soviet Union to extend to India assistance in the construction of the oil refinery factory in Barauni and cooperation in the development of the pharmaceutical industry of India.

STATING this the Joint Communiqué released in New Delhi on March 19 after the Soviet Government Delegation's departure for Moscow, says that Khrushchov in his letter to Nehru has underlined the international significance of the Seven-Year Plan of the economic development of the USSR and expressed the conviction that at present there are considerable possibilities for further development of all-round cooperation between India and the Soviet Union for the benefit of the peoples of both the countries and in the interest of permanent peace in the whole world.

"They need it for intimidating their own peoples, and the U. S. Government needs it for turning the territories of these countries into military and atomic bases against the peaceful nations of Asia."

The statement declared that the Soviet Government could not remain indifferent to the intrigues of the U. S. aggres-

SOVIET UNION CANNOT REMAIN INDIFFERENT TO NEW THREAT POSED BY U.S.-PAK ARMS PACT

sive circles aggravating the situation in Asia, particularly when these intrigues were carried on near the borders of the USSR. It expressed confidence that the peoples would be able to restrain the aggressors and in this "a great role belongs to the Soviet Union, the People's Republic of China, India and other peace-loving countries."

Common Views

The Soviet Government delegation's statement further noted that "India and the Soviet Union have common views on the most important questions of the preservation of peace and saving mankind from destructive atomic war."

"The Soviet Union and India have repeatedly spoken and continue to speak for the prohibition of production and tests of nuclear weapons, lessening international tension and the reduction of armed forces, for granting the People's Republic of China her lawful place in the United Nations Organisation, etc. The multi-million people of the People's Republic of China who are successfully building Socialism and actively struggling for peace the world over must get their lawful place in UNO."

"The striving of our peo-

ples, for peace and the struggle for the prevention of war," says the statement, "strengthens Indo-Soviet friendship, makes it firm and fruitful."

"We understand the efforts of the Government and the people of India for the development of heavy industry which is the basis of economic independence and a guarantee of further development of all branches of national economy and of the improvement of the material well-being of the people. The Soviet people rejoice at every success of the peoples of India in the deve-

lopment of her economy and culture.

"True to the policy of peace and friendship among peoples, the Soviet Union renders India disinterested aid in the development of her national industry. The participation of the Soviet Union in the construction of the metallurgical plant in Bhilai and the Institute of Technology in Bombay, in the exploration and the exploitation of new oil de-

velopment of her economy and culture.

This was further emphasised on behalf of the Soviet Government delegation by N. A. Mukhitdinov in his address to the Indian Council of World Affairs on March 18. The main preconditions were independence from colonial domination and the fact that 400 million people were working enthusiastically. N. A. Mukhitdinov stated that the Soviet Union deeply sympathised with India's striving to develop her national industry and was ready to provide friendly assistance in all fields of national economy.

The two Governments' viewpoints fully coincide in one thing—that we have all the conditions for extending cooperation in the field of economic development, in the field of science and culture, Mukhitdinov said. He assured that the Soviet Government would do everything in its power to develop this cooperation.

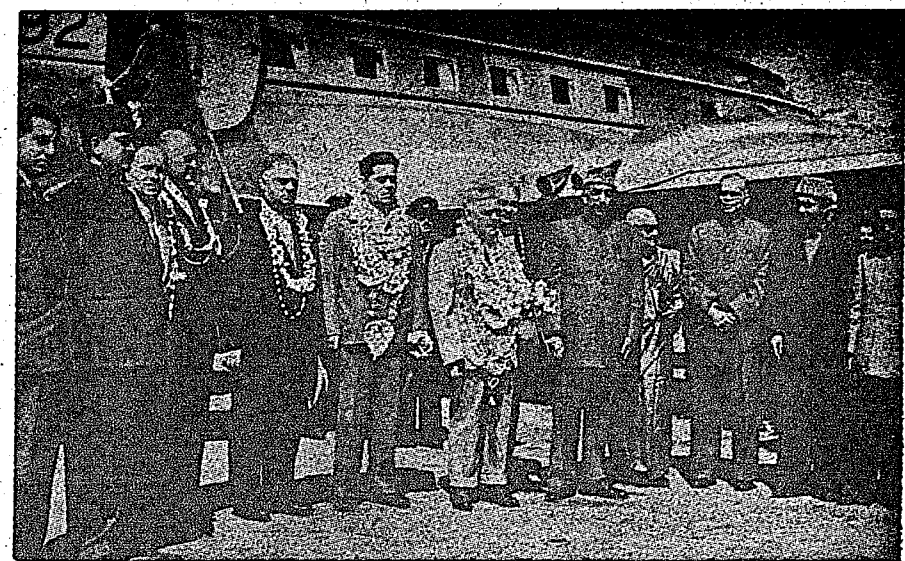
Mukhitdinov dealt with imperialist propaganda about Soviet economic cooperation with Afro-Asian countries. He said that if there was any political motive behind Soviet aid it was to help these countries build their national

economies and remove the remnants of their colonial past. The Soviet Union wished to see Afro-Asian countries consolidate their national economies as soon as possible.

As against the Soviet aim in extending aid to Afro-Asian countries the imperialist Powers sought to perpetuate their economic domination over them. They did not want the newly independent countries to establish their independent national economies and were particularly opposed to the establishment of heavy industry.

Mukhitdinov pointedly referred to oil extraction industry in India and how the Western monopolies prevented its development with the result that vast amount of foreign exchange had to be spent on importing oil. He also gave examples from Afghanistan and Egypt showing how imperialism and Western monopolies opposed the independent development of those countries. In the background of the striving of the Afro-Asian countries, Mukhitdinov explained the tremendous significance of the Soviet Seven-Year Plan.

The Soviet Government delegation whose stay in India was extended by a week visited 12 Indian States including Kashmir and Kerala. The delegation consisted of Member of Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR A. A. Andreyev (Leader of the delegation), Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Commission of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR N. A. Mukhitdinov, First Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Georgian S.S.R. M. I. Kuchava, Member of the State Committee of the Council of Ministers of the USSR for Foreign Relations A. G. Sheremetiev and the Chief of the Southeast Asia Department of the Ministry of External Affairs of the USSR V. I. Likhachev.



Members of the Soviet Government delegation being received by Kashmir leaders at Srinagar Airport.

