

'A TIRED DOCUMENT FROM TIRED MEN'

S. V. Raju

THE terse Samachar report of a Press Conference in Bombay in the last week of May announcing the scheduled birth of a new party deserved better coverage than it got.

But one should be grateful to the Socialist weekly *Janata* which, in its issue of May 30, 1976, carries the full text of the resolution adopted by the Steering Committee which met in Bombay on May 22 and 23, 1976, and the policy and programme of the new Party. This enables us to understand better what is proposed and to offer comment. The editorial on the subject in that issue is by N. G. Goray, the Weekly's editor, who is also Chairman of the Steering Committee. We should therefore consider it to be authoritative and an additional point of reference.

In the first place, the new party is not the child of a merger of the existing democratic parties in Opposition. Initially, it will comprise of "elements" of the Congress(O), the Socialist Party, the Jan Sangh and the Bharatiya Lok Dal. This is made clear by Mr. Goray in his editorial. He hopes "that at the appropriate moment the decision to dissolve the old parties and join the new party will be taken by those who have the authority to do so." Therefore, for some time at least, the new Party will exist side by side with the parties which it hopes will dissolve themselves to enable their members to join the new Party. This, readers will agree, is not quite the same as a straightforward surgical operation. It is at best an extra heart that will start ticking (hopefully) to take over when the tired old hearts stop functioning. The members of the Steering Committee took this position as they did not wish to "present a *fait accompli*" to the leaders of different parties who are still in jail." Understandable, but, in the view of this writer, not only unnecessary but likely to create problems in the way of the achievement of the objective the Steering Committee has in mind. Not everyone incarcerated has the breadth of vision required to give up "theoretical obsessions". Perhaps this is to some extent responsible for contradictions evident in the policy statement of the new Party, to which we shall refer later.

In other words, we would be justified in taking the position that the announcement should be treated as a preliminary step. As the announcement itself made it clear "some ground will have to be covered and wider consultations will have to take place before the Party's name, its constitution and its office bearers" could be decided upon. One also hopes that the policy statement is not the final word and that it too will be subjected to "wider consultations". Judging by the latest developments, there will fortunately be ample time for reconsideration.

In his letter to *Encounter* (*Freedom First* No. 283, June 1976), M. R. Masani has, in a different context, recalled the Russian proverb: "The yes-man is your enemy, but your friend will argue with you." It is in this spirit that one would like to discuss the proposed new Party's policy and programme.

There can be no two opinions, even among its opponents, of the desirability of a credible, viable, national alternative, to make parliamentary democracy meaningful, more so to prevent a minority government from continuing to govern thanks to the nature of our

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IN THIS ISSUE

Mr S. V. Raju contributes a sympathetic but critical analysis of the draft programme of the proposed new party.

Soli Sorabji's book on *The Law of Censorship* which has just been published is reviewed by Mrs. Sujata Manohar. Readers of *Freedom First* will be particularly interested in this because the case which this journal fought successfully against arbitrary censorship figures prominently in the book.

Solzhenitsyn on Socialism, World News and a Letter to the Editor make up the rest of the issue.

Between You & Me and The Lamp Post



Soviet Bloc Gets Tough

IN its May issue, *Freedom First* carried on the front page a rather startling article from *Kultura*, the Polish Communist journal, spelling out a hard line to be adopted towards under-developed countries.

Though reams of paper have been used in the Indian press in expatiating on the clash at the Nairobi Conference between the advanced and the backward countries, not a word has appeared about the clash that also took place between the Communist bloc and the Third World. *Time* magazine, in its issue of June 7, has this to say on this subject: "For the first time, the developing countries also pressed the Communist nations of Eastern Europe for concessions. The East Bloc has always argued that colonial expansion was the cause of the Third World's poverty and that the Communist nations thus were under no obligation to make reparations. Unconvinced by this argument, the LDCs (Less Developed Countries) demanded more aid, better access to East Bloc markets and payment in hard currencies—but won no commitments from the Communist delegates."

So the *Kultura* thesis disclosed by *Freedom First* was not an academic one, and the Communist bloc's hard line is already at work.

