

# frontier

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## ILLUSION AND REALITY

“HIS victory is my defeat”. When with these words Gandhiji set in motion a process reversing the perfectly democratic election of Subhas Chandra Bose as Congress President in the late thirties, no one thought of disciplinary action to preserve Congress unity. The dispute this time was, on the surface, over the election of the President of the Indian Union who, thanks to the unsavoury way puppet Governors have been invested with extraordinary powers, would also no longer be a figure-head in times of crisis. That is why both Mrs Gandhi and the Syndicate wanted a President who would befriend them; and this lent a bitterness to the power contest and the talk of discipline. The angry old men have lost in the second round of the war of nerves. Congress MPs who do not want Parliament to be dissolved have brought about a compromise. Everybody knows that the peace will not last long, that the Congress is under artificial respiration. But the concession Mrs Gandhi has made to the old gang has removed the ideological cover for her plea for a free vote and will make it difficult for her and her supporters to talk, when the crisis mounts again, with convincing logic, of a deal between the Syndicate and the Right reactionaries. It was this cover which mobilised, if not the majority of Congress MPs, a vast mass of outsiders for her and led to delusions of an instant polarisation.

One can legitimately support Mrs Gandhi's recent actions, but these should not be invested with a significance they do not possess. To the extent they have helped in the disintegration of the Congress hold on the country, they have certainly served a useful purpose. It is also possible to agree that Mrs Gandhi and her group are any day preferable to the Syndicate and its backers outside the Congress. But Mrs Gandhi will not, nor does she intend to, accomplish the tasks that the communists should set themselves, a theme which has been emphasized elsewhere in this issue. She cannot even realize the limited goals of a United Front of the so-called Left Democratic forces. If support has to be given to a Government led by her, it can only be on specific issues, not on any basis of invariable principle.

How did the non-Congress parties react in the last few days that shook them?

Mr Masani and others of his ilk have not lost heart. “Turn the

searchlight inwards", said the Swatantra leader at a meeting in New Delhi last Sunday. The light, he apparently hopes, would show that the so-called Left is a strange amalgam including elements which need not be unacceptable to those openly on the Right. In fact, what Mr Masani finds tragic is not the conspiracy of the communists but the failure of the PSP, the SSP and many Congressmen. Even the treachery of the so-called Young Turks he might have expected, but a party like the PSP should have known better. After all, there is no real difference between Swatantra intentions and PSP inclinations. And the SSP, both psychologically and in its style of operation, is closer to the Jana Sangh than to any party of the Left.

But Mr Masani need not despair. Wasn't Mr Kripalani once a socialist of sorts? Listen to what he is saying now. He has outdone Messrs Masani and Vajpayee in condemning Mrs Gandhi and her followers. In a statement, carried at great length by a pro-Swatantra newspaper, he has not only warned the nation against the danger of dictatorship, but also pointed out that, if the people are with the Prime Minister, they were also with Hitler and Mussolini. At any final moment of decision, the PSP at least will know better than side with the people against the dictates of democratic freedom. And make no mistake about the SSP. It is certainly anti-Congress and could not but support forces dismembering the old monster. But its opposition to what the Congress had come to represent is no stronger than its hostility towards the communists. Messrs Raj Narain and George Fernandes are more busy running down the communists in West Bengal and elsewhere than trying to consolidate Leftist unity.

But, if the SSP's support to Mrs Gandhi remains ambivalent, Leftist consolidation can hardly be better facilitated by those who see in her the focus of the nation's forces and start behaving as if by helping Mrs Gandhi win the first round of her fight with the Syndicate they have

brought about India's August Revolution. In the West Bengal United Front, the CPI spokesman suggested that, since Mrs Gandhi was leading all the democratic and progressive forces, the parties in the Front must give her total support; so no more confrontation, no more Centre-State friction. At least the RSP had the sense to say a word or two against this childish euphoria, though the CPI (M) was curiously silent.

## Politics Of Power

*A correspondent writes from Delhi :*

Politics is for power, and very few would willingly move away from a functioning power structure. It was thus inevitable that, on the morrow of Mrs Gandhi's spectacular victory in the Presidential poll, there would be an avalanche of support for her and the Syndicate would find its base shrinking ominously with every hour. A formal split in the Congress might yet occur; flanked by a handful of easy-on-the-eye ladies, Messrs Kamaraj, Morarji Desai and Nijalingappa might yet set up an Indian National Congress, Simon Pure Wing. But, if it comes about, it is going to be an altogether lonely wing. The fence-sitters have already flocked to Mrs Gandhi's fold *en masse*; those who hold on to jobs are fast signing up their unswerving loyalty to the Prime Minister; yesterday's Syndicate children have suddenly blossomed forth as today's conscience walkers.