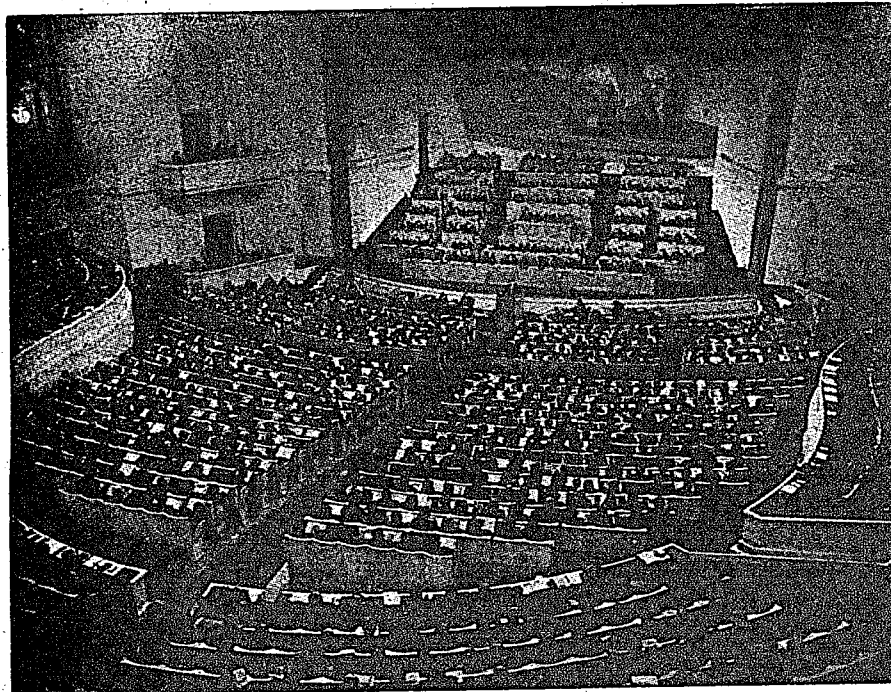
News from brother parties

POLISH PARTY CONGRESS



LEFT: Dr. Z. A. Ahmad leader of the Communist Party of India's fraternal delegation greeting the Third Congress of the Polish United Workers' Party in Warsaw.

BELOW: A view of the Congress hall.



THE Third Congress of the Polish United Workers' Party has just concluded in Warsaw. At its opening Session, Comrade Gomulka presented the report of the Central Committee to the Congress.

The report triumphantly announced that the Polish United Workers' Party was coming to its Third Congress more mature, wiser and consolidated around the immortal ideas of Marxism-Leninism. The First Secretary of the Polish Party's Central Committee declared: "We are marching today along the road of Socialism with firm and determined steps, and more than ever before we are convinced that in a historically short period of time Socialism will win full and complete victory in our country."

The report dealt at length with a number of questions concerning the international situation, the situation inside the country and the Party.

Referring to the dangerous situation created in Europe, Comrade Gomulka said that the factor responsible for this situation was the alliance between the Western Powers and their enemy of yesterday—German imperialist circles, the German Federal Republic.

ON THE ROLE OF YUGOSLAV REVISIONISTS: Speaking about the international Communist movement, Comrade Gomulka stated that only the League of Communists of Yugoslavia had broken away from the unity of this movement. The League of Communists of Yugoslavia placed itself outside the international Communist movement only when it opposed the Declaration of 12 Communist and Workers' Parties, its own revisionist programme designed to split the unity of the Socialist camp and the international solidarity of all the Communist and Workers' Parties.

Emphasising the significance of unity, solidarity and mutual assistance of the States of the Socialist camp, Comrade Gomulka showed that the acceptance of Yugoslavia's proposal to dissolve the Commonwealth of the Socialist States would be suicidal for Socialism. Because imperialism would break like dry sticks the Socialist States created after the Second World War, if they were not linked by the bonds of their community.

ON CURRENT ECONOMIC PROBLEMS: Speaking about the situation inside the country, Comrade Gomulka emphasised that Poland had considerably reduced the distance that separated the economy of Poland under the capitalist regime, from the economy of the well-developed countries. "We are now on the way," said Comrade Gomulka, "to catching up with well developed countries as regards economic development."

The present achievements provided a basis for the new development programme of

the national economy. The programme was contained in the directives for the Economic Plan for the years 1961-1965, submitted to the Congress. In this period, the increase in the industrial production will be about 80 per cent over the present level, and in the agricultural production, it will be over 30 per cent.

PARTY PROBLEMS: Comrade Gomulka pointed out that the process of Socialist democratisation, together with the correct economic policy, should determine the main direction of the effort designed to strengthen the people's State and its social basis. But the first condition for Socialist democratisation was the consolidation of the leading role of the Polish United Workers' Party.

The leading role of the Party in the national front did not mean that the allied parties would be ordered about. The Party was guided by its desire to unite all the people's forces.

Describing the activities of the Catholic Church, Comrade Gomulka stated: "Religious activities must under no circumstances be used for political ends, for antagonising believers and non-believers, for attacking our Party and the People's Government."

"We are warning the Church hierarchy against infringements of the State law and regulations, which are occurring again. We advise them to stop provoking the people's authorities, as this will do no good to the church. The Church has to limit itself to matters of faith. It has to keep within the church."

Comrade Gomulka pointed to the necessity to increase the part played by the People's Councils in planning and managing the economy and gave a favourable opinion of the activities of the Workers' Self-Government.

Comrade Gomulka stated that citizens' rights were now guarded as they never had before in Polish history, and that the courts were independent in pronouncing sentences.

Describing the ideological activities of the Party, Comrade Gomulka emphasised that Marxist-Leninist theory was the only basis of the activities of the Polish working class movement and that this is a great historical achievement, guarded by the Polish United Workers' Party as the apple of its eye.

The course of history, the internal and international achievements of the USSR, as well as the resolutions of the 21st Congress, confirmed the absolute correctness of the line of the 20th Congress. The Polish United Workers' Party declared its full solidarity with the battle which the CPSU and its Leninist Central Committee, led by Comrade Khrushchov, fought against the anti-Party group. The unmasking and repudiation by the CPSU of this disruptive, dogmatist and conservative

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MARCH 29, 1959

Italian Party Plenum discusses struggle for a new democratic majority

A Plenary Meeting of the Central Committee and the Central Auditing Commission of the Communist Party of Italy was held recently in Rome.

Among the items discussed at this meeting was the report on "The Struggle for a New Democratic Majority" presented by Comrade J. Pajetta. Speaking on this item, Comrade Amendola, Member of the Party's Secretariat, pointed out that the recently formed Segni Government was seeking a political alliance with the Right. But by openly supporting the Right-wing forces, the Christian Democratic Party risked losing many votes. Consequently, the crisis of the leading bourgeois forces remained unresolved.

Hence, "it depends precisely on us," Amendola continued, "on all the democratic bloc, whether it is solved on democratic and not reactionary lines and will give the popular forces a chance to make further

advances. The Communists set themselves the task of ensuring a new democratic majority."

