

Communists and Democracy

by A. Democrat

ILLUSIONS develop from time to time about the aims and policies of the communists. They develop fast when, in the course of their periodical gyrations from the left to the right and back again, the communists are following a soft as against a hard line. During such a period, they talk loudly and incessantly about their patriotism, their devotion to democracy and freedom, their friendliness towards other parties and their readiness to work together with all and sundry. Many are taken in by these professions, in spite of the bitter experiences made on earlier occasions. Many believe that the communists have turned a new leaf and would now behave as honest and sincere public workers. Who would like to attribute duplicity and treachery to persons with whom one is working? It is much more comfortable to believe that people mean what they say and that when the communists avow their faith in democratic and peaceful means and methods they will stick to them and will have no other ulterior motives. So, the illusion grows until it is shattered by the next turn in the communist strategy and tactics. But, in the meanwhile, a lot of damage is done to the cause of democracy and to democratic parties and organisations.

The illusion is an ever-recurring disease. The experience of one period, of one group of people or of one country is never enough for the next period or for another group of people or another country. Each, it appears, would like to make its own experience and learn its own lesson. There would be nothing wrong in the desire to experiment and learn, were it not for the danger of the communists utilising the opportunity for a total subversion of the democratic system. That has happened in some countries and it will be too hazardous to allow a repetition of that experience.

Czechoslovakia is the classic example of a country which the communists took over by posing as democrats and by entering into united front agreements with democratic parties and organisations. They forged a national front along with the Social Democratic Party and the National Socialist Party and utilised

their position in the front to weaken and disorganise the two parties. They entered the coalition Government, and made use of the governmental machinery to consolidate their strength and to isolate their allies in the coalition. While paying lip homage to the Constitution and the Parliament, they were preparing all the while for their overthrow and destruction. While posing as democrats, they were ceaselessly working for the imposition of the rule of their party. As soon as the opportune moment arrived, they threw off the cloak of democracy and appeared on the scene as the storm-troopers of their party's dictatorship. The friends and colleagues of yesterday then became enemies and traitors and were ruthlessly liquidated one after the other. Democratic parties and individuals who had put faith in the bonafides of the communists and had given them places in the Government and in mass organisations woke up to find that they had been pushed out of all positions of power and importance and would never get an opportunity of telling the people how they had been duped and betrayed. Czechoslovakia thus ceased to be a democracy and became a totalitarian communist state without the communist firing a shot and entirely through the clever use of the Parliament and parliamentary forms.

This story of the communist seizure of power in Czechoslovakia has been told by many contemporary observers and political and social scientists. Those accounts provided some warning to democrats all over world. A far more salutary and effective warning has now been provided by the communists themselves. It is through a treatise on *How Parliament Can Play Revolutionary Part in the Transition to Socialism* written on the basis of the experiences made in Czechoslovakia for the benefit of communist cadres in other countries. The writer is Jan Kozak, a communist member of the Czechoslovak National Assembly. The book was published in Czechoslovakia in 1957 and was since then extensively used for the training of communist activists. Two chapters of the book found their way to England. They were translated and have been recently published by a group of English parliamentarians consisting of such prominent persons as Lord Morrison, Lord Birdwood, Mr. Desmond Donnelly and Sir Hamilton Kerr.

Mr. Jan Kozak has in his book outlined the tactics and strategy that were adopted by the communists for the peaceful take-over of Czechoslovakia. He has detailed how the National Front was formed and how it was utilised for weakening and disrupting the other constituents of the Front. After the communists entered the Government, they combined "pressure from

above" with "pressure from below" for destroying all non-communist parties. They were caught, according to him, "in the two jaws of a nutcracker" and, in spite of their numerical superiority in elected bodies and their bigger following in the country, they were reduced to the position of inactivity and impotence. The control of the Ministry of the Interior was skilfully utilised by the communists for whipping up public sentiment against leaders of other political parties and for discrediting and isolating them. Once the ground was prepared in this manner, they could easily advance a little further and take complete control of the machinery of the state.

Mr. Kozak has written his book not as a history but as a manual of instructions for communist workers all over the world. He desires his study to be "an unusually valuable and instructive contribution to the international workers' movement for accelerating the march of the world proletarian revolution". Communist workers have been learning and digesting these invaluable lessons since long. It is only the others, the non-communists, whom the communists desire to draw into their net and then destroy, who have either ignored them or have been ignorant about them. The English translation of two chapters of the book should now serve as a warning. The purpose of the translation is, as stated by Lord Morrison in his foreward, "that it may be a warning and an indication of what to expect from those who work in their own countries on behalf of the international communist conspiracy against parliamentary democracy."

Along with many other countries, India also needs the warning. The communists have now taken to parliamentary activities and desire to be recognised and treated as patriots and democrats. Public memory being short, it is forgotten that not more than ten years back they were engaged in organising insurrectionary activities in various parts of the country. It is only after they failed miserably to make any headway along that path that they decided to combine parliamentary with insurrectionary activities. The latter are not given up, they are merely postponed for more propitious times. And even while engaged in the former, they do not forget or lessen their emphasis on extra-parliamentary activities. They are convinced, as is stated in one of their important party documents, that it is only "hundreds of streams of partisan struggles merging with the general strike and uprising of workers in the cities" that will lead them to victory. The rule still holds good and is binding upon all communists. Parliamentary activity is to the communists only a tactic to be used from time to time for furthering their objective of strengthening their party and establishing its totalitarian rule. After all, communists in each country are only a section of the international communist movement; and the international communist movement is by virtue of its avowed aims a conspiracy against parliamentary democracy and human freedom.

Without Comment

CONGRESS AND COMMUNISTS

by P. V. Thampy

(The following are extracts from an article appearing in the March 18, 1961 issue of "Weekly Kerala", the leading pro-Congress weekly published from Ernakulam, Kerala).

