

Letter from, Moscow

# Leave It to K !

Samar Sen

A crowded November has come to a close without any communique from the Communist Summit. May be, something will emerge in a day or two. The length of the discussions is an indication that the showdown, was real, that China went all out to press her point of view. Even at the heated session in Bucharest, agreement was arrived at within three or four days. Signs are that Russia has won. Whether she has been able to convince her giant and restless sister is another matter. A few days ago Pravda carried a solemn editorial, calling among other things, for relentless struggle against revisionism and dogmatism. China must have taken note of the warning. If it goes unheeded, the Communist Parties in border countries will suffer from a split That will be bad for Asia, at the beginning.

It will be wrong to think that the Russians come back home from work earlier these days because of the shorter working week. They tend to shake off politics and pass it on to the Party. They are very much pleased with their rising standard of living. The problem now is the distribution of consumer goods. With the shorter working day, queues have become much longer, and between five and six in the evening, Moscow seems more crowded than ever. The number of shops is going up, but purchasers grow faster. And the number of male shoppers has also grown. Women must have demanded more time to devote to the home. There are children to look after when they come back from school. Not all of them study in prolonged day schools. And children must not be left to themselves for two to three hours at a stretch when they return from school. Such problems are more urgent to parents that the outcome of the Kremlin talks.

Shopping takes a lot of time. You queue up before the cash counter, get your chit and then stand in another queue for the purchase to be handed over. There are now many self-help stores where you pick the thing you go and pay as you come

out. To relieve women of the burden of cooking every day, 'kitchens' have been, opened on the ground floor of many apartment buildings. Cooked food is sold there. Coffee and milk bars are becoming plentiful.

It is surprising to know that there is a rent-racket in Moscow, too. If a person or family with two rooms can sub-let one, it fetches as much as 100 roubles and a room with a common telephone. 500. Official rent for such rooms is not more than 50. So there is a ten-fold premium on sub-letting. Even then such rooms are hard to come by. The shortage is still so acute. Lovers sometimes put off their marriages waiting for allotment or for a spare room. But people do not despair, such is the strength of the Soviet system. They are certain that housing will improve that in the near future there will be rooms for most.

People are busy thinking of the new rouble. The hard facts about it are : There will be a ten-fold rise in its value — one rouble will mean ten in future. But foreigners are a little perplexed. There are two rates of exchange at present the commercial, under which a dollar is equal to four roubles or 400 kopecks, and the non-commercial under which the same dollar fetches 10 roubles. The ten-fold rise in the value of the rouble will not be reflected in its 'commercial' relation to foreign currencies. A dollar will mean 90 kopecks, (or 9 old roubles) and not 40 kopecks. That means, under the new dispensation from January 1, the uniform exchange rate will be much lower than the present commercial one and a little higher than the non-commercial. Tourists will get a little less and foreign embassies may have to spend more. There is speculation that air fares to places outside Russia will go up in terms of roubles. It is also realised that after the initial confusion and adjustments, the new rouble will be a very hard thing and will correspond more to reality. The new coins will mean more slot-machines, easier purchases. The new rate will also ease the task of Soviet

computers who have to deal with astronomical figures as the Seven Year Plan goes ahead.

West Germans I have talked to are rather sarcastic about the style of architecture in Russian towns. We Easterners can afford not to bother too much about style we know that whatever the outlook of a building, it is always a better place than nowhere to sleep in. The Russian under the Oars, and for quite a few years after the revolution, learnt the same lesson. They have built from scratch. So they are tolerant of temporary deficiencies and do not go into details of beauty.

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## They are Coming . . . .

There is no end of delegations, political, cultural and sport. The Finnish President, whose country has joined the European Free Trade Association, went back with one or two solid concessions. Now that Prince Sihanouk is here, there are rumours of a non-aggression pact between Cambodia and Russia. The Egyptian Vice-President is again in Moscow. A Cuban ballet group is performing at the Kremlin Theatre. a Peruvian singer is touring Russia, a massive Mexican exhibition was on at the Pushkin Museum, an ice-hockey team from Canada failed to justify the hopes they had raised after the first match. A Moroccan trade delegation has left.

In the meantime there are rumours that Khrushchev has asked Castro to go a bit slow.

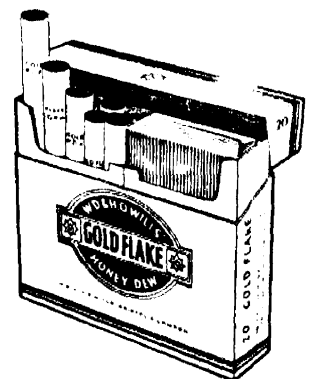
## Colour Chem

IN its first year of operations and third year of existence. Colour\* Chem has earned Rs 37 lakhs from sales and made a net profit of nearly Rs 7 lakhs, of which Rs 6 lakhs has been allocated to statutory development rebate reserve. The directors report that construction of factory buildings has been almost completed. The production of Pigment Emulsions was started in May 1959. of Binder Materials in September 1959 and of Pigment Powders in March this year. Since then the production of various items is proceeding according to schedule.



## Having fun—wish you were here

Kashmir. Spills and thrills on Khilnarg. A hole in one at Gulmarg. Bags of fishing—mostly trout. Air's like wine—people prettier than movie-stars. Country's like one big flower show. (No trouble getting Wills' Gold Flake in ten's, twenty's and tins—wherever you go they're good.)



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