British Worker Approves Profits

STUDENTS of the working class movement in any country know that the views of Trade Union leaders are one thing and those of the ordinary worker are altogether different. This truth is once again brought out by the results of a report on employees' attitude prepared by Market and Opinion Research and published by the Confederation of British Industry on May 12, 1976. According to the *London Times*, the report "appears to explode many of the myths about how employees see their employers and relegates to the realms of caricature the image of the bloody-minded British workman".

Among its significant findings, the report lists the following: fewer than one in 10 workers consider profit a dirty word and the overwhelming majority agree that companies need profits to plough back into the organization. Only 8 per cent of the sample agreed that profit was a dirty word, while 83 per cent disagreed with that statement. 88 per cent agreed that companies needed profits to plough back into the organization. 86 per cent said that it was important to them to live in a free enterprise society, and 89 per cent believed it was

fair of the company to pay dividends to its shareholders. 42 per cent of the workers agreed that they could do more work in their present job, while no less than 57 per cent of those in nationalised industries agreed with this statement.

It is to be hoped that the institution of postal ballots in British Trade Union elections will help to narrow the gulf between the thinking of the British worker and that of Messrs Hugh Scanlon and Scargill who falsely claim to represent him.

It should not be difficult to establish a similar gap between the views of the Indian worker and his "declassified intellectual" trade union leader in India today. This perhaps explains why the claims of the latter class could be deflated so easily and effectively by Government measures during the past year.

College Drones

IT is well-known that among the many facets of socialism at work in Britain is the grant to a large number of worthless students of scholarships to go to University at the taxpayer's expense. It would appear that at least one of the many beneficiaries of this largesse has suffered from a bad conscience at this waste of public funds and the consequent mulcting of the income-tax payer.

Mr. Victor Robertson of West Ham, London, who had been given a scholarship at the London School of Economics for a degree course, decided that he should repay £ 5630 which he found was the cost of his three years at public expense. It is amusing and significant that Mr. Robertson chose to give the money back not to the Government, because it would have again wasted it, but to the widow of Sir John Ellerman, who was supposed to be the richest man in Britain until his death in July in 1973, when his estate was halved by estate duty. Mr. Robertson gave the money to Lady Ellerman, the widow of Sir John Ellerman, as an act of reparation for the injustice done to one of Britain's largest taxpayers.

Lady Ellerman, who accepted the money "as a heart warming gesture in these days when individuals often accept what comes their way through the State not as a privilege, but as a right", has however persuaded Mr. Robertson to donate the money instead to three charities, namely, the Royal National Institute for the Deaf, the National Association for Mental Health, and the British Home and Hospital for Incurables.

Mr. Robertson explains that he is not a rich man,

A TIRED DOCUMENT—Continued from page 1

electoral system. It is the splintered opposition and the British electoral system that have since Independence enabled the Treasury Benches to be occupied by those who have received less than 50 per cent of the total votes cast in each successive election.

The Steering Committee's resolution would appear to give the impression that the country's problems began only after the Proclamation of the Emergency. And it took nine months after the declaration of the Emergency, for the participants to decide that the establishment of "a single democratic national alternative" had become "urgent and imperative".

The Background

To my mind, the slide down began soon after the General Elections of 1967, in which the Opposition had scored significant gains. Not only did Opposition parties fail to read the electorate's verdict clearly, but on the other hand were hell bent on making hay while the sun shone. The Emergency was to a certain extent the logical outcome of irresponsible opposition behaviour. This must be clearly understood as it is very relevant. For 1967 will for the future historian of democratic politics in India mark a watershed. The Emergency is the result and not the cause of the present situation.

Secondly, to many, among them Rajaji, Morarji Desai, Kripalani, Masani and others, this sense of urgency in regard to the need for an early emergence of a National Democratic alternative was felt in the years 1969-70. They had read correctly the sign on the wall and understood the direction in which the country was heading. The AICC(O) Resolution of June 28, 1970, a much better drafted document than the present pedestrian effort, was a direct outcome of this sense of urgency. They almost made it. But as close followers of Indian politics are doubtless aware, the move was scuttled on January 3, 1971, by a "demolition squad" of Socialists (as *Patriot* of January 4, 1971 described them).

