

Is prospective financial aid accompanied by political and military-considerations? There are no strings to Point Four, Be unknown to many, Point Four is being implemented through United Nations; therefore, Point Four is not liable to the objection raised by Russia against Marshall Aid which has been sponsored and pushed through by America outside the purview of the United Nations.

Pandit Nehru's public speeches and statements make it abundantly evident that the Prime Minister is opposed to alignment with power blocs. He is on record that the time is not ripe for a Pacific pact, and that the safest way to fight Communism in South-East Asia is to fight imperialism and poverty in this area. Though nothing definite is known, it is interesting to learn that Pandit Nehru is in favour of recognising Red China as a "comfortable neighbour"; that the Prime Minister's views on China were on the agenda of the recent Bevin-Acheson talks.

Despite carping critics, neither Pandit Nehru's statements on foreign policy, nor Indian representatives' behaviour at United Nations sessions lend support to the uncharitable criticism that the Prime Minister has sold the pass and that India has aligned herself with the Anglo-American Powers against Russia. Indications are not lacking that India is interested in establishing closer economic, political and social contact with Russia. To the criticism that the Prime Minister has visited London and is now in Washington but has never shown eagerness to visit Moscow, New Delhi can retort that no such invitation has yet been received. As yet, New Delhi's foreign policy seems based on the humanistic principle that preferences are allowed but not exclusions. When India finally comes down from the fence and shows positive proofs of excluding Russia from her foreign policy association, then will be the time to blame and criticise New Delhi for prejudiced actions and motives.

may require. We do not even know or bother to inquire how this is done. It is the result which we take for granted.

The war familiarised us with the various kinds of shortages. It taught us that goods are desirable in themselves and have a value of their own quite apart from the money which alone hitherto, we had valued, as being interchangeable with any goods that we might desire. There was a time during 1942-43 when this phenomena of shortages burst upon us with the suddenness and fury of a cataclysm. Not that shortages were subsequently eliminated, or that they were even brought under control. But they became a well-defined feature of our daily existence and came to be accepted as a part of life. These were the regular and chronic shortages; food and cloth, defined and fixed into a pattern by the system of rationing enforced with varying degrees of efficiency. There was no point in grumbling or kicking our shins against them as far as one could see or need see.

Problem of Scarcity

WE DO not always realise how much we take for granted in life. The lot of the vast majority of people is no doubt hard. The struggle for existence is never-ending; how to make two ends meet is a problem that many have to face and solve every day and every week. But there is a catch in it somewhere. The problem remains, but we take certain things for granted at the same time. If money can be found, the rest follows. For it is only metaphorically that we worry from whence is the next days food to come, or where we shall find a shelter over our heads tomorrow. For we assume that if we can get

the means, the rest would be there for the asking.

Therefore when a shortage occurs in some of the essential things of life, we get quite unnerved. This is something we had not bargained for. Money is hard to get by. But once we have the money, it exasperates us if we cannot get the things which money is supposed to buy. The latter is always someone else's headache. Not ours. Other people work day and night to ensure that the supplies of fish, meat, vegetables, fruits and milk come to the market; it is always someone else's lookout that the shops are kept filled with the things which we

But sporadic shortages create a separate problem. The psychological responses they set up are specific and different. Such shortages do not easily or quickly get absorbed into the body of general shortages which have come to be accepted and therefore become a part of our habit. They carry with them a certain disturbing mental instability, particularly when they come swiftly and unannounced, and not singly but in an array. Newspaper readers have had a foretaste of the havoc such shortages may cause from the reports of the sudden disappearance of salt from the shops of Calcutta. Salt was not in short supply. The Government of West Bengal issued disclaimers through the press and the radio, stating that supplies of

salt were adequate, and that the scarcity was artificial. They did not say if it was engineered. But whatever might have been its ultimate cause, once scarcity becomes a fact of experience, the unsettlement it causes is hard to control. If only a small percentage of the population gets panicky lest there should be no salt or sugar or kerosene, and therefore set about collecting whatever stocks are available, scarcity no longer remains an anticipation; it becomes a hard fact overnight, if not in the twinkling of an eye.

The scare of shortages has been exported from Calcutta and the genuine sugar shortage of the past few weeks has given place to a shortage of salt and matches, which is merely imaginary in origin—and therefore potentially much more disastrous. People have ransacked shops, stricken by the fear that they would not be able to get their supplies. And those who habitually fish in troubled waters and are quick to take advantage whenever disturbances break out in the market or elsewhere, have come into their own and availed themselves of these opportunities, to the full. At one place at least in Bombay, the police had to open fire, to disperse the crowd and restore order. In addition it must be mentioned that while police try to regulate queues and restore order, they make no attempt to stop the shopkeeper from profiteering.

Now shortages that are real are bad enough but those which are imagined and therefore can give rise to panic are a lot worse. About sugar, the Government have no case. The excuse that the Sugar Merchants' Assn. have put forward, that they have not received the full stocks promised to them, makes their case no

stronger. Before they can complain about the balance of the stocks not yet received, they have to explain what happened to the stocks they had already received which were sufficient to maintain supplies through the usual channels of distribution for quite sometime.

From any angle, the story of sugar is a revolting story of cupidity, of unsocial behaviour, chicanery and fraud carried on in broad daylight right under the nose of the controlling authorities. The Government must share its full part of the blame at least for its inept handling of the situation, if not for indirectly aiding and abetting it. After a lurid interlude that followed de-rationing and decontrol of sugar and the bout of profiteering, the arrangements that were arrived at worked reasonably well for many months. What happened during the last three months to upset these arrangements? Why stocks suddenly vanished in the short space of weeks or days has not yet been fully explained. But the chapter which, commenced when sugar stocks were frozen and Government apparently took over control under the powers given to them by the Essential Commodities Control Order is darker still. If the Government have the stocks in hand, the puzzled public still wonders why they have to wait helplessly until the supplies begin to flow in the next season, before making some arrangements for distribution?

Even so, making due allowance for all the sins of omission and commission in the matter of sugar, the scares that have been raised about sporadic shortages in other things do not seem to belong to this category. There is more than a hint that these scares are actually engineered by those

who stand to profit, if by any means, they can create an atmosphere of disorder and unsettlement. That they have had such a degree of success, the mere fact that panic can so easily be raised, suggests one obvious conclusion—namely that the people have faith and confidence neither in the power of the Government to control the economic system nor in their ability to run the administration.

CHEMISTRY has been beating biology all along the line. Synthetic products forged in the chemist's laboratory are claimed to be even better than their opposite numbers in the vegetable kingdom and what is more, they are turning out to be cheaper! Natural rubber is finding it hard to hold its own against the competition of the synthetic product. Rayon at one time threatened to oust cotton and silk. Though it did not actually turn the tables in the long run, it has been making steady progress. The latest is synthetic wool which some British chemists have evolved from groundnuts. The idea behind the discovery is simple. Wool is an animal protein fibre and groundnuts are vegetable protein. Animals eat vegetable protein and the internal chemistry of their body converts it into hair. What is more simple than to find out this internal chemistry in animal bodies and work it out in the laboratory and later on, on a factory scale? British chemists have done it after all. Ardil, which is the name given to the synthetically produced wool; it is reported, will be cheaper than natural wool. No one knows yet whether it would be as good, but that is only a question of time.