

frontier

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DEATH OF A BLUFF

THE people of Haryana have been fooled by the Congress once again. Refusing to learn from their experience after the last general election they allowed themselves to be swayed by the Congress propaganda that of all the parties, it alone could give the State a stable Ministry. A screening of sorts was staged to select defection-proof candidates as if the party abounds in men of incorrodible integrity. The ruse worked, and in the mid-term poll in May a fuddled electorate voted back the Congress to power with a majority sufficient to see it through till the next general election. History has now started repeating itself in all its sordid details, and the seven-month old Congress Ministry in the State is tottering. Mr Bhagwat Dayal Sharma is paying back the leaders of his erstwhile party in their own coin, for it was the present leadership of the Congress which had launched a policy of subverting the United Front ministries by playing on the avarice of unprincipled legislators. When some of the UF ministries were in trouble as a result of this policy the Prime Minister had said with a mixed air of injured innocence and ridicule that the Congress had nothing to do with it and the UF ministries were crumbling under the weight of their unity. The Fronts were in most cases emergency amalgams of disparate parties and groups, and it should have been a miracle if they were able to hold together for long against the Congress onslaught. There is no such saving grace for the Congress Ministry in Haryana. It is going to pieces because of the dry rot in the party.

Elated at the victory of their party at the mid-term poll in Haryana, the Congress leaders had complimented themselves on their show of sternness towardst he defectors. The anticlimax in Haryana has neither sobered nor shamed them, as is evident from Mr Morarji Desai's glib talk at elections meetings in this State. Desperate attempts are being made to keep the Bansilal Ministry in office, and eating all their brave words about disciplining the defectors, the Congress leaders are trying to woo Mr Sharma's followers back to the party. They have authorised Mr Bansilal to expand his Ministry clearly for the purpose of accommodating as many defectors as possible. Much is being sought to be made of Mr Sharma's expulsion from the party, but his associates have not been touched so that there may be no bar to their return to the fold. This open-door policy towards the defectors has been supplemented by Mr Bansilal

with a threat that he might recommend dissolution of the Assembly. A callow Chief Minister like him would not have dared to talk of such a drastic measure unless advised by his leaders in New Delhi. A similar bluff was tried in Madhya Pradesh last year but it did not work. There is no reason to take such threats seriously, for the Congress is no less scared of facing the electorate than other parties. Mr Bansi Lal was merely trying to bully the deserters and his depleted herd.

More unscrupulous has been the way the Governor of the State, a former civilian, is being made to play the Congress game. He is not, however, a new hand in this matter, for it is he who had recommended the dissolution of the Haryana Assembly last year when the UF Ministry had a slender majority because he was sick of the almost hourly ratting. The present situation in Haryana does not seem to be any different except that it is a Congress Ministry which is in trouble. That has been enough for the Governor; he refuses to be bothered by numbers and goes by what the Congress Chief Minister says. So great is his reliance on Mr Bansi Lal that he does not think an early trial of strength in the Assembly is necessary to decide the rival claims of the Congress and the newly formed United Front. The Chief Minister has set his face against an early session, and the Governor sees no harm in the uncertainty continuing till the Assembly meets, as scheduled, towards the end of January. In a similar situation last year, another Governor, he too a former civilian, had thought differently. Mr Dharma Vira could not wait for three weeks for the West Bengal Assembly to meet and dismissed the UF Ministry in West Bengal peremptorily, because on the strength of certain scraps of paper he was satisfied that the Ministry had lost its legislative majority. It seems the powers and duties of Governors vary not merely from State to State but also from time to time in accordance with the needs of the Congress party; they have become willing tools of the

power game of the Congress, or maybe they are only fulfilling their contractual obligations. By such manipulations the Congress is only hastening the process of disillusionment with the type of democracy it prescribed for the country.

Congress Campaign

Mr Morarji Desai, it appears, came to Calcutta both as Deputy Prime Minister and as a senior Congress leader. Such a combination of official and political roles may sometimes be inescapable, but is better avoided on the eve of elections. Men like Mr Desai make little effort to keep the two identities separate and do not seem averse to using their official position for party purposes. Mr Desai knew that his main engagements in Calcutta were official; yet he did not hesitate to utilise it for Congress electioneering as well. If he had come for electioneering alone, people could have treated the visit as it should have been. One consequence of the combination of two roles was that not only sections of the general public but also newspaper reporters (who should know better) seemed to treat Mr Desai's election speeches as pronouncements by the country's Deputy Prime Minister. In fact, Mr Desai himself blurred the distinction by saying at election meetings things that he was entitled to say only as Deputy Prime Minister; for example, his observations about the Centre's policy towards Kerala.

There is also the small matter of expenses. In view of his official engagements, the Deputy Prime Minister's trip was presumably financed by the Government. He travelled by an IAF plane, stayed at Raj Bhavan, was accompanied by officials from Delhi, and—so far as is known—used official transport to keep both his official and political engagements in the city. If this is not misuse of public funds, what is? We may, of course, be misinformed. The Congress party may, though we doubt it, have paid, or arranged to pay, the Government the part of the expenses incurred in

connection with Mr Desai's work in aid of the party. If so, let the Government make this public, and in convincing detail. Until this is done, the public will be entitled to the belief that public resources have been improperly used. Besides, how does one divide the expenses of a combined tour? Which part, and how large a part, of the air journey should be regarded as having been for party work? How many meals did the Deputy Prime Minister eat in his official capacity, and how many did Mr Desai need to sustain his strength for addressing at least two election meetings in a day? This is not exactly levity; it involves a point of principle which tends to be ignored by a senior Minister only in this country.

Obviously, Congress leaders like Mr Desai have no time for such niceties; they must save West Bengal for the Congress, howsoever dubious the means that might be necessary. At a meeting on Saturday a few miles from Calcutta, Mr Atulya Ghosh said that the Congress did not want votes by abusing other parties and promptly went on speaking of "a reign of terror and disorder" let loose by parties of the United Front. Mr Desai, who was speaking in Calcutta on the same day, was of course far more abusive. He accused the two communist parties of owing allegiance to Russia and China, described the leftists as "violent, anti-democratic and subversive", made a slanderous personal attack against Mr Ajoy Mukherjee, and, as a bull came to listen to his speech, asked the people not to be afraid of the bull since there were forces in the State much more harmful.

And, of course, much is being made of the allegedly violent tactics employed by the United Front and its supporters. The United Front has already given its reply to one of its opponents hurt in a cracker explosion in Midnapore: that it does not believe in violence even against traitors. A few Congress leaders, it was reported last weekend, had received a few stones after a meeting in Burdwan. Whenever such incidents occur, there seems to be no hesitation in holding the leftists responsible. Everybody knows

how easy it is to stage-manage such incidents for propaganda purposes and the United Front can legitimately complain that few voices are raised against violence directed against its supporters by identifiable elements among its opponents. A young man, said to be a supporter of the CPI(M), was stabbed in the Baranagore area on the day Mr P. C. Sen and some others received a few brickbats. Some time ago, a CPI(M) worker, pasting an election poster in Entally, was stabbed to death, and many other cases of right-wing violence have simply not been reported.

Midnapore Cracker

A correspondent writes:

Pretty bad that Mr Humayun Kabir was hurt in the jaw by a cracker at a Midnapore meeting. We hope that he will soon be able to resume his crusade and count the election seats before they are hatched. After all, there must be some political soothsayers for big businessmen, and at the moment Mr Kabir is the hero of their time. The pity of it all is that Mr Kabir, who imagines himself to be an Indian Joe McCarthy, has neither the capability nor the resources to be as effective as the American. Think of his record: Congressman, Independent (after his ouster from the Union Cabinet), Bangla Congress, BKD, PDF, Lok Dal—it is a large litter, too large to beget confidence. Mr Kabir has reduced politics almost to a game of word-making.

The genuine sympathy for the wounded Mr Kabir would have been sustained but for the way he has been talking his head off. In a pre-operation statement in the hospital he declared that he had wanted the Government to arrest Mr Jyoti Basu and Mr Ajoy Mukherjee before McNamara arrived in town, because it is these "captains" who are behind the hooligans. The hooligans themselves are small fry.

This is not the language of one who claims to be the saviour of West Bengal but of one who would not mind if

nastier incidents occur if these gain him a few more seats in the mid-term elections.

