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STORM IN PAKISTAN

PRESIDENT Ayub, who wanted to be tough like de Gaulle, met a tougher people and has now decided to step down like Mr Johnson. But the movement has not come to a halt. It is a movement not against Ayub Khan as a person but as the head of a hated system in which the autonomous life of the provinces has been strangled, East Pakistan turned into a colony, the workers, peasants and the intelligentsia deprived of their rights, twenty families allowed to amass immense wealth in the "development decade" and corruption to flourish with impunity. The mini-Kuomintang in Pakistan has to go. The question now is whether the Pakistanis in revolt will put up with another year of Ayub Khan in office. His announcement, of course, will encourage the rightists of the DAC who are uncommitted to any radical programme to try to compromise with the present rulers and in collaboration with them draw up rules for parliamentary reform. The bureaucrats and the military are hoping for time to reshuffle their ranks, tactics and strategy and they will be aided in their waiting game by the fear generated among the moderates by the popular upsurge. To them also unity at the barricades is unholy unity.

One of the most striking events on this sub-continent in two decades has been the upsurge in Pakistan. The movement began in West Pakistan at student initiative and was sharpened by the arrest of Mr Bhutto. In December it spread to volatile East Pakistan which had had experiences of mass action. The agitators have never looked back since. The extent, intensity and duration of the movement (non-vegetarianism makes a difference) have been spectacular, almost unbelievable on the sub-continent. The leading role is being played by students who have paid a heavy price in the ordeal of fire and blood by daring the police and the army. The unrest has spread to the countryside in East Pakistan where the octogenarian Maulana Bhashani is still a magnetic force. Large numbers of women have come out on the streets, like their Arab sisters under Israeli occupation. Lawyers, doctors, teachers, journalists, shopkeepers have all voiced their protest. The workers are stirring and the peasants no longer want to remain dumb millions. With the administration paralysed Mr Monem Khan, the East Pakistan Governor, had to shift to the military cantonment. The students have seen to it that the DAC is not able to go in for instant compromise. In both East and West Pakistan thousands of them took a vow that negotiations would not be

allowed until their demands were met.

What has made things unbearable for the regime is the unity of the two far-flung units of the country, which the communication gap could not split. Is it a paradox that the demand for regional autonomy, which is branded in this country also as a disruptive slogan, can unite a people rather than divide them? A lesson to learn again is that a strong Centre can be a convenient cover for monolithic exploitation of the people by a handful of capitalists. It is this small group and its cohorts in politics that see in regional autonomy a red rag.

There is uneasiness in New Delhi. Despite occasional sabre-rattling, so necessary to split the masses, President Ayub is a safe bet. He stands for stability, doesn't he? Loyal to both America and Russia, he has been showing signs of crawling away from the dragon. And if he goes out of power, will Indo-Pakistani relations not undergo a violent change? Mr Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the firebrand idol of many West Pakistanis, talks of a 1000-year war against India. But a mass movement of the dimension that has taken place in Pakistan will sweep away many shibboleths. The pride of a rejuvenated people will scorn many prejudices, and mere hostility to India may not stimulate unless agents-provocateurs in this country provide the pretext. Political and economic changes of a far-reaching order in Pakistan may not be reassuring to the ruling class in this country, but will be welcomed by the Indian people and inspire them.

The Making Of Ministers

Thirty United Front leaders are now installed in Writers' Buildings as Ministers. A victory for the people of West Bengal? Certainly. The mass rejoicing showed it. But let's not mince matters. Also a victory for factional and personal ambitions. How else does one explain the singularly unedifying wrangle that went on for nearly a fortnight, at the end of which one out of every

seven UF MLAs had to be made a Minister? At one stage, it is learnt, Mr Promode Das Gupta suggested a ratio of 1 to 20, which would have been ideal. But every small party—if a party it must be called—must have its pound of flesh, as Mr Jyoti Basu came to discover soon. So emerged the ratio of 1 to 10, but with a minimum of one for each party. But the Forward Bloc, with 21 seats in the Assembly, had no hesitation in insisting on three Ministerships for its nominees; promptly, predictably, the Bangla Congress and the CPI jacked up their demands to four each. And if the RSP, with 12 MLAs, was to be given two places in the Cabinet, couldn't the SSP also claim two on the strength of its nine seats?

The splinter groups were not to be outdone. The most amusing was the SUC's stance: Mr. Subodh Banerjee must get back the Labour portfolio in vindication of his performance as Labour Minister in the previous UF Government. One might think that he had a point, that he was raising a question of principle. But when he was faced with the argument that the UF victory itself had vindicated the performance of the previous UF Government as a whole, he promptly demanded Housing or Food and would simply not be content with Public Works (Roads). So what was at stake was not any of the UF's policies, not even the policies of any constituent party, but just *amour propre*. So the process went on: a full Ministership for the Workers' Party, with just two members in the Assembly; another for the sole representative of the Forward Bloc (Marxist); in fact, Ministerships even for people who are not members of either House of the State Legislature. If there are not sufficient portfolios, they must be invented. Why not somebody look after Sports? Still more people to be provided for? Well, one of them could inspect libraries and be called Minister of State for Social Education.

Even people outside the United Front may have found this exercise instructive for possible future advancement. Anyone wanting to become a Minister has a perfectly simple course

to follow. One has only to set oneself up as a party; if a few friends join in, so much the better. The party applies for UF membership and has no difficulty in securing it. In any future elections, even a single-member party can claim a nomination and probably get it, and the UF label itself will ensure electoral success. And after that, the party must be represented in the Government. Even promise of support to the UF might be enough; a Ministership would be kept in reserve, as was for the PSP until at least last Wednesday. The assumption apparently was that if the PSP came in, even Culture would call for Ministerial attention. Why not Freedom as well?

Enough of carping. We shall wait to see how the thirty or thirty-two Ministers implement the 32-point UF Programme. One point—"the UF Government will take the initiative for the abolition of the Upper House" seems to have been minimised with five to six Ministers coming through the Upper House.

Economic Survey

The Economic Survey for 1968-69, which Mr. Morarji Desai presented to Parliament last week, promises nothing. It recounts some facts, but these are by now mostly shopworn. Prices have of course steadied somewhat after the mad spiralling in the last few years, but for this negative achievement the Government itself can claim little credit. It is the greater internal availability of foodgrains following the better-than-average monsoon and the lack of new industrial activity which explain the docility of prices. Similarly the improvement in the balance of payments can be attributed to factors external to the Government: exports are up because of the closure of the Suez Canal, imports have been kept in trim merely because there have been no developmental activities worth the name in the economy. In fact, if the private sector were not doled out liberal import licences, the conservation of

foreign exchange during this year of non-activity would have been still greater.

Industrial output during 1968 moved up, in a manner of speaking, by 6 per cent. In the light of the sharp falls during the two precious years, this recovery is much less than adequate. Besides, the expansion of industrial activity has been altogether uneven; for example, production of metal produce, footwear, textiles, and jute manufactures continued to decline through 1968. Recessionary trends are still reflected in the increasing hordes of the unemployed; any gloating on the part of the Government is thus not only uncalled for, but vulgar.

Aggregate national income during 1968-69 is now promised to increase by 3 per cent over 1967-68. Since the population would have increased by something like 2.4 per cent, the rise in per capita income will therefore be scarcely more than marginal. This apart, whatever accretion takes place in national income will be grotesquely distributed; when all the arithmetic is in and all the research ended, it will be seen that for at least four-fifths of the population, the per capita income during 1968-69 will remain what it was last year.

We ought to be grateful to Mr Morarji Desai however for an unexpected confession: it has now been officially admitted that the production of foodgrains during the year would be no higher than the magnitude reached in 1967-68. In other words, the rate of growth of foodgrain output has been zero over the year; if the output of the rabi crops is not as good as is being said, there might even be a decline. This confession straightaway gives the lie to the glib talk of the Great Green Revolution which has supposedly transformed the Indian countryside. Over the period beginning with 1964-65, when the pompously nomenclatured New Agricultural Strategy was initiated, the overall rate of growth of food production has been less than 2 per cent. That is to say, the strategy, which has been the alibi for robbing the poor clerks and factory workers, the landless

labourers and small peasants to pay the rich kulaks, has led to a rate of growth for foodgrain production as a whole much lower than what was experienced without the strategy. The time has certainly come when the very hypothesis of the strategy needs to be attacked, and relentlessly. This onslaught has to be led by the Left-leaning Governments of West Bengal and Kerala: there would be no worthier cause for a confrontation with the Centre. The chicanery in the name of agricultural development has to come to a stop.

