

After the Mid-Term Elections

Arvind A. Deshpande

“WHAT is truth?” said the jesting Pilate “and would not wait for an answer!”

A leading Member of Parliament remarked a few months back that the general mood in U.P. and West Bengal then was: “Leave us alone. We don’t want elections and we don’t want politicians.” Again, a correspondent of a leading newspaper reviewing the eve-of-election scene in U.P. a few days back wrote: “the rural electorate seems largely indifferent. It is baffled by the proliferation of parties. . . . Nor is the urban voter any more enthusiastic. He feels that the choice is between “stable misrule” by the Congress and “unstable maladministration” by the coalition” And yet elections were forced upon the people of Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and West Bengal in the fond hope that they would provide an answer to the present political crisis, created by politicians themselves, and show that the 1967 verdict was a temporary aberration. It was not. The electorate has more assertively reiterated the 1967 verdict, making the mid-term election appear almost a wasteful exercise in duplication.

In many respects this election has been a meaningless ritual for two-fifths of our electorate. For never before had so many candidates and so many parties had so little to offer to their voters either by way of programmes or policies. There was almost a total absence of discussion on economic issues or national issues. The Congress kept harping on the theme of “stability” while the opposition parties referred to the Congress “misrule” and complained that they had not been given a fair deal or enough time to prove their worth. The electorate, on the whole, and as in 1967, asserted again that “coalition” and “compromise” was the prescription for our current crisis. One can only hope that this verdict will help decide the course of political strategy of our parties for the coming few years if not a whole decade. If political parties, and especially the ruling party at the Centre, refuse to play the game according to the rules, then we are in

for a spell of dictatorial rule either of the right or the left variety. The impatience of the opposition to end the 20 years’ rule of the Congress is understandable if not pardonable but one could not comprehend the impatience of the Congress to create trouble for governments formed by opposition groups.

The 1967 verdict made it evident that the age of absolute majorities for the Congress had ended and “the multiplier” of which the Indian Institute of Public Opinion talked and which had so far operated on the side of the Congress, had begun to operate on the side of the opposition parties. The Institute which was remarkably successful in predicting the Congress performance at the Centre in 1967, has this time been fairly reliable in the case of Punjab and Bihar but wide off the mark in the case of U.P. and has proved totally wrong in the case of West Bengal.

The 1967 election was the beginning of the end of the Congress Party as a great national party. It will never again become as strong as it was before the 1967 general election. The anticipated return of the people to the Congress at this mid-term poll was only a fond hope. The sooner the Congress prepares to face these realities the better for the country. Even the next general election will not be fought on national issues. The trend is towards regionalism and sub-regionalism. Even those parties who talk of national and secular outlook and have real alternative economic programmes and policies have found it difficult to refer to these issues in this election. Personalities and regional and casteist appeals played a decisive part. Hence, it would probably be more safe and advisable to consider separately the verdict in each of the four States.

Politics in Punjab is based on religion and some times on what happens across the international border. Now that the Sikhs feel that there is no danger posed to the maintenance of their separate religious identity, the religious aspect should not disturb us much. In fact now the party which promises preservation of the separate identity of this virile and protestant religion will get support. The Arya Samajist traditions of the Jan Sangh go well with this and more so with fears and apprehensions about the deeds of our neighbours across the border. Economic programmes and policies were never important in any election in Punjab. The Punjabis, especially the Sikhs, are an enterprising and hardworking people. They made progress even under the alien British rule. So, whatever the complexion of the Government, Punjab will continue to make econo-

mic progress. Even so, it is in the country's interest to strengthen the hands of the ministry under Mr. Gurnam Singh and let it enjoy the full term.

The people of Uttar Pradesh can also hope for peace and consolidation. There is much truth in the U.P. Governor's reported remark that if U.P. failed to catch up with other regions in the economic field during the coming ten years, it would never be able to do so thereafter. The Congress has captured ten seats more this time. The three factors which helped this were the Prime Minister's appeal and the Nehru legend, the Muslim votes and lastly better organisation and resources. The Bharatiya Kranti Dal which aroused many hopes when it was launched, has captured a large number of seats but all at the expense of other opposition parties especially the S.S.P. and Jan Sangh. The S.S.P. has lost its élan completely after Dr. Lohia's death. One wonders if the party will ever regain its strength either here or in Bihar, its only two strongholds in the country. Considering the general preference of the electorate for the moderate and liberal elements in politics, the poor showing of the P.S.P. and the Swatantra Party in U.P. is a bit surprising. The B.K.D. in U.P. is an extension of Mr. Charan Singh's personality. It cannot do much even as an effective opposition party unless it draws up an alternative economic and constructive programme. If it extended a hand of cooperation and joint endeavour to the Swatantra and the P.S.P. and worked on a common liberal programme it would help the democratic process a good deal and provide clean and purposeful political life to the people of the State.

The people of Bihar have, predictably, refused to permit any party or group of parties to rule them. The Congress will have to deal with the situation in a very careful way to prevent continuance of the President's rule. The S.S.P. and the Jan Sangh which emerged in 1967 as political forces to be reckoned with in the State cannot do much now that the electorate has neither accepted them nor rejected them totally. The Congress party at Hyderabad looked with favour on the possible fraternity with "like-minded" parties. Will it decide now in Bihar which are the "like-minded" parties with whom it can form a coalition?

The people of West Bengal have completely upset the calculations of political analysts. In fact they have proved them wrong with a vengeance. They have told in no unmistakable terms that their verdict in 1967 was not an aberration. The Congress here has had a traumatic experience, similar to the experience it had in Tamil Nadu (then Madras) in 1967. While the other three States have rebuked the Communists, the people of Bengal have made up for their loss of face. The United Front itself seems to be surprised at its success. Like Kerala, West Bengal will continue to be a problem State for the Central Government. One can only pray for the people there and hope that the

new Government will not stabilise class conflict and general insecurity. If public services, especially those responsible for maintenance of law and order, become demoralised as a result of the policy of "party men being more equal than others", then the people of Bengal may have to repent for their choice.