Clarifying the concept of "democratic majority", Comrade Amendola said: "We speak of a democratic majority and not of a Leftist majority because in the first case we mean not only all the Left-wing forces—from Communists to Republicans—but also the democratic Catholic forces and, moreover, those middle-classes, that part of the small and petty bourgeoisie which is beginning to realise where their real interests lie."

In conclusion, Amendola stressed the important role which the Italian Communist Party should play in the struggle for a new democratic majority.

During the discussion, Comrade Mauro Scoccimarro, the Chairman of the Central Auditing Commission, pointed out that now, under the impact of the new economic situation and the "Common Market", it was quite possible

to rally all the forces opposing the present Government on the basis of a democratic struggle against the monopolies. The slogan "control the monopolies" would be a common basis for the action of all the opposition political groups and lead to agreement on concrete problems between them irrespective of ideologies. The rallying together of the opposition forces, Comrade Scoccimarro concluded, would sweep away the present Government—the Government of the reactionary monopolist bourgeoisie.

Concluding the discussion, Comrade Pajetta stressed that the present situation was characterised by a deep split within the Christian Democratic Party, stemming from Fanfani's failure to establish the monopoly rule of the Christian Democratic Party. To deepen this division, it was necessary to wage concerted struggle with the participation of all forces sincerely wishing to alter the present state of affairs.

NEW AGE

Associated Cement Bosses On The War Path

THE Associated Cement Co. (ACC), it appears, has decided to provoke the workers into a trial of strength on the issue of bonus just when the Central Wage Board for Cement is at its job.

Out of a total number of 28 cement factories in the country, ACC alone runs 14, employing a labour complement of 31,000 as against the total 35,000 employed in cement manufacture.

For the last seven years, ACC has been paying bonus equivalent to one-fourth of the annual wages of a worker. And in 1953-54, the Tribunal awarded an extra one month's bonus against which the Company went on appeal to the Supreme Court.

The cement industry in general and the ACC in particular have been expanding tremendously with their profits swelling every year. The paid-up capital of ACC has increased from Rs. 1,056 lakhs in 1950-51 to Rs. 1,581 lakhs in 1956-57. Their Mancheril unit has gone into production in 1958. Their cement output has increased from 18.75 lakh tons in 1950-51 to 29 lakh tons in 1956-57.

ACC'S PRACTICES

The ACC is notorious for appropriating huge amounts in the name of so many reserves and even paying tax-free dividend shares. It has, for example, reserve fund, capital reinstatement reserve, plant reserve, development reserve, investment depreciation reserve, deferred taxation reserve, gratuity reserve and over and above this, provision for depreciation.

In fact, the All-India Cement Workers' Federation contends that in the name of repairs charged on depreciation they have actually modernised the plant without deploying their development reserves.

It should be noted that in 1956-57, the total amount under reserve fund, plant reinstatement reserve, capital reserve, development reserve, investment depreciation reserve, deferred taxation reserve and provision for depreciation amounted to Rs. 1,056.53 lakhs over and above a premium on shares that stood at Rs. 61.42 lakhs, whereas the total for salaries and wages was Rs. 225.40 lakhs and the bonus (three months' wages or one-fourth of the annual wage) worked out to only Rs. 50.40 lakhs. Compare it with the dividend that amounted to Rs. 135.51 lakhs.

Rs. 275 lakhs for 21,000 employees, Rs. 135.51 lakhs to the shareholders and Rs. 36 lakhs to the Managing Agents—such is the dispensation under the ACC!

And now they come forward and say that they will pay only one-fifth bonus instead of the usual one-fourth of the annual wage.

Both the All-India Cement Workers' Federation (Independent) and the Indian National Cement Workers' Federation (INTUC) have rejected this.

The All-India Cement Workers' Federation has decided to boycott this bonus. A delega-

tion of the Federation is to meet the Union Labour Minister to seek a peaceful solution to the problem. Let us hope that Sri Nanda will intervene, that better sense will prevail on the ACC and that it would not invite trouble.

COLD WAR AGAINST WAGE BOARD

But the game of the ACC bosses seems to be deeper. They propose, probably, to have a rehearsal battle exactly when the Central Wage Board for Cement is deliberating on a wage structure for the cement workers in our country. This is only part of the cold war meant to unnerve the Wage Board and see that it does not go far enough.

It was in April 1958 that the Central Wage Board for the Cement Industry was constituted. The Wage Board has since received replies to the questionnaire issued by it and the stage is now set for detailed examination of the claims put forth in the various memoranda and replies.

The bonus offensive has been timed with this stage in the work of the Wage Board.

The 18,000-strong All-India Cement Workers' Federation (Independent) and the Indian National Cement Workers' Federation (INTUC) have both submitted memoranda to the Board.

Both the Federations have stuck to their conclusion that the cement industry knows no "crisis" and is a continually expanding and increasingly paying industry. Here, therefore, the basic wage should be "fair wage" as defined by the Fair Wages Committee. The All-India Cement Workers' Federation rejects the plea that revised wages in the cement industry could not be conditioned by and determined in the light of the irrational and abnormally low wages in other industries.

While both the Federations demand "fair wages", the INTUC Federation has not worked out the actual figures and the differentials between minimum wage, fair wage and living wage. The All-India Cement Workers' Federation (AICWF) has worked out the figures and the differentials on the basis of the recommendations of the Fifteenth Labour Conference and the report of the Fair Wages Committee.

United Union Demands Recognition

THE United Textile Workers' Union in Bombay after its successful enrolment campaign on March 10 which brought on its list one hundred thousand members, is now taking the next steps to secure recognition and fight for the demands of the textile workers.

At a largely attended meeting on March 15, addressed among others by S. A. Dange, S. M. Joshi, Udhav Rao Patil and Datta Deshmukh, the speakers expressed the hope that the

Government would see the truly representative character of the union and forthwith grant it recognition.

If, however, the Government persisted in its policy and refused to grant recognition, Comrade Dange said, the workers will come out on a one-day strike and hold demonstrations in support of this just demand.

The meeting decided to go ahead with the formation of mill committees, chawl committees and centre commit-

tees in the various localities where the textile workers reside.

The Executive of the union has taken a decision to launch a satyagraha against the increase in work-load, unemployment and retrenchment resulting from the introduction of a automatic looms in some of the mills in the city. Dange and S. M. Joshi have issued a joint statement calling upon the workers to enrol 5,000 satyagrahis by April 10.

