

Mr. Dhavan's Imperfect World

A. G. Mulgaokar

PHILOSOPHERS have always maintained that this is an imperfect world. Others who do not have either the courage or the honour to belong to that fraternity have largely agreed. Of course, as in most matters there is also in this a small minority which differs and maintains to the contrary. The hero of this article, Mr. Dhavan, naturally belongs to the majority. On the celebrated occasion, the recent swearing-in ceremony of the Chief Justice of the Calcutta High Court, Mr. Dhavan let himself go to lecture to those assembled to witness this purely formal occasion, how unsatisfactory were the conditions prevailing in the legal and judicial world in India. He seemed to forget the most elementary principle that such formal occasions are never to be utilised for either lecturing those assembled or the world at large on their deficiencies in any sphere. It shows a complete want of good manners in a man holding what is still regarded as a position both of responsibility and honour.

Since Cervantes wrote his posthumous bestseller the world has always loved its *Don Quixotes* tilting at windmills. Doubtless, there are a good many things in the present world and definitely in the legal world which can bear looking into and perhaps some change. But, Mr. Dhavan certainly forgot both his position as Governor and as responsible Head of the administration in Bengal when he attacked the judiciary, because after all when the Head of a State is so totally in disagreement with the conditions either in the judicial or in the administrative field it is his plain and simple duty to forthwith resign and conduct whatever propaganda in favour of his own personal views he desires as a private citizen. A Governor is also a citizen of this, our India, but as an official, during his term of office he should remember his mouth is shut; though this is not to say that he is not permitted or debarred from making private and confidential representations to those who

are in a position to remedy the, what he considers, deplorable conditions in the judicial world. A Governor of a State under the Indian Constitution has normally a dual role. In the first place he is the formal and titular Head of the government of the State and in the second place he represents the President of India whose nominee he is in the discharge of certain functions. When a State, however, comes under the President's rule the former role of the Governor as the titular head of the government ceases and he becomes in effect only the agent of the President. It is, of course, understood that there is no interference in the day to day administration which a Governor then conducts with the help of his Advisers. But, he is, by law bound to follow whatever directives are sent to him by the President on the advice of the Union Ministry. Wherein, therefore, is it the duty or the responsibility of a Governor to critically express himself about the judiciary? In fact, it is a well recognised principle that those who occupy (or have occupied) a responsible official position should not do anything which may lessen the confidence of the public at large in the judiciary. But, Mr. Dhavan gives himself away when he tells his listeners "by contrast, in the Soviet Union the test of a great lawyer is not the size of his income but his ability, integrity and capacity for social service". So we have the clue both to Mr. Dhavan's thinking and his purposeful propaganda. We do not know if Mr. Dhavan has visited the Soviet Union either as a tourist, or what would be more appropriate in his case, as an honoured guest, and whether he has had opportunities of ascertaining the actual conditions of life and particularly the conditions under which the legal fraternity of the Soviet Union performs its duties with ability and integrity. It is possible that if he did go there like all foreign visitors (even from the topmost echelon) he was taken on a conducted tour and shown what his Soviet hosts wanted him to see and told what they wanted him to be told.

In any case we have a far greater authority on Soviet ideology and its institutions telling us what the role of the judges in the Soviet Union is. Here is what Krylenko says about the exact place of the judges in the Soviet set-up: "Krylenko, the Commissar for Justice in Russia, expressed what Malcolm Muggeridge described as 'a materialist interpretation of the Christian doctrine of Original Sin', when he said: 'in the specific nature of their function there is no difference between the Soviet Court of Justice and the OGPU ... Every

judge must keep himself well informed on questions of State policy, and remember that his judicial decisions in particular cases are intended to promote the prevailing policy of the ruling class and nothing else."

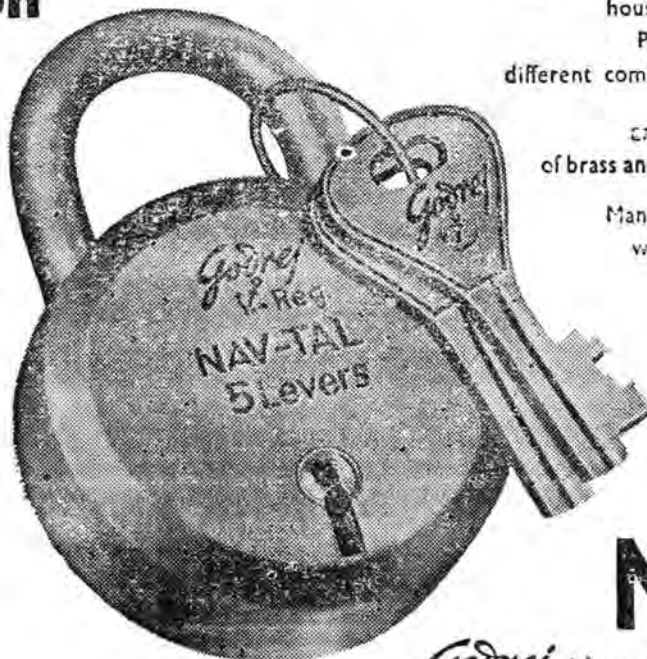
Let Mr. Dhavan ponder over what Krylenko has said and declare publicly whether he agrees with what he says and whether he wants the superior judges in India to be reduced to the role mentioned. For better or worse the Indian Constitution has chosen to give the judges and particularly the superior judges a completely independent role knowing full well that in a democratic constitution the role of the judiciary is most important and fundamental to the Constitution itself. In fact, an independent judiciary is the first corner stone of any democratic constitution. Take that away and the whole edifice will crumble in no time. Mr. Dhavan, doubtless, has some ideological opinions but he demeans the position which he occupies, that of Governor, when he talked in the manner he did. As the *Times of India* pointed out "All that is required of a Governor at such functions is to pronounce the formula laid down for inducting the Chief Justice into office. Any attempt to appropriate a larger role is bound

to attract adverse notice as publicity-hunting of a most undesirable kind."