In the poll itself, the Prime Minister and her tacticians went wrong in only two States—Rajasthan and Assam; the promised votes somehow failed to come despite the assurances of Messrs Mathura Das Mathur and Bhagawati. True to their style, several members of the SSP and the PSP, both in Parliament and the State Assemblies, apparently decided to cast their first preference for the Syndicate's candidate; a few DMK votes in Tamil Nadu too went astray. But a grateful Brahmananda Reddy did not muffle the cue; Haryana's Double Dutch was lethally effective; Uttar Pradesh stuck with Nehru's

daughter; Mr Giri was home. Mrs Gandhi has won on her own, on the basis of her own strategy; the particular arithmetic of the motley combination which would ensure victory for Shri Giri, was her own handiwork. Apart from the symbolic act of bank nationalisation and the brave evening speeches, her overt commitment toward the Left has been minimal. The Prime Minister owes practically nothing to Mr Sundarayya or Mr Dange: it is the Left leaders who have made all the overtures to her, not she to them.

It will be perilous for the communist parties if they fail to recognise this fact. Having captured the Congress organisation, Mrs Gandhi can now afford to sit pretty. The six weeks' radical stance has allowed her to reach all the targets. Apart from the Syndicate, the Jana Sangh has been the heaviest loser in the process. It is the laziness of the communist parties, and their utter faith in a variant of 'agency arrangement' for reaching down to the masses, which allowed the Jana Sangh to capture the lumpen proletariat in north India. By her gimmicks and gut politics, Mrs Gandhi has now been able to capture back the loyalty of large hunks of the peasantry and the lower middle class in the vast stretch between Punjab and Bihar and flanked in the south by Madhya Pradesh. Even if Kerala and West Bengal hold out, her house psephologists are predicting that, with the machinery of the Congress entirely at her disposal and given the time to consolidate, she might sail through 1972 without entering into further leftward commitments.

Mrs Gandhi, accordingly, can be expected to temporise from now on. Everybody, including the Americans and the World Bank, are on record as being for the poor and the down-trodden; not many will therefore strain at the gnat of bank nationalisation. Besides, even for the Americans, the days of Dullesian morality are long past; whatever might be Mr Minoo Masani's advice, they would not be prepared to ditch Mrs Gandhi till so long as she does not ditch them. After all, her immediate entourage includes not only a Mohan

Kumaramangalam but also a C. Subramaniam. For the present, therefore, the Americans have nothing to fear but fear itself.

Circumstances may of course get altered. The temper of the masses may turn out to be such that the Prime Minister might be pushed to an acuter radicalisation of programme than she is thinking of at the moment. It is equally possible for some last-ditch supporters of the Syndicate to defeat her, in the Lok Sabha on a snap vote this week or the next, and before her people have been able to take possession of the party machine, in which event she would have little alternative but to seek electoral support from the forces on the Left. But nothing is yet settled, and those who are having pipedreams about a Left-led United Front regime in New Delhi deserve to be slapped back to an awakening of reality.

## Another Holiday

*A Calcutta correspondent writes :*

The tension on Wednesday, August 20, was over at about 10-15 p.m.—for those who had not retired earlier, like Mr Sanjiva Reddy. It was quite natural for people to discuss the event throughout Thursday and the most excited and noisy discussions must have been held where people meet everyday, that is, where they work. As a consequence, perhaps not much work was done, which is normal in most offices, in particular the Secretariat. The point is, after an event of consequence people do not stay at home but are eager to meet friends and discuss it at their places of work. A public holiday, at sudden notice, disturbs this natural tendency.

But our MLAs seem to be different in their reaction. On Thursday, August 21, there was continuous clamour in the Assembly for an adjournment to celebrate Mr Giri's victory. They were told by sterner colleagues that quite a lot of business was pending, that they would have occasion to celebrate the event on August 25. But the Speaker yielded to the prevailing sentiment and adjourned the

Assembly. The babus went home.

In UF-ruled Kerala, the behaviour of the MLAs was not childish. So it cannot be said that the holiday craze is a characteristic of United Fronts. It is a disease to which West Bengal succumbs much too often. Of course the way the UF had voted for Mr Giri was welcome, but was it unexpected? Was it decisive? In fact it was the voting of the Uttar Pradesh MLAs, which was unexpected and which helped Mr Giri most. So the West Bengal Assembly had no specific reason to call it a day.

