

The Spectre Of State Monopoly

by S. R. Mohan Das

SINCE the past few weeks a controversy on the national level with considerable intensity has been generated on two questions: State Trading in food grains and the Defense Ministry's contracts with foreign firms for manufacture of trucks and heavy tractors.

The merits or otherwise of State Trading policy are left to more competent persons. This article proposes to spotlight attention on certain fundamental issues which have not found consideration in the controversy.

The free and full manifestation of the intensity of the controversy is a healthy sign, but one essential point has been ignored.

A few months ago, the Asoka Mehta Food Enquiry Committee submitted its report to the government and one of the crucial recommendations made by the Committee in its report was the taking over of Foodgrains Trade by the State.

At the time, while accepting some of the recommendations, the Government of India made it quite clear that they would not accept the recommendations with regard to State Trading in Foodgrains.

The Food Ministry also formulated a plan to meet the problem of rising food prices and suggested that the present grain reserves by government through procurement could be easily doubled and used as a lever to keep prices under check. This proposal was more or less accepted. The Food Ministry never at any time contemplated State Trading as a solution to the problem of high food prices.

The policy now announced recalls to one the parable of a man burning his house down to rid it of termites. A similar incident in the matter of dealing with the problem of primary and secondary school teachers in the matter of salaries from private school managements is worth recording.

Private school managements used to receive subsidy from the Government. To show expenses, they used to obtain from teachers salary vouchers of higher denomination while actually paying them much less. Various State Governments handling this malpractice, without making an ideological fetish about it, solved the problem by making private school managements

issue bank vouchers to the teachers who got their salaries in bank. Private schools were neither nationalised nor socialised as the Kerala Communist Government is attempting to as a remedy to this "capitalist evil". The Food Ministry did not convert the problem of high food prices into a melodramatic "cancerous growth" which should be surgically treated. But accustomed as we are getting to be to "shock brigade" perspectives, the Food Ministry's wisdom was not dramatic enough to "shock the Nation into action."

Then the National Development Council met, and at the exclusive initiative of Prime Minister Nehru, it was dramatically and unanimously decided that wholesale Foodgrains Trade would be taken over by the Government. The significance of the fact that the initiative for the present proposal of State Trading in Foodgrains came exclusively, individually and dramatically from the Prime Minister, has escaped general notice. The facile manner in which the Prime Minister so easily reversed the clear decision of his own government taken a few months ago on State Trading is reminiscent of the 1955 Avadi thesis of Socialistic Pattern which was also adopted exclusively on Prime Minister's initiative.

Without going into the complexities and implications of the announced new policy, this fundamental question deserves serious study. In an editorial the *Hindu* of Madras commented:

"It is symptomatic of the hurried and casual manner in which grave decisions are taken at the highest levels that nearly a month after the... decision regarding State Trading in Food grains was announced, the public should be in the dark as regards the aims and scope of this new policy."

(*Hindu*, Dec. 10, 1958)

Apart from the various arguments to justify or deprecate the new policy, we have to face some fundamental questions that have arisen in this process. For instance, who is the real policy-maker in various Government policies that deal with a variety of questions? How are such policies formulated or changed? If we can locate the exact source of policy-making, then we have to include the characteristics of such a source in any controversy over the policies.

It is quite clear that the Prime Minister is personally responsible for the decision on State Trading in Foodgrains. This is confirmed by his extremist reactions to the threat of hartal by wholesale foodgrain dealers in Uttar Pradesh and to the resolutions of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry, and the Associated Chambers of Commerce.

Another significant fact to note is that no other

Central or State Ministers have come out with any statements on this policy of State Trading in Food-grains. It is as though the various ministers have been caught off their guard by the Prime Minister's announcement and are taking time to rationalise their confusion and switch over to the new line!

In the matter of Defence Ministry contracts, apart from the merits or demerits of the question, we are again faced with a fundamental issue namely, how easily and casually a categorical policy decision is swept aside and the only obligation to democratic commitments rendered is in the form of generalised smearing of critics of the reversed policies.

One aspect of the Defence contracts is interesting. The Prime Minister said that the manufacture of a mere 2,000 trucks per year for defence needs need never come in the way of private sector automobile industry which will still have to meet the major requirement of about 35,000 trucks for the country. A critic has pointed out that this is not a valid answer, because finding that manufacture of merely 2,000 trucks cannot be an economical proposition, the Defence Ministry will have to justify its new vested interest by claiming monopoly of supply of trucks to other Ministries too. So from the concept "Defence

Ministry should be self-sufficient for its needs," the next step automatically will be: "The State should be self-sufficient for its needs." This dangerous dichotomy between the State and the people has already started, oddly enough, under the aegis of Prime Minister Nehru. Here again the departure from the Industrial Policy Resolution, though attempted to be played down as a mere minor shift due to expediency, is the thin end of the wedge.

Disturbingly enough, the following pronouncements of the Prime Minister are indicative of the trends of his current thinking:

"Our declared goal is a socialistic pattern of society. We will brook no obstacles and if there are any we will sweep them out with broomsticks".

The clarion call about "our" goal and the unnecessarily hysterical threats about obstacles, coming from a man who deplored "violence even in language" are eloquent indeed.

All this and other trends, allegedly economic in orientation, have a definite ideological partisanship which need to be more closely studied and understood if we have any stakes whatsoever in the preservation and spread of democratic values in India.

Weekend In Budapest

by Kurt Gratz

ONCE upon a time, Budapest was called the Paris of the Danube. Its ladies were known for their charm and elegance: its solid bourgeois homes bespoke the prosperity of its upper and middle classes; and, though there was much poverty, life was gay and the amiable people of the Hungarian Capital relished music and dance.

Spending a weekend in Budapest now, two years after its great and tragic revolution, the visitor is astonished to find people on the streets well clothed—not quite as well as in Vienna, but far better than anything one sees in Poland, Rumania or the Soviet Union. One recalls that Budapesters—and particularly the women—have always laid great stress on good dress, and have preferred to economize in other areas of life. But then, visiting a public swimming pool, one sees only old and old-fashioned bathing suits, the kind no Western woman would wear; it seems that the Budapest ladies can just about afford good street clothes, but not bathing suits.