Bengal has always been a very fortunate State in the choice of its Governors, at any rate until the arrival of Mr. Dhavan. Some very illustrious names like Warren Hastings may be found among them. Even towards the end there was Casey from Australia, now Lord Casey of the English peerage, a highly experienced administrator and a consummate diplomat in addition; surely, he would never have let himself go in the manner in which Mr. Dhavan did, utilise the swearing in occasion for the purpose of Soviet propaganda. Then there was Mr. Burroughs the last of them a railwayman from the railyard of Euston, who proudly pointed out on a suitable occasion how unlike his predecessors who came from the shooting and hunting fraternity he came from the shunting and hooting crowd.

It is Governors like Mr. Dhavan and their antics which are the strongest argument for the abolition of this useful but largely decorative office. It is even stronger that if the non-controversial aspect of the office is taken away then no justification remains for its continuance or in any case for the retention of Mr. Dhavan in the office.

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Notes

Two Elections

TWO elections which took place last month, one in Ceylon and the other in Great Britain, have proved again the efficacy and utility of the democratic process. They have enabled the peoples of the two countries to bring about a change in the Government in a peaceful and orderly manner. The change in the two countries is in two different directions. In Ceylon the election has put into power a coalition of leftist and left-inclined parties, while in Great Britain the change has been from the Labour to the Conservative Party. The direction of the change is, however, not very material. What is far more important is the fact of change and the method adopted for bringing it about. In neither case were the people required to go through the self-destructive process of a violent struggle. Democracy provided them the opportunity to bring about the desired change in a peaceful and lawful manner. That, indeed, is the great merit of Democracy over all other forms of government, a merit which deserves to be appreciated and cherished by every society anxious to secure ordered progress.

The elections have a lesson for India. There is in the country an intense desire and keen demand for social change. The desire and the demand are understandable and even laudable, but the impatience that is accompanying them is fraught with grave danger. That impatience of the people is being exploited by persons who are out to destroy Democracy. They are more interested in the destruction of Democracy than in social change. If it is social change that is the objective it can be easily attained through democratic procedures. The road may be long and arduous, but it is the only sure road. Violence and dictatorship hold out the promise of a short-cut, but the short-cut is usually no better than a blind alley. Whatever happens, the people should not, therefore, allow democratic institutions and procedures to be disrupted. As long as they remain in existence there is always hope of progress and social change.

Political Murders

Political murders and other crimes against persons and property are increasing in the country along with the growth of the communist movement. The Naxalite movement that has acquired prominence in the last few months is a particularly obnoxious and vicious form of the communist movement. Left as well as Right Communists may try to dissociate themselves from the Naxalites, but it cannot be denied that they

are the legitimate offsprings of the theory and practice of Communism. Once the communist doctrine of end justifying the means is admitted, everything is justified, including murder, sabotage and treason, provided it is done in pursuance of the end. Nothing will inhibit the commission of those crimes except the fear of detection and punishment or the cautious calculation of likely consequences. It is in this latter that there is a difference of opinion between the Naxalites and other branches of the communist movement.

Political murders and other crimes will stop only when the perpetrators realise that they do not pay, that apart from the punishment that may be inflicted upon the actual criminals there is a revulsion of public feeling against the organisation to which they belong. The police must put down with a strong hand all crimes against person and property whatever the motive behind the crime may be. It is the duty of all those who detest the use of such criminal and ignoble methods for the attainment of social and political ends to help the police in catching hold of the offender. Apart from this, they must also work actively for creating public opinion against parties and organisations which approve of the use of such methods.

The city of Bombay was so long free from the evil of political murders. The recent murder of Mr. Krishna Desai, a communist member of the Maharashtra Legislature and a prominent trade union worker, has given a rude shock to the public life of the city. It is yet to be established that it was a political murder and that the Shiv Sena whom the Communists are accusing had a hand in it. Responsible people must await the result of police enquiries before rushing to conclusions. But political or otherwise, it was a most dastardly murder and deserves vehement condemnation. It is a clear indication of the insecurity that has begun to prevail in the city. It is a blot on the city and all public men and bodies should combine to put an end to it. Freedom cannot survive if public workers have to be in fear of their life and limb.

Trade Unions & Politics

BY V. B. KARNIK

Price: Rs 3.50

Published by

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127, Mahatma Gandhi Road,
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Situation In Indo-China

Adam Adil

THE American intervention in Cambodia has nearly served its purpose, and the American troops would be obviously withdrawn from that country by June end as announced by President Nixon. Not only have most of the North Vietnamese communists been driven out of their sanctuaries in Cambodia but huge stores of communist war supplies have been seized. Although communists in Cambodia are not yet defeated, they are generally crippled and do not constitute such a major danger to Lon Nol government as they did before the American intervention. Although American troops would be withdrawn from Cambodia the remaining job in that country is expected to be completed by South Vietnamese, who, as President Nixon put it, did a "splendid" job there.