Dr Mondlane

Death is the least surprising thing to one who has taken up arms to liberate his country and was perhaps none at all to the Mozambique Liberation Front's President, Dr. Eduardo Mondlane, "Portugal's most wanted man". And it came while Dr. Mondlane was working in his friend's seaside house in Dar-es-Salaam early last month. According to one report, he was shot; according to another, a bomb planted in the house exploded and according to yet another, a parcel exploded while he tried to open it. Whatever might have been the manner, the assassin has got away. Black Africa has lost one of her finest products in the line of Patrice Lumumba and Luthuli.

A doctorate in sociology and a former professor at Syracuse University, Dr. Mondlane was intellectually an outsize man for Mozambique which has only three secondary schools for a total population of 7 million. He need not have behaved differently from the intellectuals of the underdeveloped world flocking to the United States for a *dolce vita*. But the charm of American civilization could not make him forget his Mozambican compatriots who were herded and sold annually to South Africa by their Portuguese rulers at the rate of £2 and 6 shillings per worker. Before his mind's eye passed the silent procession of lean, hungry Mozambicans plodding their way to death. Dr. Mondlane

recrossed the Atlantic, leaving his career on the other shore. He welded different nationalist groups into the Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO) to launch armed struggle against the Portuguese Government. A former professor of sociology was now an ardent student of guerilla warfare. "We try", he said, "as much as possible to work like the Vietcong." And the Western Press agrees that Mozambique has been something of a Vietnam where 8,000 guerillas of FRELIMO have tied down 50,000 Portuguese troops. Mozambique's is one of the three colonial wars in Africa that swallow up half of Portugal's budget. Learning from their British and American friends the Portuguese have tried *aldeamentos* (strategic hamlet) but with little success. After five years of struggle FRELIMO now controls vast areas in the north and north-eastern parts of the country where elections were held last year. They are now spreading out to the west.

Dr. Mondlane was struck when his dream was nearing realization. Though a tremendous loss not only to FRELIMO but to all those struggling for freedom and justice, his death, however, would mean no respite to the colonialists. If anything, the Mozambican patriots, grip on the AK-47 rifle will only be firmer. The bell has already begun to toll for the Portuguese empire in Africa.

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Dead Centrism

FROM A POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

WHATEVER the Centre's official stance, both Mrs Indira Gandhi and Mr Y. B. Chavan still seem to think that the non-Congress Governments in the States are interlopers. They seem to derive some comfort from the thought that that United Fronts would disintegrate to the Congress schedule and by 1972, the idea of replacing the Congress at the Centre would have been totally discredited and some power adjustment would still be possible.

There was a certain venality to Mr. Chavan's remarks about the United Fronts and Mrs Gandhi's tongue-in-the-cheek appeal to political parties for co-operation and her assurance of fair Central treatment of the States. Her speech in the no-confidence motion debate was in the lower key this time. Instead of asking the House to throw the motion out, she appealed to its sponsors to withdraw it. She wanted the problems raised to a higher level, so that there could be a solution on the basis of maximum agreement.

Her appeal for co-operation has no meaning. Everyone knows that in 1967, she telephoned one non-Congress Chief Minister after another almost as a routine to ask for their co-operation. But there was no let-up at the New Delhi end in the planning of a gigantic Operation Topple and early in 1968, the Congress declared war on all non-Congress Governments from the Fateh Maidan in Hyderabad where Aurangzeb once rallied his forces for an onslaught on Golconda.

At the political level, there cannot be any dialogue between the Left and the Congress. The Congress itself is disintegrating. The mid-term results reveal a certain logic. In the first place there is a shrinking in the proportion of votes secured by all-India parties, pointing to the emergence of regional or local parties. The com-

fortable all-India logic, the logic of a single India, is no longer valid. Very soon mass politics will overtake the manoeuvres of power politics by the all-India parties. Secondly, whoever propped the Congress at the Centre—the Swatantra Party that is—is facing sure extinction over a vast area. Who wants a dialogue with the Congress except the CPI and the Swatantra Party?

Solutions to problems do not become more acceptable or more valid because they are arrived at on the basis of all-party consensus. Politics now transcend political parties. The National Integration Council, for instance, lines up a broad spectrum, ranging from Jana Sangh leaders to professional fighters for secular democracy. The Jana Sangh obviously cannot be a party to any solution of the problem of Hindu communalism.

If Mrs Gandhi thinks, for instance, that the Mysore-Maharashtra boundary dispute could be solved through an all-party consensus, one is justified in asking whether the Centre bothered to consult other parties when it virtually reopened a settled issue like the reorganisation of States on the basis of language. In Maharashtra every political party thinks that the States' boundary should be really deep inside what is now Mysore. There is complete consensus on this inside the Sampurna Maharashtra movement promoted by the communists and blessed by the Jana Sanghis and now revived by the Shiv Sena. The Congress and the Centre cannot promote the Shiv Sena and ask for all-party co-operation to contain it when it turns into a Frankenstein's monster. Failure to implement the safeguards in Telengana is a Government lapse and certainly not for want of co-operation from other parties.

So one doesn't understand what Mrs Gandhi meant when she talked about

raising problems to a higher level. The Centre has not done any homework on the issues in question. Condemnation of the Shiv Sena rampage or the violence in Telengana is not enough. But the Opposition had to content itself wresting the condemnation and nothing positive.

No Grip

Fact is, the Centre has lost its grip on problems. The leadership at the Centre still thinks of manipulating a consensus at the top when there is a revolt at the infrastructure. Mrs Gandhi might feel secure in power for quite some time to come, but at the State level it is just fragmentation and disintegration leading to a serious political crisis.

The happenings in Bombay and Telengana have shattered the Centre's image more than the mid-term election verdict. The Shiv Sena was never allowed to be discussed in Parliament by the Government (was it because it is a pair of four-letter words)? But for the first time since 1967, what is unmistakably a law and order issue in the eyes of the Centre and therefore a State subject, became the subject of a censure motion. The Government was clearly on the defensive, unable to answer any of the specific charges made by the Opposition. The no-confidence debate itself has a lesson for the Opposition. When the motion was moved only the two communist groups and the Samyukta Socialists were behind it. On the third day, as the debate ended, Mr P. Ramamurti had won over to his side the PSP, the Jana Sangh and the DMK. Only the Swatantra Party kept aloof, being Her Majesty's Opposition. Mr Ramamurti raised the basic issue to a moral plane and the Congress had no answer.

If the Centre does not think of another toppling spree, it is certainly not due to any change of heart. It gambled and lost but the gambling instinct outlives all losses. More than the perils of Central intervention, the timidity that might overcome the United Fronts would prove the undoing of whatever political polarisation that has taken place.

MARCH 1, 1969

In New Delhi one often hears the slick talk of the West Bengal United Front behaving more responsibly this time (whatever that means!) and being less belligerent to the Centre. The Tamil Nadu of the late Mr Annadurai's days is held out as the model for all and there are vague apprehensions that Mr Karunanidhi might force a showdown on the language issue. There is a lot of hypocrisy in the praise that is being showered on Mr Annadurai after his death. The fact that he built up a secessionist movement against the Centre is interred with the bones. All the praise now is for his compromise with New Delhi in his twilight days.

President's Address

The President's address to Parliament seems to have been designed with an eye on the United Front in West Bengal, and possibly in Kerala. The platitudes in the address about secularism and national unity are nothing new. There was no direct condemnation of the Shiv Sena or the Telengana violence. But the President was very explicit about the "extremist groups" which believed in doctrines subversive of the Constitution. What seems to worry the Union Home Ministry is that certain organised political groups preached the boycott election slogan or refused to contest the elections! It is a veiled directive to the States to crack down on certain groups.

A certain lobby in the Congress, which includes personalities connected with the Kerala coup ten years ago and the West Bengal coup a little over a year ago, has been raising the bogey of communist violence in some of the States. At the meeting of the Congress Parliamentary Party executive, the alleged assault on a CPI(M) legislator in Kerala who had left a party meeting was the subject of a serious discussion while there was no time even for a passing reference to the Shiv Sena violence. Mr Chavan told the executive that communist violence should be countered by "political action", which again is a mysterious term in the Home Minister's vocabulary.

The very first clash between some

of the States and the Centre is likely to be over the appointment of Governors. Confrontation is inherent in the situation but no all-India party wants to risk it or force it. The politics of these parties is so much Centre-oriented that like the Congress, they

tend to overlook the real issues thrown up by the infrastructure. The premium is on false stability all the time. Nobody wants a move on from the dead centre, for all the left victories in West Bengal.