ARE Congressmen sponsoring communist cultural troupes? Judging from what happened in New Delhi last week, the answer should be in the affirmative. The communist-sponsored Kerala People's Arts Club, directly controlled by the State Committee of the Kerala Communist Party, was given an enthusiastic reception in the capital by prominent Congressmen, including Pandit Nehru and Dr. Keskar.

The K. P. A. C. presented three plays in Delhi: "Puthiya Akasam Puthiya Bhoomi", "Mudiyanaya Puthran", and "Ningal Annae Kommunist Akki" (You made me a communist). Among the distinguished audience who witnessed the performances were Pandit Nehru, Dr. Radhakrishnan and Dr. Keskar.

Thoppil Bhasi, the playwright (the first accused in the Sooranad Police Inspector Murder case), posed for a photograph with the Prime Minister of India.

He wrote with glowing enthusiasm in the Party's Malayalam Daily *Navajeevan* that after the three plays were performed Dr. Keskar presented the troupe with a shield on behalf of the communist-sponsored IPTA and the Delhi Malayalee Club.

The Communist Press in Kerala featured these stories prominently, for they know only too well that the names of Nehru and Keskar can now be successfully used by them to secure more bookings for their plays. And more bookings for their plays means more money for the Party. With the elections to the Parliament fast approaching the communists are in need of money and what more can they expect than the patronage from top Congress leaders for their money-making concern—the KPAC.

It is true that the KPAC play received a prize from the Kerala Academy, headed by Sardar Panikker. That indeed is not a justification for Dr. Keskar to present them a shield after they performed their three plays in the capital, including the play "You made me a Communist."

Nehru and Keskar obviously must have been misinformed about the KPAC. And who could be a better person to do this than Sardar K. M. Panikker, father-in-law of Mr. M. N. Govindan Nair, secretary of the Kerala Communist Party? It is not a secret in Kerala that Sardar Panikker has been keeping close contact with top leaders of the Kerala Communist Party.

Choice Before The Country

by M. R. Masani

THERE is a fundamental choice before the country. Either we accept a State-directed, or command economy, where decisions as to what is produced and at what price it is sold are imposed from the top on the common people of this country, which is basically the communist pattern,—we reject that—or we go in for real economic democracy which consists of the process of leaving the people of India the freedom of choice to decide what shall be produced and what shall not be produced.

Shri Jayaprakash Narayan makes the grievance that in a parliamentary democracy the people only vote once in five years, and then after that they are helpless. There is some force in that contention. What is the way that we supplement parliamentary democracy? I say that we can supplement it only by economic democracy where every day the men and women of India go to the market place and cast an economic ballot. They decide what they want to buy, at what price, and what they do not want to buy. Every time the common man does that, he exercises a freedom of choice. If he does not want to buy, he exercises a negative freedom of choice. Out of all these votes that are cast every day in the bazaars of India, we get a collective ballot. Out of this consumers' preference, by the laws of competition, by checking State or any other kind of monopoly, comes the consumer's right to determine the pattern of production in this country.

This is the broad philosophic choice before the country. On this choice, the Socialist and Communist parties and the present Government are all in one camp. Against that command economy, we put before the country the concept of decentralised economic power that Gandhiji had at heart when he said that if he had his way the Reserve Bank of India's vaults should be opened and the gold that was there should be distributed among the people in all the villages of India. That is how economic power is divided; a little particle is given to every man, woman and child in the country. That is the real choice before the country.

Having posed a real challenge to the Budget, I think it is right to say that it is mischievous in three ways. First of all, these additional levies undoubtedly contribute a blow to the lower middle classes and the common people of this country. This is ill-deserved, after all the burdens that have been cast on them in the last decade.

Secondly, apart from the burden on the common man, these excise duties will injure the process of industrialisation and aggravate unemployment. Already, as a result of the excise duty on power looms, anything up to 15,000 men are in danger of being displaced in the artificial silk and other

textile industries. As a result of the excise duty on metal sheets and circles of copper and zinc, 5,000 people are already unemployed today at Jagadhri in the Punjab. In Mirzapur also the small scale industry has been mortally hit already by these excise duties. The excise duty on diesel will restrict transport of goods and people. Finally, the additional duty on newsprint is going to affect adversely the newspaper industry, a necessity for the minds of our people.

In these ways, along with the reduction in the development rebate, the import duty on capital equipment and the surtax on earned incomes, economic development will be impeded by this Budget.

And that brings me to the third mischief of this Budget. At a time when everyone agrees, and the leaders of Government themselves agree, that nothing must be done to aggravate inflation, this is almost a deliberate act setting in motion further inflationary tendencies.

The *Economic Review* itself supplies the material. During the Second Plan, it points out, the real income of the Indian people rose by 19 per cent. But the money supply rose by 35 per cent. If this is not deliberate inflation of currency, I do not know what is.

The Survey also goes on to point out that at the end of 1959, the index of wholesale prices was 117.9 while at the end of 1960 it is 124.3, an average increase of 6.5 per cent; and that during the Second Plan there has been a rise of 25 per cent in wholesale prices. The rupee has depreciated to that extent. It is the monetary policies of Government that are responsible for this inflation. Government professes, on the one hand, to be against inflation; but their practices, on the other, do not coincide with their professions.

I do not accept this point that additional taxation is necessary. I claim that by cutting down civil expenditure and by not indulging in development plans of a Utopian nature, of an unrealistic nature, we can prune our Budget so that the existing taxation, high as it is, would suffice.

Let us consider non-developmental expenditure and developmental expenditure apart. Let us start with non-developmental expenditure. This has been rising, at an alarming rate. The Estimates Committee of the House has pointed out that a large part of the additional taxation levied during the Second Plan on the ground that it was to go to the Plan has, in fact, been diverted to non-Plan expenditure. Here are the figures. The cost of the Administrative Services has gone up in the last decade by Rs. 37 crores.