There have been at least 20 political murders of late in West Bengal, and the number of people killed by the police in this country in the past few months is not inconsiderable. But to people like Mr Kabir, while violence from the Left is a crime, violence of the Right is always righteous. The fighting kisan is a sinner, the murderous jotedar a saint. Why was it that Mr Kabir did not condemn the brutal police attack on those who had just ceased to be ministers in November last year? Now that Mr Kabir knows where the splinter hurts, he should be more compassionate about other victims of worse violence.

Mr Kabir is obsessed with the ballot-box. But what sort of democracy have elections produced in this country? Think of what is happening in Haryana at the moment, of what has happened all over the country since the last general election. To this sickening sequence Mr Kabir has also been a party. It can be taken for granted that if his Lok Dal gangs up with a hypothetically victorious Congress in February, the bliss will be short-lived and the game of defecations resumed. Five LD members may be O.K. But if ten or more candidates win, there will be trouble unless all of them are included in the Cabinet. We know the stuff these devotees of democracy are made of.

Bitter Sugar

The International Sugar Agreement recently signed under the auspices of the UNCTAD, has fixed the export price of the commodity at 58 paise per kilogram. If one shops around in the London market, sugar can be obtained at 40 paise, and if American wrath can be dared, the sweetening agent can be imported from Cuba at only 30 paise. In contrast, the market price here is close to Rs. 4.00 per kilogram; in other words, the price which our consumers are being called upon to pay is ten times the price of sugar

in the London market, and about thirteen times the price in Cuba.

What a topsy-turvy situation this is, with high-income countries paying low prices, and Indians, who have perhaps the lowest per capita income in the world, paying the highest price for a near-essential article. It will be idle to pretend that this high price is being determined by either the cost of production or the free forces of supply and demand. If, for example, factories are allowed to move down South, where both the yield per acre and the sucrose content of the cane are high, a reduction in the per unit cost of sugar would immediately take place. To claim that such a shift would throw out of employment hundreds of thousands of cane workers in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar is a plain exaggeration. As cane production shrinks, there should be scope in these States for crossing over to alternative crops, including foodgrains. Given the spiralling of foodgrain prices in recent years, it would have been in the nature of things if acreage had shifted in this manner towards paddy and other food crops at the expense of cane. Official price policy, however, has been precisely to forestall any such possibility: efforts have been directed to adjust the minimum price of sugarcane so as to maintain the competitiveness of cane cultivation vis-a-vis other crops, at each point of time, in all the States. Consequently, cane and, therefore, sugar pricing has been the victim of two separate irrationalities: first, the price has been set in relation to the level of cost of the least efficient unit; second, this price has been continuously tinkered with to keep pace with the price of foodgrains.

Scarcely any rhyme or reason inheres to policy decisions, such as these. At least in foodgrains, particularly rice, there is a worldwide shortage; in sugar it is exactly the opposite. If only the Government would agree to import a couple of hundred thousand tonnes of sugar each year—or even emit the threat to make such imports—internal prices will start to tumble. This could also encourage the sugar industry—the State Governments permitting—to

shift towards high-productivity regions like Maharashtra and Mysore. Importing two hundred thousand tonnes of sugar will involve barely Rs. 2 crores worth of foreign exchange, but the saving for the consumers will easily amount to Rs. 50 crores.

The regime in New Delhi does not however think in terms of imports: it has to worry about the election kitty, and about lining the pockets of the near and dear ones. In one of those breath-taking demonstrations of perverse logic, it is planning to export sugar to the extent of three hundred thousand tonnes annually. The export will of course be possible only through heavy subsidies, possibly amounting to Rs. 7 or 8 crores each year.

This is a scandalous situation; a Government which propounds and executes this type of policy deserves to be liquidated in no time. But India being India, there is hardly a ripple of protest; not only that, sugar manufacturers as well as rich cane-growers have the audacity to ask for a still higher price, which, betwixt this instant and tomorrow, might even be conceded to them. After all, the Congress will have to fight the mid-term elections in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh.

Russians In Nigeria

Thanks to the Russo-British cooperation, the Federal Government of Nigeria has been wholly successful in blockading Biafra. So much so that Oxfam reports that by January carbohydrates will disappear from Biafra. Proteins have already gone. The people have eaten up all the yams seeds supply and so there is no prospect of a harvest next year. *The Observer* said that 2 lakh people in Biafra had died in October, 3 lakh in November and five lakh would die in December. At the present rate of decimation, Colonel Gowon can reasonably expect to finish the business before 1971, for the population of Biafra is 7 million. Or even earlier considering the galloping rate of death. But Mr Wilson thinks that helping Nigeria with arms was the only humane way to end the civil war. The Soviet Union seems to have concurred.

Before July 6, 1967 the day the civil war started, the Russians used to be called by the Nigerian radio their worst enemies. Not so now. The Soviet Ambassador in Nigeria made a television broadcast on the Bolshevik Revolution for half an hour this year. It was the first time that any foreign national day was given importance by the Nigerian national television. The government press and broadcasting services kept absolute silence on the Russian entry into Czechoslovakia.

The Nigerians are grateful: when the U.S., having its hands full with Vietnam, refused to export weapons to Nigeria, the Soviet Union became the major arms supplier to Colonel Gowon: Mig 17, Ilyushin-28 bombers, jeeps and commando cars. Even shipment of aerial bombs, which the British felt too queasy to supply, were sent to Nigeria by the Soviet Union. Recently the Migs and Ilyushins killed civilian people in the crowded city of Umuahia.

The hitherto small Russian Embassy in Lagos is now a concrete fortress, holding 13 diplomats. Till now, there were only American and British military attaches in Nigeria; now the

Soviet Union has contributed one. According to a captured federalist soldier, Nigerian troops are being trained by the Russians.

Not by arms alone. A 8-man Soviet team of economic experts went to Nigeria on November 10 and concluded a bilateral economic and technical assistance agreement for a \$140-million project to construct an iron and steel complex in Nigeria.

It is no mystery that the British Government should help the Federal Government of Nigeria. British students may protest against the arms supply, Oxfam may demand mercy to Biafrans, but the British Government could not care less. It has to keep a firm control over its erstwhile colony, the seeds of dissension being sown by itself before it left the country. But no one explains why the Soviet Union should back the reactionary and feudal elements of Nigeria in preference to the bourgeoisie and working class of Biafra. Is it because support given to Nigeria would boost its image in the predominantly Muslim Middle East? The Hausa, Fulani, Kanuri and Nupe, the major tribes of Nigeria, are Muslims. Or possibly, the Kremlin thought that backing Nigeria would help to win the hearts of African States, to which Balkanization is a frightening word, although it has no particular meaning in the context of the pluralistic cultures of Africa. Or more possibly, the Soviet Union, too, banked, as did the British, on the bigger numerical forces of Nigeria which, it hoped, would finish Biafra in no time. Whatever the reason, it is difficult to find any facade of ideological justification for the Russian help to Nigeria.

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Haryana Dithers

FROM A POLITICAL
CORRESPONDENT

WITH the latest phase of man-snatching in Haryana, a new-fangled Congress myth dissolves in the air. Dissolution of the legislature and fresh elections need not necessarily deter defections or check political instability where politics is just backward. Defections are a phenomenon of the Hindi belt, like the cow protection fad. And it is mostly a Congress problem. The Prime Minister should indeed be happy that Mr Morarji Desai, the Parliamentary Board member in charge of Haryana under the Syndicate's "zonal" dispensation, has been cut to size. Mr Desai's chela, Mr Bhagwat Dayal Sharma, who led the revolt, is out of the party, which only proves that even Gandhian platitudes of the type popularised by Mr Desai are no foil against the backward politics of the cow country. When the Assembly meets early in January, it is by no means certain that the Bansi Lal Ministry would not be toppled because the politics of defection has an inexorable logic all its own. If Mr Chavan wanted to test a political theory in Haryana, he must have found that the experiment has failed. A mid-term election is at best a superficial solution to the political pandemonium all the way from Chandigarh to Patna—and Delhi included, where attitudes are so primitive.