February 23, 1969

Calcutta Diary

CHARAN GUPTA

THE hucksters who pass for political analysts may feign surprise, or it could be they are genuinely taken aback by the results of the mid-term poll, given their capacity to believe their own concoctions. But this journal has not been surprised; there is no occasion for it to be wise after the event since its expectations—and predictions—were for a Congress debacle. The Congress functionaries, backed by the writings of their henchmen in the Press, perhaps honestly believed that a swing had taken place in their favour since 1967. This merely shows their poor judgment. But this also shows their utter contempt for the people. Gimmickry has lost its occupation, at least in this State, where the people think for themselves. Atulya Ghosh uttered a lot of crap about socialist countries at the election meetings; he also indulged in some outrageous misinterpretations of the point of view of the CP(M) leadership on the question of automation. Mr Siddhartha Ray—how silly can one get to be—was wont to carry a CP(M) party flag to the meetings and, with much drama thrown in, invite the attention of the audience to the identity between the flag of the People's Republic of China and that of Mr Jyoti Basu's and Mr Promode Dasgupta's party. In regard to the performance of those imported from elsewhere—Messrs Nijalingappa, Morarji Desai, Chavan, Jagjivan Ram, et al—the less said, the better. People did flock to Mrs Gandhi's meetings; one can only sympathise with her if she went away with the impression that those who crowded would vote as she had bid.

I am ignoring the fact that 40.3 per cent of the total poll has gone in favour of the Congress; the overall swing of votes against the party has been only 0.8 per cent since 1967; two out of five people in the State have still preferred the Congress. But—and here I would ask the readers to recollect what I said in the issue of February 1—given the emergence of the United Front, merely holding on to the past clientele was not enough; other things remaining the same, the Congress needed a swing in its favour to the extent of 8 per cent of the total poll across-the-board to win back a majority of the Assembly seats. If the votes arraigned against it could be split by Mr Humayun Kabir's Lok Dal or god-alone-knows-whose Proustist Party—or the PSP—the order of the needed swing could be lower. But all the money in the world and all the blabber in the Press could not lend even any marginal lustre to these groups. *Au contraire*, despite the hair-curling stories about gheraos and Naxalbaris and rice-at-five-rupees-a-kilogram, the swing has been, in district after district—barring the curious cases of Cooch Behar, Jalpaiguri and Malda—very definitely against the Congress. And this is the phenomenon which has in fact surprised me. Even in this State, political attitudes, I thought, would still take quite a while to crystallise around definite modes; for quite some more time, I had thought, there will be a randomness in the way the electorate cast their preference, and the preferences would shift to and fro between different parties in the different constituencies. But this is not what happened on

Votes Polled Per Candidate In The Mid-Term Poll

Party District	Cong.	UF	CP(M)	B. Cong.	CPI	FB	RSP	SSP	SUC	LSS	GL	RCPI	WPI	MFB	PSP
Darjeeling	14,311	16,579	11,228	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	17,916	—	—	—	—
Jalpaiguri	19,598	15,186	13,100	7,294	20,000	—	16,825	14,348	—	—	—	—	—	—	5,200
Cooch Behar	25,835	22,102	21,407	—	—	22,134	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3,948
West Dinajpur	15,813	17,303	15,968	18,817	20,852	14,974	24,945	—	—	—	—	—	24,450	—	—
Malda	21,137	18,555	17,623	13,673	21,088	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Murshidabad	15,193	18,774	23,753	14,116	23,014	—	21,162	15,337	—	—	—	21,848	—	—	—
Nadia	21,079	23,525	22,590	23,586	26,157	—	—	21,172	—	—	—	—	—	—	841
24-Parganas	21,633	29,368	33,657	20,337	26,609	25,756	25,602	27,616	31,833	—	—	—	—	—	—
Calcutta	20,736	25,086	28,213	—	27,767	22,369	27,159	7,939	—	—	—	—	28,522	—	1,182
Howrah	22,226	31,840	31,155	30,140	—	34,076	—	—	—	—	—	—	22,941	—	—
Hooghly	22,221	28,620	29,749	22,231	29,474	29,002	—	21,594	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Midnapore	21,923	27,928	28,541	26,919	28,398	—	—	26,031	—	—	—	—	—	27,143	30,688
Purulia	12,621	17,841	—	11,551	19,611	20,104	—	—	25,105	16,629	—	—	—	—	4,993
Burdwan	18,143	25,127	26,194	22,359	26,357	—	—	19,269	—	—	—	—	—	—	767
Bankura	17,543	23,894	26,040	23,725	29,711	16,607	—	17,791	—	—	—	—	—	—	2,136
Birbhum	13,580	19,431	19,232	16,174	—	16,874	—	—	25,142	—	—	—	—	—	460
Total	19,724	24,592	27,375	22,340	26,069	23,988	22,117	17,124	28,960	16,629	17,916	25,185	23,695	27,143	7,329

February 9. There was a much greater order of consistency of electoral behaviour than I had expected.

Let us for a moment return to the tables I had set out in the issue of February 1. If things had remained as they were in 1967, the Congress ought to have obtained 75 seats. It however ended up with only 55, and the arithmetic behind this result is rather interesting. Of the 13 Congress seats that were subject to a swing of less than 1 per cent against the party, only one could be saved, namely, Kushmundi; of the 8 seats vulnerable to a swing of between 1 and 2.5 per cent, again only one—Sitai—could stand its ground; the rest fell. All told, the Congress lost 46 of its original 75 seats, including such so-called safe ones as Jamalpur, Duda and Ranibandh, which were vulnerable only to swings above 10 per cent: the actual swings were of this order.

If this were the whole story, Mrs Indira Gandhi's party would have ended up with only 29 seats in the Assembly. Luckily for it, there were some swings the other way too—and the Congress in its turn could wrest 26 seats which, as per the 1967 poll, "belonged" to the non-Congress parties. Of these 26 seats, however, the Congress won at least 9—Kaliachak, Manickchak, Domkol, Karimpur, Bhangar, Mainaguri, Banduan, Habra and Canning—because of the splitting of votes between the UF candidate and the candidates of assorted groups like the PSP, the INDF, the Progressive Muslim League or the Lok Dal. Without such splitting, the Congress tally of seats would have been only 46. This, then, is the sum-total of the achievement of Mr Humayun Kabir and other like-minded people: it is thanks to their efforts that the Congress has been able to advance its score from 46 to 55 seats.

A final point. I have said that the outstanding feature of the February 9 poll is the overall consistency of the swing against the Congress. This is proven by the fact that 46 out of the 75 seats which "belonged" to it in 1967—or 61 per cent of the total—slipped away to the United Front; in

the case of each of the other 29 constituencies too, swings have taken place against the party, but the extent of the swings has fallen short of the requisite magnitude. In contrast, the non-Congress parties have been victims of adverse swings in only 17 constituencies out of 205 which "belonged" to them—a paltry 8 per cent of the total.

The electorate have also given their verdict on something else, and which will have very great long-term significance for this State. The CP(M) has now been formally acknowledged as the leading political party in the State, dislodging the Congress. This denouement is not a fluke emanating from the ballot box, but is a reflection of the reality in the countryside and the towns and cities. Ever since, let us say, the middle of 1967, the Left Communists have far outdistanced the Congress in terms of sheer organisational strength on practically all fronts and in the majority of the districts; this has remained so despite the Naxalbari deviations. Besides, this strength has been evenly distributed between the factory areas and the rural pockets, between middle class urban homes and refugee settlements, in Dalhousie Square as much as in Ghatal or Chandrakona. The table which I attach illustrates this widening gap between the strength and influence of the CP(M) and the other parties. The United Front candidate on an average polled nearly *five thousand* more votes than the Congress candidate for the State as a whole; but the average CP(M) candidate almost *eight thousand* more votes. What is even more revealing, apart from the northern districts of Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri, Cooch Behar and Malda, everywhere else the CP(M) candidate on the average has been miles ahead of the Congress candidate. There has been a larger poll this time; but while, with 280 candidates—that is the same number as in 1967—the Congress obtained 300,000 extra votes, the CP(M), with 36 less candidates, got more than half-a-million extra votes. There can be no better criterion for judging the relative performance.

Certainly this process will now get accelerated. My own hunch is that the Congress, robbed of the *raison d'être* of its existence, will fast disintegrate in West Bengal, and soon be reduced to a PSP-like state, with a lot of bark and bluster and malevolence, and no effective bite. And since nothing succeeds like success, the CP(M) will now enter into a phase of spectacular growth accompanied by a consolidation of the base already acquired—of course provided success does not go to the head of its leadership, and it keeps itself reasonably attuned to the aspirations and demands of its cadres as well as the rank and file.