At a time when our frontiers are threatened by communist China, I would be the last person to grudge a single rupee that is being directed to the defence of the country from that aggression. But how is one to justify the purchase of a secondhand aircraft

carrier at a cost which comes, I believe, to somewhere about Rs. 30 crores including the planes that are to be found on it. We are facing a threat across the Himalayas and, instead of directing the money that we spend on defence to fighting that enemy, we go and buy this big toy for fighting a non-existent enemy. Who is going to invade us from the sea? We are making the same mistake that the Moghuls did in the reverse order. They built a huge land army and neglected the navy, and the British were able to land on the coasts and established settlements all round India and from these they moved in. Now, we are concerned with the attack by a land power on the North and, instead of concentrating on that, we neglect our defence there and we spend money on a navy which we do not need at the present moment.

According to a paper that was placed before the last meeting of the National Development Council prepared by the Planning body, these are the estimates in the States of non-developmental expenditure and developmental expenditure. The developmental expenditure in 1961-62 is Rs. 420.4 crores and in 1965-66 it is estimated to be Rs. 471 crores—that is, an increase of Rs. 51.2 crores. Rs. 375.9 crores is the non-development expenditure in 1961-62 compared to Rs. 463.7 crores in 1965-66. There is an increase of Rs. 87.8 crores in non-development expenditure. So, in the next five years, the States will spend on development Rs. 51 crores more while on non-development expenditure they will spend Rs. 87.8 crores more. It appears that the Rake's Progress in which we are indulging over the last ten years is to continue for the next ten years.

Now, let us turn to developmental expenditure. Vast developmental projects have been undertaken, at expenditure that often goes beyond estimates, and the returns are miserably low. If any businessman produced such results, he would be driven out of the market and go insolvent. The fourth steel plant should never have formed part of the Plan. It accounts for no less than Rs. 235 crores. The additional tax this year is Rs. 60 crores. In other words if this white elephant was not being imposed on this country, the burden of the additional taxation this year, the next year, the year after that and the year after that could be removed from the shoulders of the common people of this country. It is because of such megalomania that the common people are being mulcted today and there is this burden of additional taxation.

There are people who say that "this is all very negative though very effective criticism. But what is the use? Why don't you say something positive?" I shall try, however, briefly to list some positive things that we would like to do. I just list them because time does not permit a full exposition of these positive measures.

First of all, we should make a drastic reduction in civil expenditure.

Secondly, we would concentrate development expenditure on projects which are labour intensive,

which provide employment spread throughout the country and give quick returns by way of increase in national income. The priorities would be, first, agriculture, then small-scale industries, then large-scale consumer goods industries and last of those white elephants, the steel plants, which are the most unremunerative.

Then, thirdly, we would limit taxation to reasonable proportions, so that money is left to fructify in the pockets of the people to be devoted to investment.

Fourthly, we would go in for honest and efficient collection of taxes.

Then, fifthly, we would cut down the capital outlay on the State sector. This will be made up many times over by the same money being invested in the popular sector.

Lastly, we would replace foreign loans taken from foreign governments which are a burden on the country by equity capital coming in in a larger measure.

We want foreign capital, but we want foreign capital to come at its risk and not at the risk or at the cost of the interest of this country.

—Extracts from a speech in Parliament delivered on March 15, 1961.



— Courtesy Daily Express

Central Budget 1961-62

by Economicus

FOR a proper assessment of the new tax proposals contained in the Budget of the Central Government for the current financial year, it is necessary to be clear about the overall perspective governing our tax policy. In the present phase of Indian economic development, taxation no longer serves merely the limited objective of finding the funds required for running the administration, it has come to constitute the main element of a broader strategy of inducing a rapid growth of the economy, consistent with the attainment of certain widely shared aims, such as avoiding the concentration of economic power in a few private hands and narrowing the glaring disparities in the living standards of the different sections of the community. In this context, a particular budget has to be judged according to the contribution it makes towards furthering the above objectives. This does not, of course, mean that all the tax measures become immediately justifiable because they are avowedly intended for raising the budgetary resources of the public sector. Within the broader needs of the Plan, there is bound to be ample scope for variations in the detailed taxes and every specific new levy has to be closely scrutinized in the light of its impact on certain crucial determinants.

Admittedly, the task confronting the Finance Minister, who is working within the structural framework of the mixed economy, is full of difficulties. The existence of the private sector enjoins on him the duty of so framing his tax measures that he does not impair certain well-accepted economic incentives. But he must also avoid the opposite danger of failing to raise adequate revenues for the fulfilment of the investment outlay of the public sector. Since a large part of the public sector outlay goes to finance mainly the expenditure on projects pertaining to the *infra-structure* of the economy, the completion of the programmes in the public sector is of fundamental importance even for the healthy growth of the private sector.

It goes to the credit of the far-sighted and bold statesmanship of the Finance Minister that he has made a supreme effort in maintaining a proper balance between the needs of both the sectors and has spread the tax-net wide enough so as not to be too harsh towards any single section of the community.

Before examining the specific proposals, it is necessary to clear a common confusion with respect to the role of commodity taxation. As most of the tax measures suggested by the Finance Minister belong to this category, we often hear the criticism that the new taxes would lead to inflation. This is not a correct inference. The price-rises, consequent on commodity tax increases on the one hand, and the spurt in prices, on account of deficit financing on the other, should be

clearly distinguished. When the budget relies on commodity taxation or even direct taxes for mobilising the resources, there is generally no net expansionary impact on the money supply or the aggregate demand in the economy. The important conclusion, which has emerged from a discussion among some eminent economists in the U.S. on this issue, is that, unless some additional assumption is made with regard to increase in money supply, it is not possible to infer that an overall rise can take place as a consequence of the imposition of either general or partial commodity taxes. In fact, the more the budget relies on taxation and the less on deficit financing, the danger of inflationary pressures emerging within the economy is minimised.