It is heartening therefore to read Mr. Goray write in his editorial:

"But this (a unified opposition) had become impossible because of the *theoretical obsessions* (emphasis mine) from which all our opposition parties suffered." Rather unfair to blame all parties with "theoretical obsession"! But let it pass. The realisation that this was a bottleneck is in itself a welcome development though the price that has had to be paid for some to come to this realisation is rather high.

I can almost hear some friends reading this article muttering: "This is all past history. Why does he have to rake all this up? Don't we all make mistakes? Of course we do. And the path of wisdom lies in learning from them; even speaking about them; admitting that they were mistakes, and having done so, starting on a clean slate."

Hastily Assembled

Does the policy statement as published in *Janata* convince one that this is so? My own view is — only partly so. The document gives the unhappy impression of being a hastily assembled essay seeking to accommodate the major bees in the bonnet of the parties who are being persuaded to dissolve their identities. It does not give an impression of the emergence of a new party but a conglomeration of the old ones. One could be forgiven if one were to feel that it is a tired document from tired men.

The Policy statement sets out ten immediate tasks — 'points' being the word currently in favour, one could even describe them as the Ten Point Tasks! These ten points are well made, pragmatic and totally acceptable to any liberty loving democrat. The first four are really immediate in the sense that they seek to do away with many Acts and Ordinances that have eroded and deprived the citizens of Fundamental Freedoms and civil liberties. The fifth and the sixth seek to set up National Commissions, one to examine (they say 'evaluate') the Constitution so far "and to make recommendations for its amendment with a view to fulfilling effectively the basic objectives." There can be no objection to this provided the meaning of the term amendment is understood correctly. The word amendment derives from the Latin word *emendare* — meaning to correct a defect or modify something for the better. "In the history of Indian planning it is not the Constitution which seems to have functioned as a brake on the country's rapid economic development but the Indian bureaucracy which Jawaharlal Nehru once described as India's 'administrative jungle'. Political instability and the wrangling among politicians, the politics of agitation which have led to hundreds of man days being lost in factories and workshops every year, the tortuous system of licenses and quotas which, in a scarcity economy, must necessarily accentuate corruption, the inefficiency in the rank and file of the bureaucracy... high taxation... traditional attitudes and ways of life — these are the factors which have been a drag on the country's economic development. The Constitution is now being made a scapegoat for the failures of planning". (*Fundamental Rights and the Citizen*: pp. 11 Ed. S. P. Aiyar and S. V. Raju). It would be advisable for the new party therefore to move with great circumspection in this matter. Much also would depend on the composition of the National Commission appointed for the purpose.

The other National Commission to go into the question of electoral reforms is both necessary and welcome.

The remaining three points deal with efficiency and honesty in administration.

Letter

"SOCIALIST" REPUBLIC?

If the State must, at all times, exert to reduce poverty and the inequalities of wealth, is it not enough to make this a "directive principle of policy" in the Constitution? Why has India to call herself a "Socialist" Republic, as proposed by the Swaran Singh Committee, in order to advertise the resolve to the world?

In fact, the proposal would be an obstacle to political maturity. Socialism means different things to different people. To some it is only a stepping stone to acquisition by the State of total control over a citizen's life. At the other extreme, there are people who, though they do not regard themselves as socialists have more "socialism" in their thinking than can be traced in the protestations of several slogan-mongers.

The use of an imprecise word like "socialism" in the title will not, therefore, contribute to social understanding. On the contrary, it will divert citizens' attention from the fact that society is interested primarily in specific ideas and deeds — and not in names and labels.

Another subtle influence will also be at work. Persons who call themselves socialists will tend to be looked upon as *superior* citizens. They will acquire a measure of respectability even without their having explained what they mean by socialism.

In a recent publication entitled "Character — A Talk to Young People", there is a story illustrating "conformity by force" which will doubtless be of interest to your readers in the present context. It runs as follows:

A society takes the majority vote, and decides to call itself a capitalist society. But it doesn't stop there. It decides that nobody can be anybody if he is not ready to call himself a capitalist. He must call the ruling Capitalist Party's pet notions his pet notions. He can't set up a Club for examining alternatives to capitalism. He can't try being a non-capitalist even as an experiment, for if he tried that, he would not be allowed to mix with other people.