LABOUR NOTES

BY RAJ BAHADUR GOUR, M. P.
SECRETARY, ALL-INDIA TRADE UNION CONGRESS

According to this, fair wage should be 50 per cent above minimum wage and living wage should be 50 per cent over fair wage. Minimum wage, need-based as it ought to be, works out, according to the AICWF, to Rs. 40 on 1939 prices. Fair wage would, therefore, be Rs. 60 in 1939. The same at cost of living index of 350 would be Rs. 220.

The AICWF has demanded that the wage be fixed at the cost of living index of 350 and dearness allowance be granted for the rise above this number at the rate of Rs. four for every ten points rise or 40 p per cent to fully neutralise the rise.

The INTUC Federation wants that the wages be calculated on the prices prevailing between January and March, 1957, 50 per cent of the dearness allowance be merged with the wage and dearness allowance in future should be linked to the cost of living index obtaining in the nearest centre and the rise should be fully compensated.

CATEGORISATION OF WORKERS

As regards categorisation of workers, both the Federations are opposed to the existing plethora of grades that works only to the disadvantage of the worker, as he is top-graded soon and promoted to higher grade only according to the whims and likings of the employers.

But in working out the details, they differ again. The AICWF wants four categories: unskilled, semi-skilled, skilled and supervisory. The INTUC Federation wants only unskilled, semi-skilled and skilled categories. The clericals they categorise separately demanding that they be fixed at 80 per cent more than the unskilled.

The INTUC Federation wants the differentials in the wages of these categories to be worked out jointly and do not offer any concrete suggestion. But they are firm that the ratio between the salary of a worker and that of an officer should not be more than one to ten. The AICWF wants that the

semi-skilled should be fixed at 50 per cent more than the unskilled. The skilled and clericals should draw double the basic wages of the unskilled and the highly skilled and the supervisory should be fixed at three times the wage on which an unskilled is fixed.

INCREMENTAL WAGE STRUCTURE

The AICWF has also demanded an incremental wage structure so arranged that the worker starting with fair wage reaches the living wage within ten years. Both the Federations have demanded equal wages for equal work and have opposed paying less to women workers.

Both have opposed piece rates and demanded time scales. But the AICWF has firmly opposed this not only on the ground that it leads to intensified exploitation, exhaustion and ill-health but also because the nature of the cement industry is such that group output could be calculated and not the individual share in it.

On the other hand, the INTUC Federation having argued against piece-rate system has slipped into conceding that "if felt necessary" it could be introduced with certain safeguards.

On the question of consuming units in a standard worker family, the AICWF has argued that fixation of three consumption units is unjust. Quoting various sources, the AICWF has shown that nowhere is the family constituted of three consumption units. It ranges from 3.6 to 5.9. A fair average would, therefore, be of about four consumption units constituting a standard worker's family.

As regards paying capacity, the AICWF memorandum exposes the various appropriations and insists that bonus should be linked not with net profits but with gross profits arrived at after adding to net profits the following:

- (1) All the payments made during the year for past liabilities such as bonus, wage arrears, retrenchment compensation, provident fund dues, tax liabilities for previous years;

- (2) Bonus provisions, expenditure on machinery and other repairs, repairs to buildings;
- (3) Depreciation provided for;
- (4) Taxation provided for;
- (5) Cost of assets written off and prospecting expenses; and
- (6) Such other items as would not be properly items of expenditure or items belonging to revenue account." (AICWF memorandum, page 21)

The INTUC Federation wants the gross profits to be calculated by adding taxation and depreciation appropriations to the net profits.

The AICWF demands that one-fifth of the total gross profits calculated according to its suggestion should be distributed as bonus to employees drawing a salary up to Rs. 750; one-third of the remainder should go as dividend to shareholders and two-thirds should be earmarked for depreciation, taxation, etc.

HIGHEST PROFITS, LOWEST WAGES

The AICWF is opposed to the company paying the tax on dividends and distributing tax-free dividends. It is also opposed to the various reserve appropriations resorted to only to denude the net profits.

It is a paradox that the Wage Board must solve, that the profits in the cement industry are the highest while the wages paid are the lowest.

According to the statistics published by the Indian Labour Gazette (January 1959—page 521), the percentage share of workers' earnings in the net value of factory output in 1953 has been 62.42 in textiles, 53.05 in general and electrical engineering, 35.64 in iron and steel, 30.26 in paper and paper products, 29.47 in jute, 28.73 in sugar and only 23.31 in cement.

The average annual earnings of a cement worker in 1956 were Rs. 1,206 while it was Rs. 1,598 in ship-building, Rs. 1,501 in rubber products, Rs. 1,487 in basic metals and Rs. 1,244 in textiles.

Such is the situation in which the cement workers have to move unitedly to achieve their demands through the Wage Board.

But the Government itself is discriminating against the AICWF to sow dissensions. This body, claiming 18,000 paid membership—the majority—is denied representation on the Wage Board.

The two Federations have submitted two memoranda. And both of them, however much they agree on principles, seem to differ in certain details. Is it not possible for the leaders of both the Federations to come together and either submit a joint supplementary memorandum or take a united stand before the Wage Board?

However, it is now for the AICWF, the unions and the rank and file cement worker to bring about united mobilisations for tangible results out of the Wage Board deliberations.

Patna observed complete hartal on March 18 as more than 25,000 people paraded the streets and demonstrated before the State Assembly demanding withdrawal of the new taxes, supply of cheap and sufficient foodgrains through fair-price shops, stoppage of forcible realisation of loans and other government dues, stoppage of evictions of peasants from land, the early introduction of the Land Ceiling Bill and certain other demands.

THE demonstrators squatted before the Assembly House while a deputation consisting of representatives of all the organisations participating in the demonstration—the Communist Party, the Bihar Kisan Sabha, Bihar Trade Union Congress, Bihar Students' Federation, the Naujawan Sangh, etc.—argued out these demands with the Ministers.

Later, in the evening at the same spot, the demonstration had swelled into a mass meeting of about 40,000 which served an ultimatum on the Bihar Government that if no steps were taken to fulfil the demands presented in the memorandum within three weeks, the people would be forced to consider direct action to get their grievances redressed. And it decided to observe complete hartal throughout the State on April 15.

People Come Pouring In

Patna on that day wore a gala appearance. It was a sea of Red Flags. Over the long stretch of nine miles from the Eastern Gate in the old city, wave after wave of processionists—with Red Flags, reostons and placards in their hands began moving from early morning towards the Gandhi Maidan from where the main procession had to start. People had begun pouring into Patna a day earlier and by 17th night twelve thousand people had already come. All the four dharamshalas in Patna City and scores of large potato godowns were placed at the disposal of the people coming from outside and yet they overflowed into the streets. The Guru Govind Singh Gurudwara in the City opened its gates to receive the workers from Jamshepur who had covered the whole distance of three hundred miles and more on cycles.