But the season of petty jealousies and heart-burning has already commenced. I have felt no compunction in the past to conceal my views about the constituents of the UF, and I feel no compunction today either. The length to which the CPI in particular went to keep Mr Jyoti Basu out of the Home portfolio is beneath contempt. It is extraordinary that a party which has the pretension to call itself communist should go publicly on record protesting against the allotment of the Home Department to a communist leader. The CPI would do well to take time out for some introspection. Meanmindedness is no substitute for ideology and mass work. And this is not the first time that this party has played an anti-people role. By its obduracy, it gifted away to the Congress a minimum of 30 seats in the 1967 election; it had strenuously resisted the proposal of a mid-term poll for fear of a reduction in its relative strength; and the company it is at present keeping will do it no good in the long run. And I will not be surprised at the allegation that it is sponsoring the proposal to offer the PSP a seat in the UF Cabinet—the same PSP which has done its damnest to run down the Front, here and in New Delhi. As an observer from the sideline, I can only offer a friendly admonition to the CPI; it should mend itself, otherwise one of these days it will be overtaken by the people, and ditched as mercilessly as the Congress has been.

FRONTIER

These parties betrayed an amazing lack of co-ordination and organisational discipline so needed to lead this spontaneous outburst to a higher stage of struggle. (There were only 24 reported cases of inter-union collaboration). They also lacked ideological equipment.

This is particularly true of the CPI(M), the major partner of the UF. The Marxist Party failed to realise the comprador character of

Indian capital. Indian capital is not comprador like its counterpart in colonial China. But in the present form of Imperialism, operating as it is through an international network of banking and credit system, it is impossible for Indian capital to operate independently. In this sense it has close connection with foreign capital and serves foreign economic interests. As the CPI(M) could not understand this, it could not handle properly the

contradiction between industrial capital and finance capital and as a result alienated a large section of the small and the middle bourgeoisie. And, finally, when gherao was declared illegal, the CPI(M) failed the working class again by refusing to come out of the UF. Its plea was that such step would be unwise. But as it subsequently turned out, this was an alibi for inaction rather than responsible leadership.

TABLE V

Industry-wise cause and intensity index of duration of Gherao in West Bengal from March 1967 to September 1967

Industry	Duration Index	Number of firms/establishments	Total number of cases	Total period in hours	Economic Issues	Security of services	Personnel Policy/Retranchment	Misc	Not on record
Tea Estate	10	27	41	183	13	12	7	..	10
Bidi Making	17	5	7	60	7
Municipalities	18	16	21	219	12	4	1	3	4
Chemicals & other allied products	19	82	107	1189	53	28	14	5	27
Coal Mines	23	15	25	206	18	1	5	3	..
Small Eng.	31	207	282	4409	147	1.3	9	23	43
Cotton Textiles & allied products	35	34	58	700	43	10	8	1	8
Jute Textiles	50	16	33	388	13	13	1	5	4
Engg.,	128	73	295	2309	98	60	41	20	32
Electricity	211	7	30	345	7	21	1	2	1
Central Govt. (Commercial & Industrial)	218	19	99	794	35	30	31	9	15
Central Govt. (others)	7	6	6	44	1	5
W. B. Govt. (Commercial & Industrial)	168	7	29	290	7	16	4	4	3
W. B. Govt. (others)	8	11	12	85	7	..	8	5	..

Source : *Economic and Political Weekly*, 25 November 1967.

MARCH 1, 1969

Workers and Recession

H. D.

THESE has been a lot of hue and cry about labour excesses in West Bengal during the last UF regime. It has been said that the workers are largely responsible for the current industrial recession.

The fact, however, is quite simple. There is no meaningful relation between labour unrest and industrial production in India. Quite contrary to the image which the capitalists and the Press tried to sell, the recession is the outcome of the faulty planning at the unit and the national level, and as far as West Bengal is concerned, the industrial climate was, by any standard, healthier than in other industrial zones. The flight of capital from this region is due mainly to the failure of authority to provide better facilities for industrialisation. But this is a subject to be dealt with later.

There are alternative indicators of industrial unrest like the frequency of disputes, the index of man-days lost or an index of severity rates. Of these the severity rates, defined as the ratio of man-days lost to total man-days scheduled for work, is the most reliable indicator. The following table gives the severity rates of manufacturing, plantations, coalmines and ports from, 1951 to 1961. (Due to statistical inadequacy it is not possible to make the table up to date. But that does not affect the interpretation of the table in any way).

Severity Rates per 100 workers

TABLE I

Year	Manufac- turing Sector	Planta- tions	Coal Mines	Ports
1951	.424	.016	.321	.273
1952	.310	.058	.289	.311
1953	.383	.028	.270	.728
1954	.400	.005	.241	.174
1955	.563	.199	.202	.375
1956	.597	.065	.115	.769
1957	.400	.127	.526	.306
1958	.414	.248	.228	4.470
1959	.421	.038	.292	.153
1960	.533	—	.110	.177
1961	.421	—	.165	—

SOURCE: *Indian Labour in the phase of Industrialisation* by Dr S. Ghosh.

The figures show that the severity rates of these industries were decreasing generally. Besides, it has been found that the annual average severity rate of the manufacturing sector was .422 (1951-61), for plantations .086 (1951-59), for coalmines .251 (1951-60) and for ports .773 (1951-60)*. These rates are not excessive. In fact the average rates of absenteeism—calculated at 13.4 for 1951-61—is much higher (figures for other scores were not available).

Now the question is how far this industrial unrest affects production. How to estimate the effects of work stoppages on the output? One Indian author¹ has tried to show the effects of work stoppages on the national output through their effect on the sector affected by cessation of work. He calculates the index numbers of industrial unrest and industrial production of the manufacturing sector and has shown that the correlation co-efficient of these two indices comes to 0.48. Adopting a level of significance of 5 p. c. he has shown that 't' (statistics) comes to 1.40 p.c. Since for 7 degree of freedom 't' must be 2.365 in order to be significant, the author has concluded that there is no significant relation between labour unrest and production.

This argument has certain obvious shortcomings. First, for non-availability of data, the study is confined to a few representative sectors only. Furthermore, it excludes agricultural labour and casual workers. Its other limitation is that it applies to the whole of India while the present subject of study is confined to West Bengal. But that does in no way weaken the case of West Bengal. Actually official statistics show that West Bengal's industrial climate is healthier compared to other parts of India.

* Dr Ghosh: *Indian Labour in the phase of industrialisation.*

1. Dr S. Ghosh: *Indian Labour in the phase of industrialisation.*

TABLE II

Year	Index of Industrial unrest for manufacturing group (Base : 1951—100)	Index of Industrial production for Manufacturing group (Base : 1951—100)
1951	100	100
1952	73	104
1953	90	107
1954	94	114
1955	133	128
1956	141	139
1957	94	143
1958	97	149
1959	99	160
1960	126	178

SOURCE: *Indian Labour in the phase of Industrialisation:* Dr S. Ghosh.

TABLE III

Industrial Disputes, 1966

	1 Number of Dis- putes	2. Number of workers involved	3 Number of man- days lost
Kerala	307	118,958	2,296,321
Maharash- tra	810	541,051	3,693,294
West Bengal	284	187,018	3,812,861

SOURCE: *Indian Labour Journal.*

The table furnishes comparative statistics of West Bengal and Maharashtra for the year 1966. (Figures for other years have been omitted. The interested person can consult the source which conforms to the readings). The number of disputes and number of workers involved in disputes in West Bengal during 1966 were 284 and 1,87,018, respectively, while the corresponding figures for Maharashtra were 810 and 5,41,051. This shows that in Maharashtra, claimed to be an ideal place for industrialisation, both the number of disputes and workers involved were about three times as high as in West Bengal. However, the number of man-days lost due to these disputes were a little higher in West Bengal (3,81,2861) in 1966 than in Maharashtra (3,6,93,294) during the same year. This is explainable by the fact that due to deeper recessionary conditions

A Neglected Region ?

LAXMI KANTH

IS there any basis for the contention that the Telengana area has been neglected all these years ?

When Andhra Pradesh was being formed in 1956 a gentlemen's agreement was reached in New Delhi providing safeguards to the Telengana region. (No safeguards, however, were there for the ever backward 'Rayalaseema', notorious for its famine and starvation deaths). Some of the important points were—1. to set up a regional council of 20 members to look after the safeguards. 2. Domicile rules, e.g., residence of 12 years before admission to colleges or recruitment to government jobs. 3. The Cabinet to consist of members in the proportion of 60 : 40 per cent for Andhra and Telengana respectively. 4. The expenditure of the Central and General administration of the State to be borne proportionately by the two regions and the balance of income from Telengana to be reserved for expenditure and development of that area.

The following are some statistics relating to the developmental growth of the two regions (Andhra comprises 11 districts and Telengana 9 districts): The percentage growth in the number of villages electrified from April, 1957 to March, 1968 worked out at 356 in Andhra and 7689 in Telengana. Similarly the per-capita consumption of electricity was 35.5 kwh in Andhra and 28.9 kwh in Telengana. The total number of hospital beds was 45 per lakh of population in Andhra and 67 in Telengana. There were three medical colleges in Telengana and five in the Andhra area.