The same kind of contrast is evident if you spend Saturday night in the expensive restaurant atop the Swabian Mountain (now Freedom Mountain) overlooking the lights of the city. The guests look as elegant as those in a good cafe in Vienna, the orchestra plays soft music, the waiters move quickly. But, when the time comes to leave, there are no automobiles; these are reserved for Communist party bosses. So people cram into overcrowded busses and the cog-wheel railroad, leaving their refuge behind to return to the drab everyday.

Rent, transportation and amusements are quite cheap in Budapest, and Hungarian-produced bread, meat, fruit and other foods cost about as much as in a Western country. But anything that comes from abroad is very expensive. British and French textiles, for example, cost two to three times as much in Budapest as they do in Vienna. Coffee costs 400 forints a kilogram (about \$8 a pound), which means that the average Hungarian worker's entire monthly wage can only buy four to six pounds of coffee. Cocoa, at 180 forints a kilogram, is somewhat more reasonable.

The general impression one gets is that you do not starve or go in rags in Hungary, but all the thousands of cheap little items which make life easier in the West are either missing, very expensive, or of poor quality. There are almost no soft drinks, for example, and those available taste terrible. I tried a cone of the best ice cream Budapest has to offer; watery and tasteless, it would be completely unsalable in any Western city. In such respects, Budapest in 1958 is comparable to Vienna of about 1949.

The general Hungarian desire for foreign goods sometimes leads to curious consequences. The Germans manufacture a type of necktie made out of plastic instead of fabric. They are very ugly and, in my opinion, no man of taste would ever wear one. In Austria, one of them costs 8 schillings (about 35 cents). A Hungarian soccer player who had been in Germany brought back a dozen, and sold them for 125 forints (\$5) apiece.

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Notes

Whither Iraq?

THE situation in Iraq seems still far from stable and the still continuing wave of arrests of many political and military leaders who had played a prominent role in overthrowing the monarchy suggests that there is still an uneasy equilibrium of various forces who are trying to fill the vacuum left by the overthrow of the former regime. It seems clear that Brigadier Kassem has arrested many Iraqis who look to President Nasser for inspiration. Colonel Aref, who was conspicuously championing the cause of Iraq's merger with the United Arab Republic, has been arrested and there are rumours, though denied by the official sources, that many prominent Baath Socialist and Istiqal leaders who have been demanding close ties with the UAR have been rounded up.

This has naturally left the field open for the communists to consolidate their position rapidly and establish their hold over the political and administrative machinery. In the struggle for power Kassem is relying heavily on the communists, who are skilled in wielding weapon of street crowds. This has helped the communists in entrenching themselves in the state machinery, student organisations and trade unions and there have been clear signs of growing communist influence in Iraqi politics. It is already reported that Iraqi communists and fellow travellers have gained control of the Defence, Press, Propaganda and Judicial departments of the Government and infiltrated even into the office of the Prime Minister. The Iraqi press and radio is now generally following the Russian line in international affairs. Added to this, there have been more and more reports of growing Soviet influence in Iraq. Soviet arms, including tanks and jet fighters, are said to have arrived; Soviet officers are reported to have been seen in Baghdad and elsewhere.

This has set many Arab leaders thinking who are naturally getting worried over the prospects of Iraq being sucked into the Soviet orbit. Cairo's Government-controlled press, in contrast with its earlier restraint, has now begun to display stories of disquiet in Iraq in screaming headlines and has even expressed its apprehension of the growing communist influence there. Many UAR officials, it is reported, are now openly hinting that the U.S. should not support the communist-backed Kassem against Iraqi nationalists who are strongly pro-Nasser. In an interview a fortnight ago, Mr. Saeb Salem, who led the Lebanese revolt against President Chamoun for being too pro-Western, was reported to have said that the growth of communism in Iraq was the "greatest danger in the Arab world"; he even indicated that President Nasser was also of the same opinion. Iraq has thus served to underline the danger inherent in nationalism flirting with communist organisations and countries. The blind anti-West hysteria on which this nationalism

flourishes makes the latter more vulnerable to communist designs.

Exit Serov

THE removal of General Ivan Serov from the office of the Chairman of the Committee of State Security marks another milestone in the history of post-Stalin Russian purges. Serov's removal, however, creates a precedent in the Russian history in more than one sense. He was fortunate in having been highly placed in the Soviet security organisation longer than any other and has been perhaps the first Soviet security chief who had exceptionally good luck in leaving the post without losing his head. His predecessors, Yagoda, Yezhov and Beria were first entrusted with the task of mass production of corpses and afterwards were themselves executed by their successors. In this sense at least, Serov's departure marks another step on the road away from the police State.

How far his dismissal has relevance, if any, to the process of normalisation of the Soviet regime in the post-Stalin era has yet to be seen. The Committee of State Security was set up in April 1954 and after Beria's execution it was placed under the direct supervision of the Council of Ministers in order to deprive the Minister of Interior of exclusive control over the security forces. The powers of the security forces were also cut down and the security police thereafter have remained more or less in the background. Recently it was reported that Khrushchev in his personal conversations with visiting foreign dignitaries had expressed his desire to reduce further the powers of the security police as a step towards further relaxation. How far Serov's departure is connected with that remains to be seen.

As the Security Chief, Serov proved himself as terrible as any of his predecessors. He made mass deportation his speciality. He uprooted populations of whole nations like Baltic countries, the Ukraine, Poland, the Caucasus, the Crimea and finally East Germany. He was also in charge of major security questions throughout East Europe. His prominent role in the brutal suppression of the Hungarian uprising is now a part of the history of that tragic episode. He, in fact, more truly represented the Soviet regime in all its naked brutality than even Khrushchev who, at least uptill now, has proved to be more adept than anyone of his colleagues in the art of serving and surviving in that murderous game of mutual throat-cutting which is euphemistically called politics in a totalitarian dictatorship.

