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needs of this overcrowded city. The question is whether the rents charged, though comparatively low and now deemed uneconomic, have been such as to attract the less well-to-do classes who are most in need of housing and for whom in fact all this construction has been undertaken. If the extent of unauthorised occupation is as large as it is reported to be, then the answer is in the negative. The prevailing practice would seem to be for workers and others entitled to accommodation to take over the rooms and then pass them, on to better off relatives, friends or acquaintances, with or without a premium. The premises are no doubt made good use of; but the primary object of the scheme, which is to provide relief to the poorer classes, is defeated in the process. Apart from that, the drive against unauthorised occupation, which is periodically conducted with all it means in surprise check, searching inquiry and eviction has tended to give the whole housing programme an unsavoury taste.

Things are not likely to be improved if the rents of these buildings are to be raised by 40 to 50 per cent. This is what Bombay's Housing Minister indicated in the State Assembly last week. Rents are being raised, it seems, following the findings of the Accountant-General and the Public Estimates Committee that the rents now being charged are uneconomic. Except for the absence of a premium, the step contemplated by Government now would reduce State-built houses more or less to the same level as private ones, with no special advantage left, to the worker or the low-income groups. In consequence, even the bona fide occupants of these buildings who are trying to meet somehow the present rents, which are themselves not within the means of most of them, may have to quit, reducing Government's primary object, in providing such housing to a mockery. It is not so difficult to put up houses these days, particularly for Government; and there is no great virtue in it. What is important is whether the rents fixed are such that they can be paid without too great a pinch by those for whom these houses are meant; or if the 'economic' rent cannot be reduced, whether Authority can subsidise it to a reasonable extent. Without finding a solution to this question, it would be no more than a gesture on the part of Government to erect

houses and allocate them airily to persons who just cannot make use of them, however much they may need them.

Ground for Hope

CEYLON'S Premier, Shri Bandarnaike has given out that he would be having informal discussions with Pandit Nehru on the issue of Indian settlers in Ceylon at the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference in London in coming June. Formal talks are to follow. Shri Bandarnaike has himself been a party in a sense to the last Nehru-Kotelawala agreement which has been bedevilled by hair-splitting essays in interpretation. The three-page agreement might not have led to so much elaboration, if the desire to implement it were sufficiently keen. Nevertheless, as differences have arisen, there are two alternatives open: either to replace it by a new agreement or to refer the differences to the judgment of a third party acceptable to both the sides, as suggested by Pandit Nehru.

Instead of going over the entire ground again, it might be advisable to try the second alternative. In any case, if Ceylon is disposed to play fair to such Indians in the island as are entitled to citizenship, there should not be much difficulty either way. Shri Bandarnaike has given ardent expression to his regard for our Prime Minister; and recent developments have shown that there is much in common between them, whether in respect of domestic or foreign policy. The socialist line that Ceylon's new Government is inclined to follow should make it easy for the Premier to give a fair deal to the Indian have-nots in the island, while the policy of friendship with all that is evolving itself in the foreign sphere, with the accent on Asian countries, makes it imperative that there be no continuing cause or misunderstanding between the two next door neighbours. The problem is essentially a human one, and it must be treated as such. With two warmly human personalities like Pandit Nehru and Shri Bandarnaike tackling it now, there is considerable ground for hope that it will at last be solved.

Cominform Dissolved

DISSOLUTION of the Cominform can be interpreted in more than one way. Time and time again, the Western Powers have reminded Moscow that its propaganda and

supervisory efforts are intermingling the "cold war". Moscow can now claim that the decision to dissolve the Cominform is a gesture which should be reciprocated by the Western Powers. During Pandit Nehru's visit to Russia, the Soviet Union and India issued a joint declaration in which Russia accepted the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of other nations. Formal dissolution of the Cominform, Moscow can claim, is an emphatic proof that Russia means what she says.

Unlike the Comintern, the Cominform was never rigid. It was created as the war-time alliance between Russia and the Western Powers showed signs of degenerating into the "cold war". To be precise, the Cominform was the Russian answer to the Truman Doctrine. It has played an active role in the establishment of Communist governments in eastern Europe. Cynics will no doubt insinuate that, with the emergence of the Warsaw Pact, the Cominform has become redundant, even as the Truman Doctrine has been embedded in NATO. There will be hope that the demise of the Cominform will be the prelude to the dissolution of NATO and the Warsaw Pact.

That will depend on the end of the "cold war" through an agreement on world disarmament. Meanwhile, the dissolution of the Cominform will be interpreted as another blow to Stalinism. Strict control and supervision of the Communist parties and movements in foreign countries by Moscow was an integral part of Stalinism. By dissolving the Cominform, Stalin's successors imply that such "centralised control" from Moscow is no longer necessary. This does not mean that Moscow has abandoned its faith in World Communism. It implies that Stalin's successors are inclined to the view that the existence of different types of economy in the different countries is no obstacle to the ultimate goal of World Communism.

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