They had all come from long distances, these twelve thousand peasants, agricultural labourers and industrial workers. They had mostly come on foot. And as they lay down in the dharamshalas or the godowns that 17th night on the bare ground or on their gamchhas serving as their scanty bed, the exhaustion of long distances was writ large on their tired faces. But all had kept up their spirits. And hardly anyone required the assistance of the flying medical squad of Dr. A. K. Sen and Dr. M. Habib who were on the move all that night and the whole of next day.

Many of the demonstrators had walked about a hundred miles. The largest number was from Bhagalpur—a good hundred and odd miles away. They did their journey partly by train but they, too, walked the first lap of their journey as also the last from Bakhtiarpur to Patna doing not less than thirty miles on foot.

People from Warsaliganj and Arwal in the District of Gaya, South Monghyr, Shahabad, Sonepur and Hajipur across the Ganga and from parts of Patna District all came on foot, walking in many instances about 75 miles. Cycle proces-

HUGE MASS DEMONSTRATION AND HARTAL IN PATNA

Notice Served On Bihar Govt.

★ FROM ALI ASHRAF

being drawn into struggles in defence of their rights. The professional tax has affected the middle and the lower middle class of people in the towns. Traders and businessmen—especially the small businessmen—are severely hit by the multipoint sales tax whose taxable limit was reduced from Rs. 15,000 to Rs. 5,000 annual sales. Rise in foodgrain prices—wheat at Rs. 24.0 and dal at Rs. 40.0 a maund—has hit all sections of people in towns and villages alike.

PSP's Disgusting Tactics

In order to build the broadest movement against these, the Communist Party in Bihar has been making strenuous efforts to bring in all sections of people irrespective of political affiliations. Repeated letters were addressed to the PSP and other Opposition parties to join as co-sponsors in the committee for preparations of the demonstration. They, however, did not respond. It is true, however, that many rank-and-file PSP members and even local Congressmen in some places signed the charter of demands and participated in the demonstrations.

PSP leaders Basawan Singh, Ramanand Tiwary and Karpoori Thakur had assured they would meet the de-

monstrators at the Assembly gates. But at the last moment they formally decided that none of them would meet the demonstrators. And that was not all. When Communist leader Comrade Karyanand Sharma moved for the adjournment of the House in order to enable members to meet the demonstration, PSP benches got a counter-adjournment motion moved to discuss the alleged high-handedness of some elements in forcing rickshaw pullers to strike! While Communist MLAs were alone to walk out of the House to meet the demonstrators, these antics of the PSP leaders disgusted even honest Congressmen.

The Government and the monopoly Press did everything to belittle the demonstration. The Labour Minister said on the floor of the House that the demonstration was only 2,000 strong, though he never took the trouble of seeing it from even the balcony of the House. His own police on the other hand, estimated it at 10,000. Birla's Searchlight, however, chose to echo the Minister. The Hindi Aryavart and the Indian Nation—both belonging to the Maharaja of Darbhanga—estimated five and ten thousands respectively.

Despite these face-saving devices, this huge demonstra-

tion affecting the whole State, and the accompanying successful hartal in the Capital have forced the Bihar Government to retreat. This was apparent, to some extent, during their discussions with the deputation, and more so, in some of the concessions announced afterwards.

In the discussions with the deputation, the Labour Minister Binodanand Jha, for the first time, was forced to take a public stand against the mass dismissals of TISCO employees by the Tatas. He assured that the Government would intervene. It is another story, however, that this assurance, too, has gone the way of most of its predecessors. The Labour Secretary, the very next day, explained that the department would go into the cases of all the dismissed workers and intervene for the reinstatement of those who they will think are wrongly and unjustly dismissed. For example, he explained further, those who will say that they did not mean to participate in the TISCO strike but were prevented by others. It is obvious the Labour Minister was not sincere in his assurance if this is the interpretation of his Department Secretary.

The Government also assured that it would take steps, regarding the demands of the non-gazetted officers after the Central Pay Commission's report was published—which is expected by June this year. It also agreed to make adequate supply of foodgrains for the I'd and Holi.

No Concession On Major Demands

The most important concession which has so far come is the exemption of books from sales-tax. It is learnt that on the question of raising the taxable limit from Rs. 5,000 rupees annually to Rs. 15,000 there is sharp difference in the Cabinet.

Sri A. P. Jain's promise to supply two lakh tons of foodgrains to Bihar in the current year is a substantial concession to the demand on the question.

But on the rest and most important questions of the people, the Bihar Government has refused to make any concession. The demonstrators who came to Patna on the 18th have gone back determined to wage effective struggles to win their demands from the unwilling hands of the Bihar Government. The general, State-wide hartal on April 15 will be a step in that direction.



Having enchanted audiences all over the country, Sergei Obratov and his troupe of Soviet Puppeteers, on the last lap of their month-long Indian tour are currently giving performances in Delhi. On Wednesday evening, Obratov gave a lecture-demonstration to a packed hall at the Sapru House. He kept the audience spell-bound and roaring with laughter. The art of puppetry, he told them, was only 27 years old in the Soviet Union but the perfection it has attained was manifest from the demonstration. Obratov has been acclaimed as the greatest living puppeteer. Picture above shows Obratov and Boris Tulzakov with a new doll.

THE UGLY FACE OF OUR PRIVATE SECTOR

LAST week we referred in this column to the malpractices of certain companies in the country in respect of the provisions of the Companies Act of 1956. Now a more severe indictment of how our barons of trade and industry have been behaving has been provided in the Second Statutory Report on the Working and Administration of the Act, published last week.

WHAT THEY SAID THEN

Before dealing with the facts revealed in the Report, we might as well recall the horror with which the private sector viewed the Act when it was put on the statute book three years ago. All the leaders of business—with the FICCI at their head—denounced it as a draconian measure, designed to encroach upon the strictly private domains of private trade and industry. As it is, with all its limitations the Act, in its two years of operation, has only proved that it was enacted not a day too soon—else, in its absence, even the little that the country has now come to officially know about the practices of private enterprise would not have been possible.

The companies raised a hue and cry at the time the law was enacted saying that it would stifle private initiative and enterprise, and in the first year of its operation, no doubt, the

number of new companies registered also went down; but for reasons, which the experience in the second year has shown, were quite unrelated to the Act. For, as the Report says, the number of such companies registered in the latter year rose to 961 from 848 in 1956-57. Out of these, 28 were "giant" companies with an authorised capital of Rs. one crore and above, all of which, except two, were privately-owned and managed. Surely this could not have been possible if the measure had really been as restrictive in its effect as it was made out to be.