Substitute "socialist" for "capitalist" in the above story and one sees what is to be feared. I do not suggest that the Swaran proposal *must* land India into this disaster, but it will certainly make conformity by force a little easier to come about.

P. L. MAYEKAR

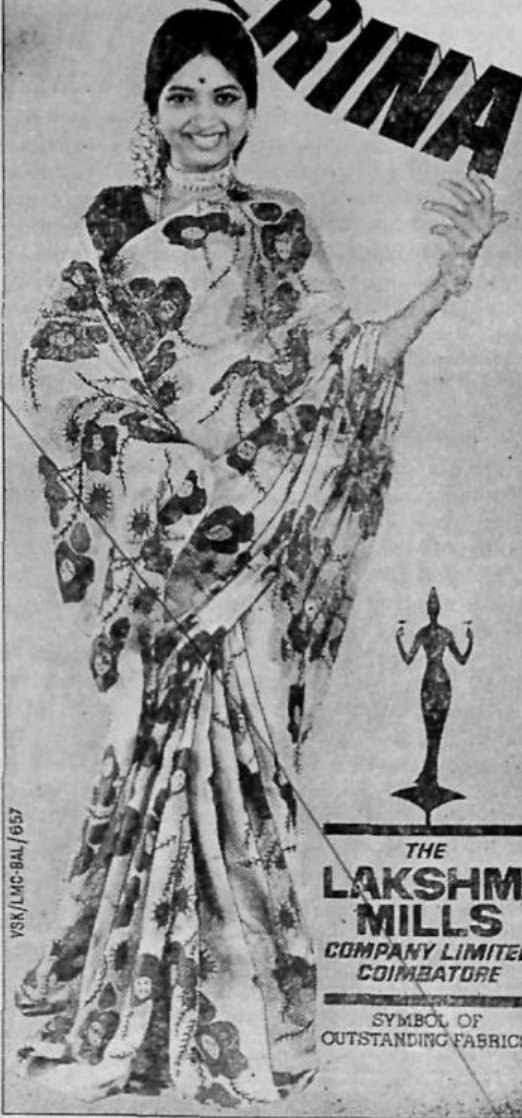
HOBSON'S CHOICE

Prague, June 17. — Czechoslovakia will hold a general election with Communist Party candidates only on October 22 and 23.

—The Times, June 18.

A CHARM FOR THE CHARMER

Lakshmi's
BALLERINA
voile sarees
Enchanting. Wear for work
Wear for fun. Around the town.
Around the picnic spots.
Any where and BELLERINA
will please you every wear
Made from 90s & 100s
pure imported cotton.



Patchwork

One wishes the statement had stopped there. But it does not. And that is a pity. For, from here on, one perceives the patchwork formulations. The very first sentence after the 10 points talks of building "an egalitarian democratic fabric". It is followed a little later by setting down as a basic objective of the party the "Establishment of an egalitarian society and self-reliant economy by peaceful means." This is spelt out from (a) to (g). (a) talks of putting an end to social and economic inequalities, exploitation and oppression. How does one put an end to economic inequality? One hopes the members of the Steering Committee believe by providing opportunities for the less fortunate to grow and not by pulling down those with means which is what it has now come to mean. Then (e) talks of "establishing a ratio of 1:10 between the minimum and the maximum (expendable) income in the country. How does one establish such a ratio and by what means is it hoped to be achieved especially when the document talks elsewhere of striving for "maximum production"?

The document gives pride of place to agriculture and rural development. This is as it should be, but platitudinous statements could easily have been avoided. The part dealing with industry in the urban areas does indeed present a series of contortions to accommodate various shades of opinion from those who put primacy on consumer goods production to those who would bar certain areas from large scale units.

Total Plan?

Despite the performance and 'achievements' of the Second, Third and Fourth Five Year Plans, the policy statement threatens to make it a "total plan covering all the various departments of national life and *not merely economic*"! What do they mean? Is it an improved version of the Gosplan that is envisaged?

Was all this really necessary? Would it not have met the needs of the situation if the august members of the Steering Committee had confined themselves to the first ten points and in regard to the rest left it to experts to provide position papers?