Mao Steps Down

MAO Tse-Tung's decision to relinquish the Chairmanship of the Chinese People's Republic has naturally caused much speculation regarding the motivating factors behind the unexpected move. The official Chinese explanation is that this would allow Mao to set aside more time to concentrate on the more important work of the direction of policies and the

general line of the party and the State without detriment to his leading role. On the face of it at least, the decision does not suggest weakening of Mao's hold over the party and the State as he would still retain the Chairmanship of the party which controls all organs of the State. Thus Mao's withdrawal from his administrative post does not mean any change in the power complex in China.

But this does not answer the question why Mao should choose this particular time to relinquish the post. The answer may provide a clue to the mysteries surrounding the decision. This may be a voluntary decision on Mao's part or it may be an intelligent anticipation of the gathering storm that might have threatened his position. Already the decision has been linked by close students of Chinese affairs with the two reverses which China suffered in the immediate past: the failure to grab Quemoy and Mastu by the war of nerves and trouble the party had to face in the formation of People's Communes. The Chinese Communist Party's resolution, adopted immediately after the acceptance of Mao's resignation, to slow down the pace of the Communes programme is construed by some observers as an indirect criticism of Mao's leadership itself. In the past few weeks there have been frequent reports of revolts and uprisings in many regions of the mainland and especially in many Communes. Though these uprisings have been put down with a firm hand and the situation is still within the

control of the State apparatus, this growing discontent has obviously compelled the party to slow down the pace of the dreadful experiment.

In this connection it may be noted that the news about Mao's impending retirement was first given out by the Kuomintang news agency a few days before it was disclosed by the Chinese authorities to a select few diplomats in Peking. According to the same source, when the Chinese Party's Central Committee met on November 27, Mao is said to have been severely criticised by Central Committee members. The wrangle was apparently prolonged for it was not till December 10 that the decision that he was retiring was taken. This may or may not be true, but the decision can certainly be related to the set-back on the communes front.

The Chinese communes do bear the trade-mark of Mao's own thinking and they are in a way true to the pattern originally laid down by Marx a century ago in his Communist Manifesto. But the Chinese experiment has staggered the imagination even of Moscow leaders who are studiously reticent about this monstrous programme. It was even reported that Khrushchev described the Chinese system as being "actually reactionary" in his conversations with the U.S. Senator Humphrey. This clearly shows how even Moscow has been appalled by Peking's frightening leap forward towards the communist utopia.

QUEST

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Single copy: Re. 1/-.

Annual Rs. 12/-

For members of the I.C.C.F. Rs. 10/-

West Bengal—Problems And Prospects

by K. K. Sinha

THE General Elections concluded in early 1957 indicated that the Congress has consolidated its position in the rural areas, and even in areas where the leftists expected to return their candidates the Congress won some seats.

But in the city of Calcutta, suburban towns and refugee areas the leftists secured a swing in their favour and the Congress was badly mauled—rather seriously weakened. The Leftists increased their total strength in the State from 94 before 1957 to 100 in a house of 252 after the elections, the Communists' increase being more substantial, both politically and numerically (from 28 to 46).

This pattern generally remains, although attempts by each side are being made to encroach upon the influence of the other.

In West Bengal we have the category "Leftists" as against the Congress. Before 1957 it was an alliance of several parties more or less on equal footing. The elections indicated that the CPI has become the dominating party managing the alliance, the other parties tending to become satellites round the CPI as it were.

This was the position at the end of the elections.

All the parties have to operate on the background of some major problems of the people. The refugee problem is one of the difficult headaches. Food and high cost of living is another. Unemployment is a serious menace. The general drift towards Calcutta and suburban towns is aggravating the already acute sanitation and housing problems. There is a growing sense of the Bengalees being cornered and pushed out by the rest of India and has a cumulative effect on the political and social scene, sensitive as the Bengalee is. The outlook is becoming more and more provincial, embittered and aggressively explosive and destructive.

The Congress stability in the districts is based on the nationalist record and its far-flung organisational apparatus, on the inadequacy of political workers belonging to opposition groups and due to a lassitude among the rural folks regarding general political issues. The Congress is also helped by its being in office and thus being able to control strategic points of vantage such as representation on the regional road transport agency, issuing of permits for various commodities and distribution of relief funds. The Congress administration and the Party organisation had systematically laid stress on welfare and educational activities in the districts in order to consolidate its hold, and in doing so it neglected the other areas.

The elections indicated the weakness of the Congress in catching the eye of Calcutta's middle-class and the industrial working-class. Its labour wing had not developed any character and integrity in the eyes of the industrial workers. Its ideological work was severely neglected. It was on the whole on the defensive and even conspicuous by absence in the political life of the city. Within the Party, factious

attitude rather than the political atmosphere prevails. Congress membership has no particular significance. It has become a managerial organisation.

The Leftists are united by a tradition of anti-Congressism, anti-authority attitude, a craving for mass agitation inviting police repression, a peculiar sense of satisfaction by the creation of civic disorganisation. Members of various political groups which may be competing with each other are drawn towards an unconscious alliance by this tradition without coolly calculating the future that such an alliance may imply in terms of the strength of the relation of forces between the various groups and parties. This confused state of political flux in the leftist movement is a peculiarity which challenges a clear grasp or definition. The Communist Party has by now come to fully comprehend its role in this leftist movement. It would be a part of this movement in the beginning without creating any suspicion of guiding the latter. Later it would work out a significant place for itself on an equal footing with other groups. Rivalry and friction would appear at this stage. After further working upon the movement by its intensive organisational efficiency, the CPI would in actual fact exercise a political influence dominating the alliance. Later it would begin cautiously dictating the policy of the alliance and even building its unofficial nests in the other component groups. It will play one group against another. When its own position is strong enough, it would not mind if any rival group threatens dissociation. It would build up its own leaders as the leading personalities of the movement. A situation may arise when the CPI will not, for all practical purposes, distinguish between itself and the movement. This will force the other groups to choose to be a complete political satellite (as in China) or be damned as an agent of the reactionaries.