Now the United States would naturally concentrate on the withdrawal of its forces from South Vietnam. The withdrawal which was halted from the middle of April, will now be resumed, and according to present schedules 50,000 troops would leave South Vietnam by October 15. Additional 100,000 troops would leave within six months from that date, thus effecting an overall withdrawal of 1,50,000 troops within next ten months. Of course, further withdrawal would naturally depend upon how the communists would behave.

In the midst of these withdrawals, however, the United States would not abdicate its concern at what is happening in Cambodia. It will supply arms and aid and also bomb Red supply routes so that the communist pressure on Cambodia does not rise. It appears that the immediate objective of the United States in Indo-China today is to preserve the neutrality of Cambodia and Laos.

One thing is certain, that America would not be too deeply involved militarily in any other Indo-Chinese country in its fight against communist aggression. The uproar, which its intervention in Cambodia evoked at home is sufficient deterrent to U.S. Government to take further risks in Indo-China, although in his televised report to the nation on June 3 President Nixon described the Cambodian campaign as the "most successful operation of this long and difficult war".

In South Vietnam also, things have considerably improved, although, observers believe that heavy fighting is still ahead. The countryside is increasingly coming under Saigon's control and communist attacks have shown marked decrease. Defections by Red soldiers have become more common now than ever before. Throughout South Vietnam, major roads and feeder-routes are opened, new market-places have sprung up, old schools have reopened and new schools have been started, a number of medical centres have been built

up. The government has also helped more than 3,80,000 refugees to return home including 1,00,000 refugees who have been rehabilitated in Thua Thien Province in Northern South Vietnam.

But against all this improvement, there has been a sharp increase in communist terrorism. In May about a thousand South Vietnamese — mostly pacification officials — were murdered by the Reds. This is too big a figure compared with 417 assassinations in March. In addition to this, President Nguyen Van Thieu has incurred considerable unpopularity with the people. Militant Buddhists, students, and veterans have been demonstrating against Thieu government. Newspapers are generally critical and there is growing opposition to President Thieu in the National Assembly. Yet, Thieu government enjoys a measure of stability and there is no likelihood of its being thrown out by any *coup d'etat*. To ensure the stability of his government further, President Thieu recently ordered general elections in villages and hamlets and has allowed elected officials to have a say in the running of local affairs. More than 10,000 hamlet chiefs and 2,000 village chiefs have received training in "leadership" course at Government sponsored camps. Similarly, the organisation of the Peoples' Self Defence Force — a village militia consisting of two million members — has added to the stability of Thieu government.

Similarly, matters are being cleared up in Laos. The situation there is not as precarious as it was two to three months ago. According to latest reports the Laotian Prime Minister, Prince Souvanna Phouma has made a proposal to the Pathet Lao leader, Prince Souphanouvong that they should meet to prepare the ground for formal discussion among all Laotian parties as a move for a peaceful settlement. Since Prime Minister's proposal is in response to Pathet Lao leader's message in relation to his 5-point formula for peace, it appears that the settlement of the Laotian problem is in sight. This shows that the Communists are now convinced that they cannot take over Laos by force and hence they are now adopting conciliatory policy. However, how far the Communists are sincere in their conciliatory attitude is yet to be seen.

Now that the American troops are being withdrawn from Cambodia immediately and from South Vietnam in the due course, the Communist policy in Indo-China will have to be carefully watched. It is not certain that the communists will appreciate the American intentions for lasting peace in the area. It is also possible that the Communists may exploit the decreasing presence of U.S. in South East Asia and attempt to increase

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Meghalaya: Blueprint Of Hope

Brigadier J. P. Dalvi

THE inauguration of the Autonomous State of Meghalaya (Abode of the Clouds), on 2nd April 1970, was a momentous event and a significant landmark in free India's political history. It was a triumph of reason and non-violence and tribute to our democratic way of life. It was a novel solution to a potentially thorny impasse in a very sensitive border area, of the vulnerable North-Eastern region. If the experiment succeeds it may well point the way to resolving the other outstanding issues such as Telangana, Vidharbha, the Konkan Belt, Jammu, the UP Hill Tracts and Jharkhand. In fact Mr S. K. Bage of the Jharkhand Party has openly demanded an autonomous state on the pattern of Meghalaya, on the floor of the Bihar Assembly. A similar demand for the eight Hill Tracts of Kumaon and Garhwal has been made by the leaders of most hill parties. The future of Meghalaya is therefore of more than passing interest. The country would do well to follow the gestation period of this young State with interest.

Meghalaya was born of a 15-year struggle fought with the weapons of reason, non-violence and goodwill. Opponents of Meghalaya had opposed its creation on the ground that it violated the Constitution, others trotted out the familiar cry of encouraging 'fissiparous tendencies' as if this old cliché had any validity after the creation of Andhra, Gujarat, Haryana and Nagaland. A few questioned the wisdom of creating more 'non-viable' units in the Indian Union but they were quickly silenced by being reminded of Himachal Pradesh, Nagaland and our numerous centrally administered areas, namely Pondicherry, Goa, Manipur and Tripura. The special status of these tiny political units is solely due to extraordinary political factors — factors which applied with equal force to the Hill Areas of Assam.