That it was not so in the eyes of foreign entrepreneurs either is shown by the fact that as many as 23 companies "incorporated" elsewhere than in India were reported to have established their places of business in the country during the year.

REPUGNANT PRACTICES

And if this was the flowering of private enterprise, how did it use (or abuse) the good climate provided to it? Judging from the findings of the Report, it cannot surely be accused of any diffidence in this respect either, for apart from indulging frequently in practices which "though not illegal, are patently unsound and undesirable" it provided 1305 occasions when actual prosecutions had to be launched against it.

Among practices, which,

though repugnant to business ethics, were nevertheless not technically violative of laws, the Report lists: resignation of managing agents to become sole selling agents; taking of commission on bank overdrafts by directors and managing agents to increase their remuneration; placing of contracts with associates of managing agents; irregular expenditure incurred by companies and employment of relatives of directors and managing agents.

SOURCE OF EVIL

The investigations into the cases of the Mundhra group of companies, still sub judice, have, besides, the Report says, disclosed loopholes in the law in respect of (a) control of spurious shares, (b) prevention of negotiating credits on the strength of spurious shares and (c) imposing more effective control over inter-company loans granted on the basis of guarantee given by persons connected with management of the company whose solvency is apt to be affected by such inter-company involvements.

Commenting on the light nature of fines imposed by courts especially for defaults in calling of annual meetings and filing of returns, the Report says the "laxity in compliance with these provisions had been a potent source of evil in the past, and if permitted to continue, may develop tendencies and attitudes which would not only dull the

INSIDE OUR NEWS & ECONOMY NOTES

sense of the shareholders' responsibility but also permanently damage the basic concepts of corporate accountability.

The picture of the private sector emerging from the Report, therefore, is not one of which it can be proud. On the contrary it

is one of which it should be positively ashamed, for it exposes not only the falsity of its ethical claims in business, but also the absurdity of its apprehensions about the "squeeze" which the Act was supposed to have put on its enterprise and initiative.

REVEALING STATISTICS

REVEALING statistics in respect of the allocation of profits (after taxes) between dividends and reinvestments have been cited by the Times of India columnist, "Haran" in support of his standpoint that Sri Morarji Desai's recent innovations in corporate taxation will augment revenue. Leaving discussion of the validity of "Haran's" argument to a later date, however, we are giving below the statistics cited by him (and based on a study into the finances of 1,000 companies by the Reserve Bank) as evidence of the fact that the private sector has after all not been as mindful of the interests of country's developments as it has been claiming to be.

The break-up of figures of the industries mentioned

below gives the allocations (in percentage) between profits retained and distributed in 1956:

Cotton textiles—retention 41.3, distribution 58.7; cement—retention 43.8, distribution 56.2; sugar—retention 28.2, distribution 71.8; paper—retention 32.4, distribution 67.6; vegetable oil—retention 36.5, distribution 63.5; chemicals—retention 31.7, distribution 68.3; matches—retention 7.3, distribution 92.7; coal—retention 3.6, distribution 96.4; electricity generation and supply—retention 29.3, distribution 70.7; shipping—retention 42.8, distribution 57.2; tea plantations—retention 11.6, distribution 88.4; other plantations—retention 23.2, distribution 76.8; and trading—retention 29.0, distribution 71.0.

UNEXPECTED WELCOME

THAT the claim about trade with Socialist countries being definitely advantageous for the country at its present stage—hitherto made only by progressives in the Left—is creating an impression even in the private sector is borne out by the welcome which the recently concluded trade pact between India and Czechoslovakia (providing for purchase of goods worth 11.3 crores of rupees by both countries from each other) has received in the columns of the Eastern Economist of March 20.

Commenting on the Pact the Journal observes that the virtue of the bilateral deal "lies in the fact that, in the process of bilateral balance, the volume of Indian exports has been pushed up to higher levels than would have been possible under normal trade."

Stressing the importance of Czechoslovakia as an exporter of capital goods and machinery, the journal says that "this potential

aspect of economic cooperation between the two countries has not been pursued as energetically as it ought to be." In conclusion it pleads that "opportunities for collaborating with Czechoslovakia for erecting plants and running them efficiently in the initial stages must not only be explored but created."

It is really heartening to see even the editors of the Eastern Economist, shedding off their ideological blinkers for once to perceive, a little bit of reality. Can we hope that it was not merely a chance phenomenon but the beginning of a realisation that overdependence on a declining western market ill-accommodates the requirements of the country's development?

—ESSEN
March 23, 1959.

Towards The Summit

PROSPECTS AFTER THE IKE-MACMILLAN TALKS

"... the discussion between Eisenhower and Macmillan of a Summit meeting and Khrushchov's first dividend... he (Khrushchov) succeeded in impelling American politicians to do what they would very much like not to do..." thus reports Josef Alsop, the New York Herald Tribune columnist.

IN other words, even the worst opponents of the Soviet Union are now coming round to acknowledge that the tide of Soviet initiatives is sweeping over the brinks of West's creation.

The occasion that elicited the above observation was the Eisenhower-Macmillan talks in Washington and Khrushchov's timely Press Conference in Moscow.

KHRUSHCHOV'S PRESS CONFERENCE: On March 19, in the Sverdlov Hall of the Kremlin, the Soviet Premier addressing Soviet and foreign correspondents, reiterated once again the sole aim of the Soviet Government's proposals for a peace treaty with Germany and the abolition of the occupation regime in West Berlin, as: to put an end to the after-effects of World War II, normalise the situation in Berlin and throughout Germany and thereby to make a good start towards ending the cold war.

Soviet Stand Reiterated

Once again the Soviet Premier emphasised that the Soviet proposals did not seek any advantages at the expense of the other side, and did not prejudice anybody's interests. And once again Khrushchov expressed the USSR Government's preference for a meeting at the Summit and at the same time its readiness to have the Foreign Ministers' meeting before, if the Western Powers so wished. Again the Soviet Premier

made it clear that the time-limit of May 27 was but a tentative date, and to call it an "ultimatum" was "an ill-advised interpretation of the Soviet position."

The Soviet Premier's reference to President Eisenhower, was hopeful: "Let us not cavil at these contradictions"—remarked Khrushchov, referring to the U. S. President's declaration on the German question—"Let us proceed from the President's latest statement. It too contains reservations, but if they are weeded out, healthy seeds which are obviously in a majority, would remain: namely consent to the convocation of a meeting of Foreign Ministers to begin with, a meeting of the heads of government not excluded."