Leave the majority of the MLAs alone, the West Bengal Government too goes out of the way to declare public holidays. Perhaps the old habit of calling for general strikes dies hard. Is it also part of its programme for providing limited relief to the people under the Constitution? The trouble with our leftists is that they have begun to derive great vicarious satisfaction from other people's victories. For that matter, if Mr Giri had lost, we would perhaps have had a hartal and general strike. It is heads we win, tails you lose. What matters is a holiday for people whose representatives in any case are not famous for their capacity for serious work—or courage in the face of unarmed policemen. A tendency is growing in this State to bask in a synthetic sun, to feel mighty proud and self-important and appropriate to ourselves the credit which should go to other people—to dissident Congressmen on August 16. The leftist jubilation, the ever-changing dialectics, the air of expectancy, all this reminds one of jackals waiting for a paper-tigress to let them in at the kill.

## Tea And Sympathy

Mr Hathi, Union Labour Minister, has said that the Government has full sympathy for the striking tea plantation workers. Assuming it has, the question remains: what is the worth of this sympathy?

Nearly two hundred thousand North Bengal tea workers are on

strike because the tea planters would not brook any encroachment, as the planters say, on their fundamental right to determine the size of their labour force. Using this fundamental right the planters have brought down the number of plantation workers from 3.2 lakhs in 1951 to 1.9 in 1968, even though the area of plantation has increased from year to year. They have done this, pleading some agro-technological revolution in the gardens. The workers, who pluck leaves with their own hands and do all the drying, dusting, screening and the rest themselves, are not aware of any such blending of agriculture and technology. The talk of agro-technology is for them just a cover for use of casual labour, dispensing with the necessity of paying statutory privileges to permanent workers. The practice has been so blatant that even the planters, in a bid to avert the strike, agreed not to appoint casual labour for 'perennial' jobs, during the aborted tripartite talks.

The pivotal question however is how fundamental is the employers' fundamental right to fix the size of the labour force? There will be no dearth of advocates who will swear by the Constitution and hold that this right is unassailable. Aware of the problems that it may give birth to in a land of chronic unemployment, even the Government has restrained itself from an unguarded exercise of it. For example, in the matter of automation. But what can it do when a party refuses to have a voluntary curb? The tea planters rejected the Government's request not to reduce the number of workers. What can the Government do? Can it amend the Constitution, restrict this fundamental right and thus pull off the svelte carpet from under the potbellied planters' feet?

When the area of plantation as well as the volume of production increases but the number of workers employed decreases, it is simple arithmetic that the workload of the worker is increased. But the planters, experts in higher mathematics, show beautiful pictures of agro-technological graphs to prove it is not. The strains of the Indian tea plantation

workers are however common knowledge and even the Government was compelled to appoint the Kader Nawaz Committee, after the 1966 tea strike, to recommend the land-labour ratio. What the workers today want is nothing but implementation of the Committee's recommendation. But the planters contend that they have the sole right to fix the labour size, vide the Constitution of India.

What can the Government, with all its sympathy for the tea workers, do in the face of this flagrant defiance? Can it nationalise the tea industry? Mr B. R. Bhagat, Union Minister for Foreign Trade and Supply, has, it is reported, outright rejected the demand.

The prospects of the tea strike are uncertain. The planters have strong hopes that it will wither away, because the strikers are not coordinated, being scattered over hills, plains and terai. Moreover, the strike is more political than economic, because the land-labour ratio has nothing to do with the immediate wages of the workers. It follows then, the planters hope, the trade unions will gradually lose hold on the starving

strikers. The Union Government has so far been just a passive onlooker, loftily saying now and then that the State Government is well seized of the matter, which is a State subject. The Government of West Bengal is well caught—between the struggling workers and shrieks over the daily loss of Rs 30 lakh worth of production.

## A Tough Game

The events in Brazil over the last three weeks demonstrate again how precious is democracy, that only responsible, peace-loving and obedient people deserve a democratic government, and that it is always violent people conscious of their rights who compel the army generals to run democracy on behalf of the people. The Brazilian junta headed by President Costa e Silva was said to be working on plans for "the imminent return of a measure of political democracy" when the left-wing enemies of democracy, the Army complains, indulged in bank robberies and started preparations for guerilla war. The same people who include some Roman Catholic priests have been for some time inciting workers to seek wage increases, protest against the sweeping emergency powers of the army and even go on strike. The last straw for the Army was the discovery of guerilla bases complete with arms, ammunition and maps—straight out of Che's manual. Now more than 2,000 Marines are hunting for guerillas in an area along the Atlantic coast south of Rio de Janeiro. Naval gunboats have been stationed along the coast to prevent the guerillas escaping to offshore islands. General Sizenio Sarmiento has made an open declaration that from now on the Army's repression is going to be violent. "Now we know they are playing a tough game we shall reply in kind."