As the Central Government is required to raise an additional tax revenue of the order of Rs. 1,100 crores during the third plan period, the Finance Minister has rightly proceeded to make a substantial contribution to this tax effort. On the basis of the revised estimates (after making allowance for the concession of Rs. 4.5 crores) the new taxation measures are expected to draw to the exchequer a sum of Rs. 59.37 crores in the current year or Rs. 300 crores in the entire third plan period. The major reliance is placed on commodity taxation—customs and excise—and only a nominal sum of Rs. 3 crores is to be collected through direct taxation. The Finance Minister seems to be sharing the view, held by most persons who are affected by high rates of personal taxation, that direct taxation has very little further scope in India. It is very easy to argue, on the basis of a comparison of Indian tax rates and those prevailing in other countries, that direct taxation has reached the point of saturation. Upto Rs. 20,000 per annum level, however, there is still some room for raising the rates, and it is quite likely that Mr. Desai may have reserved such changes for the next few budgets.

From the point of view of avoiding economic concentrations and lessening inequalities, the Finance Minister of a political party, dedicated to the socialistic pattern, should have taken some steps to raise the existing rates of estate duties. By any standard, Indian rates are lower than those prevailing in many advanced or even under-developed countries. From the strictly revenue goal, the contribution of enhanced rates of estate duties cannot be substantial, but it may go a long way in creating the proper psychological climate for imposing sacrifices on the masses.

Another reform expected of the Finance Minister pertains to closing the existing loop-holes in the administration of direct taxes. While experts may differ regarding the exact amount of tax evasion practised in India, the available evidence indicates that such evasion is quite considerable. The Finance

Minister should have indicated the steps the Government proposes to take for a stricter enforcement of various provisions intended to check illegal avoidance of direct taxes. As the legal sanctions in India are not very adequate, new provisions should be incorporated in the Indian Income-tax act for curbing evasion.

The changes proposed in the corporate taxation should be generally welcome. While the rationalisation effected in the treatment of inter-corporate dividends has not satisfied industry and the reduction of the rate of development rebate allowance has met with loud protests, the restriction imposed on extravagant entertainment expenditure is well conceived. Rather than effecting a blanket reduction in the development allowance, the Finance Minister would have been well advised to introduce the principle of selectivity. This was, in fact, the original idea of the Taxation Enquiry Commission in granting development rebate, which according to the Commission should be confined to producers' and capital goods industries.

The Finance Minister needs to be also congratulated for having summarily rejected the plea of some Members of Parliament, belonging to his own party, for the reimposition of excess profit tax. Though the tax may have certain superficial merits, the differential taxation of company profits which it introduces is damaging to the efficiency and economy of the corporate sector. A proportionate tax on the Company's profits is the best method of ensuring that a part of high corporate profits are brought into the tax net. While excess profit taxation has ample justification during the war time in mopping up the windfall profits made by war contractors and others who benefit by the scarcity conditions generated by the wars in a developing economy, the differentiation introduced by the excess profit tax would not be consistent with the principle of equity between shareholders.

As the Finance Minister has chosen to rely very heavily on commodity taxation, there is a general presumption that the new taxes will affect the poor

and the middle classes. The item-wise break-up of the new levies on imports and excise, however, shows that not all the fresh imports would push the prices of the articles of common consumption. Out of the new custom levies bringing in Rs. 29.57 crores, only Rs. 5.79 crores will directly burden articles of common consumption. In the sphere of excise taxation, too, the direct incidence on articles of popular consumption amounts to Rs. 11.20 crores.

Even some of the industrial raw materials and machinery, subjected to higher customs and excise taxation, are useful only in the manufacture of luxury and semi-luxury articles. Their taxation will not affect the articles of essential consumption. Of course, the levies on tea, betelnut, kerosene are bound to impinge on the common man. But if direct taxation has reached the point of saturation, what other method could be devised for mobilising resources for economic development?

A salient feature of the Budget is its reliance on custom duties. It was almost axiomatic that, as the import policy is encouraging the imports of developmental materials, there is no scope for raising the revenue through imposition of custom duties. The policy of import substitution also points in the same direction. But the new budget has followed the unconventional path of imposing higher taxation on imports of essential industrial raw materials and machinery. Mr. Desai has tried to justify the increase in the standard rate of import duty re: machinery from 10 to 15 per cent on grounds of protection to indigenous machinery manufacturing industry. It is also suggested by some that the higher duty will discourage the imports of machinery and prevent excess capacity, which is allegedly induced by the current development rebate. It is really questionable whether the best method of encouraging indigenous manufacturers of machinery is a higher duty on imported machinery. At any rate this is not a proper device for discouraging excess capacity. The control of capital issue and the licensing administration should take care of this problem.

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Famine Conditions In China

(Contributed)

JUDGING from reports that have been appearing in the press recently, it is obvious that the food situation in China is more desperate than she has faced at any time during the last twelve years. The tone and substance of various announcements made by spokesmen of the Chinese communist regime during the last three months indicate that their main concern at present is how to stave off large-scale famine on the mainland this year. The magnitude of the problem can be gauged from the fact that China has recently bought from Australia one million tons of wheat and 40,000 tons of flour for twenty-one million pounds (i.e. Rs. 27 crores) in cash and is negotiating for a large quantity of barley. In addition to this, she has obtained from Canada about 7,50,000 tons of wheat and 2,50,000 tons of barley for a similar outlay and bought fertilizers worth 10 million pounds, mostly from Western Europe. Most of these purchases have been for cash totalling more than fifty million pounds (about Rs. 70 crores). This is known to be more ready cash than China had immediately available. Thus, the fact that the country like China which was hitherto exporting food stuffs for effecting barter deals with other countries has been herself obliged to resort to these expensive emergency food purchases in the open markets abroad indicates the gravity of her food situation.