Let us first trace the history of the political movement which culminated in the happy establishment of Meghalaya. In 1947 Assam had about 47,000 square miles of which about 22,000 square miles were inhabited by the so-called 'hill tribes' of Mongoloid origin, namely, Khasis, Jaintias, Garos, Nagas, Mizos (Lushais), North Cacharis and Mikirs. This political union, based largely on administered convenience, was foredoomed to extinction as the grouping together of peoples of diverse languages and cultures was bound to crack up under the impact of adult franchise and political awakening. The 1956 decision to set up States on a linguistic basis was the mortal blow against a composite State of Assam.

The Constituent Assembly admitted the special and distinctive character of the hill people and this realisation was reflected in the special safeguards provided in the Sixth Schedule — notably the creation of

Autonomous District Councils, which began functioning as early as 1952. Within two years the members expressed their dissatisfaction with the limited powers (mainly local self-government) given to them and in 1954 they demanded a Hill State. This was the beginning of Meghalaya. In 1956 the Khasi National Durbar, the Garo National Council and the United Mizo Freedom Organisation formed themselves into a bigger party called the Eastern India Tribal Union.

Thereafter the problem was dormant although discontent simmered below the surface till 1960 when the Assam Language Bill (1960) provided the detonator to spark off an agitation and rally the hill people. In July 1960 the All Peoples' Hill Leaders Conference (APHLC) was formed to resist the imposition of Assamese and to fight for a separate identity within the Indian Union. When the controversial Bill was passed in October 1960, the APHLC formally decided to fight for an Eastern Frontier State.

The problem had become so intractable that it required the personal intervention of late Mr. Nehru. The Hill people had a steadfast and able champion of their cause in Mr. Nehru. He understood and sympathised with their aspirations, a people whom he described as "a disciplined people often more democratic than most others in India... I have found in the tribal people qualities which I do not find in the people of the plains... without a constitution they have functioned democratically and carried out the decisions made by the elders and representatives without exception. Above all they are a people who sang and danced and tried to enjoy life. They are much better than us in many ways, they are an intelligent and disciplined lot who have democratic customs guiding them. These unsophisticated simple people who have got their own distinctive societies cannot stand the approach of more advanced people, so it is essentially necessary to give them special protection".

Despite his many preoccupations, Mr. Nehru spared time to study the demand of the tribals of the North East with a view to finding a just solution. When he attended the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference in 1960, he visited Scotland to meet with the Secretary of State for Scotland and study how the constitutional and administrative set up worked there. This visit prompted him to consider a similar pattern for the hill areas, since known as the "Scottish Pattern" of autonomy for the hill areas. This was rejected by the APHLC as by this time other political and economic factors had entered the scene; and it was no longer a question of merely preserving the identity and culture of the hill people. They wanted a free hand in determining their own life and future.

In 1963 Mr. Nehru amplified his proposal and tried to clarify the misgiving of the hill leaders, in a written offer called the "Nehru Plan". The plan died with Mr. Nehru, but the germ of his idea grew into the State of Meghalaya. A leading Khasi paper the *Implanter*, in a recent issue, expressed the sentiments of the hill people in these words: "Mr. Nehru would rightly have claimed as the Father of Meghalaya had he been alive today".

The momentum generated by Mr. Nehru's patronage of the hill peoples' case became irresistible. In pursuance of the 'Nehru Plan', Mr. Lal Bahadur Shastri appointed the Pataskar Commission, in 1965, to study the problem anew. But it was too late for patchwork solutions and euphemisms. The old British technique of 'too little, too late' would not work. Nothing short of a separate State would meet the aspirations of the people. It is pertinent to remember that from 1957 onwards the hill people showed their sympathies and desires by returning Hill leaders *en masse* to the Assam Assembly and the District Councils. Indeed the goal of a separate State was invariably the critical electoral issue. Advocates of a composite Assam were given short shrift at the polls. It is thus wrong to classify the hill movement as an attempt by a small Christianised and westernised minority to pursue their own ends; they had the backing of the vast majority.

Predictably the APHLC rejected the Pataskar Formula in May 1966 and decided to launch a mass non-violent Direct Action movement. The hill people had been keen observers of the Indian scene and had

absorbed the lesson that the most just cause would be buried under a heap of reports from commissions, committees and the views of eminent individuals. The only way to move the Government of India was to launch an agitation.

By mid-1966 major events had lent a new and urgent complexion to this thorny problem. Mrs. Indira Gandhi had become Prime Minister after the tragic death of Mr. Shastri at Tashkent, in January 1966.

The Nagas had 'won' separate statehood in 1960. The second shattering event was the armed rebellion of a section of the Mizos who incidentally form the backbone of the Assam Regiment. On the night 28th February-1st March 1966 hostiles raided key centres and armouries. As Commander of the first troops to move into the Mizo Hills to quell the insurrection I had an opportunity to sense the mood of the people and ascertain the reasons which had prompted the extreme elements to take up arms against the State. This story must wait till law and order is finally restored in this troubled district and these normally happy people can resume their old secure ways. But what is common knowledge is that the ruling Mizo Union Party had originally been with the APHLC but had left in 1965 due to lack of response from Delhi and had decided to carry on a lone struggle with the Centre for a separate State for itself. The frustration of the Mizos at Government's dilatory tactics, as they saw it, led to the rise of the Mizo National Front (MNF) which master-minded the cry for a separate State outside the Indian Union, and led the armed rebellion to achieve its aim.