Which raises the larger question. Can the Congress keep Punjab, Uttar Pradesh or Bihar even if it wins the mid-term polls? The leadership's approach to the mid-term elections has been so lackadaisical that the party enters the paddock with practically no political preparation. For instance, what has been done these two years to revitalise the party? A third of the Assembly seats in the country is at stake in these States and about 40 per cent of the country's electorate is involved. Finances are still a big problem. But the latest party directive

that individual leaders who collect funds should make them over to the party would only encourage the leaders to collect the funds and not to disclose them to the party at all.

The Government leadership's only concern now appears to be the fancied Naxalite revolts in several parts of the country. What is significant is that the same set of bureaucrats in the Home Ministry who psyched Mr G. L. Nanda into ordering a mass round up of the Left Communists in 1964 are planning the policy still. Last week, the Home Secretary, Mr L. P. Singh, wrote to the governments of Assam, West Bengal, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh alerting them about possible Wynad-type attacks on police stations in the months to come in these States.

The Home Secretary's letter is in short a time-table of the projected upheavals in various Naxalite pockets in these States—where and when a raid could be expected. The communication makes hardly any distinction between the amateurish Kerala raids and the clashes that might result in the context of a genuine agrarian unrest. Secondly, the communication makes it appear that it is the Centre's policy to attribute any organised peasant movement in the country to the political leadership of the Naxalites. The Centre's communication would only encourage some of the State governments to adopt this easy recourse to cover up other things. For instance, the attack on a bus in a tribal tract in Andhra Pradesh, first attributed to Naxalite Girijans, has turned out to be a clash between two Congress factions in the area.

One is struck by the obvious difference between what Mr Chavan has been saying in Parliament and what the minions in his Ministry seem to have taken for granted. The Home Minister would not presume that the Kerala raids had anything to do with the call of the All India Co-ordinating Committee of Communist Revolutionaries which met in Calcutta in October. But his Ministry's letter to the States suggests that the silly adventures in Kerala were part of the Naxalite movement in the country.

Looking back on the Kerala incidents, one is struck by the obvious absurdities about them. Ajitha was paraded by the police as though she was an exhibit. And Mr Kunnikal Narayanan has been presented to the Press after his arrest to proclaim to the world that the world's one and only genuine revolution has failed and that he was a Maoist. The Criminal Procedure Code does not permit this kind of absurdity.

On the whole the Centre is in a fairly comfortable position at the moment. There is no prospect of the long-awaited Cabinet reshuffle until the Nagercoil by-election next month. Mr Kamaraj is the Syndicate's favourite for inclusion in the Central Cabinet, if he wins the by-election. It should be a marginal victory, even if he makes it, thanks to the triangular contest. But the Centre seems to be miscalculating things in Madras State. For instance, it thinks the DMK's stand on the language issue has softened considerably. Nothing has been done to equalise the language burden the Language Policy Resolution imposes on the non-Hindi people. On the use of Hindi commands in NCC, the Centre has not relented a bit and is out to get tough with Madras and go ahead with its plans to revive NCC training in the State from the next academic year. The deadlock over the three-language formula continues. In All India Radio, English has been pushed to the background and Hindi has been installed as the super-language of the country, which is enough to offend the Tamil sentiment.

Mr Annadurai's desire to softpedal the language issue and its fairly respectable showing at the Madras City Corporation elections have given the Congress a false sense of confidence. Slick public relationing by New Delhi might have got the DMK leadership round but not its following. The student movement in Madras State on emotional issues might well overtake the DMK and even if Mr Annadurai wants it secretly, Mr Kamaraj's election to the Lok Sabha cannot be taken for granted.

DECEMBER 15, 1968

DECEMBER 21, 1968

Calcutta Diary

CHARAN GUPTA

THERE are certain imperatives in the situation; Mr P. C. Sen has to say that the Congress is going to capture all the 280 seats—each one of them—in the mid-term election. Mr Sen would have been hardly Mr Sen, and the election season hardly the election season, if the claim was any less total. Nobody is being fooled. My private information is that Congress is now reconciled to having a maximum of 105 seats in the new Assembly. Surprisingly, most people who are doing the advanced calculations—including, at one end, the C.B.I. and, at the other, the United Front—I am told, agree, more or less, with this assessment of the likely Congress performance. Views diverge only with respect to the arithmetic on the number of seats the United Front itself is going to capture: as of this week, the Front is confident of winning between 170 and 180 seats, while those who are still pinning their hopes on a Congress-INDF-Lok Dal-PSP-Bengal National Party combine to save West Bengal from the Communists and the 'Naxalites' do genuinely believe that, come February 9, the Front would somehow fall short of an absolute majority. That is also the hope of the industrialists and businessmen who have suddenly now woken up to their responsibilities towards Calcutta and its cause. This election-eve bout of conscience will of course die a natural death once the results of the poll are announced: if the Congress emerges victorious, the purpose of the ersatz moral fervour would have been amply served; if the United Front wins, the industrialists might as well start cutting their investments—and Calcutta could take the hindmost.

In the past, potentates and similar sorts have ascribed their misfortune to slow horses and fast women; in their analysis of the anticipated February debacle, Congressmen are heaping the blame on slow-moving civil servants and the fast-talking

Governor. Contrary to what even the United Front had feared, the floods in North Bengal—and the consequent postponement of the poll—instead of improving the prospects for the Congress have made them immensely worse. The ineptness of the local administrators, coupled with the casual way of dealing with even grave matters in Writers' Building, has fouled up beyond redemption the party's starry-eyed plans to cash in on the goodwill of official relief operations. The rest of the debacle has been Shri Dharma Vira's very personal contribution. It had taken him six days to descend from Darjeeling to Siliguri in that grim week following the fury of the October 4-5 night; even that descent was not an autonomous movement, but was induced by the visit of Mr Morarji Desai. And the Governor has stuck to his own code of manners. He could not spare the time to meet the representatives of the Jute Workers' Union to discuss the problems faced by the 80,000 retrenched workers in the jute industry; he was "much too busy" to meet the union leaders, they could leave the relevant papers behind. Busy with what? He has seemingly enough time to "inaugurate" film shows, to go to the Golf Club, to adorn cocktail occasions, to deliver glib perorations to chambers of commerce. By his disgraceful behaviour, with every day, the Governor must be making the Congress lose at least 100,000 votes. Mr Atulya Ghosh, it seems, would never put up with Mr Dharma Vira; now he has the objective reason for not being able to.

* * *

So the odds are for the United Front's returning to Writers' Building. But what will it do with this victory? The thirtytwo-point programme is a *pot pourri* of generalities; if good intentions are to be translated into reality, the Front will need strong will power. It cannot afford to carry

nincompoops as ministers, whatever the exigencies of intra-front party politics; it cannot afford to be kind to the unscrupulous and inefficient lot of senior civil servants and police officials who are at present ruling the roast in the State; it has to have the courage to alienate the jotedars and the industrialists; it must not allow petty jealousies in the way of executive power gravitating towards genuinely able ministers; and it must have a programme of sweeping agrarian reform which will not be bonded to the niceties of conventional law and order. Finally, it must not be scared of having a confrontation with New Delhi. The trouble with the United Front is that by now it has turned into a plant with many lodgings; some of these deserve to be weeded out. There will be no dearth of counsel that the Front ministry should this time hasten slowly, must first consolidate its political hold over the State before substantive problems are taken on hand, for otherwise the whole thing might once more blow up. But this is precisely what mity. The whole tone of the new administration will be set by what it is able to achieve during the first couple of months. If it starts out by behaving like a Nervous Nelly—as it did the last time—it will never be given the opportunity to consolidate its influence; New Delhi would hem it in, the Governor would browbeat it, the ragamuffins of the civil service would frighten it, the police would lead it astray, and the rural racketeers and urban industrialists would sweettalk it into non-activity. Does the United Front have the courage to stand up to the hostile forces and push through its minimum programme? If things turn out in the way it is being anticipated it will get its second chance in February. If it muffs this one too, the people of the State, for all one can sermonise, would make up their mind and turn—perhaps—towards a far-out direction.