Viewed in the above setting, the Communists came into a politically dominant position in West Bengal after the general election. But the events of the Hungarian Revolution, Nagy's execution, break with Yugoslavia, Kerala discomfitures, Pasternak episode, etc. are having a cumulative effect on the minds of the leftist political workers. They are very slowly realising the implications of *pure leftism*. As a consequence, an ideological, and now an organisational schism are appearing in the movement.

Several movements have been launched since 1957 such as:

- (i) Struggle against Price Increase and Food Crisis (4,000 persons courted arrest)
- (ii) Direct action by the Refugees in regard to rehabilitation of refugees in West Bengal
- (iii) Student's agitation against fee increase (about 1200 students were arrested)
- (iv) Movement by the State Government Employees, and

(v) Tram strike.

The idea behind the launching of these movements which require careful organisational preparations was to consolidate anti-Congress Leftism. But as later agitations indicated, at least the PSP is beginning to realise that in becoming part and parcel of such movements, without simultaneously distinguishing itself from the CPI, it will be lost in the broad stream and the initiative will be completely left to the CPI and even its own following will be difficult to control.

The Communists took a systematic stock of their position after the General Election. They spotted their weakness in the peasantry. They, therefore, set about working in that field. Many of the movements and agitations were launched with the aim of extending their influence and organisation in the rural sector. They have substantially succeeded in this respect at least in opening out new areas and in increasing their membership in the districts. Today their membership stands at about 30,000 compared to about 10,000 in January 1956. In 24 Parganas their membership has increased from 2,000 to 5,000, in Midnapore from 1,000 to 3,000, in Burdwan from 400 to 1500, in Dinajpur from 400 to 1400, in Darjeeling from 600 to 1500, in Calcutta from 2500 to 4000, in Hooghly from 600 to 1500.

The progress in the rural areas has been so spectacular that the Communists are today facing a demand for a greater recognition of the rural leadership in the provincial Party. This suggests that the CPI in Bengal is undergoing an internal transformation. It may be mentioned here that the rural poor agricultural labour, based also on caste and religious considerations, constitutes a very important factor of rural Bengal.

Lately two new tendencies are noticeable in the PSP. One is regarding organisation. Its leadership, although divided in itself, seems to have become aware of the need to stand on its own legs. It has, at least temporarily, decided to keep a distance from the Communists in public movements and it is taking active steps to activate and consolidate its membership in the district units. The leaders are touring and local study camps are being held.

The other tendency is its becoming more politically aware of the Communist danger. The execution of Imre Nagy provoked some of its units to organise public demonstrations against it. The relation between the CPI and the developments in Kerala is having its impact also. The fascination for leftism is slowly fading.

How far these tendencies will be strengthened within the Party is difficult to assess at present. One thing, however, is worth noting, namely, that these tendencies have grown from within and were not initiated from the Centre.

There are several other leftist groups in Bengal which are not unimportant in their own way, such as the RSP, Forward Bloc, Forward Bloc (Marxist), the Socialist Unity Centre etc. They are so 'revolution' conscious that it is difficult to anticipate whether they will seriously make a reappraisal of their ideologies. But it is conceivable that in order to preserve

their organisational ego they may tend to go against the Communists on specific issues. However, in general, they help creation of the leftist environment for the Communists to exploit and consolidate.

In summarising the political situation in West Bengal, it may be said that while Congress holds the organisational control over the province now, its political position is steadily weakening. A climate of instability is slowly emerging as the erosion of the Congress takes place and as the CPI's organisational network extends itself throughout the region. Although the CPI has to face major problems relating to its political alliances in the coming years preceding the next election, it may be in a position to create a generally confused political climate for making the intelligentsia indecisive. If it succeeds in doing this, it should consider its task successful. On the other hand, if the democratically minded political groups and movements generally veer round emphasising the democratic and libertarian aspects of our political life in contrast to the totalitarian pattern, thus isolating the Communists *politically and ideologically*, the danger of creating the pre-conditions for Communists taking over in West Bengal might be averted.

STATISTICAL NOTES

I. Population

West Bengal	..	2,63,02,386 (1951 Census)
Greater Calcutta	..	45,78,071 (1957 Census)

II. Refugees:

In West Bengal (December '57)	..	31.63 lakhs
In Camps	..	2.64 lakhs in 168 Camps
In homes & infirmaries (unattached woman & children, old & infirm)	..	60,000 in Eastern Zone.
Number of people who have received assistance for rehabilitation.	..	28.99 lakhs.

III. Party Position (comparative) in West Bengal:

1957 Election:				1952 Election: Total Seat 248			
Parties	No. of candidates	Seats won	% votes polled		No. of candidates	Seats won	% votes polled
Congress	251	152	46.2		246	154	38.6
C.P.I.	103	46	17.9		87	28	10.3
P.S.P.	67	21	9.8	KMPP	129	15	8.6
Forward Bloc	27	8	4.1	SP	64	—	8.6
-do-(Marxist)	4	2	0.45		49	11	5.1
				FB(B)	32	2	1.4
Janasangh	33	—	1.0		86	9	5.4
Hindu Maha- sabha	37	—	2.2		22	4	2.2
Lok Sevak Sangha	11	1	1.3		8	5	1.4
Independents	315	11	12.6		640	20	22.3

Mao's Short-cut To Communism

by Adam Adil

A RESOLUTION recently adopted by the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party and broadcast by Peking Radio declared that China was going to expand its policy of establishing "communes" until every city and rural area in the nation was brought into the system. The resolution stated "It can be foreseen that in the future Communist Society, the people's commune will remain the basic unit of social structure. . . . In the future, the urban peoples' communes, in a form suited to the specific features of cities, will also become instruments for the transformation of the old cities and construction of the new socialist cities. . . . They (communes) will become the unified organisers of production, exchange and distribution and of the livelihood and wellbeing of the people — social organisations which combine industry, agriculture, trade, education and military affairs and in which government administration and commune management are integrated."