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Parties In India

V. B. Karnik

SINCE 1967 and more particularly after the 1969 split in the Congress Party, there have been such drastic changes in the relation of forces between the various political parties that many assumptions made earlier and inferences drawn from them have become out of date. The Congress Party has ceased to be the dominant party that it was during the first two decades of Independence. An analysis of the political situation based on that assumption may in this new situation, read more like a story of old times rather than as a record of contemporary events. The remark can well apply to the scholarly study* of Angela Burger of the operations of three opposition parties in Uttar Pradesh in the context of the Congress Party functioning as the dominant party.

The author is aware of the change in the situation that took place after she completed her study in 1963-1964. The three parties which she studied and which were at that time "opposition parties" were no longer in that position after the fourth general election of 1967. They had "allied with several others to form the Government". It is another matter that that position did not last long. In about a year the allied parties lost their majority as a result of internal quarrels and some of them again became opposition parties. This shows how since 1967 the political situation has become very fluid and how difficult it is to build any hypotheses and frame any general rules about party-building and party-maintenance.

Mrs. Angela Burger has based her book on a detailed study of the efforts made by three opposition parties, the Jana Sangh, the Praja Socialist Party and the Socialist Party to build up and maintain their organisations in six U.P. Assembly constituencies. The information brought together is very interesting. But that very information shows that the factors which enable an opposition party to attain and retain a "winning position" in a constituency are so many and so varied that no general rule can be evolved which opposition parties can follow with sure hope of success. The factors also change from time to time and many a time new factors emerge which render useless all the previous work that might have been put in for building up a party. The electoral contest then becomes a game of "musical chairs," one party taking the place of another in election after election.

The author has advanced some hypotheses regarding the attitudes of social groups towards the domi-

nant party and parties in opposition. She claims that the evidence collected by her proves their truth. One need not quarrel with that finding, for the hypotheses make such general statements that they can be easily regarded as proved or unproved. However, let us examine a little the first two hypotheses. They are as follows: "(a) A party of national independence (such as Congress) tends to have its leadership frozen in those social groups which were mobilized by the time of independence (b) Leaders of more recently mobilized groups will tend to seek recognition and position in opposition parties".

It is difficult to accept (a) as the whole truth. As a matter of fact the leadership of the Congress has undergone many changes since Independence, particularly at the State and district levels. In many places it has passed into the hands of groups and classes mobilised after Independence and precisely it is in those places that the Congress is stronger than in places where the old leadership has continued. The process was inevitable after what the Congress had done, which the author has described as follows: "The Congress, as the ruling party, has instituted policies which have brought about or encouraged change. By establishing representative government, granting universal adult suffrage, and holding elections it has encouraged a democratization and dispersion of power, thereby increasing the rate of mobilization of various groups and changing their relative power positions. Numbers have become important. Change has been furthered also by various governmental policies, such as abolition of zamindari and restrictions on landholding. By offering special opportunities for education and for employment in government to members of less privileged groups, many of whom formerly were not politically conscious, Congress has encouraged the development of such a consciousness."

It is equally difficult to accept the correctness of (b). Leaders of "more recently mobilised groups" try to secure entry and position in the Congress. It is only when they are rebuffed that they turn to opposition parties. And many a time after spending a little time with the latter some of them eventually land in the Congress. The author is not altogether unaware of this phenomenon. How is it possible then to regard the hypothesis as proved?

Indian political parties present a fascinating phenomenon for study. The study is fascinating because they lack many of the essential features of a political party. A political party is generally an organisation of a class or an interest. Its membership as well as short-term and long-term programmes are fixed, at

* *Opposition in a Dominant-Party System, a Study of the Jana Sangh, the Praja Socialist Party, and the Socialist Party in Uttar Pradesh, India*, — Angela S. Burger, Oxford University Press, Bombay, Rs. 52.

least for a fairly long period of time. Though its sphere of influence may expand or contract from time to time, it has a social base which is more or less of an abiding character. In India this type of a political party, with a fairly permanent social base, is just in the process of growing. The Congress had a large and solid country-wide social base, but it was as a broad national movement and not as a political party. From the time that efforts began to develop it as a political party, fissures started appearing, the latest and the most damaging being the split that took place in the latter half of 1969. It is still an open question if the Congress will develop as a political party of a class or classes or a social group or groups or continue as a broad people's movement.

The opposition parties, particularly the socialist and similar other parties are not sure of their social base. It changes from time to time, being tied to a caste or a community or a powerful individual leader. Castes, communities and individual leaders tend to transfer their loyalty from one party to another as circumstances change. The Communist Party and the Jana Sangh can be regarded as exceptions to some extent. Both are ideological parties with a strong and growing nucleus of committed activists. If they grow and succeed in influencing large sectors of the society, the political situation will change beyond recognition.

There is also a possibility that regional parties may grow instead of one or more national parties. Already

two States, one in the North and the other in the South, are ruled by two regional parties. The contagion may spread as all-India parties are getting more and more fragmented. There is an equal possibility of a breakdown of parliamentary democracy and an end of the multi-party system. Out of the disorders that may overtake the country may emerge the dictatorship of a single party. The party may be a party of the Right or of the Left. The discussion in the book about how an opposition party builds up its strength and electoral support has little relevance to this wide variety of possibilities that may develop in the Seventies.