Of Rs. 51 crores spent on rural electrification Rs. 19 crores was utilised in Telengana and 32 crores in the Andhra region.

In the Kothagudem Thermal Project, of a total of 809 posts 328 were filled by the Mulkis and 433 by non-Mulkis, 38 being vacant. The Nagarjunasagar Project was a joint venture of the erstwhile Governments of

Andhra and Hyderabad. The first stage was to benefit 11.5 lakh acres under the right canal in Andhra districts and 5.90 lakh acres in Telengana districts under the left canal. During the irrigation year 1967-68 more water was let into the left than into the right canal.

The Government has released to Osmania University the entire block grant of Rs. 62.12 lakhs and the additional block grant of Rs. 18.72 lakhs. There was, therefore, no discrimination whatsoever in the grants to the universities in Andhra and Telengana.

Even presuming that Government statistics cannot be wholly correct, the argument that the Telengana area received step-motherly treatment in development has no basis.

Under the pretext of this argument, the dissident leaders of the ruling party headed by a former Union Minister instigated a student in one Telengana town to go on an indefinite fast. This sparked off sympathetic strikes by students throughout Telengana. After five days of violent demonstrations, the Chief Minister convened an all-party meeting and resolutions were passed there to appoint an accountant-general to enquire into the surplus Telengana funds and to transfer thousands of employees belonging to the Andhra area but working in the Telengana area and remove those working temporarily. The resolution was signed by 45 persons belonging to the various political parties of the two regions.

Transfer Decision

The decision to transfer en masse four thousand employees belonging to the Andhra area sparked off counter-agitation in the Andhra area and an indefinite strike call was given by Andhra and Venkateswara University students. Meanwhile, reports poured in from all parts of Telengana about the harassment of Andhra employees and their families. Even then the Government did not take any action to protect the lives of its employees. A steady influx of Andhra refugees into Vijayawada leaving their belongings behind started and their stories made the situation tense in the

coastal towns of Andhra and hartals were observed in different towns as a protest. The Vijayawada station was flooded with Andhra refugees and reminded many of the partition days after independence. In spite of all these acts of hooliganism against innocent citizens, the Chief Minister did not take any steps to restore normal conditions excepting a few statements condemning the anti-social and vested interests who were allowed to go scot-free. The climax of the atrocities against Andhras came when a Deputy Surveyor belonging to the Andhra region was burnt alive in Nalgonda. No steps were taken by the police to arrest the culprits. In several Telengana towns properties of Andhras were looted and houses burnt. In Warangal alone property of Andhras worth several lakhs of rupees were burnt down. The police were silent spectators. On the night of January 29 the State Government sought the help of the army to help the civil authorities in several towns like Vijayawada, Visakhapatnam, Warangal, Khammam, Guntur and the city of Hyderabad. Police from Mysore, Goa and the CRP were requisitioned. So far no compensation has been paid to those affected in the riots. In Hyderabad city many students belonging to the Andhra area were beaten up in hostels and all their belongings looted and burnt down.

None of the ministers came forward to help restore normal conditions. Even leftist parties also provided an image of regional chauvinism. After so much of lawlessness, the Central Government which daily cries itself hoarse against fictitious Naxalite uprisings does not seem to have taken any serious note of the events in the State.

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In Two Bengals

COMMENTATOR

THE short-lived stalemate in the United Front over allocation of portfolios made more news for the papers than did the landslide victory of the Front in the mid-term poll. At the time of writing only one of the four States where mid-term polls were held has got a Ministry; the situation in two States is no different from that in West Bengal. Yet from newspaper reports it would appear that the delay in West Bengal had no parallel. The Centre did not fail to seize the opportunity to make its own contribution to this impression. Within forty-eight hours of the announcement of the poll-results it inquired from the West Bengal Government about the progress in Ministry-making on the plea that it must get ready for revocation of President's rule, as if its own intelligence service did not keep it informed of the developments. A reply to the criticism of the UF for the delay in Ministry-making has been given by Ranajit Roy in *Hindusthan Standard*, who says that the Front, in spite of the differences within, may be able to come to a decision in less time than, for instance, the Congress took in electing Mrs. Gandhi as Mr. Lal Bahadur Shastri's successor or Mrs. Gandhi to nominate her Cabinet. For Calcutta papers the differences in the UF became staple subject for lead stories for nearly a week. This is understandable, but not the sudden interest taken by some outside papers in the developments in the Front. At least two national newspapers thought the inauguration of the budget session of Parliament and the President's address to be of secondary importance and led with the West Bengal story. Perhaps they thought that the differences would defy solution and despite its overwhelming majority the UF would be unable to form a government. The importance attached to West Bengal on the news pages found no reflection, however, in the editorial columns; leader-

writers seemed to be refraining scrupulously from commenting on the intra-UF wrangles.

No less in the news was the other Bengal which seems to have surpassed the western wing of Pakistan in the intensity of the anti-Ayub agitation. The papers which only a few weeks ago had advised President Ayub Khan to come to terms with the Opposition leaders by offering some concessions are now coming round to the view that the days of the regime are numbered. *The Hindu* has published an article by Rehman Sobhan, a teacher of Dacca University, on the situation and prospects in Pakistan. Sobhan begins his piece with a description of what is happening in Pakistan: Dacca university girls brickbattling the police from their dormitories; Government clerks responding to a student call to join them in an attack on the Whitehall of East Pakistan; an attack by 50,000 workers on the largest jute mill in Asia; Dacca students defying a military-enforced curfew to parade their martyrs; pitched battles against armed police in the streets of West Pakistan; the military on call in half a dozen of its cities. This is the mood of Pakistan's first popular uprising, which has shaken the 10-year Raj of President Ayub Khan to its foundations. Sobhan says that because of the Opposition's lack of roots in the villages one of the more fertile veins of disaffection remains untapped in the present unrest. Some day, however, the unresolved social tensions of the villages are going to explode just as the towns are doing today. It was in the towns that the fires of revolt were banked. The frustrations of the educated as much as the juxtaposition of extreme wealth and poverty make the towns of the Third World breeding grounds for discontent. In Pakistan a robber-baron variant of capitalism, fostered by government development strategy, enables 20 families to own 66 per cent of the industrial assets, 79 per cent of the insurance, and 80 per cent of the banking. In pitched battles with the police in all Pakistan's major cities and many other towns, students were joined by workers and the urban poor to give the

protest a ferocity and stamina which had never been seen before. Unrestrained police and eventually military firing transformed a middle-class protest movement for constitutional reform into a full-scale urban uprising demanding nothing less than the end of the Raj. Deserted by his political followers, showing their true colours in flight from public wrath, the President's last bulwark was the Army. But the entry of Air Marshal Asghar Khan, a widely respected former C-in-C of the Air Force, into the ranks of the Opposition three months ago may have sufficiently divided loyalties in the power-establishment to make continued dependence on the forces a two-edged weapon. This—or the possibility of the Army following the path set in Turkey and South Korea—seems to have conditioned the unsure response of the regime and produced an avalanche of concessions, culminating in the President's decision to lift the State of Emergency as a precondition for negotiating reforms with the Opposition. In the present mood even this decision may have come too late.

The Statesman also agrees that the days of concessions are over. It says that to nobody's surprise except perhaps his own, President Ayub's attempt to initiate talks with the leaders of the Opposition in Pakistan has foundered, at any rate for the time being. The proposed parleys lost much of their meaning after several Opposition leaders had declined to participate in them. The subsequent decision by the eight-party Democratic Action Committee unilaterally to postpone the talks was thus unavoidable. For purposes of record at least, the DAC has not abandoned the talks and has decided to send one representative. But it is very doubtful if the talks can now be revived. With thousands violating the curfew in Dacca, the DAC is unlikely to be able to go against the popular mood. The reasons for the boycott of the talks by the six of the most influential Opposition leaders are so basic that it would be difficult to find a formula to bring them to the conference table without complete capitulation on the

part of President Ayub. For once Mr. Bhutto seems to have found the right phrase for telling the author of *Friends, Not Masters* that the people of Pakistan want change, not concessions.