It had been clear during the second half of the last year that China had to cope with worse natural calamities in various parts of her territory. But the Chinese communist rulers, till the last week of December, refused to admit the desperate food situation resulting from the calamities that hit the country during the year. For example, in October last year, *New China News Agency* reported that half of the arable land had been affected by the natural calamities, but it noted triumphantly that owing to the communes "the impact of the disaster was restricted to only a third of the affected area... and in resistance to disaster a great victory had been won". The same tone was maintained as late as the second week of December. An editorial pronouncement of the *People's Daily* rhetorically asked on December 13, 1960: "with a succession of natural calamities extending over two years, what would have happened without the achievements of years of great works on water conservancy?" But this false propaganda could no longer be sustained as the news about the severe famine conditions in different parts of China could no longer be suppressed from the outside world.

On December 28, the *New China News Agency* announced that in 1960, half of the arable land of the country had suffered from natural disasters. It further reported that calamities, the worst in a hundred years, had hit China and that 900 million mow, more than

half of the arable land, were affected with varying intensity, (the total arable land is 1,600 million mow); 300-400 million mow had suffered heavily and a part of the agrarian land did not produce anything. This was a calamitous news, particularly in a country where the whole of the national economy depends so much on agriculture.

The seriousness of the food shortage was later confirmed by the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party which met in Peking from January 14 to 18. It issued a communique directing the whole nation to concentrate in 1961 on "strengthening the agricultural front" in view of the calamities that had occurred in two successive years. It also announced the decision, unprecedented in a communist state, to reduce the scope of capital construction and slow down the rates of development of heavy industry. The communique also admitted the existence of the disgruntled and dissatisfied elements in China. Some 10 per cent of the population, it stated, "who have not yet been sufficiently remoulded, have taken advantage of the difficulties brought about by natural calamities and shortcomings in work at the lower levels to carry on sabotage." It also noted that there were 10 per cent of party and government functionaries who "infringe the law and violate discipline in cities and villages to the detriment of the interests of the people." This is, perhaps, the first time that the Chinese communist rulers have admitted that at least 70 million people are dissatisfied with their People's Democracy.

The extent of the acute food shortage has not been disclosed by Chinese rulers, but it is estimated that there has been a shortage of about 100 million tons of food grains last year. Chinese spokesmen have claimed that in 1958 the output of foodgrains increased by 65 million tons to a record of 250 million tons. They also claimed that despite natural calamities, food grain output rose to 270 million tons in 1959 and was to increase by 10 per cent in 1960. The figures are, of course, exaggerated and many observers place these figures at 200-220 million tons for 1958, and about 190-200 million tons for 1959. As regards the output in 1960, Chou En-lai stated that it had been less than in 1958 and 1959 but more than in 1957. In 1957, the food grain output was claimed to be 185 million tons. Thus the actual food grain output last year can be placed at about 140-150 million tons.

There have been wide-spread food shortages in China throughout the last year. Peasants were being encouraged to economise and raise their own vegetables and livestock. Food rationing was reported to be much stricter during the second half of 1960, with the daily grain rations varying between half a pound and one and a half pounds. From January onwards, Chinese papers began advocating the cultivation of

Chlorella, a pond weed, as an edible food for the people. Chlorella is a sort of unicellular alga which normally grows in stinking stagnant water, appearing as a layer of green foam. Before the advent of the communists to power, it was sometimes used in China to feed swine, but no one ever thought of it as a possible food for human beings. The *People's Daily* on July 6, 1960, editorially announced that Chlorella was already being used to make pastry, bread, candy etc., and that it was also used to feed babies after being made into powder. Along with Chlorella, the people were also made to eat artificial meat with mud taste. The meat "is made mainly of baggasse, sugar cane leftover and other unknown ingredients" according to the Formosan Central News Agency dispatch in February this year. The meat, it further added, "tastes like mud and often causes stomach troubles". In February, again, the daily ration of rice was cut from 6.6 oz to 4.4 oz in a drastic move to meet the acute food shortage. There were, besides, other indications confirming the worst food shortages on the mainland. Many Chinese refugees living in Hong Kong have recently been receiving pathetic letters from their relatives and friends on the mainland complaining of unprecedented hardships beyond the limit of endurance of even the stoic Chinese. Some letters complained that rice and flour rations were not half enough for subsistence, some said they had not seen cooking oil for months. Pork and beef, others wrote, were dishes existing only in fairy tales, while vegetables were great luxuries. Mal-nutrition, they added, had caused general ill-health and night blindness was a common disease.

Contrary to past practice, Hong Kong communist papers this time have not seriously attacked the "capitalist rumours" which speak of extreme shortages of food on the mainland. On the contrary, the Chinese authorities have confirmed the near-famine conditions by their deed. For example, there are about 2.5 million Chinese refugees residing in Hong Kong, most of whom were driven out of China by the communists. These refugees were sending food parcels to relatives and friends on the mainland for the last two or three years; but only those who were better off could afford to pay exorbitant customs duties levied by the Chinese communists. But from the later half of 1960, the number of food parcels sent to China from Hong Kong has increased rapidly. At the end of the last year, an average of about 40,000 small food parcels for China were sent from Hong Kong every day. In January, it rose to an average of 1,00,000 lbs of food daily, while it reached the figure of 1,40,000 lbs per day in February.

Various other reports emanating from China during the last few months also underlined the gravity of the famine conditions. There were, for example, reports of long queues formed at food distribution centres throughout Peking in February. Similarly, many provincial Chinese newspapers, like *Nanfang Jia Pao* of Canton, *Yunnan Daily News* and *Anhui*

Daily News reported the occurrence of hunger riots and protest demonstrations in various parts of the country. In some places, for example in Yunnan province, it was reported that hundreds of farmers "plundered food depots after killing the cadres in charge". In some other places, like in Anhwei province, peasants even burnt down grain depots and killed communist officials. That the Chinese communists permitted these reports to appear in papers showed the magnitude of the dissatisfaction against the communist regime as well as the severity of food scarcity in the country.