In a stable democracy political parties play a useful role by providing the people a choice of governors. They also play a similar role in a "multi-party with one party dominant system" that obtained in India until the general elections of 1967. The author has described the role that they play. But does that hold true when the domination of one party is replaced by fierce competition between a variety of parties each trying to drag the society in its own fancied direction? Will they not in that situation bring about political instability and eventually social disintegration? The country may have to face that dire possibility in the years to come. Will it not be more desirable then to think in terms and explore the possibility of politics without parties? The book has not raised or discussed that question. That, however, may turn out to be the main question of the future.



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Letter to the Editor

America's Responsibility

Dear Sir,

It is a sad commentary on modern civilisation that the two great Powers should have a hand in every war on earth. While the Americans assume the Big Brother's role and storm to the "assistance" of countries, like bulls in a china-shop, the Russians are silent in their methods. Whilst everybody is bitterly critical of the "naked aggression" by the U.S. "Goliath" the pernicious and subtle influence of the Kremlin is hardly noticed.

At the outset, it must be realised, that the Soviet Union is a totalitarian dictatorship, where every form of dissent is ruthlessly crushed, every mode of opinion-forming is tightly controlled and the iron curtain of secrecy lies thick over party deliberations. On the other hand, the U.S.A. is a working democracy with the Press, Radio, T.V. and the Congress continuously banging away at the Administration, which itself has to face the electorate every four years.

The American actions in Laos, Vietnam and Cambodia have been consistently and vociferously criticised by the Government of India. On the other hand, the most perfidious forms of brutal Soviet treachery in Hungary, Czechoslovakia and the Middle East have left our Government stuttering and stammering in highly apologetic tones.

We would do well to remember that U.S. involvement anywhere in the world is essentially of a defensive nature. The Americans are deplorably poor fighters on the propaganda front. Whilst the Soviets gradually infiltrate into the economic, social, military and political fabric of newly emergent countries with subterfuges and methods that we in India know so well, the U.S.A. merely pumps in large doses of aid (which is generally received with ingratitude and then mis-utilised). The Americans have not yet learnt that against Communism sportsmanship never pays. They have yet to realise that something more than money is required to mould the minds of the masses.

India ought to know by now that Indo-China is the springboard of communism into the Afro-Asian continents. Japan is the only Asian country which is economically equipped for containing the Chinese Dragon. For wellknown commercial and psychological reasons the Japanese are reluctant to divert their resources into the military sphere. Hence, the U.S. (much against its will) has to undertake the onerous responsibility of endangering its economy and men so

that our lands may prosper and our people sleep in peace. This is not a responsibility which the Americans cherish. It is a duty that is thrust down their throats by their own sense of decency, justice and humanity.

Had it not been for Kennedy's prompt response when China attacked us (where was Khrushchev, then?) India would have been a Communist satellite since 1962. Let us not fool ourselves that we could have fought it out alone.

Friends are not those who proclaim themselves from the roof-tops but those who willingly and silently help you in your time of need.

Bombay,

N. J. TAVARIA

May 18, 1970.

INDO-CHINA—Continued from page 4

their influence. In that case the whole purpose of American withdrawal will be defeated.

What is necessary in such a situation is that Asian nations themselves must become the guardians of peace and freedom in South East Asia. American anxiety for withdrawal is understandable. After all the U.S. cannot afford to sacrifice the cream of its youth forever for the freedom of other countries. At some stage it has to call a halt. The task must be undertaken by Asians for it is the freedom of Asian countries which is at stake.

From this point of view the initiative taken by Indonesia in calling a Conference of Asian countries on Cambodian situation was a move in the right direction. Unfortunately, for fear of communists displeasure this Conference was boycotted by important Asian countries including India. Even the task force appointed by the Jakarta Conference was not properly entertained by New Delhi and other Asian Capitals. With the result a fine opportunity for Asian countries to achieve peace in Asia without the intervention of either Western or Communist countries was lost.

The British Government under Wilson had declared its intention to withdraw its troops east of Suez by 1971. What the present Conservative Government in England would do in this respect is yet to be seen. Probably, they may not stick to the withdrawal schedule. Even if the British troops are not withdrawn, the responsibility of Asia's democratic nations in the maintenance of peace and containment of communism in South East Asia cannot be minimised. Will New Delhi give a bold lead in this direction?

MEGHALAYA—Continued from page 6

The last major factors were the Chinese aggression of 1962 and the Indo-Pak War of September 1965. The Chinese advance to the Assam plains had highlighted the vulnerability of this strategic State. In a moment of panic, in November 1962, we had almost abandoned hope for this corner of India. The Indo-Pak War had clearly demonstrated the strategic importance of the Garo/Khasi/Mizo — Pakistan Border which runs for some 380 Kilometres and gives Pakistan the advantage of interior lines. On our side communications are long and tenuous. A hostile local population was a luxury we could ill afford and had to be avoided at all costs.

The stark political and strategic realities induced a sense of sobriety and urgency in New Delhi's mind. Patently we were not prepared for a third mini-war with our own nationals. Government was made aware of the fact that the political movement was in the hands of moderates. The people were getting restless and there was every chance that extremists would oust the moderates. The implications were ominous and the Mizo Hills provided living evidence of the consequences of procrastination and trying to buy time through commissions and committees.