In other words, the whole of Chinese mainland is being converted into a gigantic prison house, controlled and managed by communist party bosses with ruthlessness surpassing even that of Chengiz Khan's hordes. So far only villages were brought into the commune system, hence forward the cities will be subjected to the strait jacket social and economic regimentation.

The general discontent among the Chinese people over the commune system is obvious from the fact that this new form of regimentation has not only deprived the people of all their freedoms, but broken down the traditional Chinese family life, split the husbands and wives into separate dormitories and taken the children away to be brought up by the state without love and care of their parents. If a Chinese loved anything it was his family life—his wife, children and relations. With freedom lost and family broken and regimented into a huge commune system, the Chinaman will be a robot without a soul, without individual preference and choice, without leisure to enjoy, and his life will be reduced to one of no purpose and meaning.

This is the Marxist-Leninist dispensation that once happy, and matter-of-fact Chinese people, under the direction of the Communist Party, are drifting towards. Actually this "Marxist-Leninist" dispensation, euphemistically called "socialist social structure" and "the transition from collective ownership to the ownership of the whole people. . . . the transition from socialist to communist society" is nothing but, what Dr. S. Chandrasekhar, a noted Indian demographer and social scientist, rightly described as new form of colonialism.

The first of the Communes were set up last April in the province of Honan in East-Central China. Since then the formation of the communes has proceeded at

a rapid rate. Actually, these communes are large-scale collectives in which everything is pooled — not only land and farm implements, but factories, schools, nurseries and even housework and meals. They are centres of communal living in which not only the family but the individual is submerged. They are in other words forced collectivisation of all material resources and human beings — peasants, traders, teachers, students, intellectuals, officials, housewives and professional men—an experiment which the Russians had abandoned as impractical in 1933.

According to the official statements, over 120 million households, that is, more than 99 per cent of all the peasant households of various nationalities in China have joined the people's communes. More than 740,000 agricultural producers cooperatives in the country have been compelled to reorganise themselves into over 26,000 peoples' communes. Rural people's communes sometimes has as many as 300,000 members and absorb the whole population of a considerably big geographical area.

As soon as a person "volunteers" to join a commune, he has to turn over to it all his property including home, garden, poultry, plots and heavy tools. Once in the commune, the member ceases to have a regular trade or personal profession; he becomes a all-purpose production unit.

In Honan's pilot Sputnik Commune, 43,000 members are divided into 27 "production corps" and 87 smaller "production battalions." At harvest time, every one is ordered into the fields. In the slack agricultural seasons or in their "spare time" all the manpower (and woman power) is switched to the construction of dams and building of hundreds of smelting furnaces, primitive factories and other works. All the members of the communes are subjected to regular military training and even while not on duty, they are required to move in numbers and not individually, nor according to one's personal choice or discretion. The whole life — both of men and women, young and old — is patterned on military lines. At Chao Yin Commune, accordingly to the *Red Flag* report "assembly bells ring and whistles blow at daybreak. In about a quarter of an hour the peasants line up. At the command of the company, and squad leaders, the teams march to the fields, holding flags. One no longer sees peasants in groups of two or three smoking and going slowly and leisurely to the fields. The desultory living habits of thousands of years are gone forever." Obviously the peasants are not even allowed to chat and joke about among themselves!

Women are "liberated" from all household chores. Squads of workers, male or female, have been assigned to do the house-cleaning. Mending and sewing are done in the cooperative work rooms. Children are tended in the communal nurseries and schools. Meals

are taken in the canteens. All this has released women to go to work. And it is called the "liberation" of women from centuries old "enslavement!" The sole concession made to the womankind is that pregnant women get a month off from work with half pay.

Instead of a share in what they produce, commune members get wages fixed by a ruling committee of party activities. At Sputnik Commune 260 mess halls have been provided for feeding the members with free boiled rice.

For the old folks especially, the Communes are supposed to have established "Happy Homes", but here too the old and the infirm are kept busy with scheduled chores such as feeding the chickens. And at least in one of the communes situated in Kwantung, when the inhabitants of the Happy Homes dies, their bodies are dropped into a chemically treated pool and converted to fertiliser!

As a matter of fact, the Communes have already made inroads into the industrial areas. At Yangchuan coal mines in Shansi province, where more than 28,000 miners and their families live, a commune has been recently formed. The miners and their families have been forced into commune quarters, and according to Peking's *People's Daily* "the head of the mine pit is simultaneously company commander of the militia and head of a row of rooms in the living quarters." Miners' wives and their teen age children have been put to work in 40 new "industrial enterprises" including a cement factory.

In all the communes, husbands and wives can meet in privacy only once a while. The communes have evolved what is called the "Saturday-night system" under which a married woman worker lives in one room of a factory dormitory alone with her husband one Saturday night in a few weeks according to her turn.

Apparently it might appear to some people that in exchange for the loss of individual freedom the members of the commune have the right to conduct their own affairs, albeit communally. But it is not so. The control and the administration of the communes have been taken over by the local government agencies supervised by the communist party functionaries — in Chinese known as the Hsiang government. The members have absolutely no say in the administration of the commune. Matters of policy as well as of details are decided at the top and these cannot be questioned by members even jointly.

The commune-system has been introduced in China with a definite purpose. Firstly, under the ever-vigilant eyes of the communes "activists" the Chinese peasants will no longer be able to evade forced deliveries of crops to the government, and secondly the Chinese people will be harnessed into work in agriculture as well as in industry at the cheapest possible cost. The commune members, besides free boiled rice, get lowest wages, which hardly go to satisfy their other wants, that too, when they satisfy the bosses that they are active sympathisers of the Communist Party. If any one's loyalty to the com-

munist party is under suspicion, he is not only not paid any wages but harassed in umpteen ways.