At the same time, the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR once again made it quite clear that if the Western Powers refused to conclude a peace treaty with Germany and to negotiate, the Soviet Union would then sign a peace treaty with the German Democratic Republic and call upon other countries, which were in accord with it, to follow suit.

As can be seen from the above, Khrushchov had not made any new proposals. Yet, interestingly enough, this Press Conference found a wide echo in the Western Press.

Western Press Reactions

A series of reports in the American Press and news agencies suggested that the Press Conference held by the Soviet Premier would favourably affect the Macmillan-Eisenhower talks. New York Times reproduced the text of the Soviet Premier's statement. New York Herald Tribune editorially acknowledged that East-West talks are "undoubtedly imminent." Even most of the West German papers are reported to have published foreign comments and to have stressed that Khrushchov's statement at the Press Conference has been met with satisfaction in the Western capitals.

What does it all show, then? It shows the correctness of the Soviet initiative in taking up the German question, in the interests of easing the cold war tension.

SOBERING DOWN: On March 21, from the U.S. Presidential mountain retreat at Camp David, came the news of the Eisenhower-Macmillan joint statement as saying: "There is complete agreement between our two Governments that we are looking to negotiations as a means of settling current controversies in Europe."

It appears from the reports in the Western Press about the discussions "on an open stone porch" between Macmillan and Eisenhower, that the Western Powers' strong resistance to move towards the Summit, is giving way.

INTERNATIONAL EVENTS

Communist Party Emerges As Largest Party From French Municipal Elections

WHEN, in the confused, disorientated political arena of France, de Gaulle came romping in, the reactionaries were jubilant—Communists are dished and in the land of the Paris Commune, Communism is doomed, they proclaimed.

However, the recent elections to France's about 38,000 communes (municipalities) have shown that with the people of France, the French Communist Party, far from being smashed, enjoys the greatest confidence.

Analysing the first ballot results, the Political Bureau of the French Communist Party's Central Committee, declared:

"The resistance to the anti-democratic policy of poverty and war, which has been pursued since June 1, 1958, has been crowned with a great victory.

"Our Party has achieved success everywhere, both in the towns and the countryside. In central cities, notably in Paris and in the Seine Department where we polled the biggest number of votes since the libe-

ration, the working people strikingly demonstrated their confidence in the policy of the French Communist Party and their approval of its tactics of alliance against reaction and fascism..."

After the first round, the Right-wing parties, with various political labels, presented common lists of candidates. The Socialist Party under the thoroughly discredited leadership of Guy Mollet, struck election bargains with the de Gaulle Union, the Right-wing "Independents" and the Popular Republican Party.

On the other hand, the Communist Party of France, the rank-and-file nationalists and other Republicans, took to more and more unified actions. In more than 50 cities and townships such a united front against the Right-wing bloc, was forged.

And when the final results came after the second round, they threw overboard all reaction's hopes. Even the U.S. TIME (March 23) had to report: "In France's 13 largest

cities, the Communist polled 27.7 per cent of the votes, regaining the TITLE OF FRANCE'S LARGEST PARTY from the Gaullist Union for the 'New Republic.'" (Emphasis added).

The results of these municipal elections have revealed that the working people of France are quick enough to see the true face of the "New Republic"! They unmistakably point out that in France extreme reaction is clearly losing its position, the already discredited leadership of the French Socialist Party is getting even more discredited—and the French people are turning more and more towards the French Communist Party.

"The massive return of the extreme Left is assuredly the outstanding aspect of the election"—admits LE MONDE along with the French and foreign Press.

Nevertheless, the "outstanding" absurdity of bourgeois democracy in France is such that the Communists are represented by only ten members in the French Parliament!

How effective the control was, and on this basis it can unilaterally withdraw from the treaty.

In other words, the treaty is permanent but each party has the right to resume nuclear weapons tests, at any time, at its own discretion!

The meaning of this stratagem is plain enough: it seeks to satisfy public opinion by professing to con-

clude the agreement. "for an indefinite period" while ensuring the United States "the legal rights" to resume the tests at any moment that suits its purpose.

It is high time that such hypocritical, diversionary moves are ended and the tasks of the nuclear weapon tests ban taken up seriously by the U.S. ruling circles.

—RAZA ALI

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V. Visalandhra Publishing House, Buckingham, P. O., Vijayawada.

V.O. MEZHOUNARODNAYA KNIGA, MOSCOW 200, U.S.S.R.

★ IN THE NEW MAP OF
THE COMMONWEALTH ★

Kashmir Is Not Within India

HER Majesty's Stationery Office has just published a handbook called "The Commonwealth in Brief" with a brand new map of the Commonwealth.

The imperial red is gone. The map shows all the Commonwealth countries shaded light brown. Britain knows how to move with the times. This is what the Indian admirers of the new Commonwealth would say. But we insist on calling it the British Empire. And we have been proven right once again.

In this British official map, Kashmir is shown with yellow diagonal stripes on brown background. The code explains this to mean: "future status of Kashmir is not yet determined."

Thus in the official publication of the British Government, Kashmir is not accepted as Indian territory but regarded as disputed territory.

The British knew the old boundaries of India as its masters and they knew where Kashmir was. The British claim to be such good friends of new India that Lady Mountbatten and her daughter currently are staying as the Prime Minister's guests. They certainly know the boundaries of independent India, the solemn resolutions of the Kashmir Assembly, the Constitution and laws of

our country and the stand of our Government.

To deny that Kashmir is a part of India is to deny Indian sovereignty over rightful Indian territory and stick on to the mischief of the Mountbatten Award and seek to revive the dark days of 1947 in our sub-continent.

Let there be no doubt as to why the Commonwealth Relations Office goes all diagonal when it comes to Kashmir. Its spokesman said, "We try not to get involved in this dispute and the map puts the position as fairly as it can be put."

It is the latest example of the deliberate, cold-blooded British policy to keep Indo-Pak relations artificially at tension by accepting Kashmir as disputed territory.

The Government of India must demand that the British Government respect Indian sovereignty fully by accepting Indian laws about Indian territory and stop playing the old imperialist game of provoking Hindu-Muslim differences in the new form of fomenting Indo-Pak tension.

No more diplomatic niceties. India's indignation must ring out in simple and clear words.

The new British map should help the Congress leaders shed their illusion about British friendship towards independent India.

NIZAM TRUST BLOW-UP

ANOTHER STAR IN THE GALAXY OF MUNDHRAS AND MATHAIS

● From V. HANUHANATHA RAO

HYDERABAD, March 24

To the ranks of the Mundhras and Mathais, one more name can be added and it is that of C. B. Taraporewala.