To sum up, though the mid-term election results, *prima facie*, and from the following figures prove that the 1967 verdict was not a temporary aberration and that this election has more or less been a duplication, it will have served some purpose if we learned to face realities and drew proper lessons from this costly experiment.

	Punjab	U.P.	Bihar	West Bengal
Congress	38(47)	209(199)	118(128)	55(127)
Jan Sangh	8(9)	49(98)	34(26)	0(1)
S.S.P.	2(1)	33(44)	52(68)	9(7)
Swatantra	1(0)	5(12)	3(3)	0(1)
P.S.P.	1(0)	3(11)	17(18)	5(7)
C.P.I.	3(5)	4(13)	25(24)	30(16)
C.P.I.(M)	2(3)	1(1)	3(4)	80(43)
Akali Dal	43(26)	—	—	—
B.K.D.	—	99	6	—
Bangla Congress	—	—	—	33(34)

(1967 results in brackets)

The lessons briefly are:

1. The Congress must recognise that the age of absolute majorities has ended and "coalition" will be the pattern for the coming decade.
2. Having accepted coalition Governments as the order of the day, no political party should encourage defection especially defection for political prize. The people have rejected defectors in no uncertain way.
3. Every party, consistent with national interests and security, should be allowed to rule if people prefer its rule. It would be fatal hereafter to our democracy to force President's rule or mid-term elections. People might either vote with a vengeance for the wrong kind of people or not vote at all.
4. Every effort should be made to check the growing trend towards regionalism. Those who believe in liberal politics, secularism and national outlook must endeavour to merge or get together or at least agree on a minimum common programme to preserve freedom and consolidate economic progress made so far and agree to disagree on other matters and not take opposition to the point of subversion or mutual destruction and insurrection.

In the coming years all political parties will have to pay greater attention to the prosaic business of efficient government and the containment of subversion. It is time we realised that there are many in our country who are losing interest in the democratic process. It is upto politicians and political parties now whether or not to add to their numbers.

Riots In Bombay

Observer

THERE can be no doubt that Shiv Sena was mainly responsible for the riots that disgraced Bombay from February 8 to 11. Goondas and anti-social elements might have later jumped into the riots and taken advantage of the disturbed conditions. But the spark which set the city ablaze was, on all accounts, ignited by the Shiv Sena and its leader. His violent and inflammatory statements set in train the chain of events which culminated in the riots. The fact that they came to a sudden stop on the fifth day in pursuance of a directive issued by the leader from prison points to the same conclusion. The Shiv Sena cannot claim credit for stopping the riots, as it is doing, and at the same time disclaim responsibility for causing them. Any doubt on that score is now set at rest by a statement later issued by a prominent member of the Sena, Mr. Pramod Navalkar. After referring to the "pent-up feelings of discontent and frustration" prevailing in the city, and how they exploded he admitted: "This time, our agitation provided the spark for such an explosion. In this sense it proved to be the cause. We are sorry for it."

No leader and no organisation, however popular and powerful they may be and whatever the cause they may espouse, can be permitted to bar a Cabinet Minister or any other person from entering the city of Bombay. The Shiv Sena exceeded the bounds of law and democratic behaviour as soon as it declared its resolve to effect that bar. A peaceful demonstration on the occasion of the visit of a person is one thing, but physical action to stop his entry is an entirely different thing. Law and democracy permit one but not the other.

The immediate cause of the riots was the conflict that developed out of Shiv Sena's widely proclaimed intention to stop the entry into the city of the Deputy Prime Minister, Mr. Morarji Desai. The big and unruly crowd that had gathered together at Mahim made it impossible for the police to stop Mr. Desai's car as, it appears, was agreed earlier to receive a representation from the Shiv Sena. That and injuries received by a couple of persons in the collision with the car were immediately seized upon to start a city-wide orgy of riots. According to a Marathi daily, Mr. Thackeray, the leader of the Shiv Sena, said that evening, "Blood has been shed, it must be avenged". He was referring to the injuries caused by the lathis of the police and the collision with Mr. Desai's car.

Once the riots begin, things do not remain in the hands of the leaders or the organisation. They have a logic of their own and any number of extraneous forces enter the scene to take advantage of the situa-

tion. This must have happened on this occasion also. But the surprising fact noted by many is that on this occasion most of the rioters were young boys and many of them came from homes which cannot be regarded as homes of goondas and anti-social elements. There was moreover widespread silent sympathy for and acquiescence with the acts of violence and depredation. The prevailing mood was against the Government and the police.

The police were obviously not equipped to deal with riots of such dimension. They were too few and had moreover to act with great caution. And yet one cannot say that they were lenient. The fact that police bullets took a toll of over fifty lives tells a different tale. Surprisingly enough, not much attention has been paid to this heavy loss of life. People talk about damage to public and private property, which is, no doubt, deplorable, but can be compensated; but the lives that were lost cannot be brought back. There is a smug feeling that all those who were killed were rioters. This is wrong; many of them were innocent victims and something needs to be done to give some solace to their near and dear ones.

The police deserve to be congratulated on the arduous job that they did in curbing the riots. One wonders if the job would not have been done earlier if they had been given the assistance of the military. The mere presence of the military would have acted as a deterrent on the stone-throwing and bus-and-car-burning crowds and the task of the police would have been rendered easier. Even the Home Guards, it appears, were not called out in time. This put a heavy burden upon the police which obviously they found it difficult to shoulder.