At present, especially in North West China, communes are in the midst of a mass drive for the production of pig iron and steel in tiny hand-made blast furnaces of a kind developed by the Chinese artisans during the Middle Ages. In desolate northern marshes Mongol and Tartar, women are made to toil and sweat over more than 5000 furnaces which they have built in recent weeks. According to the Chinese newspapers, peasants in Honan, after having already put in a ten-hour a day in field, are made to operate during the nights 440,000 furnaces. The Chinese Communists claim that these operations accounted for 30% Red China's steel production in October.

The Chinese Communists, have, no doubt, brought a sort of uniformity in people's incomes; but they have brought this uniformity — euphemistically called 'equality' — not by raising the standard of living of the poor but by down-grading that of the well-to-do peasants and artisans to the level of the poor. The communes have, thus, led to the distribution of poverty among the Chinese masses instead of creating opportunities for their social and economic betterment. In China today, no one owns anything, not even a living room or kitchen, or cow or hen. Each one is reduced to complete depravity.

The communists hope to complete the 'communes' scheme throughout the country in four to six years. In terms of communist theory and practice, the Chinese leaders claim to be taking a great leap forward in the transition from socialism to communism. It is expected by Mao Tse-tung that if he succeeds in enforcing commune system throughout China he would take a jump ahead of Khrushchev. The communes are, in fact, meant to constitute Mao's short cut to communism.

But will Mao succeed? Already the seething discontent against the commune system is coming to the surface, and there are reports that communists will be ultimately forced by peoples' increasing resentment to give up their fantastic scheme of total regimentation of human and material resources. The human factor in China is, indeed, as unpredictable as anywhere else in the world. Let us hope that the revolt of the unarmed Chinese people against the commune-system will mark the end of Mao and his ruthless hordes.

The Truth About Stalin

BY N. KHRUSHCHEV

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Life In East Germany

The Congress for Cultural Freedom has organised since September last a Centre in West Berlin for the use of refugee intellectuals who are required to run away from East Germany. The following report on the life in East Germany is based on the stories told by the refugee intellectuals who took advantage of the Centre.

THEIR stories, though varied in detail, show a clear pattern of political engulfment of all areas of life in East Germany. It should be emphasized at the outset that none of the refugees who found shelter in the Congress house had left their homes in the East for material reasons. As intellectuals and professional people, they had received high salaries and had generally enjoyed a preferred status. Some had lived in virtual opulence: for example, a professor of music at the Dresden Conservatory, who had his own suburban home, three concert pianos in his house and a library of valuable books and manuscripts.

One of the major reasons for the decision to leave home and material comfort was the pressure exerted upon the children. Starting at a very early age, the children in East Germany are required to join the "pioneers," the R.D.J. ("Free German Youth") or some other "brigade." Refusal to join such organisations means discrimination and prejudice against the children at school.

The refugees at the Congress house said that, in general, school teachers take an objective attitude toward their pupils and judge them by their performance. The teachers, however, are forced by higher authorities to give passing, or even honour, grades to the official youth leaders in their classes even when they neglect their studies. But it was noted that the old-group of competent and objective teachers is slowly disappearing from the schools, and young and professionally unqualified, but politically reliable teachers are taking their place.

Many of the refugees at the Congress house have also told of political pressures which, in different ways, made it impossible or intolerable for them to continue their professional careers.

A veterinarian fled to the West, leaving his wife and daughter behind, when he was threatened with punishment because of his remarks about injustices perpetrated against the remaining peasant proprietor class. The veterinarian had found that these peasants were placed at a serious disadvantage, as against members of the collective farms, with respect to gas and electricity rates and the cost of the necessities of life and of fodder for the animals; his remarks on these discriminatory practices had been reported to the Socialist Unity (Communist) Party. When his wife tried to send his typewriter to him in West Germany, she was arrested for smuggling and sentenced to six months in jail. The doctor, informed that his wife would be freed upon his return to East Germany, went back to the Soviet zone; his wife was released, and this time the entire family escaped to West Berlin.

One pattern which has emerged from the stories told by guests at the house is the attempt to embarrass the

politically unaffiliated by imposing upon them duties which they feel they cannot accept. A lawyer was asked to organise his city block for forthcoming elections. Another lawyer was told that his office would be used as a secret police headquarters, but that he would not be personally involved in police activities. Since his experience with Nazi practice had taught him that police use of his office would soon involve him actively in police activities, he left East Germany and abandoned a flourishing law practice.

The head of a hospital dermatology department had irritated the authorities by declaring that materialism could not furnish an answer to the mystery of life. For half a year, this physician was assailed at all hours, nearly daily, with telephone calls which were never answered. He was forced to share the evening courses which he taught with a Party appointee who was unqualified in the subject. The dermatologist finally decided to leave East Germany when he was ordered to head a communist party electoral propaganda committee.

A protestant clergyman suffered a severe conflict of conscience, not because of the discrimination and vituperation to which he was exposed in his community, but because those who stood by him, or even had any contact with him, were publicly vilified and denounced. Before the parson left East Germany, he resigned from his ministry to return to his former profession as a high-school teacher; and this is the career he hopes to pursue in West Germany.

A university professor of gynecology was told that his Catholic faith disqualified him from being a good professor and that he was to be transferred to the military College at Greifswald. He chose to leave his home and a medical practice which, in any case, he was in danger of losing.

The director of an important art museum was accused of neglecting the teachings of dialectical materialism in his writings. As proof of the charge, the authorities cited a passage in his biography of Tilman-Riemenschneider, a German sculptor of the late Middle Ages: "During the peasant war, Riemenschneider sided with the rebellious peasants." The museum director was told that the use of the word "rebellious" placed the peasants in an unfavourable light and that he should have described them as "revolutionary". On another occasion, he was criticised for failing to praise, in a publication designed for Western consumption, the generosity of the Soviet Union for returning art treasures which they "had saved during the war from certain destruction". Since he knew, as everyone else did, that the Soviets had carried off the art treasures a year after the end of the

(Continued on page 10)

WEEKEND IN BUDAPEST—Continued from page 2

Many in the West assume that the economies of the various satellite nations are integrated and coordinated, and that economically there is a single Soviet bloc. In reality, the individual Communist countries differ widely. Certain goods which are available very cheaply and in huge quantities in one country cannot be bought in another, or else must be had at high prices in the black market. The fantastic price differences between the different countries are used to make money by people who have the opportunity to travel from one country to another.