I served in Assam through those tense days in 1966 and 1967. I witnessed the ugly mood which was fast developing and which rapidly assumed racial overtones.

The Assam Government, under pressure from the plains people, hardened its public views and stood against any further 'vivisection' of the State. The main argument adduced was that the integrity of the State must be preserved at all costs because of the long border with Pakistan and the continuing Sino-Pak threat. The ball was neatly lobbed into the Centre's court. Statesmanship of the highest order was called for.

Mrs. Gandhi first appointed the Nanda Commission to gain time. The Members spent six months looking for a Solomon-like solution which would be acceptable both to the Assam Government and the hill people. Then suddenly in December 1966 Mrs. Gandhi visited Shillong and declared that Assam would be reorganised and the aspirations of the hill people would be met. She promised them 'requisite status and dignity'; and invited the various leaders to Delhi for detailed discussions. Soon after, on 13 January 1967, Government announced the 'federal plan', which would create two equal administrative units.

Preoccupied with the General Elections of February 1967, Mrs. Gandhi had no option but to lie low and re-marshal her forces led by Mr. Y. B. Chavan, who had moved to the Home Ministry in December 1966. Mr. Chavan had a wider grasp of the problem in all its ramifications than most of his colleagues, some of whom had never even visited Assam to see for them-

selves the situation on which they were called upon to give decisions.

In July 1967 Mrs. Gandhi appointed Mr. Ashoka Mehta to head another committee in the hope of narrowing the gap between her proposal and the Assam Government's adamancy. This Committee was a non-starter. The APHLC boycotted it and later rejected its recommendations.

At this stage there appeared to be a major rift in the Union Cabinet over this issue. Mr. Morarji Desai, who had refused office in Mrs. Gandhi's first administration in 1966, had in 1967 accepted the portfolio of Finance and the title of Deputy Prime Minister. Mr. Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed who hails from Assam was the spokesman for the Assam Government's point of view. He was reported to have the support of Mr. Desai, though it was never very clear whether this support was on the basis of maintaining a principle or whether to embarrass Mrs. Gandhi, who was publicly committed to the 13 January 1967 statement. The threat of resignation by two of her senior colleagues stayed Mrs. Gandhi's hand for the second time and delayed a solution by another year. The search for a face-saving formula ended in September 1968 when Government announced on its own the proposal for an Autonomous State for the hill areas. The APHLC had organised two major Direct Action Movements on 9 and 10 September 1968, but it is not clear whether this had anything to do with Government's announcement.

It took another 15 months for the Lok Sabha to pass the Assam Reorganisation (Meghalaya) Act 1969. The Act was passed with rare unanimity and good-will on Christmas Day 1969 — a happy augury for a people who are fifty per cent Christian.

The salient features of the Meghalaya Act are that the parent State of Assam and the Autonomous State of Meghalaya will share a common Governor and capital (Shillong); and common institutions such as the High Court, Public Service Commission and Electricity Board.

Each shall have its own Legislative Assembly and Council of Ministers. In addition, the Hill areas will be represented in the Assam Assembly by 9 members and will be given 'adequate' representation in the Assam Cabinet.

The division of powers is broadly as follows: out of 66 entries in the State List of the Constitution, as many as 61 are included within Meghalaya's powers. Of the remaining five, four are included in the Concurrent List for Assam and Meghalaya. Meghalaya has no jurisdiction over 'public law and order' (except town and village police). This is normally a vital power. The omission is partly in deference to the sensitivity of the Assam Government and partly due to the unusual law and order problem posed by the extensive boundary with Pakistan, with some un-

resolved boundary 'disputes'. There is also the major problem of large-scale infiltration from East Pakistan. A unified authority for the various police forces was perhaps unavoidable, for the time being anyway.

Professor G. G. Swell, a distinguished Hill Leader and the Deputy Speaker of the Lok Sabha, has summed up the legal position as follows: "Except for a few subjects which are of common interest and which will be administered jointly with the parent State of Assam, all subjects in the State List and a number in the Concurrent List, will come within the purview of the Meghalaya Assembly. Thus in its own sphere, the Meghalaya Assembly will be supreme and in the discharge of its functions it is subject to no over-riding power of any other state".

This reorganisation has not been without its critics in the hill areas and its detractors elsewhere. The Hill State Peoples' Democratic Party, a splinter group of the APHLC demands a full-fledged State. This party has been active in both the rural and urban areas, propagating the idea that the APHLC leaders have sold the hill people for the trappings of office. As recently as 3rd of June, the PWD and Education Ministers of Meghalaya were subjected to an ugly and hostile demonstration.

The Meghalaya Government is definitely on trial and it is already evident that its success depends a great deal on the leading personalities of both Assam and Meghalaya. The Governor has perhaps the pivotal role. He has the status of a sort of *pater familias* of Assam, Meghalaya (and of course Nagaland). One can only be grateful that the present incumbent is one of India's outstanding personalities, with the requisite imagination, tact, impartiality and above all, that vital detachment from the pressures of current party politics. Mr. B. K. Nehru came to Assam after a distinguished career as a civil servant and diplomat.