To curb a riot in an industrial city like Bombay is always a very difficult task, more particularly, if it enjoys some measure of popular support or acquiescence. In a city there is always a large number of unemployed persons and persons with little to do who find time hanging heavily upon their heads. Young men with plenty of energy but nothing to do also abound in a city. All this is very explosive material which any clever demagogue can easily set aflame. Under normal conditions it remains quiet; but as soon as there is a little breakdown of law and order it erupts into lawlessness and violence and can then hold a city or large portions of it to ransom. This has happened many a time during recent years in American cities; it has happened in some Indian cities and happened in February in the city of Bombay. The police by themselves cannot curb such a citywide phenomenon. If they are to be effective, they must have the support

of political and social leaders and organisations. The rioters can be then isolated from the general public and dealt with effectively.

What role did political and social leaders and organisations play during the four or five days of the riots in Bombay? There may be some honourable exceptions, but by far and large they were silent spectators of the destruction that was taking place, where by their overt and covert acts they did not actually encourage it. Opposition parties like the P.S.P., the S.S.P. and the C.P. can be definitely accused of playing that role. They have now joined the chorus against the Shiv Sena; but when the riots started each one of them was anxious to be on the bandwagon with the Shiv Sena, to take the leadership of the so-called mass outburst. The P.S.P. issued statements accusing the police of highhandedness, demanding judicial inquiry and generally aligning itself with the Shiv Sena and its leader. The S.S.P. as usual went many steps further and declared its intention to break the police orders prohibiting meetings and demonstrations. It is another matter that the police as well as the general public took little notice of this insane activity of the party. Not to be left behind, the C.P. was equally vociferous in its condemnation of the Government and the police. The general feeling amongst these parties was that they must not allow the Shiv Sena to steal the whole show and deny themselves the popularity that they would earn by being with the people in the riots. Now that the riots are suppressed and the popular feeling all over the country is one of aversion rather than of approbation, they are combining to throw stones at the Shiv Sena.

The great Congress party, including its legislators and Corporators, was, as usual, silent and inactive. It was only at the end of those fearful four days that the General Secretary of the B.P.C.C. issued a statement condemning the Shiv Sena and castigating democratic opposition parties for virtually supporting it. The common citizen could, of course, do little, though there are stories of some of them putting up united resistance against the rioters and compelling them to leave the locality in peace. The Government should

really think of devising some machinery by which it will be possible to secure the active support of public-spirited citizens in curbing anti-social activities in an emergency like this. Citizens will welcome such an opportunity to be of help.

The riots have left behind a frightening toll. According to a statement made by the Home Minister in Parliament, 19 police chowkis, 103 milk booths and 20 BEST buses were burnt, 63 hotels and 123 shops were looted, and considerable damage was caused to other types of public and private property; 52 persons lost their lives in police firings and 2 in rioters' stone-throwing and over 300 were injured; about 5000 persons were arrested and a large number of them are still in jails facing prosecution on one charge or the other. And what have they achieved? They have not advanced by a single inch the solution of the border problem between Maharashtra and Mysore which was the objective of the movement that Shiv Sena had planned to organise. They brought a lot of discredit to Maharashtra and the Government of Maharashtra. They have hardened the feelings against Shiv Sena all over the country. Will not the workers and the organisers of the Shiv Sena ponder over these bitter fruits of a ghastly episode and see if it is not necessary to effect a change in its programme and policy?

STATEMENT ABOUT OWNERSHIP AND OTHER PARTICULARS OF *FREEDOM FIRST*

Form IV (See Rule 8)

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. <i>Place of publication</i> | Bombay |
| 2. <i>Periodicity of its publication</i> | Monthly |
| 3. <i>Printer's Name</i>
<i>Nationality</i>
<i>Address</i> | V. B. Karnik
Indian
The Inland Printers,
Gamdevi Road,
Bombay 7. |
| 4. <i>Publisher's Name</i>
<i>Nationality</i>
<i>Address</i> | V. B. Karnik
Indian
127, Mahatma Gandhi Rd.,
Bombay 1. |
| 5. <i>Editor's Name</i>
<i>Nationality</i>
<i>Address</i> | V. B. Karnik
Indian
127, Mahatma Gandhi Rd.,
Bombay 1. |
| 6. <i>Names and addresses of individuals who own the newspaper and partners or shareholders holding more than one per cent of the total capital.</i> | Democratic Research Service
127, Mahatma Gandhi Rd.,
Bombay 1. |

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

1st March, 1969

V. B. KARNIK
Signature of Publisher

Indo-Soviet Relations

HARISH KAPUR
M. R. MASANI
A. D. GORWALA
A. G. NOORANI
M. R. PAI
JAYAPRAKASH NARAYAN

Price: Re 1.

Published by

POPULAR PRAKASHAN
BOMBAY

Hindu—Muslim Problem

V. B. Karnik

THE Hindu-Muslim problem is not a problem between two religions but a problem between two large-sized communities each of which is suspicious and afraid of the other. Religion gets involved in the problem because it is still the most important factor which determines the mental outlook and the way of life of both communities. Semi-religious issues like cow-slaughter or music-before-mosques have from time to time been instrumental in causing communal riots, but the underlying cause has all along been the feeling of insecurity felt by members of one community against those of another community. Communalist leaders of both communities have always done their worst to intensify that feeling.

In the quarrel between the communities the Hindus could easily adopt a seemingly non-communal, progressive and democratic position. For, numbers were on their side and, as democratic institutions developed in the country, they could always be sure of enforcing their will through sheer force of numbers. Muslims on the other hand, being numerically smaller, had all along to plead for special rights and privileges. That gave the leaders of the community, from the very beginning, a bad name and a bad odour. Many observers, otherwise keen and dispassionate, have failed to notice this logic of the situation and condemned most Muslim leaders as communal, selfish, narrow-minded, anti-national and what not.