Forced to cut down drastically the daily rations of the common man to the minimum necessary for subsistence, the Chinese communists have taken steps to "reduce the appetite of the population." Physical training of the entire nation, which was made compulsory some time ago, has now been abandoned and so also the extra hours of work enforced earlier in industry.

Faced with the dire economic and food situation, the Chinese rulers have now tried to dangle the carrot before the Chinese masses. Already the structure of people's communes has been modified to meet some of the practical objections and needs in order to mitigate some of the rigours of the system. The communist regime has also resorted to doses of "private enterprise" by introducing a system of personal rewards for labour in rural areas with a view to improving the output of farm workers. Private plots of land, taken away from the peasants when communes for rural areas were organised in 1958, have also been restored. These can total in area the equivalent of about 5 per cent of the average per capita cultivated land in each commune. Stern orders have been issued that the crops, fowl and livestock from private lands belong to individuals and cannot be collected by official agencies. Rural officials have been ordered, moreover, to see that peasants have some spare time instead of enforcing a routine of mass meetings, military training and other forms of participation in public activities that take up all their daily hours except those spent in the fields and at meals. The spare time thus allowed is to be used by peasants to engage in work on their small plots.

The regime has also tried to stimulate production and simplify market procedures by permitting small local "free" markets, where peasants could sell poultry, eggs, fresh vegetables and so on. This small-scale restitution of private enterprise is obviously a temporary measure and even peasants are bound to accept it with wry scepticism. It is therefore uncertain how effective the new "small freedoms" will be in communist China in helping the regime to tide over the difficult food situation. But in any case the Chinese people will have to endure stoically the wrath of nature and pay for the mismanagement by their communist bosses, who, by their unwieldy commune system and bad management, have caused great damage to Chinese agriculture.

The Place of Muslims In India

by Saadi

ADDRESSING an informal meeting of some prominent Muslims in Bombay the other day, at the residence of Mr. H. H. Ismail, Consul-General for the Dominican Republic, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, Chairman of the AICC's National Integration Committee, stated that communal tension had prevailed in Jabalpur long before the actual riots took place and that it was only incidental that Muslims became the victims of the riots. She came to the view, after her recent visit to Jabalpur, that had the Muslim boys not misbehaved with an unfortunate Hindu girl which gave a different twist to the tension and resulted in Hindu-Muslim riots, the majority community would have raked up a violent quarrel with some other minority, possibly, Jains.

Mrs. Gandhi's statement makes it clear that a section of the majority community was itching for trouble. It also shows that we have yet to go a long way to establish communal harmony and bring about emotional integration between all sections of the society. In its absence even a tiny section of a community bent upon mischief can disrupt the fabric of our social life.

In an under-developed economy, however secular or democratic it may be, the minorities are prone to be frustrated for the simple reason that there are not enough advantages to go round and the minorities feel that they are left out. Actually, not only the minorities, but even the members of the majority community are frustrated for the same reason. In other words, in an under-developed economy, there is a general phenomenon of frustration; all communities suffer from it in varying degrees.

So far as the Muslims, the largest minority community in India, are concerned, their frustration can be traced to the early period of British domination of the country. Having lost their political power, they felt isolated and, indeed, they have never fully recovered from this feeling of isolation since then. Their initial refusal to take advantage of loaves and fishes which the British power offered intensified their feeling of isolation and, consequently, led to the deepening of their sense of frustration. Even when they took to English education, and accepted new professions and services under the British, their sense of frustration did not subside because compared to the majority community (which had taken the advantage of the British power much earlier) they still lagged behind. The British policy, based as it was on the notorious Roman principle of "divide and rule", helped to aggravate this feeling.

The emergence of the Muslim League on the political scene of India, however, offered a chance to the Muslims to ventilate their grievances. While generally blaming the Hindus for all their ills, they demanded greater share in services and educational and other

facilities, and also larger number of seats in the legislatures. Ultimately, under the leadership of Mr. Jinnah, they demanded the creation of a separate state of Pakistan as the solution of all their problems.

However, after Pakistan came into being as a result of the division of the country, the Muslims who remained in India, did not find their problems coming to an end. They realised to their deep dismay that Pakistan was no solution to their problems and that they were left absolutely leaderless.

The Indian leaders took a sympathetic view of the rights of the minorities. Although Pakistan chose to be a theocratic state, the Indian Constitution provided all necessary safeguards to the interests of the minorities.

The desirability of according safeguards and protections to the minorities was never doubted by any section of public opinion in India. The need for such safeguards and protections was, time and again, stressed by various political organisations and special committees even prior to freedom.

After freedom, however, Muslims never felt socially and emotionally integrated with the larger Indian community. There are various reasons for it. Firstly, Hindus after partition, did not take Muslims fully in their confidence. The memory of the intransigent attitude of Muslim League leaders at various stages of political negotiations with the British, the Muslim League agitation for Pakistan, in which the Muslims who had been left in India after partition had taken leading part, the Calcutta holocaust following the Direct Action Day of the Muslim League in 1946, the Razakar atrocities in Hyderabad was too fresh in the minds of the Hindus to trust the Muslims overnight. Again, Pakistan's occasional advocacy of the so-called cause of Muslims in India after partition and the latent tendency of some Indian Muslims to look to Pakistan for moral support, which was a hangover from pre-independence days had only helped to deepen the suspicions of the Hindus about the Muslims. Secondly, Muslims have felt that they have been increasingly isolated, if not deliberately discriminated against, in economic, social and educational fields. The fact that the Muslims have not been able to take advantage of the various economic facilities offered by the developmental projects and expanding economy, for instance, in the fields of industry, commerce, trade and services and other professions, has only added to the Muslim feeling of isolation. Thirdly, the official attitude towards Urdu in certain states — although Urdu is not necessarily the language of the Muslims and is being spoken by many Hindus and Sikhs in North India — led to a feeling of cultural discrimination amongst

(Continued on page 11)

Dangerous Decades

by V. B. Karnik

INDIA: THE MOST DANGEROUS DECADES* is a stimulating and thought-provoking book. It draws attention to a problem and a danger which deserve the most serious consideration. The problem is the growth of fissiparous tendencies in the country and the danger is the peril to national survival.