All documents, account books and relevant papers connected with the Rs. 5.11-crore public charitable trust created by the Nizam have been seized and sealed by the Endowment Department of the Andhra Government in a raid on the Trust Disbursal office in Hyderabad yesterday. The Secretary of the Trust, Taraporewala, has gone underground and is evading the serving of a search warrant.

THE raid was a sequel to various reports about the alleged misuse of trust funds by the trustees, all of whom were at one time Government servants and prominent public men.

Rs. 40 Crores Involved

It is feared that something equally serious if not more might have happened to other trusts created by the Nizam in which money to the tune of Rs. 40 crores were involved and of which also Taraporewala is the Secretary.

The Endowment Department was sleeping for the last five years over the issue of funds and has woken up only now to serve notice on the trustees to get the trust registered and to submit accounts of the trust for scrutiny under the "Regulations Regarding Trusts, 1949

Fasi," an old Hyderabad Act still in force. The trustees contended that the Government had no right to exercise their powers over this trust.

The trust is one of the twenty-two or twenty-three trusts the Nizam has created, the total amount involved being about Rs. 60 crores. While most of them are private trusts, created for the benefit of his sons, grandsons and others, a few are public trusts and the above is one of those public trusts. All public trusts are validated by an Act of Parliament.

Taraporewala, Secretary of the Trust, was a guest of the Government of India in its jails for some time at the time of the State's integration. He is also believed to have helped Moin Nawaj Jung, Minister for External Affairs in the Nizam Cabinet to run away to Pakistan. Perhaps, as a matter of recognition of his services, the Nizam appointed him as Financial Adviser.

Since the trust's affair is a closed book to the public, no one knows what "meritorious services" were rendered to the needy people. But it is being talked about that an amount of Rs. 8,000,000 from out of this trust was given to one young Bombay industrialist for starting "industries" which have yet to see the light of the day. This young industrialist, with the help of a former railway officer, is reported to be making merry in Delhi and the United States, hatching conspiracies for exporting money abroad with American and other foreign capitalists.

Terrible Mismanagement

Another amount of Rs. 25,000 is understood to have been given to air-condition a certain library in Delhi. Relatives of one high police officer in the Nizam's Government are paid from this trust. Everyone of the four trustees is being paid a decent allowance of Rs. 18,000 per year for their "services" to this trust. Meetings of the trust are held in Bangalore, while the trust office is situated in Hyderabad. For the meeting, air travel charges for all the trustees plus all incidental expenditure for the meeting are also debited to this trust.

A trust with Rs. 5.11 crores should normally get, at five per

cent interest rate, a minimum of Rs. 25 lakhs but it is believed the income of this particular trust never exceeded Rs. five to six lakhs, again indicating terrible mismanagement.

If this is the fate of the public trust, what has happened to all the private trusts to the tune of over Rs. 40 crores for each of which Taraporewala is the Secretary—this is the question being asked everywhere. What are the amounts that Taraporewala and his friends hold in Swiss Banks—is another question that is being asked.

The Trustees

Here are the names of the other members of the trust: Sri V. P. Menon, former Secretary of States, Government of India; Sri S. Shavax Lal, former Deputy Legal Advisor to the Government of India and later Private Legal Secretary to the President, now retired; and the third, Nawab Jain Yar Jung, Minister in the erstwhile Nizam Government and nominated member of the Andhra Legislative Council.

The Government of India has been in the know of things for a long time but no action was taken while right under its nose huge amounts were being smuggled abroad or swindled. It is understood that one influential M.P. from Hyderabad has been keeping the leaders of the nation informed from time to time about the misdeeds and misuses, taking the risk of earning the disfavour of the Nizam and his henchmen.

Why Did Govt. Keep Quiet?

While it is true that Government of India has no legal powers to lay their hands upon private trusts, it is felt that the Government which granted the Nizam legal immunity, could have strongly advised the Nizam against the misuse of his trusts to the detriment of national interests.

It is beyond the comprehension of the common people that the mighty Government of our country and its Prime Minister could not effectively intervene in the matter. It is also felt that since all public trusts have to be validated by Parliament Acts, it should not be difficult for the Government of India to take steps in the matter.

It is hoped that the Andhra Government would appoint a strong officer not susceptible to any influences to deal with this affair and also take over powers under Sections 5 and 12 of the "Regulations Regarding Trusts" to take over the trust and appoint a controller.

Pantji's Baseless Allegation No Answer To Serious Charge Against Home Dept.

★ FROM FRONT PAGE

at Rs. 1½ lakhs. Five-and-a-half per cent interest is charged on the loan and it is to be paid back in eight years.

FIVE, such loans have been granted also to non-Communist and anti-Communist papers. For instance, the inveterate enemy of the Communist Government, Malayali (Rs. 50,000); the non-Communist Kerala Kaumudi (Rs. 50,000); Fradeepam (Rs. 5,000); the Muslim League's Chandrika Publishing House (Rs. 50,000).

Pantji should also be made aware of two other instances of such loans.

● Sri Kuroor Nilakantan Nambodripad, President of the Trichur District Congress Committee, well-known in Kerala as the man who sends the largest number of telegrams appealing for Central intervention, took a loan of Rs. 47,500 for his enamel industries. He has not repaid the loan and the Government is considering action under revenue recovery.

● Another gentleman who has taken a loan is one Sri Madhavan Nair. He is the husband of a niece of Sri K. P. Madhavan Nair, formerly General Secretary of the All-India Congress Committee. He took a loan of Rs. 4,86,000 for his West Coast Fisheries. He also did not bother to repay the loan and the Government has been compelled to take over his ice-freezing equipment. Pantji should not throw stones while he lives in glass houses.

Pandit Pant made his statement about the loan to Deshabhimani in reply to the sensational exposure Comrade Bhupesh Gupta made about Home Department funds being used by Central Intelligence to run an anti-Communist daily, Free Lance, in Calcutta.

Pandit Pant should have known the difference between the two cases.

● When Comrade Bhupesh Gupta made his charge, he did it with evidence in his hands—a letter from the Assistant Editor of Free Lance. Pandit Pant had no facts and

his statement had no basis in truth.

● The loan to the Deshabhimani Printing and Publishing House has been granted under an Act of the State Government and was duly sanctioned by a properly constituted board. The money spent on Free Lance came from allotments to the Home Department, which are not liable to audit—that means the people will never know how the money has been spent.

Instead of trying to answer the charge made by Comrade Bhupesh Gupta against his Home Department, Pandit Pant tried to take cover behind a baseless allegation.

The Deshabhimani daily in an editorial has demanded:

"If the Hon'ble Home Minister has the courage, let him make this statement outside the precincts of Parliament House, let him give us a chance to find out whether there are laws and courts in this country."

We await Pandit Pant's reply.