This difficulty would not have arisen if there had been an integration of the two communities as part and parcel of one common nation. But for a variety of historical and other causes that did not happen during the days of the national movement and the result was the partition of the country and the establishment of Pakistan as a separate Muslim State. That did not happen thereafter and, as things stand at present, it will be quite some time before it will take place. Integration, without either community giving up its religion and religious practices but circumscribing them within well defined narrow limits, is the ideal for which all who desire communal unity will strive. The ideal will not be achieved, however, without a long process of education and enlightenment.

It is customary to place the responsibility for this lack of integration, entirely or mainly, upon the Muslim community and its leaders. No doubt, both must shoulder some responsibility, but it is historically wrong to put the sole or main responsibility upon their shoulders. The struggle against the British Government was in the beginning a struggle for more rights and privileges for the Indian people. If the Indian people were one, there would have been no internal quarrel regarding the sharing of rights and privileges. But they were not one; they were divided

into a number of watertight compartments as castes and communities. A dispute was therefore inevitable. One of the off-shoots of the dispute was the Non-Brahmin movement. It ceased to have much significance in later years as, being numerically the much larger part of the Hindu community, it merged in the national movement and began to dominate it. Another off-shoot was the movement of the untouchables. It assumed a weighty form under the leadership of Dr. Ambedkar. It was conciliated in the end by agreeing to reservation of seats in legislatures and also in services. The third and the most intractable was the movement of the Muslims. It gave many headaches to the national movement. But the national leaders did not decry or denounce it. They regarded the doubts and suspicions of the Muslims as legitimate and were prepared to provide safeguards for the protection of Muslim interests. The safeguards suggested by them did not satisfy the Muslims and the dispute continued, becoming graver as years passed by and the prospect of transfer of power appeared on the horizon. However disagreeable the development, Muslims cannot be blamed if, when power was being transferred, they insisted on having a share in it in order that they may not be at the mercy, as they were afraid they would be, of the majority community.

It is a grave tragedy of the national movement that it did not succeed in allaying the fears and suspicions of the Muslims and had in the end to agree to partition the country. It is a failure as much of the Congress leaders as of the leaders of the Muslim League. Mr. Jinnah and the Muslim League are not alone responsible for the Partition. The Congress and Congress leaders contributed substantially towards it by their actions and policies from 1937 onwards. The monopolistic attitude that the Congress developed, the arrogance and intemperance of many a Congress leader and the essentially Hindu outlook of most of them did not make a mean contribution towards it. The light that Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad has shed in his book *India Wins Freedom* on some of these crucial factors is usually shunned by those who are out to place the whole blame upon the shoulders of the Muslim League.

Mahatma Gandhi was a great advocate of Hindu Muslim unity and for some time in the early Twenties he succeeded in bringing the two communities together on the basis of a fight for the preservation of the Khilafat. That was, indeed, a notable achievement. But in the light of future developments one cannot be too sure if it was not in a real sense a disservice to the national movement and more particularly to the objective of national unity. The propaganda for the Khilafat encouraged religious and

obscurantist tendencies amongst Muslims and made them think of themselves more as Muslims than as Indians. As a consequence Hindus began to think of themselves more as Hindus. The net result, after the suspension of the movement, was greater estrangement between the two communities and outbreak of a series of communal riots in many parts of the country. This unexpected development saddened the Mahatma and towards the end of the Twenties he began to feel that communal unity would follow independence rather than precede it. He is reported to have stated: "the moment the alien wedge is removed, the divided communities are bound to unite". In a paper prepared for a seminar on Gandhi organised by the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Simla and published in the weekly *Mainstream* Mr. Mohibbul Hasan has documented this change which came over the thinking of Mahatma Gandhi. Gandhiji continued to work for communal unity till the very end of his life—he became a martyr to that cause—but that work had little effect upon the political developments in the country.

Gandhiji's participation in the Khilafat agitation brought into the Congress and the national movement a number of religious leaders of the Muslim community, the Maulanas, the Ulemas and the Moulavis. An alliance developed between the Congress and such organisations as the Jamiat Ulema, the Ahrars and others. The latter were plainly religious organisations which emphasised the importance and all-embracing character of religion and were opposed to the modernisation of the Muslim society. Gradually, in the beginning slowly but rapidly at a later date, educated and enlightened sections of the Muslim community drifted away from the Congress. They gathered under the banner of the Muslim League and provided Mr. Jinnah the strength with which he secured Pakistan. It is the tragedy of the Congress and the national movement that they did not succeed in winning and retaining the confidence and loyalty of the enlightened and progressive sections in the Muslim community.

This bitter experience has a lesson. The lesson is that consistent and persistent efforts must be made to win over to the idea of a common nationhood the educated and enlightened sections of the Muslim community. They are the natural leaders of the community and without their cooperation it will not be possible to secure the support of the large masses. A separatist movement is not now possible; if ever it emerges it must be dealt with speedily and decisively as an anti-national activity. But a mere absence of a separatist movement will not guarantee the growth of integration. What is important and essential is to secure the conscious and wholehearted cooperation of the Muslim

community in building up a cosmopolitan and democratic Indian society.

There are some who hold that Muslims will never cooperate in any such endeavour as their religion is expansionist and aggressive and as their sympathies are essentially with Pakistan. A view of this type is expressed in a recent publication^{*} by a young and enthusiastic Muslim writer. In his enthusiasm the writer has made many wild statements highly derogatory to Indian Muslims. A couple of them may be quoted as a sample. At one place he writes: "Indian Muslims still regard themselves as Pakistanis, and they believe that their emancipation has been ensured by the creation of Pakistan. They expect Pakistan to deliver them fully some day." (p. 60) Continuing in the same strain, he writes: "What, according to the Muslims, is the solution to the problem of Muslims in India? It seems that the only solution which occurs to them is the establishment of an Islamic state in India". (p. 61) Towards the end of the book he states: "The Muslim mind is basically expansionist because it dreams of religious expansion." (p. 93) If this is what the Indian Muslims are, as stated by Mr. Dalwai at several places in his short book, then one must agree with the Jan Sangh demand that they must be either thrown out of the country or made to live on sufferance as second class citizens without any rights. Mr. Dalwai has confessed at one place that "Hindus have generally welcomed my views." Why should they not, one may ask, when he provides them with such convenient arguments for their propaganda against the Muslims?