The Times of India thinks that President Ayub Khan will have to accept the final humiliation of withdrawing the treason charges against Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and other accused in the Agartala conspiracy case if he is seriously interested in talks with representatives of the Democratic Action Committee. Since all the cards are stacked on the side of the Sheikh it would have been surprising indeed if he had not insisted on a prior withdrawal of the charges against him before participating in the proposed negotiations. The Awami League leader is also being logical which cannot be said of the President. President Ayub Khan has already made concession which were regarded inconceivable even a few weeks ago. In his predicament he may finally call off the trial. The conspiracy case is said to have been investigated by the military intelligence and its withdrawal will cast doubt on the integrity and reliability of the service. The Generals may balk at this. In any case the decision to withdraw the conspiracy case will only confirm the Pakistani people, especially those in the eastern wing, in the view that the Ayub regime has not much resistance left and that a few more hard knocks will topple it. In such a situation the Opposition parties are bound to take up an even tougher attitude. Whichever way President Ayub Khan moves he is not likely to strengthen the chances of the revival of his regime. But the Sheikh's unconditional release and participation in the talks will also not resolve the present crisis. The students who are the backbone of the anti-Ayub movement in both the wings are stoutly opposed to any negotiations with him except probably for the limited purpose of paving the way for his retirement. Mr Bhutto represents their mood. So do Air Marshal Asghar Khan and the former Chief Justice of East Pakistan, Mr S. M. Murshed. A negotiated settle-

ment which does not enjoy the support of these men can hardly be viable.

The Indian Express has gone completely wrong in assuming that the conference proposed by President Ayub Khan would take place on schedule. It says that participation in the proposed talks will not be in keeping with Mr Bhutto's flamboyant posture, but to stay away from the conference would mean isolation from the other opposition parties. The DAC represents a coalition of moderate and conservative elements. Others present at the talks will include men like Air Marshal Asghar Khan and General Azam Khan who have not yet defined their political beliefs and are not attached to any party. The success of the talks will depend on what President Ayub Khan's own intentions are. A split in the Opposition might help him temporarily, but he has realised that the status quo is not acceptable to the country and is not going to last. There is a suspicion among many of his opponents that he is stooping only to conquer. The popular upsurge in Pakistan has made it clear, however, that he cannot impose his will on the people any longer. Left extremism has no use for such a consensus, and this increases the responsibility of the others who while desiring political change want to avoid an upheaval.

Commenting on the choice of February 17 as the day for beginning the talks *The Hindustan Times* says it was exactly nine years ago, even to the day, that Mr. Ayub Khan took over as President of Pakistan. Today his Government is under seige and his 1962 constitution threatened. He is back before the people once more but no longer as a virtual dictator. He is obviously willing to bend low with the storm, though not to break. Not yet. Nor need he if he can liberalise and further democratise the system to a point where it offers stability and more genuine participation in government to the country's intelligentsia and proletariat without risking any unstable or uncertain extremism. Pakistan stands at the crossroads.

February 22, 1969

Shillong's Culture-Mongers

A. C.

THE people of Shillong, the capital town of Assam, are known to be very passive and jealously conformist in their attitude. And, most discernibly, Shillong's cultural life reflects this sickening attitude, its reserve of intellectual vitality having been seemingly eaten up by some overpowering introducers.

To describe Shillong's cultural life one has to look not to the vast Khasi slum-dwellers who lead a life worse even by sub-human standard, and who had till the other day a cultural heritage of their own; not to the middle-class Khasi gentry to whom culture means some hillibilities imported from the West; not to the Khasi landlords and the high-ups who are always anxious to utilise their officially recognised bigmanship in their characteristically own big way, but to a number of cultural institutes inherited by some caste-Hindu feudal elements, fascist-oriented in outlook. These institutes have got no business other than performing some rituals like Rabindra Jayanti and other jayantis. On such occasions some brave words of set pattern are spoken, some propaganda cliches are uttered, obviously with a view to pleasing the Establishment, some Tagore songs are sung, and much ado is created to leave an impression that these institutes are avowedly non-political, non-committed, that they are all believers in 'nirapeksha saundarya'. The organisers would always go about bragging that they are contributing a great deal to the promotion of 'Banga-Samskriti'.

At different stages they would of course speak in different tones, whichever suits them best; but, at any rate, Hindu cultural revivalism is their supreme consideration. Fortunately, the non-caste Hindus are not allowed any share in this revivalist movement (one cannot imagine to what formidable degree casteism is still practised here). Their Hindu mind which does

not care for any politics but a cultural regeneration of the wayward younger generation, feels very much stretchy towards their non-Hindu fellow countrymen when the latter talk about asserting their sociopolitical rights, and more often than not they are seen to participate actively in the politics of the forces of right reaction. Their Hindu mind does not also find anything wrong in looking with superior disdain upon even the culture of their Hindu brethren belonging to a linguistic group other than theirs. Lest others think that they are some uncultured hydra-headed blunts, they would once or twice a year arrange seminars on art and literature. They would not mind if you talk about Sartre's existentialism or Camus' absurdism, but for God's sake, not Marx. They would always view with concern the possible emergence of any progressive cultural organisations and would be ready to go any length to sabotage it.

There is also another comic aspect behind all that they do. Almost every year they would invite some self-

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styled celebrities, preferably from Calcutta, to come here and report to the people about how far the former have progressed under the latter's tutelage. These celebrities come and go, felicitated and garlanded. I remember an incident worth recalling in this connection. Last year when a press luminary came here on business tour, one of these institutes promptly seized the opportunity. It sang hallelujah to him and his paper amidst thunderous applause. In reply, this luminary shed some tears for the Bengalis of Assam, made a clandestine reference to the 'disturbances that rocked Assam in 1960 and used such emotive phrases in his typically pseudo-vaishnavite style that to a sensible listener his speech appeared to be no better than a well-calculated chauvinistic exercise. He also used some rhetoric in his speech about the host institute so that he could take his audience in confidence about the 'great service' the coterie rule of these institutes is rendering in Shillong's, nay Assam's, cultural field. And, needless to say, he did not forget to give a rousing call to his audience to subscribe to his paper and to make it a weapon against their 'enemies'. The audience was visibly moved by this insidious messianism of the big shot.

Dramatic Groups

Next to them coming in order of importance are some amateur dramatic groups composed of a considerable number of egoistic characters pursuing their private obsessions in their respective worlds. They would always like to pose as nonconformists, but they do not know what their nonconformism stands for. Their sartorial nonconformism puts faith more in the Theatre of the Absurd than in the Vietnamese peasants fighting American imperialism. They draw their so-called revolutionary didacticism from metaphysical convictions, which, in fact, have got nothing to do with their own human condition but with the bourgeois culture in which they are protected. The result has been that in their anxiety to treat their culture on a strictly neutral plane they

become more apt to be amoral, casting a coolly neutral eye on life's perverse moods. In prescribing what they would call a broad picture of social reality, they create individually intricate symbols inexplicable even to themselves, as though the present human problems are insoluble. Lack of any real revolutionary outlook and the rationale of insurgency has evoked a theory of sensory realization that belongs rather to the tradition of art for art's sake. Often their basic theme of art receives articulation according to that philosophy. But they would always try to give us an apparently impressive set of negative judgments on all that the conservatives see good, but tend to turn a deaf ear to any objective criticism. If any words are uttered against their romantic nonconformism, they would say that they have sacrificed a great deal for the cause of their culture, in that they have preferred to take to the medium of art for 'social service' to becoming the 'princes of the IAS.'

They would say that since their social conditions are not identical with those of the West they cannot readily assimilate themselves in the materialistic trend of social theory. Are they able to interpret the philosophy of the Theatre of the Absurd (where does this philosophy come from?), which has become a sensationalism of this age, in their favour? All that they have got to say is: they do not want to make themselves converts to a certain kind of political thinking. But they would not listen to the argument that the Theatre of the Absurd has been made by its adherents a covert vehicle for much political, social and moral criticism. They would brand such argumentation as overt propaganda in utter disregard of the fact of their own inconsistent propagandism. These sham intellectuals feel themselves closer to the hippies with their marijuana and such other people than to the masses.

Dwandik

At a time when the forces of right reaction are irresistibly dominating the cultural life of Shillong, to which all other organisations are simply sub-

Choosing A Play

Z. H. KHAN

ordinated, creating impediments to the growth of mass culture, Dwandik's very recent appearance on the scene should be viewed as a welcome breakthrough. It has appeared as a revolt against all kinds of obscurantism, especially at this hour of cultural insularity, in the face of squawkings and threats by the so-called cultural bosses. Those who people Dwandik are young men capable of passing judgment on a wide variety of things. Their pronouncements on art and culture have unnerved the traditional critics who have already raised a hullabaloo about Dwandik's 'audacity' to impugn all that they have learnt through decades of experience. They do not also quite like that 'Dwandik' should bring in its fold the non-Bengali elements, undermining the interests of a particular community (those critics are the ones who will never recognise the rights of the minority community).