* * *

It was graceful for the Front to demand last week that Mr Kanu Sanyal and his comrades be accorded the status of political prisoner. Cynics might

suggest that the statement is merely a vote-catching device. But let me take the United Front at its face value, and proceed from there. Once in power, what does it propose to do with the intense young men and women whose exploits have introduced such a tremendous qualitative change in the political situation? Can we, please, have a pledge from the Front that, let Mr Chavan go to the winds, one of their very first acts on taking charge in Writers' Building will be to release Kanu Sanyal and the rest of the political prisoners who are freely described as adherents of the Naxalbari path? Can we have a pledge that all those who have been clamped behind the bars under the Preventive Detention Act for exclusively political reasons will be let out with honour, and all pending cases related to disputes over land and harvesting rights be summarily withdrawn? In other words, can we have a straightforward assurance from the United Front that the ethos it will follow will be one unflinchingly loyal to the cause of workers, the peasants and the middle class, and not one handed out by Indira Gandhi, Morarji Desai, Y. B. Chavan and company? Will the United Front be proud of its professed socialist faith—and fearless in its defence of it? The worst that would happen to the Front would be for it to be stampeded into a reactionary course of action by the Centre, by the enemy newspapers, by the shrill put-up voices of the capitalists and the rich landowners, as it was last year. One would hope that Mr Ajoy Mukherjee is a reformed man this year; at least, he ought to be a chastened man.

* *

I have also a plea to mount before the Marxist Communist party, the largest constituent of the Front. Is it that the party has washed the Naxalbari adherents of its hand, and it has no residual responsibility? Is the general attitude one of letting the adventurists stew in their Peking juice, and the party could not care less? Epithets break no bones but they do not heal any either. After all, the Marxist Communists themselves were being called 'adventurists' by the minions of

the Right Communist Party till only about two years ago. It would be foolish to be wretchedly dogmatic about correct tactical lines in the present state of confusion; lags and leads are inevitable as between judgments reached by different individuals. The issue of breach of inner party discipline too can be viewed from a somewhat dialectical angle. All I am driving at is that it will be a pity—and a blunder of a major proportion—if the leadership of the CP(M) insists on harping on what it considers to be negative aspects of the Naxalbari movement, and slurs over its glorious, exhilarating side. Who can deny that whatever ferment there is discernible today in the country is on account of the daring and sweep of the little 'adventure' that was launched in the West Bengal *terai* last year—and on account of the zestful, idealistic students who took it up from there? Pray, what have been the overall contribution in the course of the last one year, to the cause of social transformation by the careerist MPs belonging to the Left some of whom have been reduced to confusing their parliamentary duties with the performance of comic antics for the regalement of the Establishment in New Delhi?

It is no use putting on blinkers. The CP(M), for its own long-term survival—if not for the long-term interests of the movement—has to build a line of communication with the young militants who are now either in the wilderness or in formal disgrace. Its failure to do so will be a major tragedy; let nobody be under any illusion that simply because a few of the recalcitrants are turned out from the party, everything will turn out to be sweet and smooth; the fact remains that the new generation of idealists are no longer feeling attracted to the CP(M). Unless the party thinks that it can march along despite lack of support from the younger generation, it has to do something about it and quick. The triumphal re-entry into Writers' Building cannot possibly be the end of the road for the party. Or maybe I am mistaken.

* *

I have a rather hilarious footnote to

add to the story of the young student who was arrested under the Preventive Detention Act, for the second time during one year, on the eve of Robert McNamara's visit. When he was arrested for the first time last year, after about a month he was produced before the reviewing board, over which was presiding an ancient former Chief Justice of the Calcutta High Court. The ex-Chief Justice went thundering at the boy: "Fellow, aren't you ashamed of yourself? Why can't you give up hooliganism, and for a change use your time to do your studies?" "But I do my studies." More roaring from the other end of the table: "Don't argue. Let me have a look at your papers." The papers were looked into: the boy had a uniformly brilliant academic career, starting from his school days till the week he was arrested. But the former Chief Justice was not to be daunted; he roared once more: "Cheeky young man, after indulging in all this hooliganism, how the devil do you manage to have time for studies?"

But did I say this was a *hilarious* footnote to the young man's story?

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U. P. Teachers On Warpath ?

INDUKANTA SHUKLA

THE Higher Secondary school teachers have defied the ordinance and the jails are being filled up with them. The Government, as usual, pleads its helplessness for lack of funds. But people are amazed at the alacrity with which it swung into action and clamped the draconian ordinance similar to the one against clerks rammed by New Delhi earlier. And the teachers ask why does the Government, which is sluggish and craven vis-a-vis the tycoons guilty of evasion of taxes running into crores, and other malpractices like adulteration and blackmarketing, swoop so swiftly and savagely on the clerks and teachers? Dangerous questions these and for raising them teachers must be taught a lesson. The bona fides of the Government, on this reckoning, are suspect and its behaviour reprehensible.

Collaterally, for their persistent refusal to sabotage the teachers' movement the leftists are being rounded up all over the State. The pattern is familiar and the HQ of these Mafia operations is called the capital of India. Lucknow is as much under a Congress Government as New Delhi. Popular assertion that President's rule is Congress rule is daily demonstrable.

What has given the Government the creeps? The respectable teachers have shed their bourgeois inhibitions, banded together for a cause and thrown their chins up for the first time. This massive upsurge has injected into them a militancy whose depths and dimensions they are viewing with gladsome

wonder, and the Government with mistrust and apprehension. Both are busy calculating its potential. The teachers feel re-assured and confident, the Government glowers. What is more, the students and degree college teachers have pledged their support to the striking fraternity.

Which is what the Government is frightened of. Closing of discriminatory ranks among teachers may well be one welcome consequence of the movement. It may be fleeting, it may be feckless. But it is there, evolving, emerging visibly. Again, the strike has brought the teachers and students closer in an affectionate alignment reminiscent, however faintly at present, of the pre-Independence era. Some of the stigma of the teacher as one among many mercenaries in modern society is shed, and it is touching to see wave after wave of students—kids among them—visiting their teachers in the jails to pay them their regards and offer them their services so that they bear their tedium well. This development, understandably, peeves and perturbs the oligarchs who are avowed votaries or ventriloquists of non-alignment.

An aspect of the movement has come, rightly enough, into the proper focus. In case of a prolonged show-down with the Government, the plight of the urban teachers would be markedly difficult, and different from that of those with rural assets and relatives to fall back upon. For such an eventuality the teachers perhaps did not prepare themselves. But the solidarity forged among them in the first bout with the Government will hereafter stir into function that organizational acumen which in their first flush of mass action they failed to invoke and benefit by. Bonism may not be justified in the present phase, but these postures and plays are radical enough in the cow country. And this is to say much.

Tailpiece: The Government is spending Rs. 7.50 per teacher in the jails. But the teachers insist it is only Rs. 3 per head. Whose pockets are lined with the rest of the dough? Of the officers of a government which chronically bewails lack of funds.

BHU is not for Burning

FROM A CORRESPONDENT

DR Sen from the eminent heights of Delhi sings paeans of varsity autonomy while a Vice-Chancellor called (P)A. C. Joshi looks on as maniacs and marauders are let loose upon innocent students and skulls are broken, limbs dislocated, bodies battered and property pillaged or set on fire. The two-pronged flame-throwers are the (R)SS and the PAC: the force called Armed Constabulary (of provincial picarons) and the black-capped Hindu Nazis run amuck.

A visit to the district jail, Varanasi, gives a glimpse of their doings. Two brilliant students of Mining-Metallurgy, one from Lucknow, another from Orissa, first-rankers to boot, lay drenched in blood, their bodies banded all over. They are stupefied, and wondering as to what brought it on them. Other students lying alongside were as badly beaten and mashed. Unable to move or talk comfortably they told me somehow that they were set upon by some gangsters followed by PAC hoodlums who pilfered their articles, bashed them right and left, arrested them and then had them lined up in the Bhelupura police station for a second dressing down which undid them.

The progressive students and leftist leaders of the city were clubbed together in a selective hunt leading to quick arrests in several swoops. Now the incendiarism and pillage in the varsity could be imputed to them. Funnily enough, the comrades are protesting that their leaders did not visit the varsity at all this year. To preserve their parliamentary skins they left the students in the lurch, leaderless. Even this failed to win them certifiable respectability necessary for escaping the Congress dragnet.