One need not, however, take these effusions of Mr. Dalwai or his general treatment of the Muslim movement in the country seriously. They contain many half-truths and wide generalisations. As such they cannot carry conviction to anybody. His thesis that "Hindu communalism in India has sprung up primarily as a reaction to Muslim communalism" may flatter Hindu communalists but is not based on facts. The concluding plea of the book is, however, sound. It is a plea for the growth of a modern humanist trend amongst Muslims. The writer may, however, note that pouring abuse on a whole community is not the way of encouraging that trend.

The writer as well as Prof. A. B. Shah who has written a thoughtful Foreword to the book exaggerate the breadth and the depth of the effect of the renaissance movement that developed in the Hindu society in the nineteenth century. If the movement had any lasting effect, the caste system, the untouchability, the subjection of women, the superstitious rites and rituals and many other social evils would not have been as rampant as they are today in the Hindu society. Passions based on religious and communal prejudices would not have the influence they have on the Hindu mind and Mahatma Gandhi would not have died at

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^{*} *Muslim Politics in India*, Hamid Dalwai, Nachiketa Publications, Rs. 10/-.

A Communist Tragedy

M. D. Kini

THE tragedy that was enacted in Czechoslovakia by the Soviet Union is a communist tragedy. It is as much a Soviet tragedy as that of the Indian communists, who have approved and applauded the Soviet action. If the Soviet Union is the villain of the piece, the Indian Communists are the accomplices. They are as much responsible for all that happened in those fateful August days as Soviet Russia.

The one redeeming feature of this tragic drama was the condemnation of the Soviet action by the majority of the Communist parties of the world. The biggest Communist parties outside the Soviet bloc such as that of Italy and France came out against Soviet military intervention. This is a new phenomenon in the international Communist movement. These parties opposed Soviet action because the military intervention was a clear violation of the 1960 Moscow Statements of 81 Communist Parties and that of the 1957 Moscow Declaration which proclaimed the sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and mutual non-interference in the affairs of communist States. It is also a violation of the provisions of the Warsaw Treaty. But Indian Communists did not find any such violation in the military action of the Soviet Union. They found their salvation in the age-old and time-honoured policy of "tailism", to put it in the communist jargon. They followed religiously the cue from Moscow.

The world which hailed the Communist Revolution in Russia as the beginning of "a new civilisation" (Webbs) has found it after 40 years to be nothing more than the emergence of "the new class" (Djilas). Even Webbs, if I remember it right, put the question-mark after the title of the second edition of their book. The credit for condemning the Soviet Union for its lack of democracy and liberty should go to Rosa Luxemburg. This warning was not at all heeded by Communists. The liquidation of Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kamanev, Bukharin and others by Stalin was not taken notice of. Nearly 70 per cent of the Central Committee members of CPSU were arrested and shot by Stalin in the late 30s. Thousands of innocent people, members as well as non-members, were killed and murdered. Millions were sent to concentration camps. This was not even believed till it was disclosed by Khrushchev in 1956. Many admirers of Russia were disillusioned during this period. It was in 1949 the book, *God that Failed* appeared. It was written by six famous ex-Communist intellectuals. Then there was the *Naked God* by Howard Fast. But nothing seems to

have impressed our Indian Communists. Even the Hungarian Revolution and the revelation made by Khrushchev about Stalin left no mark on the Indian Communist movement.

One should take heart that at long last there are some intellectual stirrings caused by the Soviet military intervention in Czechoslovakia in the form of a book.* The book written by some of the leading Indian Communist intellectuals, is a severe condemnation of the Soviet act. One of the writers, Mr. K. Damodaran is a Communist member of the Rajya Sabha and a member of the CPI National Council. Another, Mr. Pauly V. Parakal is on the staff of the *New Age*. The book has been banned by the Communist Party for sale in its book shops and the two party members have been asked to explain. Their only crime is that they have quoted chapter and verse from Marx and Lenin to condemn the Soviet action.

"Socialism without full democracy and individual freedom is a sham and a mockery to hide the selfish privileges of a bureaucracy." (pages 26-27) "There can be no democracy without the right to differ. Democracy involves the settlement of differences and conflicts in ideas and policies neither by decree nor by physical liquidation but by open discussion and confrontation. This necessarily means that people must be able to possess full, objective and truthful information about differing views and to openly express their own views without fear or favour. Propagation of onesided versions of events or the suppression of news disliked by those in power in the name of the fear of penetration of bourgeois ideas and return to capitalism shows only that the rulers have no faith in the intelligence and capacity of the people to reach out for truth and justice by their own efforts, without coercion." "Democracy, above all, is the freedom of the individual to criticise and oppose the authority in power." (pages 40-41) These quotations are all from the article of Mr. Damodaran. Are we to believe that the CPI is against democracy and democratic freedom referred to by Mr. K. Damodaran?

Prof. Susobhan Sarkar has quoted the Fundamentals of Marxism-Leninism to condemn intervention: "Socialism proclaims genuine sovereignty and also demands its strict observance. Why? Because the building of socialism is based on the activity of the broad masses — No one can know better the requirements and potentialities of a given socialism than that nation itself; no one can more correctly take into consideration the specific features of its economic, political and cultural development. That is why

**Whither Czechoslovakia*, Essays and Documents on Czechoslovak Crisis, Edited by P. K. Sundaram, Dawn Publishers, New Delhi 5. Rs. 18/-.

