

The Statesman

Incorporating and directly descended from THE FRIEND OF INDIA - Founded 1818

Skimpy ceasefire

With at least two major firing incidents in the Jammu sector since the Directors-General of Military Operations of the Pakistan and Indian armies called a truce on May 29 - followed by an interaction between sector commanders of the Pakistan Rangers and India's Border Security Force - questions must arise over the utility of such agreements. For every transgression of those understandings sparks off a verbal spat, counter-allegations of who "started it", betrayal and so on. Which exacerbate rather than reduce tensions on one of the world's hottest frontiers. Obviously each side projects its own version of the incident to its people, and that only makes the relationship more bitter. And while bellicose politicians thrive in adding fuel to fire, life has become a living hell for people residing in villages along the frontline. Both sides claim the other resorted to "unprovoked firing" which was given a "befitting response", and so the vicious circle persists.

Forget the politics momentarily, do the DGMOs lack the capacity to ensure that their men - the paramilitary included - pay heed to decisions taken higher up the chain of command? That obvious inability points to deteriorating standards of leadership and training - all talk of a common heritage and traditions has long lost its relevance - which translates into the frontier becoming the proverbial "powder keg" that could explode after a seemingly trivial misunderstanding. Jingoistic statements from across the political spectrum help nobody. If the two armies wish to keep things under control, the DGMOs need to use their hotline more, perhaps move towards setting up a joint-mechanism to keep the border relatively peaceful - if that is the intention. However, the covering-fire provided to infiltrating militants raises grave doubts about intentions.

Again provided the intentions are not dishonourable, the nitty-gritty of the "ceasefires" need mutual agreement. According to some reports, the latest incident in the Ramgarh sector in which four BSF personnel were killed was initiated by the Rangers firing at a BSF party moving stores to repair damaged fencing. Was that necessary at night, could it not raise suspicions? Even at the risk of being accused of being "anti-national", is must be re-asserted that it takes two hands to clap. Alas, the track-record of the Pakistani forces inspires little confidence. Yet for how long, and to what purpose, will pointing accusing fingers serve? Anything more positive than the customary ministerial "clashes" at international forums? Who apart from Indians and Pakistanis take note of such routine rhetoric? True, that the DGMOs cannot relieve the nations, or their armies, of the baggage of history. Yet they can enhance the dignity of their office, and indeed their armies, if they strive to impart credibility to their statements. Their hotline has to be put to meaningful use - and not to emulate the politicians in trading insults.

Childish theatrics

There is a glaring mismatch between Arvind Kejriwal's demand for full statehood for Delhi and his sit-in at Raj Niwas - a seemingly valid demand has been negated by a puerile bid to hog the headlines. The chief minister of the NCT likes to project himself as thinking big but acts so terribly small that even those who might see merit in enhanced powers for the state government are left wondering if national embarrassment would be risked if the local government had more clout - after all he had even threatened to disrupt the Republic Day parade. It is not surprising that at a point in time when most non-BJP parties are exploring the possibilities of forming another "front" ahead of 2019, the Aam Aadmi Party hardly figures in the calculus. Only Mamata Banerjee sees Kejriwal's squabble with the BJP as a plus point - the grapevine has it she had pressured HD Kumaraswamy to invite him to the recent photo-op at Vidhana Soudha - so maybe there's truth to the old saying that birds of the same (maverick?) feather flock together. Few other parties seem anxious to hold hands with a young party that has already alienated so many of its founding stalwarts. There are similarities in leadership styles of Kejriwal and many others in politics around the world; leaders who are prone to aggressive posturing and believe that the way up is by pulling others down. Governance in the National Capital is the casualty.

Kejriwal's sit-in at Raj Niwas to press the Lieutenant-Governor to direct senior officials in the local government to attend "duty" - they insist they are not on strike, only declining to attend one-on-one meetings with Delhi Government ministers after the alleged assault on the Chief Secretary at Kejriwal's residence - brought no immediate results, but did attract plenty of media coverage. So his supporters planned a march on Raj Niwas to up the ante. To be sure Mr Anil Bajjal has not handled himself in accordance with the standard spelled out by the first LG, Dr AN Jha, but what did Kejriwal expect by taking possession of the reception room at Raj Niwas? Was he hoping that the police - with whom he is also at loggerheads - would be summoned to forcibly evict him and a few of his colleagues? Wonder how he would react if his bungalow in Civil Lines was similarly commandeered? That his action has been flayed by both the Congress and the BJP (actually, supported by no other party) suggests the AAP sticks out like a sore thumb in the political arena. It is also telling that the home ministry, under whom the Lieutenant-Governor functions, has made no visible effort to end the impasse - not even waved the threat of invoking Article 356? Is it worried that despite all his several shenanigans Kejriwal's broom could yet again sweep a Delhi Assembly poll and accelerate an anti-BJP sentiment next summer?