In its first play, 'Eka Noi' which was staged here on November 24, 1968 (it is also going to be produced in Assamese soon), Dwandik has attempted to give, in striking contrast to what people here are used to seeing, a rationalistic analysis of the burning problems that confront the youth of today in middle-class society: that the world suffers because all the individual sufferers live in a suffering world of their own failing to see that their sufferings must have a social root and can be cured only socially, not by self-imposed estrangement from the people. Dwandik's success is that it has attempted to find out the root of the evil, to which Darwin gave the first blow and Marx and his adherents the last one. Dwandik has also picked up the cue and attempted another, however feeble.

The play Dwandik has no doubt issued an urgent invitation to ponder over the validity of the absurdist philosophy, causing much provocation to those who comes to theatre expecting to find some meaningless babble and comforting illusions. It can be said in all fairness that for the first time in the history of Shillong's cultural life Dwandik is going to explore a mass cultural base which we here need so badly today.

A couple of years ago an interview with Luis Valdez was published in the *Tulane Drama Review* describing the work of El Teatro Campesino established in Delano, California, by him during a continuing strike of agricultural workers. Valdez had decided to devote his time to organising the farm workers through the medium of the theatre. He faced a number of problems, not the least being the bilingual nature of his audience. The people there spoke Spanish and English. He had therefore to think out how to make his message intelligible so that the purpose behind his plays was served.

He used the simplest methods and the easiest means.

The "Teatro" could not afford costumes and scenery, lighting or music and never had more than one actress to rely on; in fact they performed at times from the decks of trucks. Characters were indicated by using placards hung round the neck, action was mostly mimed and dialogue reduced to the most easily understood monosyllables and sometimes slang with which both the English speaking and Spanish speaking audience was familiar.

The effort was successful enough to have drawn the attention of the editors of the *Tulane Drama Review*, (now the *Drama Review*). This was two years after the inception of the *Teatro*.

With the conditions that obtained, suppose for a moment that Valdez had chosen Bengali for his language and Beckett for his idiom, could he in his wildest dreams hope for any communication with his audience? For any sincere group of people who are truly interested in constructive activity the first task is, therefore, to analyse the needs of the audience they wish to address. All else will follow correctly.

Let us forget the utterly false notion that art is its own purpose. Art has meaning because it expresses. It

is an expression of feelings, of sensitive reactions not to super-natural emanations but to very tangible earthly occurrences.

Therefore, art has purpose and it is reasonable to expect its purpose to be conveyed or communicated.

Once the needs of the audience have been understood the next thing to establish is the medium which will be the most effective. Art knows no compromise. The moment it is contaminated or adulterated it not only ceases to be art, it also fails to serve any purpose. If material is not available suitable for a certain type of audience then material has to be created, just as it was done by Luis Valdez.

Poster Plays

Not long ago, here in Bengal, poster plays were used as an effective political weapon. These bore a remarkable resemblance to the "Teatro" referred to earlier. Those who believe in "comfortable" art condemned these poster plays vehemently but those who understood their meaning flocked by the hundreds to listen and learn.

The poster plays were usually performed from the decks of trucks and used devices very similar to those described in the earlier paragraphs. The measure of success can be understood from the violent attacks that were made on the performers by opposition groups,

This brings us to the question of the venue. If a play addresses itself to the workers and its object is to rally them to a tactical or strategic point it should be performed in an area where workers abound. It would be ludicrous putting on such a play at, say, the New Empire.

A review of theatrical activity in recent months will demonstrate the scant attention that is paid to these basic considerations.

A play like *Loot* was chosen by a new drama group as their first play and performed at the Hindi High School. The play attacked religion on the one hand and the establishment on the other. Yet the audience that saw the play was mostly conservative. Another play—a biographical one

about Taras Shevchenko—would have appealed to radical and devoted audiences but was put on at the University Institute amidst so much noise and din that it was difficult to hear the dialogue; and this consisted of some of Shevchenko's beautiful poems.

Brecht's *Caucasian Chalk Circle* was one of the plays comprising the festival of Hindi plays in celebration of the centenary of the Hindi stage. The fashionable and very well-to-do audience that attended must have appreciated the rich costumery, the effective decor, and perhaps the novel technique of the play and yet missed the thematic message it carried.

Since drama is presently an activity indulged in by the more comfortable layers of society, there are constant examples of compromise. *Angar*, a play about miners, was presented at the Minerva, a theatre surrounded by such reactionary elements that during most political upheavals it is under threat of attack from its own neighbourhood. In fact attacks have been made; yet the Little Theatre Group continues to act there and does not see the necessity of taking its radical plays to where radical audiences are available.

However, *Angar* speaks about the workers and not to the workers. It depended largely for its final impact on lighting effects by Tapas Sen. Its sole purpose thus became the introduction of the workers to the urban "elite" and, of course, the not-so-elite. If this was the purpose, then there is no complaint.

In the final analysis one has to produce plays with a full knowledge of one's stock of actors and actresses, their various strengths and their weaknesses, their ability and their capacity and last, but by no means least, their devotion. For a group with an ideal there is no limelight, no astral fame, no astronomical wealth.

The professionals are generally influenced by the idea of making money and there can be no expectation of progressive and experimental ideas from them.

The burden of developing the theatre along these lines rests squarely on the thinking and sincerity of groups.

Tagore Paintings In Reproduction

BY AN ART CRITIC

IT has been a long journey. From the quaint and delightful pictures made with woodblocks, antedating Gutenberg's invention, to the reproductions of paintings with the latest and most sophisticated techniques, gadgets, and of course, skill. Today, the finest reproductions confined generally to small numbers, are so completely faithful that not even the most discerning eye can tell the real from the copy at a glance.

Some truly fine reproductions, done in collotype, were on view at the Academy of Fine Arts from February 19 to 25. They were the 37 Ganymed prints of Rabindranath's paintings which were commissioned during the Tagore Birth Centenary celebrations in 1961.

These prints were one of the most worthwhile things to emerge from the celebrations, and during 1961, they were shown throughout India and in various countries abroad. After the celebrations were over, these prints numbering about 350, were distributed to museums and art bodies in India and abroad.

The significance of these reproductions will be realised from the fact that Tagore's originals, numbering about 2000, painted between 1928 and 1939, (most of these, numbering about 1800, repose in Santiniketan's Rabindra Sadan mostly unseen) are a fragile lot done on the flimsiest of paper with the most fugitive black and coloured inks, and cannot be safely sent out. These prints have thus, enabled and will enable art lovers here and abroad to see some of his best drawings and paintings in versions almost indistinguishable from the originals. The paintings chosen for reproduction were representative of Rabindranath the painter as can be seen from the exhibition. First, there are a couple of pages of his poems with their calligraphic erasures and doodles from which his paintings were

born. Secondly, there are faces, witty, romantic, mysterious. The face studies include one of Tagore's full self-portraits. Thirdly, there are some flower studies. Fourthly, there are landscapes, burning with an incandescent glow. Finally, in Tagore's own words, there are animals that have unaccountably missed their chance of existence and birds that only soar in our dreams. These paintings, born out of their creator's joy, will continue to give joy to all those who look at them.

Hena Mitra's Paintings

A new painter, Hena Mitra, held an exhibition of her paintings at the Academy which were on show till February 25. Among the 25 canvases displayed, face and figure studies accounted for the majority. One is not unfair when one says that Hena Mitra has still some way to go to make the grade as a full-fledged painter. It must be added, though, that some of her face studies and monochrome paintings showed promise.

Musical Instruments

A photographic exhibition on 'The Musical Instruments of India through the Ages', sponsored by the Max Mueller Bhavan, at the Academy, was on view from February 19 to 25. The exhibition was planned and executed by Mr. S. Krishnaswamy.

The photographs covered folk and classical musical instruments, and those used by the tribals of various regions in India. An interesting series showed musical instruments depicted in Indian sculptures dating back to the 3rd century B.C. and Indian musical instruments found in paintings and sculptures in such places as Central Asia and the Far East. Lastly, there were also photographs of some master musicians of India demonstrating how the principal instruments are played.

The exhibition was interesting not only because of its unusualness but also because of its intrinsic value. It must, however, be said that the photographs could have been of better quality, if not larger in size, and the exhibition more attractively mounted.

Merely Trivial

MRIGANKA SEKHAR RAY

AT one time, the favourite set-up of many Bengali films used to be boarding-houses where one could find the familiar samples of the human species. Now health resorts seem to have become the centre of human oddities in their celluloid manifestation. In *Duranta Charai* (directed by Jagannath Chatterjee) the action takes place around Massanjor's 'Moon Lodge', a cluster of small cottages where different characters assemble with all their mysteries, sins and confessions. The story is about two love-affairs; Binu (Madhabi Mukherjee) with a troubled past finds her real mate in Alope (Anup Kumar), while Sadhan, Binu's brother, has his frustrations in his relationship with Sheila, modelled on the conventional conception of a modern girl of the Indian screen. The other characters add their bit to the clumsy and confused scenario and no amount of scenic beauty could salvage the trite material. Madhabi Mukherjee looks scintillating as a mute beauty, but in her climactic harangue about free love one starts feeling sadly that the magic touch of *Charulata* is gone. Anup Kumar has an all-singing, all-swinging, all-romancing role, but somehow he fails to rise above the level of a lolly-pop hero. The accent on outdoor photography does not help much. With all the picturesque boulders, the gentle charm of the streams and sun-flowers, *Duranta Charai* is essentially a still photographer's film and this excessive pictorialism stifles the quality of people as people, of feeling as feeling, and at the end, a big question-mark haunts the audience—Massanjor is definitely beautiful to look at, so what?