(Continued on page 8)

the hands of a Hindu and that dastardly act would not have received the approbation that it did in some Hindu quarters. On the other hand, both disregard and underestimate the significance of the various modernising movements that developed in the Muslim society from time to time. They show that Islam is not the rigid unchanging religion that it is supposed to be. In India the most significant development was the movement that was initiated by Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan in the last quarter of the last century. He not only turned the attention of the Muslims towards modern education by establishing the college at Aligarh which later developed into the Aligarh Muslim University, but he also made a notable attempt "to formulate Islamic doctrine in terms of modern thought". According to him, "the true justification of Islam was its conformity to Nature and the laws of science and that nothing which conflicted with this principle could be regarded as authentically Islamic" (quotations are from *Mohamedanism*, by H. A. R. Gibbs).

Other notable names that can be mentioned are those of Sir Muhammad Iqbal and Sayyid Amir Ali. They were naturally frowned upon by the religious leaders. Mr. Dalwai mentions that in the case of Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan the *ulemas* of Deoband issued a *fatwa* that he was *Kafir*. This was the treatment that they and other liberals received from orthodox Muslims. And on the other hand, the Hindu society

ignored them because the political demands that they put forward were not to its liking. Now that the political struggle has ended, it is desirable to rescue from their writings those truths which may help the modernisation of Indian Muslims. Mr. Dalwai will be more successful in achieving this his proclaimed aim if he turns his attention in that direction instead of indulging in political diatribes against a whole community.

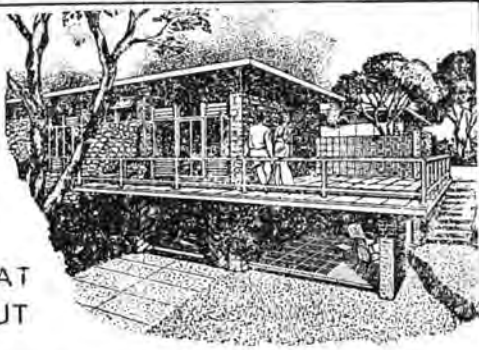
The efforts at modernisation will not, however, succeed unless steps are taken at the same time to look into and satisfy the legitimate demands of the Muslim community. Muslims are entitled to demand a fair share in services, in employment opportunities and in developmental activities. They must be guaranteed safety of person and property which has been threatened many a time during recent years through eruption of communal riots. All these rights have been guaranteed to them by the Constitution, but there is usually a big gap between a declaration and its actual implementation. Ceaseless efforts are necessary to narrow the gap. It is unwise to condemn those efforts of Muslims as communal, parochial, reactionary or anti-national. That is not the way of advancing the cause of national integration. National integration is bound to be a long process and it will succeed only when communities, groups and individuals in the country will gradually realise that they have a full scope for development in the growing democratic and cosmopolitan Indian society.

(Continued from page 7)

any interference from outside, even if dictated by the best of intentions, can prove not only out of place, but even harmful to the building of socialism in a given country." (page 61) He quotes Engels to clinch the issue: "the victorious proletariat can force no blessings upon any foreign nation without undermining its own victory." (page 70).

Mr. Pratap Varma after giving a factual account of the Soviet occupation, ends his article with a moving peroration "Jan Hus was burnt at the stakes by the Church Council in 1415 for his 'heresy' but the warcry of the Warriors of God resounded for decades in the Czech Lands against the oppression of feudalism and religion. The 1848 rebellion of the Czech people was drenched in blood by the Hapsburg monarchy, but their yearning for freedom could not be snuffed out. Julius Fucik perished at the gallows of Hitler fascism, but his song of freedom could not be stilled by the Nazis. Can the Russian might achieve the impossible?" (page 159)

It is good to know that some Indian Communist intellectuals have found that their god is naked and that he has failed. This revolt in the ranks of Communists is the most hopeful thing that has happened in the Communist Party for several years.



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Anatomy Of A Southeast Asian City

Ramu Pandit

CITIES play a vital role in the cultural, political, economic, social and educational life of the western world. They are the nerve centres of cultural activities, experiments in arts, student demonstrations, workers' processions and political agitations of all kinds. The government makes an active effort to promote urban culture, induce people to leave villages and be a part of the large impersonal metropolitan or city life. Villagers also prefer to be urbanised. They do get lost in the urban environment for a while, but soon become an integral part of it and are willing to make necessary readjustments in their way of life rather than go back to the rural areas.

In the developing countries, however, there is still a romantic fascination for rural life. Many social and political leaders eulogise the pleasures of primitive living and do not miss a single opportunity to whip the urban civilization and the evils that are its creation. These leaders are great advocates of decentralization and handicraft industries and consider cities to be the exploiters of rural wealth. They know that small villages are politically not as dangerous as one big city is. Events of great significance and even upheavals in the rural society do not attract as much attention as events in a big city do.

However, increased tempo of industrial development has resulted in a sudden growth of population in the cities and very few cities in the developing world have been able to meet this challenging task of growth-absorption successfully. Mr. McGee* has selected only a few large "primate cities" of Southeast Asia — Kuala Lumpur, Djakarta, Bangkok, Manila, Singapore, Rangoon — and investigated their major features and problems though he has made passing reference to almost all problem cities of Asia including Bombay and Calcutta.

The study does not attempt to build up any constructed model of the typical Southeast Asian city because cultural diversities and widely varying economic and political systems 'inhibit generalization on a regional basis'. Even then there are enough common 'configurations in the history, economic and social structures and roles of the cities of Southeast Asia to permit some general assessment'.