Extraordinary Erudition

Few nineteenth-century correspondences can boast references as erudite as those that flowed from the pens of the two Communist revolutionaries. Marx read eight languages and Engels mastered as many as twelve; their letters are striking for their constant switching between different languages and for their number of learned quotations, including the use of ancient Latin and Greek



Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels first met in Cologne, in November 1842, at the office of the *Rheinische Zeitung* where Marx was active as its young editor. But their theoretical partnership began only in 1844, in Paris. Engels, the son of a textile industrialist, had already had the opportunity to travel in England, seeing for himself the effects of capitalist exploitation on the working classes. An article of his on the critique of political economy, published in the Franco-German Yearbooks, aroused great interest in Marx, who at the time had decided to devote all his energies to the same subject. The two then began a theoretical and political collaboration that would last for the rest of their lives.

In 1845, when the French government expelled Marx because of his Communist activities, Engels followed him to Brussels. That same year saw the publication of one of their few jointly written works - *The Holy Family*, a critique of the idealism of the Young Hegelians. The two also produced a voluminous unpublished manuscript - *The German Ideology* - that was left to the "gnawing criticism of mice". Subsequently, with the first signs of the 1848 revolutions, Marx and Engels brought out what would become the most widely read political text in the history of humanity - *The Manifesto of the Communist Party*.

In 1849, following the defeat of the revolution, Marx was forced to move to England, and Engels soon crossed the channel after him. Marx stayed in London, while his friend went to manage the family business in Manchester, some three hundred kilometres away. From 1850 to 1870, when Engels retired from business and was finally able to rejoin his friend in the English capital, the two men lived the most intense period of their lives, comparing notes several times a week on the main political and economic events of

the age. Most of the 2,500 letters they exchanged date from these two decades, during which time they also sent some 1,500 items of correspondence to activists and intellectuals in nearly twenty countries. To this imposing total should be added the 10,000 letters to Marx and Engels from third parties, and another 6,000 which, though no longer traceable, are known with certainty to have existed. It is a priceless treasure, containing ideas which, in some cases, they did not succeed in fully developing in their writings.

Few nineteenth-century correspondences can boast references as erudite as those that flowed from the pens of the two Communist revolutionaries. Marx read eight languages and Engels mastered as many as twelve; their letters are striking for their constant switching

between different languages and for their number of learned quotations, including the use of ancient Latin and Greek. The two humanists were also great lovers of literature. Marx knew passages from Shakespeare by heart and never tired of leafing through his volumes of Aeschylus, Dante and Balzac. Engels was for a long time president of the Schiller Institute in Manchester and worshipped Aristotle, Goethe and Lessing. Along with constant discussion of international events and revolutionary possibilities, many of their exchanges concerned the major contemporary advances in technology, geology, chemistry, physics, mathematics and anthropology. Marx always considered Engels an indispensable interlocutor, consulting his critical voice whenever he had to take a position on a controversial matter.

At times their relationship

involved a veritable division of labour. Of the 487 articles published in Marx's name between 1851 and 1862 in the *New York Tribune* (the paper with the largest circulation in the United States), nearly a half were actually written by Engels. Marx wrote for the American public about economic crises and major events in world politics, while Engels recounted the course and possible outcomes of the many wars that took place. In this way, he enabled his friend to devote more time to the completion of his economic studies.

The relationship between the two men was even more extraordinary in human terms than at an intellectual level. Marx confided all his personal difficulties to Engels, beginning with his terrible material hardship and the numerous health problems that tormented him for decades.

Engels showed total self-abnegation in helping Marx and his family, always doing everything in his power to ensure them a dignified existence and to facilitate the completion of *Capital*. Marx was ever grateful for this financial assistance, as we can see from what he wrote one night in August 1867, a few minutes after he had finished correcting the proofs of Volume One: "I owe it to you alone that this was possible."

From September 1864, Marx's involvement in the activity of the International Working Men's Association caused further delays to his magnum opus. From the outset he had assumed the major burden of its leadership, but Engels, too, as soon as he could, placed his political talents at the service of the workers. On the night of 18 March 1871, when they received news that the "storming of the heav-

ens" had succeeded and that the first Socialist commune in human history had come into being in Paris, they understood that the times could change faster than they themselves had expected.

Even after the death of Marx's wife in 1881, when the doctors prescribed trips far from London in an attempt to cure his ailments, the two men never stopped writing to each other. Often they used the affectionate nicknames by which various comrades in the struggle addressed them: the Moor and the General - Marx because of his jet-black beard and hair, Engels because of his extensive knowledge of military strategy.

Shortly before his death, Marx asked his daughter Eleanor to remind Engels to "make something" of his unfinished manuscripts. Engels respected Marx's wishes and began that gigantic task soon after the afternoon in March 1883 when he saw him for the last time. He would survive Marx by twelve years, much of which was taken up with preparing for publication of the draft material for Volumes Two and Three of *Capital* that his friend had not managed to complete.