The leftists are poor smokescreen for the real goons and favourites of the PAC-AC combine. The VC has to be vindicated by New Delhi. The stakes are high with the mini-elections imminent. A scapegoat for persecution as also for buttressing the police

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morale must be invented. Surely it is not to be the Black Hoods of the RSS, for they, from all accounts, have rendered yeoman service by burning property and bleeding people. Here come handy the commies. Here enter the Home Ministry of Chhatrapati Chavan.

Yes, now there is peace—through wholesale absenteeism. In fright the students fled the hostels, stayed in the city hotels outside, and in despair left the city. Yet the VC tells a gullible Delhi that the situation is normal and the varsity is to remain open. With the students gone or in jail, with Sec. 144 clamped on the city, with PAC astride the campus, if the situation can be described as normal, God help Joshi's perception.

The boys recall, as the citizens do, it was Mr Joshi who broke peace by his insistence, despite seething turmoil, on keeping BHU open—which led to the students being trapped for a drubbing.

The VC, the PAC and the Union Home Ministry outfit has a simplistic solution for problems plaguing India. Traditionally it is Bengalis who make bombs and launch revolts. Impound them and all be well. And this belief held in dead earnestness is evident from the rabid thoroughness with which Mukherjis, Malliks, Majumdars and Sinhas have been pulverized. If there are a few Singhs etc. among them, let them know that this contact is combustible.

The medieval manner in which the Kashi Vidyapith students' peaceful procession, a token of their sympathy for their BHU brethren, was smashed and the way in which the PAC boos hounded and hacked at them in the lavatories, bathrooms, verandas is proof, among other things, of the peace the VC would have. The walls and floors of the hostel, as in BHU, with splashes of blood on them are mute but eloquent testimonies that Bengalis have myriad names, and they are not born in a certain State of India, but made out of intelligent, independent-minded young men and women who hold their heads high and cry unto death: Down with Fascism! BHU is not for burning!

The Comprador And His Capital

NISHAD

WE give below certain facts and figures relating to some of the biggest companies in India, which we hope would explode the myth that the big capitalists/industrialists of India are independent and mutually competitive groups which have antagonistic contradiction with each other and imperialism.

The objective facts of the Indian economic scene should have been enough to show that in the age of imperialism, an independent, national, big bourgeois cannot develop in any colonial country. In order to develop at all the bourgeoisie of the colonial country must submit to and ally itself with imperialism; that in spite of being an underdeveloped country, India's industry is operating with huge idle capacity; that Indian industry is having to close down, retrench, reduce real wages, and pauperise both the urban and the rural sections. In short it is being made to kill its own market; that Indian industry has at present and in the past a relationship with imperialism and feudalism which is overwhelmingly submissive and friendly; that Indian industry is having to import unpatented know-how at high cost and accept restrictions on export from foreign "collaborators". (RBI-Survey of Collaboration); that the State depends absolutely on foreign imperialists; that the rupee, even within the country, is totally dependent on those who hold one-fifth of the total money in circulation—PL 480; that it is highly depended on an infrastructure (i.e. railways, roads, power, food, administration of the country) which is under the command of U.S. and Russian economic and political interests; that the very origin and growth of the Indian entrepreneur in the colonial era was that of a subservient lackey, never that of an independent bourgeois (in contrast to the development of the bourgeois of France, Germany, U.K. or pre-World War II Japan).

In the tables given later we have dealt with companies which belong to

the biggest industrial families in India. The CPI and CPI(M) hope to use the "democratic tendencies", "the anti-feudal inclinations", "the anti-imperialist contradictions", of the group. It is this faith which leads them to swear by the Constitution, rule by UF Ministries and depend exclusively on non-violent, non-revolutionary tactics. From 1952 onwards their actions have been based on a single premise—that there is an *independent* Indian big bourgeois.

Being bourgeois and big, this class is, of course an "enemy" to the CPI and CPI(M). But the "enmity" derives more from the "monopolist" character of this bourgeois than from the latter's *basic anti-national, comprador origin and character*. Therefore, to the CPI and CPI(M) this class is an enigma—to be fostered and to be fought at the same time. This results in the confusion and the bewildering changes of direction that so frequently take place in the action of these parties. In order to explain away the facts of life, the two parties maintain that this class is "leaning heavy on" or "is increasingly compromising with" imperialism. They even go so far as to say that "we are in danger of coming under neo-colonialist exploitation." They argue that till 1947 India was a colony (and therefore could only have a dependent big bourgeois); that from 1947 India became independent and the big bourgeois picked up State power and became bigger and more independent until 1957, (as if "becoming" and "picking up" could happen in the present epoch); that since 1957, according to CPI and CPI(M), the bourgeois has been submitting, is compromising with imperialism, but apparently no qualitative change has occurred.

What we give below is neither complete nor conclusive. Yet, it ought to serve as an indication of the financial dependence of the Indian big bourgeois on foreign finance.

This study bases itself on the fact

that the ability of the capitalist to serve his own and national interest diminishes as he becomes increasingly dependent upon foreign finance. When dependence on foreign loans reaches, such proportions that for every Re. 1 of the "owner" he has borrowed Rs. 3 or 4 even Rs. 10, from foreigners, his "independence" must logically vanish. It is his creditors by whose grace he earns his income. His creditors are then in a position to dictate his policies, about sales, purchase, finance and national politics; control his operations and destroy him, should he prove disloyal or unruly.

The relevance of this type of study can be gauged from the following comment made in the course of a speech to shareholders of Indian Iron & Steel Company by Sir Biren Mukherjee on July 24, 1968. Discussing the primary liability of the management to the creditors and informing the shareholders that no dividend shall be paid to them, he said: "Shareholders will realise that whereas the

gross block of the Company has increased from Rs. 33 crores to Rs. 121 crores at present, their own direct contribution towards the growth of the Company has been limited to only Rs. 7 crores through the proceeds of a small issue in 1957".

In this paper, we repeat, the economy is not treated as a whole, but individual large companies have been analysed on the basis of their annual reports. Therefore, two important aspects have not been touched upon. These are dependence of Indian big bourgeois on foreign (mainly imperialist) technology, not only for the pilot plants but also for subsequent expansions and even for maintenance; and the dependence of the entire infrastructure of Indian industry and commerce—administration, food, railways, power, roads—upon imperialist 'aid'.

The data have been arranged as follows:

1. *Group*: The Indian business

group that supposedly "controls" the economy.

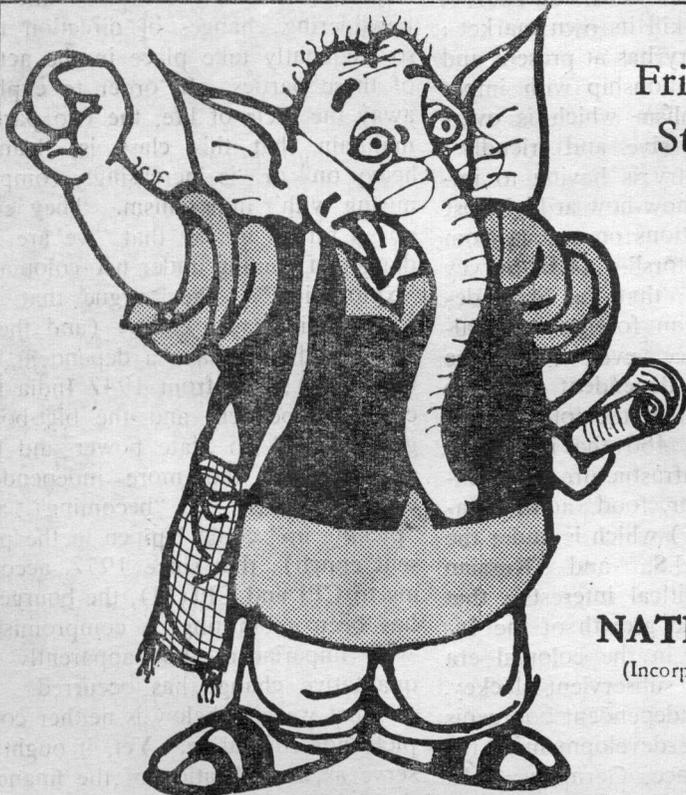
In actual practice they are managers-cum-senior partners who earn commission, interest and share of profit of the business; and exercise political power by virtue of their "ownership" (actually by virtue of their position as favoured agents of this or that foreign power); and deliver to the foreign creditor profits in the shape of interest, profit on capital and maintenance purchases, dividends and a share of the Indian and Afro-Asian Market.