What is needed above all is goodwill. One has already began to hear loose talk about Meghalaya not really being a State. Professional hairsplitters (whose members increase in direct proportion to our political ills) have pointed out that Assam is a unit of the Indian Federation and not Meghalaya. Assam is directly represented in the Lok and Rajya Sabhas and not Meghalaya: Assam can be represented in the Central Cabinet and not Meghalaya.

This sort of talk from men in public life can only do harm and nettle the Meghalayans besides confirming the worst fears of the extremists who want a full-fledged State. There is need for both silence and circumspection. The Assam and Meghalaya Governments have to work many common subjects like water supplies, irrigation, water power and so on.

Meghalaya is but two months old and it would be both premature and churlish to comment adversely on anyone. But it is a fact that sundry preliminary administrative arrangements have got off to a bad start, for

example, accommodation problem in the joint capital and allocation of government servants between the two States. Some Assam Government offices are being shifted to Gauhati and one hears of husband and wife being separated — a human tragedy which could have been avoided by a little pre-planning and foresight.

The Meghalaya Assembly, and therefore the Council of Ministers are men who are in hurry to prove themselves. Pending elections, which I believe are scheduled for November 1970, Meghalaya has started with a provisional Legislative Assembly elected by an electoral college of all the elected members of the District Councils. The APHLC, needless to add, dominates and the Assembly is almost uni-party. This poses two dangers. The first is intra-party fighting, in the absence of a strong opposition. The second is that all the shortcomings, failings and omissions of Government will be laid squarely at the feet of the APHLC. This will strengthen the hands of those who sponsor the demand for a full State.

Fortunately, the Ministers of Meghalaya are a credit to the acumen of the hill people. They are very young by contemporary Indian standards, cosmopolitan in outlook and very modern. All have made their mark in their chosen spheres, however humble, and none are professional politicians, the bane of political life in the rest of India. I have met most of them and the most dominant impression one gathers, is their naturalness and patent sincerity. They do not attempt to wear the mantle of saviours of their peoples; or claim homage for having led their voters out of bondage from the Assamese. Products of a truly egalitarian society they are easily approachable. They have no fads, fancies or phobias.

To end on a light-hearted note, it is good to see Ministers who are well turned out in smart tereyn suits at public functions. They obviously believe in Swadeshi-1970, and not Swadeshi-1930. Welcome the day when it is no longer necessary to wear the uniform of the independence movement, of the 20's and 30's to establish one's patriotism and fitness to rule.

Meghalaya is but the bringing of a hope for a better life for our hill brethren. The quest for a better life does not end with evolving a complicated formula for government, this formula has to be worked. The challenges are formidable. Luckily the hill areas have the resources, the manpower and the will. All they need is the goodwill of Assam, the financial help of the centre and capital from the business community.

For too long now we have neglected the border areas and added to our already considerable military problems. The success of Meghalaya will not only do justice to a segment of India's diverse races, but also help us in our quest for secure borders against the twin threats from Pakistan and China. Failure, or a resumption of the agitation for a full State will be a tragic manifestation of political ineptitude and myopia.

With Many Voices

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

The slightest Chinese gesture from a frown to a smile convulses New Delhi in alarms and excursions.
—*Statesman*, June 9.

The main issue confronting the nation today is whether India will survive as a democracy, or slip into some authoritarian form of government.
—*March of the Nation*, June 13.

The right to property has been recognised as a vital and essential right of man in every country and in every age.
—C. K. Daphtary, *The White Star*, June 1970.

Is Mrs. Gandhi proposing to hand over Bengal to the Communists, perhaps as a preparatory step towards handing over the whole of India?
—*Opinion*, June 9.

Overwhelmingly our foreign policy is keyed up to support the stand taken by Soviet Russia in almost all matters.
—*The Indian Monitor*, June 13.

Step by step, the country has been led to sheer anarchy.
—K. M. Munshi, *Bhavan's Journal*, June 1970.

Whatever the explanation for the External Affairs Ministry's strange antics, it could not more efficiently be cutting itself off from the mainstream of Asian events.
—*Statesman*, June 14.

The small-car and TV are the prime symbols of the middle class Socialism of the New Congress.
—*Thought*, June 6.

When the Americans withdraw they will leave behind a far more disastrous situation for the Cambodians and a ferocious civil war now spreading beyond the borders of Vietnam to the whole of Indo-China.
—*The Observer*, (London), June 14.

The Indira Government had pushed India almost completely into the Soviet camp.
—*Indian Express*, June 19.

Polarisation is neither feasible nor desirable in India.
—*Times of India*, June 19.

Inter-party rivalries in West Bengal have been resulting in acts of barbarism and even gruesome murders.
—*Janata*, June 14.

Talks of isms are at best good for drawing-room conversations and did not, in the least, interest the man on the street.
—B. M. Birla, *Economic Times*, June 19.

India is the egg safe in the Russian basket.
—Frank Moraes, *Indian Express*, June 22.

If by the mere force of numbers a majority should deprive a minority of any clearly written constitutional right, it might in a moral point of view justify revolution; it certainly would if such a right were a vital one.
—Abraham Lincoln quoted in *Swarajya*, June 13.

To secure in Britain freedom of the individual from bureaucratic interference; from enemies without; and from lawlessness within.

—Manifesto of the British Democratic Party quoted in *The Economist*, June 13.

An inch of land is an inch of gold.
—Hanoi slogan quoted in *The Economist*, June 13.

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