The argument that is developed in the book is briefly as follows: The first decade after Independence was a decade of confidence. It has now ended and the decades to follow will be the most dangerous because the very existence of the nation and of the democratic system of government will be in question during the period. People will think more and more in terms of their linguistic groups. Within the linguistic groups caste lobbies will emerge. Each group and caste will press forward its claim to a larger share of the cake — and there will be constant quarrels and fights between the Centre and the constituent units. The bonds which hold the country together will weaken as the older generation of the leaders of the national struggle passes away and as English ceases to be the common language of administration, education and inter-State communication. With the rise to prominence of regional languages and with the affairs of each region being conducted through its own regional language, a stage may be reached when "India will be led in not too many years by a generation of bureaucrats and politicians literally unable to talk meaningfully to one another on a national stage." (p.93) Economic competition between the States will grow and with its growth will grow "the unity and militance of regional lobbies and regional caste lobbies". (p.5) These centrifugal pulls will lead to national disunity and disintegration. The worst may not happen and India may survive as a nation, but at a heavy cost. The cost will be the abandonment of democracy or at least of what is known as democracy in Europe and America and the adoption of "a series of authoritarian forms". (p.4) "The nationalist in a hurry" will seek an escape in a surrender to a total state and "India will, for better or for worse, know the total state in the decades ahead". (p.7)

Mr. Selig Harrison has put forward this thesis with a wealth of arguments and corroborative evidence which may appear overwhelming. He has ransacked history and literature to bring to light the ancient roots of the contemporary tensions between linguistic groups. He has equally diligently read through the files of newspapers and speeches and writings of national and regional leaders to give a realistic picture of the pulls and the counter-pulls, the strains and the stresses and the conflicts and quarrels that have developed in the country. He has drawn the disagree-

able picture, as he has seen it, not with the intention of doting over it or exposing to the world the weaknesses of India, but because, as is clear from the words of Harrison Brown given at the beginning of the book, he does not regard the "dismal future" that he has predicted "inevitable". He has described the disease and projected its course in the future because he regards its understanding "a prerequisite for the cure."

In spite of his painstaking research, Mr. Harrison has failed to take note of some important factors which go to strengthen the feeling of national unity. There is, in the first place, the feeling of oneness throughout the country arising out of a civilization and culture which is the common heritage of all. It existed even in pre-British days when the country was split into separate and many a time warring kingdoms. The political unity established by the British rulers strengthened it and after Independence it is growing as a powerful unifying factor. Then there are the railways, the posts and telegraphs and a number of other all-India services which bind the country into one. The needs of defence and of economic development also make it necessary for all parts to think in terms of the country as a whole. Moreover the class of politicians and administrators and businessmen and thinkers and writers with an all-India outlook which developed under the British regime and in the course of the national movement will not altogether disappear with the replacement of English by Hindi or with the growing importance of regional elites. The class is increasing numerically — and may even be able to increase its influence in the years to come. The regional elites may not be all parochial in outlook. Many amongst them may grow and advance further to assume national responsibilities.

The troubles which arose over the linguistic reorganisation of States seem to have given some a wrong perspective. The troubles arose because there was delay in giving effect to a principle which was one of the basic planks of the national movement. As soon as the reorganisation was effected, they subsided and the influence and the strength of the central power increased and did not wane. The best example of this phenomenon is to be found in Maharashtra. After its constitution as a separate State, separatist and fissiparous tendencies did not grow; as a matter of fact they practically disappeared from the scene. Some problems yet remain to be solved. They should be solved tactfully and firmly as early as possible. It is the failure to solve them that creates difficulties and not the other way round.

One need not, however, close one's eyes to the jealousies, rivalries and antagonisms that are likely to arise. They are likely to be minimised by the acceptance of the principle of equitable development of all

*Selig S. Harrison, Oxford University Press, Rs. 20.00

parts and special attention to backward areas. The Central Government and the Planning Commission have already accepted that principle. There may be quarrels, no doubt, regarding its application, but they can be settled from time to time by a tactful handling of the situation. They are as a matter of fact the inevitable consequences of democracy. When people had no rights, there was no dissatisfaction and no dissent. Now that they are getting conscious of their rights, there are bound to be claims and the exercise of pressures in their support. They will not endanger national unity or democracy if they are treated with sympathy and understanding and attempts are made to give them reasonable satisfaction. They will, no doubt, pose many ticklish problems before Indian democracy, but there is reason to believe that they will be tackled more or less successfully.

It is "the nationalist in a hurry" who will prove the real danger to democracy. He will be impatient of regional claims and clamours and would like to suppress them once and for all in the interest of national unity and national strength. He would like a powerful and determined government to grow at the centre in order to put down with a firm hand what he would call fissiparous tendencies in the regions. He will have

no compunction, if he finds it useful, to put an end to democratic rights and liberties and to abolish democratic forms and institutions. Mr. Harrison has done well to draw attention to this danger inherent in the Indian situation. He has failed, however, to suggest any solution; and one is left wondering about his own point of view, whether he would like the regional claims to be adjusted and satisfied or whether he would like them to be ignored and, if necessary, resisted.