2. *Company*

Name of Company and date of annual report, and the name of the collaborating foreign group.

3. *Equity and Return*

Equity capital is that capital whose ownership (legally at least) confers a right to elect the directors of the company. The "owning" group seldom owns the total equity capital. They just invest enough to give themselves a controlling interest and then



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scatter the rest of the shares as widely as possible so that their authority can never be challenged. Sometimes the "owning" group's share of equity capital can be as low as 20%.

Of the total equity capital of a company, a part might represent bonus shares. These are profits distributed as shares. Therefore, these do not represent money investment by shareholders. The profit was built up by the borrowed capital. Therefore the holders of bonus shares owe more to their creditors than to their investment. To find the real contribution

of the shareholders, bonus capital is to be deducted from total equity.

This is the crux of the study: the profit of the Indian bourgeois is dependent chiefly on foreign (mainly U.S.) finance and therefore its relationship with imperialism is mainly non-antagonistic.

4. Loans

Name of the creditor. Foreign creditors are grouped together.

The sum paid as interest is shown. Compare this with dividend, that is, what the shareholders get and what the creditors take.

5. Ratio

Foreign loan for every rupee of actually contributed capital.

6. Abbreviations

- IBRD —World Bank
- DLF —Development Loan Fund —USA
- AID —Agency for International Development, USA
- EXIM —Export Import Bank—USA
- CDFC —Commonwealth Development Fund—UK
- ICICI —Industrial Credit and Development Corporation

All in Rupees Crores

Group	Company	Equity	Foreign Loan	Ratio
TATA	Tata Iron & Steel Co. TISCO 1967-1968	Equity : 38.6	IBRD, U.S. 25.7	1:1.2
		Bonus : 14.8	N & G Bank UK 2.0	
		Contrbn. : 23.8	ICICI .9	
		Dividend : 4.4	28.6	
			INTEREST 2.9	

Note : Growth

	Loans	Assets	Profit
1925-26	6.7	21	1.0
1944-45	2.3	34	4.0
1951-52	2.5	44	5.4
1956-57	21.5	93	8.1
1958-59	83.8	172	8.2
1966-67	51.5	238	19.1

Group	Company	Equity	Foreign Loan	Ratio
TATA	Andhra Valley Power 1667-69	Equity : 3.3	AID US 6.3	1:3
			IBRD—US 3.3	
			9.6	
		Dividend : .4	INTEREST .6	

Note : Growth

	Loans	Assets	Profit
1925-26	3.8	6.1	.2
1946-47	1.0	5.1	.2
1950-51	1.0	5.2	.3
1960-61	4.8	11.7	.7
1967-68	10.3	18.6	1.3

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Group	Company	Equity	Foreign Loan	Ratio
TATA	Tata Engineering & Locomotive Co. Ltd. TELCO: 1966-67 (West German)	Equity : 14.8	AID—US 19.1	1:1.6
		Bonus : 2.0		
		Contrbn. : 12.3		
		DIVIDEND 2.1	INTEREST 3.2	
BIRLA	Century Spinning 1967	Equity : 3.2	Institutions 5.3	1:6.9
		Bonus : 1.9	Suppliers of Machinery 1.9	
		Contrbn. : 1.3	7.2	
		DIVIDEND .7	INTEREST .8	
Note : <i>Growth</i>				
	Loans Assets Profit			
1945-46	— .4 0.2			
1951-52	2.2 5.6 .7			
1957-58	15.5 16.8 2.3			
1961-62	14.7 29.3 4.5			
1966-67	43.0 68.4 11.2			
BIRLA	Orient Paper 1967-68	Equity : 3.8	EXIM—US 10.9	1:13.6
		Bonus : 3.0		
		Contrbn. : .8		
		DIVIDEND .4	INTEREST 1.6	
BIRLA	Hindustan Motor 1967-68 (General Motors USA)	Equity : 8.2	AID—US 22.1	1:2.8
			CDFC—UK 1.1	
			23.2	
		DIVIDEND 1.0	INTEREST 2.0	
BIRLA	Hindustan Aluminium 1967 (Kaiser Aluminium USA)	Equity : 7.1	EXIM (US) 19.3	1:3.5
			AID (US) 4.8	
			Kaiser (US) .5	
			ICICI .1	
		24.7		
		DIVIDEND .6	INTEREST 1.9	
BIRLA	Renusaga Power Co. (General Electric USA)	Equity : 3.8	AID (US) 4.8	1:4
			Suppliers of machinery—US 10.3	
			15.1	
		DIVIDEND Nil	INTEREST .4	

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Group	Company	Equity	Foreign Loan	Ratio
SHRI RAM	Delhi Cloth Mills DCM 1967-68	Equity : 6.6	AID (US) 6.4	1:10.2
		Bonus : 5.5	ICICI .2	
		Contrbn. : 1.1	Mitsubishi 2.0	
			Suppliers of Machinery 2.7	
			<u>11.2</u>	
	DIVIDEND .8	INTEREST 1.7		
WALCHAND	Premier Automobiles 1965-66 (FIAT—Italy)	Equity : 7.5	DLF (US) AID 6.7	1:1
			Fiat .4	
			<u>7.1</u>	
		DIVIDEND .4	INTEREST 1.0	
Note : Growth				
		Loans	Assets	
		1946-47 —	.3	
		1950-51 .7	2.0	
		1955-56 3.0	3.0	
		1960-61 4.0	6.0	
		1965-66 16.2	21.4	
MARTIN BURN	Indian Iron & Steel Co. 1967-68	Equity : 24.8	IBRD (US) 6.5	1:1.3
		Bonus : 14.5	N & G (UK) 6.6	
		Contrbn. : 10.3	<u>13.1</u>	
		DIVIDEND Nil	INTEREST 1.2	
CHETTIAR	Ashok Leyland (1967-68) (Leyland UK)	Equity : 7.8	CDFCC (UK) .9	1:2.4
		Foreign Holding 4.3	N & G (UK) 4.3	
		<u>3.5</u>	FNCB (US) 1.2	
			ICICI 1.8	
			<u>3.2</u>	
	DIVIDEND .6	INTEREST .4		
CHETTIAR	Madras Aluminium (Montecatini—Italy)	Equity : 4.5	Mediobanca Italy 8.6	1:2.2
		Foreign Holding : .5	ICICI .1	
		<u>4.0</u>	<u>8.7</u>	
		4.0		
		DIVIDEND Nil	INTEREST .7	

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Group	Company	Equity	Foreign Loan	Ratio
MAFATLAL	Mafatlal Fine Spinning 1966-67	Equity : .9	ICICI 1.0	1:4.5
		Bonus : .5	Suppliers of Machinery 0.8	
		Contrbn. : .4	1.8	
		DIVIDEND .3	INTEREST .2	
MAFATLAL	National Organic Chemical 1967 (Shell Petroleum) Co. UK—Dutch)	Equity : 12.0	Foreign Guarantee .6	1:1.5
			ICICI 1.0	
			Shell 16.3	
		DIVIDEND Nil	INTEREST 1.3	

*The Press***Rats Of Haryana**

COMMENTATOR

THE Congress balloon has been pricked in Haryana at last. Most papers have expressed themselves against the tactics employed by the Congress party to keep itself in power in Haryana, though they all regret the imminent end of Congress rule in the State. Mr Bhagwat Dayal Sharma, who organised the defection, has come in for sharp criticism; so also the newly formed United Front. But the present Chief Minister, Mr Bansilal, emerges practically unscathed, though some papers have not been able to agree with him that the assembly should be dissolved in the event of a fall of the Congress Ministry.