Bibaha Bibhrat (directed by Ashim Bandyopadhyay) fails to come out of the beaten track of the screen comedy. The director attempts to transplant a Prabhat Mukhopadhyaya plot into modern surroundings without taking into account the changes in the objective conditions. Anup Kumar is

dragged into marrying his neighbour's sister, but the affair could not be consummated, because his tyrant father would not let him live with his wife. Now the comedy runs amuck and the director brings in all kinds of silly contrivances to hasten the hour of re-union. The result is a lump of unfunny situations, some vulgar jokes and a couple of ill-conceived fantasy sequences. Anup Kumar and Robi Ghosh as the comic duo have their share of horsy clowning; Utpal Dutt as the bullying father tries some not-very-effective stylised exaggerations, while an enchanting and dignified Lily Chakraborty moves elegantly through this gallery of stuttering people, waiting eagerly for that precious moment when she could get a role really worthy of her enormous talent.

Letters

Economic Programme

Ashok Rudra's omnibus critique (February 15) of Amit Bhaduri's "central suggestion" for self-financing rural development (February 8) has a rather flimsy basis. Bhaduri argues (a) that food be procured from the peasants and (b) that this food be used to pay wages in kind to the underemployed rural manpower while they are engaged in rural development work during the agricultural slack season. If the procurements were made in lieu of cash from the coffers of the State Government—and this is Rudra's very own grafting—Bhaduri's scheme would surely generate inflation. But a careful reading of the latter's article reveals that he wanted to minimize costs to the State Exchequer; obviously then Rudra's assumption is contrary to Bhaduri's basic postulate. As far as I know, there are no insuperable legal or political impediments, even within the present structure, to the imposition of some progressive land or income tax on the rural rich that could be used to finance rural construction. Rudra's spectre of inflation could be exorcised without the ritual incantation

of 'Chinese communism. On political grounds, however, I remain a sceptic: the present UF may lack both the courage and the vision to put into effect the none-too-radical Bhaduri-type policy. (Whether the policy was original or not, does not appear very relevant now).

About Bhaduri's two other suggestions I have serious reservations. Any State law forcing the employers to dole out emergency benefits to the workers during lock-outs may be declared unconstitutional by the courts, if it is not scotched earlier by the Central Cabinet acting through the President. On the other hand, company taxation is most definitely a Central subject and so is the concomitant business of "expense account". The State governments cannot do anything in this regard.

N. K. CHANDRA
Calcutta

Mortgaged

The articles 'The Comprador And His Capital' (December 21, 1968) by Nishad and 'Power through Election?' (February 1) by Abdul Gafar were of excellent order. It is quite true that India now stands mortgaged to foreign financiers and moneylenders, and that the Government right from the beginning of the Five Year Plans did not touch the internal capital resources at all and depended entirely on foreign capital on the pretext of industrialising the country. It is equally true, as Nishad wrote, that all this is resulting in the loss of political independence.

Isn't it significant that when small loans amounting to £5 million were being signed with the U.K. Government, which gave it a yield of 15 shillings per pound, India's own capitalists like the Maharaja of Baroda were being allowed to keep £9 million abroad in banks? This Maharaja alone had been drawing a privy purse of £200,000 a year since August, 1947. He was also given £17,000 as allowance by the Government of India and a salary of £190,000 yearly from 1947 to 1951 as a ruler. In New Delhi he lived in a huge, white

stone house in the Princes Park where his neighbour was the Nizam of Hyderabad, who topped him at one time as the world's richest man. In 1951, his wife flew 3,000 miles to London from New York to phone her husband because America at that time was not connected with India on the direct line. She smoked £10 Havana cigars held in a ruby studded holder.

While he lived in England where he died in 1968, the Maharaja built up his string of racehorses and in 1957 paid a record price of £29,400 for a yearling colt. At the New Market auction in 1945 he had paid 28,000 guineas for another yearling. At bloodstock sales at Newmarket and Doncaster, he spent nearly a million pounds on animals. He took more interest in the welfare of his old English acquaintances than in his starving countrymen at home and for three years in succession allotted a Christmas gift of £500 to the former. The actress, Jane Mansfield, was presented a gold button studded with diamonds. Two necklaces worth £100,000 each were given to a German blonde. Film actress Virginia Keily of Jersey (USA) was his friend. He held shares worth £30,000 in Fortunum and Masons, famous London wine distributors, rather than in any industry at home.

Abdul Gafar is right when he says that the communists lack courage to give lead to the working classes. Is it not unfortunate that they know text-books more than the people for whom the text-books are meant.

A. THAKUR
London

Election Lessons

Hats off to Charan Gupta for his correct assessment of poll prospects in *Frontier* of February 1.

Like you and your journal we too do not believe that epoch-making changes are possible in the socio-economic condition of the State through this mid-term poll. Also that these will never come through parliamentarianism. But the Congress is the main enemy; it had to be buried and it's buried at last.

The West Bengal mid-term election

is a good lesson for the co-conspirators and the Centre's political watchdogs that the people of this State will not allow them to do whatever they like. And again it is the last nail in the coffins of political opportunists like Ghosh, Kabir & Company. Finally, it will hasten the political polarization in the State for the last showdown.

PRIYADHON NANDY
Garalgacha, Hooghly.

On Not Eating Beef

Mr. E. M. S. Namboodiripad recently gave a talk at the Indian Statistical Institute on "An Alternative Approach to the Plan". In the course of the talk, the Kerala Chief Minister stated that he had been told by Mr. Morarji Desai that in planning of economic development, one should not be guided by "ideologies", but "moral" issues like prohibition should still receive consideration. Mr. Namboodiripad said that whereas for Morarji, prohibition was the major moral issue, for him the main moral (as well as ideological) problem was the end of "economic exploitation" of the primary producer by landlords, money-lenders and the like.

Commenting on Mr. Namboodiripad's speech, Prof. P. C. Mahalanobis agreed with him generally, but said he would like to carry the arguments a step farther. He felt that more than irrational inhibition about prohibition (which he also regarded as a relevant factor), irrational sentiment about the sacred cow and proliferation of temples and rituals held up a secular modernisation of Indian societies. Prof. Mahalanobis pleaded for a "cultural revolution" in the direction of "universal, individual spiritualism" for achieving social justice.

I find this "neo-obscurantist" approach in Prof Mahalanobis's statement quite misleading. (Incidentally, such ideas are often also voiced in your otherwise intellectually and socially alert journal). I have full sympathy with Mr. Namboodiripad's straightforward definition of morality and I find it wrong to expect that much social justice will come out of

beef-eating, drinking and individual spiritualism in the name of secularism. There are many instances to show that one can comfortably be secular in these terms while ruthlessly exploiting the labour of the masses without even having the saving grace of sharing their symbolic idioms. If the end of "economic exploitation" be the guiding criterion for cultural and political action, one has to go in for the hard-headed rational exercise of finding out whether there is any correlation at all, positive or negative, between exploitative behaviour and going to temple, not eating beef or being a teetotaler. One should empirically explore whether Indians who are not inhibited about beef, drink and formal religion are less involved in the exploitation of the masses. I would, therefore, make a strong plea for not confusing issues. Once we really go about the task of ending economic exploitation, formal religion (orthodox or reformed) and popular superstitions will lose their inhibitive role. To begin with an abstract ideological programme of fighting "superstition" will be beginning at the wrong end and it is likely to give a longer lease of life to capitalism with a doubtful gain of a veneer of secularism. I am pretty sure that the majority of our peasants are not looking forward to taking beef or giving up their social cycle of "superstitious" rituals which punctuate the hard routine of their life. With all these superstitions they are quite keen about getting their due share of the land and would not mind at all if efficient technological equipment and improved seeds also came along with that.

Let us, therefore, not impose our westernised *bhadralok* sensitivity about traditional customs on the Indian masses but go the whole hog to provide them with the material items they need and reorganise the system of social and political control decisively in their favour. Persistent moral commitment to such an objective will in itself generate "universal spiritualism" and relevant secularism as by-products.

SURAJIT SINHA
Calcutta

MARCH 1, 1969



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