The next few decades are bound to be of crucial importance. India may succeed in overcoming her difficulties, difficulties of language, of caste, of unequal development, of backwardness and ignorance, of population, of regional jealousies and of parochial loyalties. Or she may fail, as a democracy or as a nation. It is difficult to forecast the future as it depends on a number of uncertain factors. Mr. Harrison has attempted one forecast on the basis of the evidence that he has collected and presented. One may or may not agree with it, but one must be grateful to him for presenting it, as it may enable one to find a cure for the disease which he has described with such meticulous care.

(THE PLACE OF MUSLIMS IN INDIA *Cont'd from page 9*)

Muslims. The fact that Urdu has been recognised as one of the fourteen national languages in India has not compensated much in this regard. Added to this, the communal riots which occurred from time to time have generated to some extent a sense of physical insecurity. It must be, however, admitted that Muslims in India enjoy greater security than Hindus in Pakistan—this is evidenced by the fact that the number of Hindus migrating to India from Pakistan is much larger than that of Muslims who cross into Pakistan from Indian side; and indeed, a substantial number of Muslims, who had initially opted out for Pakistan have preferred to come back to India and stay here for good. Also, authorities in India are invariably prompt in countering riots or taking precautionary measures to prevent riots.

It is obvious that by and large Indian Muslims have more or less ceased to look to Pakistan for support. And to many of them developments in Pakistan for the last one decade, have come as a great disillusionment. Further, they are keenly conscious that Pakistan's so-called solicitude for Indian Muslims has only sought to compromise their position in this country and jeopardize their interests. They sincerely feel that it would be to their advantage if Pakistan lets them alone.

In view of these facts, the integration of Muslims in the larger Indian community should not present any difficulty. But this problem has to be tackled in the larger context of national integration of different communities, linguistic groups and religious sections.

The Indian Muslims must begin to feel that they are wanted in India and that they as citizens of India have a vital stake in the progress and welfare of the

country as a whole. The unfortunate tendency of suspecting the generality of Indian Muslims as potential fifth columnists of Pakistan will have to be given up. Secondly, Muslim must be absorbed in increasing number in the emerging economic pattern. The opportunities created by national reconstruction schemes must be equitably shared with Muslims and other minorities. Muslims must be also encouraged to play their legitimate role in the development of the country. Being the largest minority, their contribution towards the country's advancement can be of great value.

Likewise, they must be assured by practical measures that the constitutional guarantees for the protection of the religion, language and culture of the minorities are the guiding principles underlying the policy of the administration. In other words the official indifference and apathy which was evident during Jabalpur riots—which has been admitted by the Fact Finding Committee appointed by the AICC—should not be allowed to repeat any where.

PT. GOVIND VALLABH PANT

We pay our respectful homage to the memory of late Pandit Govind Vallabh Pant. He was a great statesman and one of the most competent builders of the nation. His passing away is a blow not merely to the Congress party to which he belonged but to the nation as a whole. He was a powerful force for stability and progress and the country will miss him for years and years to come.

With Many Voices

Moans round with many voices. Come, my friends,
'Tis not too late to seek a newer world."
—Tennyson.

When Mr. Bardhan (Communist MLA) said in the Maharashtra Legislative Assembly that communists believed not only in internationalism but were also national and patriotic and that they would fight aggression, Mr. Warty (Praja-Socialist MLA) questioned: "What about the Chinese aggression?" The query evoked a spontaneous reply from a communist member, Mr. S. G. Patkar, "They are not aggressors."
—*Indian Express*, March 17.

The Swatantra-ites may not be right, but they are logical when they say that economic planning as in India and parliamentary democracy as practised here cannot co-exist, not for long, any way.

—*Link* (fellow-travelling weekly), March 19.

The struggle is between two widely varying interpretations of the meaning of life: one which believes in the inherent dignity of the human individual, the other which believes that man was born to serve the state.

—*Chester Bowles, The New Leader*, February 8.

We are getting only 8% of our requirements from the USSR. About 50% comes from the USA.

—*Mr. Morarji Desai, Thought*, March 19.

STATEMENT ABOUT OWNERSHIP AND OTHER PARTICULARS OF FREEDOM FIRST

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I, B.K. Desai, hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

B. K. DESAI

1st March 1961

Signature of Publisher

And to the Soviet Union I would say: there are laws of history more profound and inescapable than the laws dreamed up by Marx and Lenin; laws which belong not to class relationships or stages of economic development, but to the nature and destiny of man himself. Among these laws is the certainty that war follows when new empires thrust into the collapsing ruins of the old.

—Adlai Stevenson, *American Embassy News Letter*, March 8.

These Madhya Pradesh riots were staged as a political rehearsal by the Jan Sangh for the coming General Elections, as a part of their political tactic, as their way to win popularity as the protector of the Hindu majority and to defame the Muslim minority as a fifth column of Pakistan.

—P. C. Joshi, *New Age*, March 12.

The International Commission which is being suggested to be set up for investigating the murder of Lumumba may also be armed with powers to investigate the callous execution of Imre Nagy and the persons responsible for both the crimes must be tried.

—T. P. Ramanathan, *Swarajya*, March 11.

Khrushchev believes that if one carries a big rocket one should roar ferociously as often as possible. But he might be wiser to remember that rockets are no solution when others have them, too.

—*New York Times*, Weekly Review, February 26.

Peking understands nations whose attitudes and policies are based on a build-up of military strength and alliances and is happier taking its bearings from them than from others who profess friendship and always talk of negotiation.

—*"Tenax," Indian Express*, March 14.

Referring to the recent Indo-USSR agreements for the purchase of a large number of transport planes for operation on the Sino-Indian border, Mr. Sudhir Ghosh said that according to the agreement the planes, being specially built ones, would be permitted to be flown only by Russian pilots and not by Indians in the most "sensitive areas of the border".

—*Thought*, March 19.

Abraham Lincoln is credited with the observation that "you can't fool all the people all the time". The Soviet Union is paying around two billion dollars a year to prove him wrong.

—Senator James O. Eastland, as quoted in *Bulletin*, Munich, January.