Officially, one Russian ruble equals one Czech crown equals one Hungarian forint. But a kilogram of coffee costs 38 rubles in Russia and 400 forints in Hungary, a kilogram of pepper 40 rubles and 600 forints, a vacuum cleaner 2,500 rubles and 1,500 forints. If you buy a cheap watch in Hungary for 450 forints, you can sell it for 400 crowns in Czechoslovakia. For the 400 crowns, you can buy 6 shirts made of silon (Czech nylon)—for which you can get 1,500 forints in Hungary. If you buy 100 handkerchiefs with your 400 Czech crowns, you can get as much as 1,600 to 1,800 forints for them in Hungary. The Czechs, on the other hand, buy pullovers, wine, salami and furs in Budapest.

For the average Hungarian to go to another Communist country is quite difficult. Only one member of a married couple, not both, can get a travel permit to East Germany (from which one can get to West Berlin and freedom). But an East German camera sells for three times as much in Budapest as it costs in East Berlin.

Even within Hungary travel is not free. Permission to visit the border region near Austria is granted only on approved business or by invitation of a relative living there (who assumes responsibility for your return). The border itself is heavily guarded; there are watchtowers with search-lights, machine guns, barbed wire and minefields.

How do the Hungarians feel two years after "the events"? (The Communists only use the term "counter-revolution," the term "revolution" is dangerous, so the average Hungarian refers to "the events.") There is a feeling of despair, and a deep disappointment in the West, which failed to help the Hungarians after having aroused much hope that it would. All explanations of why the West was unable to offer effective aid are rejected.

There is a general feeling of helplessness. The ordinary Hungarian must accept without grumbling what the authorities order. Thus, after the execution of Imre Nagy and Pal Maleter, everyone was deeply shocked, but nobody discussed it. If a worker's wages are reduced, he can only be silent and adjust. My friend Laszlo, for example, had a comparatively well-paid job with a monthly income of 2,200 forints (about \$88). This consisted of a basic salary of 1,600 forints and bonuses up to a maximum of 600. Suddenly, this

summer, Laszlo had to sign a circular which cut the maximum bonus to 250 forints. This meant a 16 per cent wage cut for him. Strikes are impossible, so Laszlo is trying to make extra money on the black market.

Uncertainty as to the whims of the rulers is reflected in the fact that nobody tries to save money. Why put money in the bank? It may be worthless next week if the Government devalues it or confiscates it. Thus, every forint is spent as fast as possible; the average citizen does not plan even a week ahead. The Government, too, is spending in the same manner, and Soviet aid is running out.

Walking through the main streets where the revolutionary fighting was most violent, the only reminder you can see now are freshly-planted trees next to the old, thick ones. The Government has ordered all the houses rebuilt exactly as they were before—even the ugliest old houses with all their Hapsburg-era ornaments and decorations. But on the side streets there are still battered houses which show the impact of hundreds of projectiles.

Leaving Hungary Sunday night, your fellow-tourists have been taciturn and pensive. But, when the bus crosses the frontier into Austria, they become eloquent in their denunciations of the Communist dictatorship which suppresses their friends and relatives. A weekend in Budapest is an impressive reminder of the meaning of freedom.

—Reproduced from *New Leader*

LIFE IN EAST GERMANY—Continued from page 9

war, he did not insert the laudatory passage in his text. As in similar cases recounted at the Congress house, the museum director was caught in a net of increasingly tight controls; he remained nominally the head of his museum but he gradually lost effective control over it as he was surrounded by party officials who impeded his work. In cases of this kind, the refugees said, department heads were usually given contractual guarantees of the right to appoint their own assistants, but these guarantees were increasingly being disregarded.

The guests at the Congress house, once they begin to move about in West Berlin, have been struck by the fact that the people in shops, restaurants and even in the transit camps, where the staff is burdened by an enormous work load, are still in the habit of saying 'please' and 'thank you' words that have disappeared from the vocabulary of Communist officialdom. On the other hand, the refugee intellectuals have not been particularly eager to go out in the evening to the theater or cinema. They are generally content to stay home reading, looking at the television and getting over the shock of emigration.

Although some of the guests still seem a bit dazed by their good fortune, the community at the Congress house is a happy one.

Visitors To India

Three distinguished foreigners, Mr. Frode Jakobson, Prof. Sidney Hook and Mr. Arthur Koestler came to India in the month of December. The first to arrive was Mr. Frode Jakobson.

Mr. Jakobson arrived in Calcutta on November 28 and left for Karachi from New Delhi on December 26.

In Calcutta he stayed for two days. During this short stay he met Dr. B. C. Roy, the Chief Minister of West Bengal. The Radical Humanist group accorded him a reception where he explained the working of Scandinavian democracy. Mr. Jakobson gave a very thought provoking lecture under the auspices of the Ramkrishna Mission Institute of Culture on the subject 'Communism and the Intellectual.' Prof. Nirmal Bhattacharya was in the chair. One more reception was given to him by the Institute of Political and Social Studies at Freedom House.

Mr. Jakobson went to Madras on 5th December, after a four day visit to Colombo. In Madras he met prominent writers and trade unionists. The fishermen community gave him a reception where he spoke on the High Economic Equality which existed in his country. Mr. Jakobson also met a mixed gathering of businessmen, political workers and journalists where he answered a number of questions about his country and the European situation. The local PSP arranged a public lecture.

From Madras Mr. Jakobson went to Kerala, where he stayed for four days. He met Mr. E.M.S. Namboodiripad, the Chief Minister. He also met prominent citizens of Trivandrum and had occasions to discuss with them the political situation in the state.