The author who is a lecturer in Geography at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand, spent four years at the University of Malaya and took frequent trips to different countries of Southeast Asia to collect data using Kuala Lumpur as a base. He has

beautifully synthesised the demographic, economic, political, ecological and residential patterns of these cities and presented 56 interesting plates to highlight the contrasts in the ways of living in different parts of the same city, 12 useful Tables and 35 interesting drawings and maps. Out of ten chapters, he has devoted the first one to explaining the broad features of urbanization in the *Third World* which he labels as a pseudo-urbanization as against true urbanization. His contention is that this urbanization is not like the one that occurred in industrialized nations that transformed rural societies into urban ones, but is a direct result of unprecedented growth in population exercising its pressure on the size of the cities. Since the cities are governed by the political *elites* who have adopted Westernised patterns of life, they are not deeply concerned about the conditions of the common man. If necessary capital for industrialization is raised through the taxation of the rural sector, there is the danger of political instability and the slowing down of economic growth. The future of these countries rests, therefore, largely on the ability of the present governments to prevent social and political antagonisms between the city and the countryside emerging.

In chapters 2, 3 and 4, Mr. McGee traces the historical development of the major cities of Southeast Asia. The analysis of Modern Cult cultures appears in chapter 5, and chapters 6, 7, 8 and 9, contain the analysis of the economic, residential and ecological patterns of the Southeast Asian city. He feels that throughout Southeast Asia today the problems of housing the overcrowded populations of the cities are not all being tackled with the energy of the welfare socialism of the Singapore government. He is afraid that the slum dwellers form a potentially dangerous mass of political dynamite and a fertile ground for revolutionary propaganda. The solution does lie in providing adequate housing to alleviate grievances, but it would only prove to be a piecemeal measure in the absence of the solution of the basic problem of unemployment and enlarging the economic base of the city. Moreover, allocation of scarce funds for housing is bound to result in a cut in funds available for industrial development which would not be desirable in view of its adverse effect on employment opportunities in future. The solution, therefore, lies in overall planning rather than the piecemeal engineering of resettlement schemes, says the author. With the help of modern technology which offers a "wider range of opportunities for the region-wide distribution of population", and increasing role of government in the planning process, it is not impossible to guide the

* *The Southeast Asian City* by T. G. McGee, London., G. Bell & Sons, Ltd. 1967, pp. 204. Price 30 sh.

process of urbanization so that better and healthier life becomes possible in the cities of developing countries.

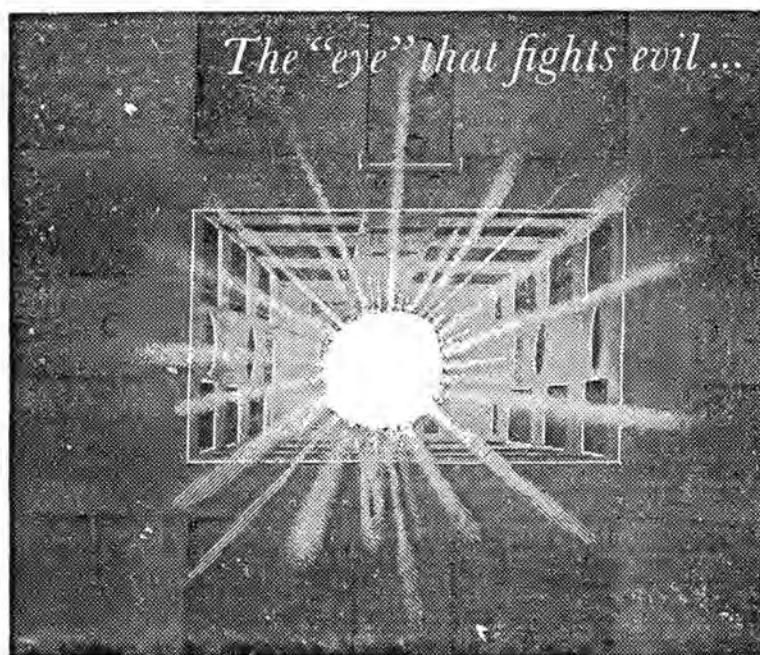
The most illuminating part of the book is its analysis of the future of the Southeast Asian city given only in five pages of the last chapter. Demographic pressure, lack of national consensus either in terms of goals of development or territorial loyalties, government's pre-occupation with 'custodian goals' rather than 'developmental goals' etc. make the Southeastern city undergo a change in a little different way than the western cities underwent. Today the pressures of population growth have turned many cities into refugee camps rather than centres of economic development. The power is centered in the cities and urban-based governments have either ignored or neglected the problems of the countryside. Thus the barrier that existed between urban and rural areas in the colonial period instead of disappearing have strengthened. But geographical unity of the country being paramount, and majority of the people being rural, some way will have to be found to remove these barriers. The city-based elites will have to adhere to a programme of economic development that will not neglect the interests of the rural areas otherwise there will be increased antagonism between the city and the countryside.

Striking a balance between urban and rural development is not so easy as experience in our country

indicates. However, the noteworthy feature of Indian urbanization is that though problems of the cities are as complicated as those of the six Southeast Asian cities that the author analyses, the rural areas are not really neglected. In fact a new class of *rural elite* is gradually coming up which poses a certain threat to the *urban elite* in the public life of our country.

At the end of his book, the author refers to the success of the Chinese experience which has popularised the concept of rural-based revolution. All over Southeast Asia — and in India too—there is a growing realisation of the potential strength of peasantry in overthrowing the city-based government of the elite. So decline in the importance of great metropolitan cities and growth of the rural areas and rural-based elite is not a remote possibility.

The author though primarily a geographer has shown remarkable insight into the problems of economic, political and sociological development. His approach is comprehensive and the contrast between the growth of cities in the West and in Southeast Asia brought out by him is convincing though one may be inclined to challenge some of his views. It would be wonderful if this well-written book inspires some geographer or sociologist in India to analyse the conditions of growth of our cities *vis a vis* Southeast Asia and Western Europe.