The Indian Express regrets that even when Mr Sharma gave the High Command 24 hours' ultimatum, the central leadership tried to get the rebel leader to come to Delhi for a bargaining session. Mr Sharma has been suspended only and no action has been taken against the 15 Congress MLAs who have defected from the party under Mr Sharma's persuasion. Appa-

rently it is still hoped that some, if not all, of these defectors can be brought back to the Congress fold. One is therefore compelled to conclude that opportunism reigns supreme in all camps. Advising the Governor to deal with the situation in an "upright manner" the paper says that it is not the Governor's job to determine whether Mr Bansilal has lost his legislative majority. The question must be decided on the floor of the House, and the Governor should lose no time in summoning the Assembly for this purpose. Nor should he make the mistake of dissolving the House in case Mr Bansilal advises dissolution to evade defeat on the floor of the House. In the event of the Bansilal Ministry's defeat, the proper course would be to give the SVD a chance to form a Government. It is not the Governor's function to punish defectors. Even if Haryana's politicians are determined to make a mockery of parliamentary democracy, the Governor should try to keep alive the spirit of the parliamentary system.

The Times of India also feels that the Centre must put out of its mind any thought of imposing President's rule on Haryana by way of a preemptive strike to protect parliamentary democracy. Whether the Congress or

the newly expanded SVD has a majority in the legislature is a question which has to be decided on the floor of the House and nowhere else. Nor can it be assumed in advance that the majority claimed by one side or the other will be necessarily unstable or will lead to a perversion of the parliamentary process. This too has to be confirmed by events. Holding the Congress High Command responsible for the turn of events in Haryana the paper says that common prudence should have warned the High Command against accepting the calculations of Mr Bansilal, who was entirely new to the rough and tumble of Haryana politics. Relying on this optimistic assessment the Congress President apparently decided that a show of firmness would be in order, forgetting that in the case of a party so accident-prone as the Haryana Congress, a posture of this kind, unless one was very careful, might only appear farcical. This is precisely what has happened. Until almost the last minute, the High Command seemed confident of averting a trial of strength or being able to overcome it and spoke of its determination to maintain discipline. It was clearly unprepared for the crisis that has overtaken it. In the face of the crisis the High Command's

determination to maintain discipline has wilted noticeably. A massive expansion of the Cabinet seems likely, but this is a game at which Mr Bansi Lal will be no match for Rao Birendra Singh who has been waiting in the wings all these months and now moves to the centre of the stage as Mr Sharma's principal ally. The Bansi Lal Ministry may salvage enough from the debris to keep afloat a little longer but only by giving up all pretence of maintaining discipline.

The Hindustan Times notes that nearly as impressively as it had, through a mid-term poll, pulled itself out of political instability, the infant State of Haryana has moved to the brink of instability. How the Congress leaders handle the issue of indiscipline highlighted once again by the defections in Haryana is strictly speaking an internal affair of their party. The main thing to bear in mind is how to enable the people of Haryana to have a stable representative government. Whether the Congress party has lost its mandate to govern the State must be decided on the floor of the legislature. It is the only arena in which the claim of the defectors and the Opposition can be tested convincingly. Normally the State Assembly would meet towards the end of the next month. But it can and should be called as soon as possible. What can be suggested immediately is that in no case should defectors be rewarded with ministership. This principle is valid for both the Congress and the SVD.

West Bengal Recalled

The Statesman recalls that when the majority of Mr Ajoy Mukherjee's United Front Ministry in West Bengal was in doubt last year because of defections by Dr P. C. Ghosh and others, a three-week delay in summoning the Assembly was considered so objectionable by the Governor that the State government was dismissed. This course of action considered too precipitate at that time need not be repeated in Haryana. But both the Centre and the Governor owe it to the country to use all their constitutional and moral authority to ensure

that Mr Bansi Lal is not allowed to delay the summoning of the Assembly. To allow him to hold the session at the end of January, as at present scheduled, would be an act of impropriety which could seriously undermine faith in the impartiality of the Centre. The precise number of defections may be a matter of dispute, and it is possible, indeed probable, that some at least of the Gaya Rams may again turn into Aya Rams at the drop of a Gandhi cap. But there can be no denying the fact that the Congress party's majority in the legislature has been called into question. The paper advises the central leadership of the Congress to withhold permission for Cabinet expansion in Haryana, though it contends that criticism of political bribery comes ill from representatives of political parties which are members of the SVD in Madhya Pradesh.

Patriot says that Haryana must be accepted by the Congress party's scarecrow president and those who believe that a political organisation can be built round a system of rituals and formalities as the final warning that a party without a true economic purpose and a following committed to it cannot exist and grow in modern India. Mr Nijalingappa and Mr Morarji Desai and perhaps most of the others who take their ease in Delhi and imagine that the pompous puerilities with which they seek to hide their political incompetence and lack of dedication to principles are not leaders who can revive the kind of faith that a large party requires if it is to become effective again. Their single-minded absorption in the problems of office and organisational power is more than matched by the cold-blooded cynicism of those who call themselves the second-rank leaders or "workers" of the party. The former's hope that pulling down non-Congress Governments here and there with the aid of unprincipled charlatans will eventually convince the people that only the apolitical opportunism of Congress power-mongers can give administrative stability is being frustrated. If there had been secret hopes in certain quarters that after the

mid-term elections the Government of Kerala could be pulled down under cover of constitutional casuistry, what has happened in Haryana should dash them. The lesson that Mr Sharma and Mr Bansi Lal have taught is not for the so-called central leadership of the party which is largely made up of individuals with similar inclinations and aptitudes. The latter will only treat it as one more chess problem that can be solved by moving one individual here or another there or by striking deals between themselves. The lesson is for those younger Congressmen who desperately look forward even today to a time when their once disciplined and principled party can once more face the people without placards of corruption and factionalism hung round its over-fat neck. For them it is an opportunity to do some honest heart-searching and on the basis of it to initiate a movement of house-cleaning that will drive out of the organisation a number of professional office-hunters who go about pretending that they enjoy the confidence of the people.

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BY A DRAMA CRITIC

ONE does not really know what resources an amateur group possesses to enable one to give a fair-minded opinion: after all, the system under which an activity develops must affect it deeply. If one upholds the principle that a biographical play should be accurate in manners, costume and locale, then Abhijan's presentation fails. If on the other hand it is meant to convey the motivating idea which makes the character worth remembering, then it succeeds to the extent which Monmotho Roy's play succeeds.

The biography begins in 1838 with Taras Shevchenko, the Ukrainian poet and artist, getting his freedom from Baron Engelhardt. A series of seven episodes depict his development as a revolutionary, his incarceration and finally his death. To those seven scenes was added a tableau which, though visually pleasing in patches, failed to evoke either mood or emotion. The man in drainpipe trousers standing on a dais baffled the senses. The singer down the aisle and the simultaneous speaking on the stage was drowned by the excitement of an over-exuberant audience. It must have irritated the sensitive and disgusted the serious types in the hall.

Far too many "special effects" were tried, and since minor imprecisions in them mar the general effect, a curb on the producer's enthusiasm for such effects would have been for the better.

The play itself was good only in parts. The scene placed in the village of Kirilova was perhaps the weakest both in acting and in content. The best was undoubtedly the episode inside Novopetrovsk Jail. Though why

painted flats were introduced suddenly when most of the play was performed in front of curtains and back-lit screens, must remain a mystery. The end of the play came as an anti-climax. The costumes, except in the case of the women, were assembled according to availability and Baron Engelhardt was made to look like an American truck driver complete with leather jerkin, while his son came right out of a visiting circus. This bizarre costumery was intended to lampoon the landlord class but would have been done better by exaggeration of manner and dress of the period itself. Since no period costumes were attempted, the baron and his son could have worn modern costumes with necessary touches to affect the ludicrous. While on this subject, the number of red wigs seen in this production was fantastic. The same money spent on costumes could have helped the visual effect more.

Although the standard of acting was generally good, some minor parts could have been better served. Competent performances were put up by Shyamoo Roychowdhry in the title role, ably supported by Meena Halder as Natasha. Since three microphones were assisting the voices, there were many occasions when the words seemed but a jumble of noises. Particularly at fault was Amal Mukherjee as Ivan, who was made to walk up and down between a table and the back drop. He was only partly heard, as every time he turned his back to the audience his words were completely lost. It was unfortunate that Mahadev Das playing the Police Inspector, whose lines were delivered clearly, acted as if he had been lifted out of the silent films.

As a first production, Taras Shevchenko was ambitious but was carried through fairly well. After the jail scene, however, one felt that the last part could have been omitted so that Taras Shevchenko remained a hero in the minds of the audience and not become a mere idol.