Mr. Jakobson arrived in Bombay on the evening of 10th December. He met the Press in the ICCF office on 11th December. On December 12, Mr. Jakobson spoke on "Socialism and Ethics" under the auspices of the Indian Committee; Mr. H. R. Pardivala was in the chair.

Mr. Jakobson was in Poona for two days. In the evening of the 15th, he addressed a meeting convened under the joint auspices of the Poona Group of the Indian Committee and the local branch of the Indian Council of World Affairs. On the 16th, Mr. Jakobson visited a Community Development Project and also saw some villages lying in the vicinity of Poona City. In the evening he gave a talk under the auspices of the Gokhale Institute of Economics and Politics.

Mr. Jakobson was in Delhi for about a week. He met the Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru on the morning of 19th December. He also met prominent politicians and intellectuals of the capital.

Prof. Sidney Hook, the Head of the Department of Philosophy and Political Science of the New York University arrived in Calcutta on December 1 after a successful tour of Japan, Burma and Phillipines. Prof. Hook was accompanied by his wife. They had a busy programme in Calcutta. He delivered a lecture on "Dialectical Materialism" at St. Xavier's College. A reception was accorded to him by the Radical Hu-

manists, where he spoke feelingly about the late Mr. M. N. Roy. At the Indian Academy of Philosophy, Prof. Hook gave a talk on "Philosophy of John Dewey," Dr. R. B. Das presided. At the Jadhapur University, Prof. Hook spoke again on "Dialectical Materialism." Dr. Ashim Dutta, Dean of the faculty of Arts, presided. At Ramkrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Prof. Hook spoke on "Science and Human Wisdom." To a philosophical group, *Darshan Chakra*, Prof. Hook spoke on "Freedom and Responsibility." The Calcutta Group of the Indian Committee, accorded him a reception at Freedom House, where he spoke on "The Vocation of Intellectuals."

From Calcutta, Prof. Hook proceeded to Banares, Lucknow and then to New Delhi. In Banares, he addressed a meeting of intellectuals. In Lucknow he delivered two lectures under the auspices of the Lucknow University. In New Delhi, the Asian Office of the Congress for Cultural Freedom accorded him a big reception. A number of other meetings and receptions were also arranged.

On the 22nd, he delivered under the auspices of the Indian Committee a public lecture at Resham Bhavan Hall on "The Spiritual Crisis of Our Time;" Mr. A. D. Gorwala presided. The University of Bombay invited Prof. Hook to speak on "The Meaning of Democracy" on the 23rd evening; Pro. G. D. Parikh, the Rector presided. The Press Guild of Bombay accorded him a reception on December 24th. At the Gandhi Smarak Nidhi, Prof. Hook spoke on "Freedom and Responsibility" on the evening of 25th December. On the 26th he met the Economists Group at the Reserve Bank of India and spoke on "Philosophical Basis of Modern Economies."

Prof. Hook attended as a distinguished guest the annual session of the Indian Philosophical Congress held in Ahmedabad. He also delivered a lecture under the auspices of the Marathwada University at Aurangabad. Prof. Hook will be in India until January 10. He is scheduled to visit Bangalore, Madras and Poona. In Poona he will deliver two lectures under the auspices of Poona University.

Mr. Arthur Koestler arrived in Bombay on December 30. He will be in Bombay until January 8th. Thereafter he will visit Madras, Trivandrum, New Delhi and Calcutta.

The programme that has been arranged in Bombay for Mr. Koestler is as follows:

- January 1 – Reception under the auspices of Marathi, Gujarati and Hindi Writers' organisations.
- January 6 – Lecture under the auspices of the PEN All-India Centre.
- January 7 – Reception by the Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom and the Indian Council of World Affairs.
- January 8 – Lecture under the auspices of the Bombay University.

With Many Voices

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

Ironically enough, the threat to our democracy comes not from bullets but the ballot—the threat of a communist dictatorship installing itself through constitutional means.

—D.R. Mankekar, *Indian Express*, December 10.

Socialism today stands as much in need of corrective as capitalism did in the last century.

—*Indian Express*, December 3.

The only Indian news which appears in Chinese newspapers is about Kerala.

—Dr. S. Chandrasekhar, *Statesman*, December 25.

Mr. V. K. Krishna Menon is an orphan of Indian politics, who has no friends in the party and very few within the Cabinet, thanks to his genius to make enemies and scare away people.

—D. R. Mankekar, *Indian Express*, December 3.

The fortunes of Mr. Krishna Menon are as avidly studied in the communist countries as his misfortunes in the Western world.

—Dr. K. Shridharani, *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, December 22.

China has plenty of older men who speak good English. But they are never employed as interpreters.

—Gerald Clark, *Bombay Chronicle*, December 16.

China is like one big zoo in which the animal wants of the human being are looked after. Or she is like one huge beehive in which there are no drones, but there are still some queen bees.

—Dr. S. Chandrasekhar, *Times of India*, December 18.

Nehru is Democracy's Tito.

—Dr. K. Shridharani, *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, December 22.

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In the past decade the Middle East has seen a long struggle between Arab nationalism and the West; now the struggle is between Arab nationalism and the Communist East, and the battleground for the moment is Iraq.

—Michael Adams, *The Manchester Guardian Weekly*, December 25.

The tremendous lack of individual freedom and liberty can be characterised as a new colonialism. This is the greatest tragedy of modern China.

—S. Chandrasekhar, *Times of India*, December 18.

Five years from now, some Sunday morning, our scientists will regretfully have to report that the missile we aimed at Jupiter has fallen short and is shamefacedly parading round Mars.

—*New York Times*, December 9.

Europe is the continent of yesterday. Africa is the continent of tomorrow.

—Tom Mboya, *The Economist*, London, December 20.

Do not let us also forget that colonialism and imperialism may come to us yet in different guise, not necessarily from Europe.

—Prime Minister Nkrumah of Ghana, *New York Times*, December 10.

I visited four communes in China, but I never saw a face which showed happiness.

—Dr. Chandrasekhar, *Times of India*, December 18.

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