During that last period of his life, Engels missed a lot of things to do with Marx, including their constant exchange of letters. As he carefully catalogued their correspondence, he remembered the years when, drawing on his pipe, he had been in the habit of writing a letter late at night.

Now he often re-read them with a touch of melancholy, thinking of all the moments in their youth when, smiling and joking to each other, they had tried to predict where the next revolution would break out. Never, though, did he abandon the certainty that many others would continue their theoretical labours, and that millions, in every corner of the world, would press on with the struggle for the emancipation of the subaltern classes.



MARCELLO MUSTO

The writer is Associate Professor of Sociological Theory at York University, Toronto, Canada. He has authored and edited several books on Marx

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

editor@thestatesman.com

Shillong's net connectivity snapped

SIR, The SMS and mobile internet services were restricted and banned in Shillong from June 1 to quell rumours following clashes on 31 May. Although the SMS was restored on 7 June, the restrictions on mobile internet services are still in force.

The sudden suspension and disconnection of such connectivity can disrupt the flagship programme, called "Digital India". The worst affected are those students seeking admission to colleges and universities outside Meghalaya.

The online system for applications and payment of fees has been dislocated. Students who are doing their internship in Shillong

are finding it difficult to complete the tasks assigned to them by the universities as most of the assignments are shared through e-mail. The shutdown has also affected business and job aspirants. It has hit tourism hard as May, June and July form the peak season. Hotel bookings are being cancelled. It is a lost season in terms of tourism.

Yours, etc., Samares Bandyopadhyay, Kolkata, 14 June.

RAGPICKER'S DAY

SIR, Hats off to *The Statesman* for publishing a very symbolic picture of a ragpicker looking for recyclable materials at a disposal site ahead of World Environ-

ment Day (page 3, June 5). Those who are engaged in ragpicking have enabled India achieve the highest PET (Polyethylene terephthalate) recycling rates in the world. India recycles or reuses over 90 per cent of all the PET that is manufactured in the country and the ragpickers are the largest driving force behind this. We can achieve almost 100 per cent PET recycling rates if we can use the service of adult ragpickers in a methodical manner.

Ragpickers have always helped the process of India's garbage disposal and the world's environment. They face the risk of allergy, skin rashes, tuberculosis and several other infections. They

dispose of the garbage in the most scientific manner by taking the recyclable materials from the garbage to the place where it can be recycled. Without their service, such materials would have been burnt, resulting in air pollution and warming of the environment. They might even have been dumped, resulting in soil/water pollution. The ragpickers also prevent the scattered garbage from choking our drains. They do deserve to be rewarded for their services and engaged in the Swacchh Bharat Abhiyan.

Yours, etc., Sujit De, Kolkata, 5 June.

DARJEELING NORMAL

SIR, This refers to the article, "Darjeeling back in form". We had suffered considerably last year because of the violence over statehood. However, Darjeeling is now back on track while Shimla contends with a water crisis.

Tourists from Europe and South-east Asia have always been attracted to Darjeeling. As Winston Churchill once remarked, "With opportunity comes responsibility". In the context of

SEX EDUCATION... NO SECRETS

SIR, This is with reference to the report, 'Sex edu in schools may help in curbing sexual crimes against minors: Experts' (11 June). People in general are averse to the use of the word, sex. They are afraid that discussing sex with teenagers might prompt them to have sex. Such fears are unfounded. We must admit that there is a degree of ignorance about the anatomy, physiology and sexual emotions. Studies show that if sex education is not provided through proper channels, adolescents seek information elsewhere. This information is usually incomplete, incorrect and highly gender insensitive. This results in sexual coercion, rape, unwanted pregnancies, sexually-transmitted infections including HIV and an environment of insecurity for boys and girls. Sex is an integral part of life. It is neither base nor vile nor dirty. In the words of Albert Einstein: 'Regarding sex education: no secrets!'

In addition to teaching children about sex in schools, the subject should be a topic of conversation in homes as well. As Bertrand Russell once remarked: 'The main physiological facts [about sex] ought to be taught quite simply and naturally before puberty at a time when they are not exciting. At puberty, the elements of an unsuperstitious sexual morality ought to be taught.'

Yours, etc., Jaydev Jana, Kolkata, 10 June.

Darjeeling, that responsibility ought to be shared both by the government and the people of the hills.

Yours, etc., Kalim Ansari, Bangalore, 13 June.

GENERAL'S OVERDRIVE

SIR, This is with reference to Saroj Kumar Mehera's letter, "General Rawat another Ayub Khan" (5 June). The Chief of the Army

Staff is increasingly speaking the language of a politician. General Rawat is not a people's representative; he was not elected to the post. He needs to abide by the norms and ethics of the Armed Forces, and not go on overdrive. His public relations can have adverse consequences.

Yours, etc., Rupam Guha, Kolkata, 5 June.