And then there is the issue of constitutionalism. This writer has had numerous opportunities to hear Rajaji admonish members of the Swatantra Party impatient to resort to the streets or to satyagraha. Peaceful processions seeking to present or focus a point of view are perfectly legitimate and entirely consistent with constitutional behaviour. But not *Gheraos* and *Bundhs*. As for *satyagraha* it is the ultimate weapon to be used as the last resort and always to be peaceful. The objective must have the national good in mind, not some side issue that serves some sectarian, communal or linguistic interest. This is what Gandhiji taught and that is what it should be. It is hoped that the policy statement

as it finally emerges will place adequate emphasis on this.

This, it is claimed, is a *new* party. And from a new party one justifiably expects fresh ideas. Preparing long, often unreadable statements of policies are in my view not only tiresome but quite unnecessary and rather outmoded. What percentage of the population has the time or the inclination to read them? In an age of specialisation was it necessary for politicians who are not industrialists to prescribe for industry or for those who have never seen a farming operation, let alone farmed themselves, to pass judgements on details of agricultural and rural development? India abounds in experts. And a fresh approach would have been to take a broad position relating to basic freedoms and the thrust in administration and leave the rest to be worked out by specialised groups appointed for the purpose. In other words, having underlined the Party's determination to uphold certain values, it could have, for the rest, sought pragmatic solutions from people who have no ideological or political vested interests.

In the context of Indian diversity, any party or group that seeks to spell out its position on numerous issues is bound to exclude a whole lot of people who, while in agreement on certain basic issues, might differ on details. And this will inevitably lead to re-fragmentation in the not too distant future.

I have essayed a critique of the programme of the proposed new Party. Whether the strategy behind the move, which envisages a free election under present conditions, is a realistic one is yet another question.



YOUR GUARANTEE OF GOODNESS

WITH MANY VOICES

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

He who bears no evil, and sees no evil, is not doing his duty.

—Motto displayed in the room of a Superintendent of Police quoted in the *Statesman*, May 2.

The original name of the firm was Marx and Engels: Socialism, Wholesale, Retail and for Export. Later, when new partners joined (Marxist-Leninism, Marxist-Leninist-Stalinism, Troskyism) Engels disappeared from the letter-heading.

—A.J.P. Taylor in the *Observer*, April 25.

His (Masani's) philosophy today is a melange of Senator Henry Jackson, Alexander Solzhenitsyn and Willy Brandt on international affairs and Mahatma Gandhi on village development.

—Jonathan Power in *International Herald Tribune*, March 26.

Are they (British industrialists) too timid, too idle or too selfish to speak up?

—G. Rippon in *Daily Telegraph*, May 1.

The love of liberty is the love of others, the love of power is the love of ourselves.

—Old saying quoted in *Democratic World*, May 2.

FREEDOM FIRST,
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To the man in the street, who I'm sorry to say
Is a keen observer of life,
The word intellectual suggests straight away,
A man who's untrue to his wife.

—W. H. Auden quoted in *Democratic World*,
May 2.

People are interested in only three things; who sleeps
with whom, who is paid how much, and who is doing
what job.

—Malcolm Muggeridge quoted in the
Observer, May 8.

Bang home the great issue of Liberalism v. Bureaucratic Socialism.

—Jo Grimond in the *Observer*, May 23.

The bulldozer does not recognise history; nor does it
respect human sentiments.

—Vijay in *New Age*, May 23.

What makes the Carter-Brown contest piquant is
that both believe they have a "hot line" to the Almighty.

—Henry Brandon in *Sunday Times*, May 16.

If you want to produce a Communist, send him to
Paris; if it is a capitalist you want, send him to Moscow.

—African student quoted in *The Statesman*,
May 26.

Radical feminists regard Sigmund Freud as the
ultimate male chauvinist and with some reason.

—*Time*, May 24.

Rank in the Russian Navy means a great deal financially. A full captain's pay at £202 a month is more
than 40 times greater than that of many ratings — on
average £4.70 monthly.

—Naval Correspondent in *Daily Telegraph*,
June 2.

The Third World must feed itself and this will not be
done by suggesting that Americans eat too much.

—Daniel Moynihan in *Time*, January 26.

Students should be socialist, secular.

—Nurul Hasan, Education Minister, in
Times of India, June 6.