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Mr. Nath Pai's Bill

G. A. Abba

THE declared objective of Shri Nath Pai's Bill is to "restore to the Parliament its supremacy". The implication is that the Parliament at one time enjoyed a supreme status and enjoyed various rights, including the right to abridge Fundamental Rights, and the said right having been snatched away by the Supreme Court through its judgment in the Golaknath case, the Bill was necessary to "restore" to the Parliament its original status.

It is claimed that the Fundamental Rights as they stand to-day, specially the right to private property, are hindering the implementation of the socialistic pattern of society and, therefore, it is necessary to enable the Parliament to remove this obstacle.

The truth of the matter is that, firstly, the Fundamental Rights defined in the Indian Constitution are not absolute but subject to reasonable restrictions as laid down in the Constitution itself. The Golaknath decision has not in any way affected the right of Parliament to enact laws which impose reasonable restrictions on those rights. What the Supreme Court decision has done is to deny to Parliament any right to make less fundamental the Fundamental Rights defined in the Constitution. These rights as they are to-day do not stand in the way of socio-economic progress.

As it is, the Constitution gives very few rights to the people. If at all there is need to add to this limited store of fundamental rights and not to further encroach on them.

Secondly, the claim of the sponsors about their concern for the supremacy of the Parliament appears to be quite hollow. Far from asserting the supremacy of the Parliament, they have agreed to water down this supremacy by surrendering a part of it to the States. This they did when the sponsor of the Bill and the Union Law Minister agreed to fetter the supremacy by subjecting Parliament's Constitution Amendment Bill to approval by at least 50% of the States.

Thirdly, it is important to clearly understand once and for all that it is neither the Parliament nor the Supreme Court which are supreme. It is the people who are sovereign and the Constitution which is supreme.

The Law Minister correctly, and if one may say so, candidly admitted that Shri Nath Pai's Bill was only an "enabling Bill." The question is: What will it enable? And the answer is that it will enable the Government of the day to whittle down

the few rights which are guaranteed to the people under the Constitution.

The performance of the Congress Party in the Parliament clearly establishes that as far as it is concerned, it will not use the Bill to establish socialism but only to abridge our human rights and take away our republican liberties.

Authoritarianism ever attempts to make itself respectable by legal phrases about parliamentary supremacy. The drift towards authoritarian rule is plain for all to see. The resort to amendment of the Constitution every time the decision of the Supreme Court ran counter to the policies and decisions of the Government of India of the day speaks volumes in this regard. The attitude and respect of Communists for individual freedoms and liberties is too well known to require elaboration.

The Government support of the Bill arises out of its desire for absolute and unlimited power and not from any solicitude for the poor and much less for property.

The Bill has come as a boon equally to the Communists and the Government. It will obtain for them what is dearest to their hearts without their being branded later by history as the executioners of people's liberties.

The P.S.P. leaders, by trying to snatch away the right of the Supreme Court to interpret the Constitution and act as the watchdog of people's Fundamental Rights, are, knowingly or unknowingly, playing the Communist and Government game.

Shri Nath Pai's Bill will not in any way make the Parliament more supreme than what it is to-day. It will, on the other hand, without a shadow of a doubt, undermine the interests of the people.

Even if the Bill is adopted, it is bound to be challenged before the Supreme Court, which, having already held that the Parliament cannot abridge Fundamental Rights, is certain to strike down the proposed amendment. In these circumstances, quite clearly the attempt to push through the Bill is nothing but an exercise in futility. The precious time of the Parliament should be devoted to more constructive purposes.

All those who value human rights and republican liberties and are opposed to totalitarianism should take a lesson from the way in which the "most democratic constitution in the world", of the Weimar Germany, was subverted in 1933 and take a firm stand against attempts to open the flood gates of totalitarianism.

With Many Voices

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

Events in Czechoslovakia have not shown that Russia is bent on aggression; but they have clearly shown that Russia's rulers are so conscious of their own weakness that they dare not make any political concessions.

—*The Observer*, February 9.

Those who talk loosely of the benefits of a military dictatorship in India could learn something from Ayub.

—Frank Moraes, *Indian Express*, February 10.

There will be no peace as long as President Ayub stays in power. Neither can anyone guarantee that peace and order will prevail should President Ayub agree to step down from office.

—*The Economic Times*, February 20.

All these political parties which are very joyful in having united with CPI-Marxists, after a couple of years, will feel they are the prisoners of that party.

—Home Minister, Y. B. Chavan,
Indian Express, February 20.

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The Jews who were hanged (in Baghdad) were scapegoats and not an atom of proof has been provided to show that they were saboteurs or spies.

—*Swiss Press Review and News Report*,
February 17.

Bengal, India's large industrial complex in Communist hands, Bengal, bordered by East Pakistan, an area already amply infiltrated by Mao's emissaries and supporters, what better fortune could mighty Mao's men have hoped for?

—*Opinion*, February 18.

Comrade Stalin, is back in Soviet official history now. He no longer is a nonperson.

—*U.S. News & World Report*, February 17.

India had practically no friends now. Neither Russia nor America was friendly to India.

—RSS leader M. S. Golwalkar,
Indian Express, February 4.

Reform is a dirty word to the dedicated revolutionary, but it is the better and more civilised course.

—*The Guardian Weekly*, February 6.

Without Israel's implicit threat to the Arabs, Russia could never hope to retain their favour and thus entrench itself along the seaway to Asia.

—*New York Times*, February 9.

But they (CPI, Bangla Congress, Forward Bloc) are prisoners of anti-Congressism and of their own slogans and have no choice but to stick it out.

—*Times of India*, February 22.

Britain could withdraw from east of Suez but not from the situation in Europe on which its security depends.

—British White Paper on Defence