So much work and so much dedication deserves a better audience—please let us keep out the 12-year-olds and certainly those below that age.

An Empty Canvas

PRABODH KUMAR MAITRA

APAN JAN, Tapan Sinha's latest film, has its focus primarily on the teenagers who are apparently adrift but who, after all, are our "near ones" and not particularly bad guys. Only circumstance maketh them so. Their case, however, is unconvincingly presented, what with the scratchy sketch Sinha manages to scrap up.

The material has good potential but the director curiously chooses a tortuous way of storytelling. The introduction itself is quite an elaborate process. An old woman's past life is shown in pieces when it had been rosy despite the ruffian type husband's rough postures—the bloke has really a golden heart. Then we see Chhaya Devi as the old woman with a hideous make-up who clings to her home. But she seems destined to be in town in no time, to pass through experiences which we must share and she comes over to her apanjon's establishment. She, of course, could not quite realise what was in the offing, only the helping hand enlightens her on the ways of the city bred. We find some toughs around and the old woman post-haste forsakes her relations to join them in their den.

There are two groups of them in fact. One is led by an immaculately dressed boy (a newcomer in the film fold), a dispenser of justice and a sort of universal provider to the small children who hop around him. Their background is not sufficiently explored. They are all fair complexioned, (compared to the other group), looking like bhadralog whose plight, one faintly makes out from the dialogue, is mainly due to postponement of examinations or something to that effect. Their leader's fate seems to have been sealed after the collapse of his love-lorn existence, the damsel's father having been instrumental in sending him to jail. We are shown it in flashback as we are often reluctantly led to the old woman's past life through whacky flashbacks. This technique seems to have some fascination for

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Sinha and it takes away considerably from whatever little he has achieved in terms of storytelling. He seems to lack confidence in straightforward narration in this film—the subject may have given him jitters for he is plainly unable to tackle it even in terms of bare sociological formations.

There is another group nearly all of whom have a dark complexion. This is Sinha's way, maybe unwitting way, of pointing out the bhadralog background of the other group. Significantly no character, not even the leader is explored to give us any insight. The leader of this group, however, is shown once, in the traditional style of the Bengali cinema, in a disreputable girl's company with a bottle of liquor. That sums up Sinha's attitude towards him.

The fairer group (complexion-wise) quotes their Tagore and the director does not let them forget their Tagore songs even, for they burst into one in chorus. In occasional fisticuffs with the other group, they tend to fare better. The encounters are generally anaemic, for mostly one is the taker of blows

while the other remains in a suspended state, presumably not to disturb the frame.

But the director is not only content with his brand of sociology, he must make his foray into the political arena. Two rivals in the election make use of the rival groups and both curiously are swatantras, not the party candidate one presumes but mere independents. The political process is sought to be pilloried but it is quite ineffectual.

The final confrontation of the two groups takes place on what looks like quite a battlefield. Blows and sticks are used liberally but their ultimate weapon, the revolver, is meant for the grandma from the village whose collapse ends the film and possibly the values she so assiduously believes in. And the police take care of the other characters.

Apan Jan is the usual sentimental stuff of the Bengali screen with a veneer of contemporaneity that is facile. The characters are hardly that credible quantity that might give an idea of what social ferment is like. Apart from the story which is full of

strange quirks the making of the film does not speak well of the director as a craftsman.

Sinha is his own director of music and, of all songs he makes use of one by Atulprasad which is a rousing call to the countrymen. One wonders for whom it is intended by the director in the film.

Two Exhibitions

BY AN ART CRITIC

THE art of ceramics or the making of clay vessels, effigies and toys has been practised in India from time immemorial. In West Bengal, terracotta reached monumental proportions in the temples and an exquisite refinement in the brick carvings that adorned their walls. But the making of ceramics, using the Western methods of baking, is of comparatively recent origin as commercial venture and craft.

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held an exhibition of their recent work at the Academy of Fine Arts last week. Not merely in technique but in their choice of forms and glazes, the Janahs have a marked Western orientation. This was evident also from their latest exhibition which included decorative objects like ceramic sculptures, vases of various shapes and sizes, bottles and vials, jewellery and toys as well as utilitarian products like cups and glasses, dishes and bowls, tea and coffee sets. But in the present exhibition, there were also some items that showed that they are now turning to our traditional terra-cotta for inspiration and are adapting some of its elements to suit their purpose. For instance, in some vases, they used clay figurines as decorations and the result was not unpleasing. Altogether, it was an interesting show and contained at least a few exhibits of excellence.

Greeting Cards

Shilpayan, a group of young artists, held an exhibition of greeting cards, letterheads and envelope sets, prints on textiles and some water colours and temperas at the Academy of Fine Arts last week.

The greeting cards dominated the show and some of them, using old illustrations from illuminated manuscripts and sculptures and printed in silk screen on hand made paper, were done with taste and refinement. But the same cannot be said about the letterhead and envelope sets and the cases containing what was described as 'Thank you' cards. Of the other exhibits, two largish prints on textile, based on figures, based on Indian miniatures, were well-drawn and well-printed.

Letters

The Benefactor !

Mr Bhut Nath Bhattacharjee has been swift to come to the defence of the benefactor of his class—McNamara (December 7). With pompous sarcasm and righteous indignation, he points out that Calcutta's

electric supply *partly* comes from the DVC system, which is *partly* financed by the World Bank. How terribly thrilling this is for those whose homes are (partly ?) furnished with (Fedders-Lloyd ?) air-conditioners ! No doubt those of Calcutta's population who do not even *partly* benefit from electricity—let alone that part of it which is the gift (or loan ?) of the World Bank—should also go down on bended knees and genuflect to the latest minion of U.S. monopoly capital. With remorseless logic Mr Bhattacharjee goes on to say that because the World Bank dumped some capital on the DVC (at high rates of interest), "Calcutta still breathes." One doubts if the children rummaging in Calcutta's rubbish heaps, or the tens of thousands sleeping on Calcutta's pavements are over-enthused about the fact that they "still breathe."

Mr Bhattacharjee is angered that the Russians did not genuflect to the Americans after the Second World War, in spite of the fact that the latter had already begun their encirclement of the socialist world and their now-famous cacophony about "communist aggression." He also cannot understand why China did not gratefully acknowledge her debt to Russia after the latter suddenly cut off aid and withdrew all her technicians leaving hundreds of projects in the air as part of her economic blackmail.

The editor of *Frontier* and "like-minded politicians" have "destructive designs," complains the aggrieved admirer of McNamara. Of course, the system which by 1960 had destroyed 125 million tons of bread grain (enough food for all Indians for one year) in order to keep up world prices is being extremely constructive. The system which in the past 14 years has destroyed 4 billion dollars worth of farm surpluses and which rains 30 billion dollars worth of destruction on Vietnam every year, is, of course, only doing all this as part of a grand construction plan for the world.

India is now at a stage where, apart from the millions of rupees of repatriated profit leaving the country, she is having to borrow more in order to pay off old loans—from such phi-

lanthropic institutions as the U.S. dominated World Bank. Yes, Mr Bhattacharjee, "an open eye and a clear mind are enough to know the culprits." I suggest that he does some eye-opening and mind-clearing for himself. For open eyes and clear minds are one type of commodity which even McNamara with all his benefaction will not be willing to sell.

DILIP SIMEON
Delhi

Sniping

While commenting on "student anger" and the recent massive demonstrations against President Nasser (*Frontier*, December 7) you wonder "what the Indian Government would have proclaimed and done had such demonstrations taken place so soon after a shattering military defeat."

It is a common experience with the readers of *Frontier* that while discussing all and sundry subjects you never miss an opportunity to snipe at the Government of your own country however unsuited the occasion may be. You must know illogical criticism is just as bad as uncritical conformism. Both do no credit to their authors but betray a certain amount of immaturity of mind. When you made the above remark you simply forgot that "what the Indian Government would have proclaimed and done", the dictatorial regimes of Nasser and Ayub need not proclaim and do, for the powers sought by such proclamations are already vested in them. Unlike their counterparts in India, the students in Egypt "want a free press and a greater freedom of expression and association." Had you been in Egypt you would have to achieve a "free Press" first to bring out a weekly like *Frontier*.

BHUT NATH BHATTACHARJEE
Howrah

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