Yet barely two months ago Brazil appeared to be peaceful and about the most secure of Latin American countries in the hands of the generals. Nothing was more impressive than the security arrangement made for

the visiting American envoy, Nelson A. Rockefeller, which was hailed as "the strongest military security shield that has been mounted in any of the 12 countries" visited by him. The progress report that the junta submitted to the visiting American was, however, no less impressive. The rate of growth, President Costa claimed, had been pushed up and that of inflation down. The formula for success as described by the Minister of Planning has been to replace demagoguery with work, subversion with order and improvisation with projects. Of all this achievement the most remarkable quite obviously was in the area of "order". In the Operation Cleaning up that has been continuing since December last year 94 members of the Lower House have been purged. Ending April a total of 300 people, including judges, city mayors, air force personnel and journalists have been stripped of their political rights for ten years. Another decree forcibly retired 12 diplomats and 31 foreign ministry officials. In Sao Paulo several university professors and civil servants were removed from their jobs—among them two of Brazil's few nuclear physicists. Prisons, needless to mention, have been packed with the dangerous young men. The only failure of the Junta consists in their inability to sell this success story in their own country and impress people accordingly.

Isolated guerilla activity is nothing new in Brazil and the present one might turn out to be more of the same. But one thing that must be clear to the generals is that 'success' does not always succeed and that it is one thing to ensure the safety of a visitor and another to do it for a regime like theirs.

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## Anatomy Of The Syndicate

FROM A POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

BY its very nature, victory for either side in the Presidential election could not have solved any political issue. In the course of the struggle, the only political issue Mrs Indira Gandhi can be said to have raised through her bank nationalisation became the first casualty. Neither side forced the issue. And how does one explain the fact that Mrs Gandhi held out an assurance to the princes that their privy purses would not be touched until 1971 (and this was a compromise on principles with the very forces which had propped the Syndicate) if they backed her candidate in the election? A section of big business has gone over to Mrs Gandhi's camp and this to a degree would force her to compromise with the very forces the Syndicate has been representing. So what has been achieved by Mrs Gandhi is at best an organisational defeat of the Syndicate and the rout of its candidate in terms of mere voting arithmetic and little else. Mrs Gandhi's victory would have been politically more significant had she fought the battle for Mr Giri on issues more tangible than "conscience" and had not given the impression that she was exploiting the socialist sentiment of the people for her own ends. The Politbureau of the CPI (M) has arrived at a conclusion approximating this, though on the basis of a different set of propositions. The Mrs Gandhi-Syndicate polarisation is not one of vested interests versus anti-vested interests. Secondly, part of the victory could be attributed to the appeals to Muslim communal and Harijan caste sentiment, and this is a weapon the Syndicate could use when it suits it.

The fact that the Syndicate could not hit back immediately is a measure of its shock at the defeat while Mrs Gandhi was pressing her offensive in the wake of her victory. With Mr Sanjiva Reddy's defeat a good part

of the Syndicate's peripheral following is melting away and in the Prime Minister's camp those who worked against the official candidate have turned "doves" overnight. The Young Turks' role in trying to build a bridge for the Prime Minister's camp to the Syndicate through Mr Chavan underlines this aspect of political opportunism in the whole game. Disciplinary action cannot solve anything because the Syndicate just does not have the strength to challenge Mrs Gandhi's position in the Congress Parliamentary Party, either on its own strength or with the help of other parties.

In the normal course, the defeat of the Congress candidate should have occasioned a no-confidence motion in the Lok Sabha on the very morrow of the result. But none materialised. The Swatantra Party and the Jana Sangh had no moral right to sponsor such a motion because they had given their second votes to Mr Reddy. The communist parties could not have done it with equanimity (they did not want it in the first place) because Mr Giri was their candidate. The SSP could have done it (by virtue of the anti-Congress and anti-communist basis of its support to Mr Giri but its group in Parliament found itself divided, Mr Raj Narain demanding such a motion and Mr Madhu Limaye and others opposing it).

The Syndicate can at best hold Mrs Gandhi on a short leash in Parliament directing its following in the Congress Parliamentary Party to keep continuous pressure on the Prime Minister with veiled threats to vote her down on any substantive motion.

### In Disarray

There is little doubt that the Syndicate is in disarray, and dazed. If it wanted to "discipline" the Prime Minister the most opportune time

was between the poll and the result. Action could have been taken irrespective of the outcome and vested with the strength of a principle. But the Syndicate found itself debating the issue—the hardliners demanding stern action against the Prime Minister and others and a leader like Mr Chavan pleading for a soft line. Mr Chavan has changed sides thrice in two weeks and it is moot if either side would trust him. The peace moves attributed to him have been confined to the Prime Minister's camp and the Syndicate knows nothing about them.

Mrs Gandhi's strategy seems to aim at weaning Mr Chavan away from the Syndicate. Mr Chavan on his part wanted a firm commitment by the Syndicate that he would be the next Prime Minister if Mrs Gandhi was toppled and strategy for the operation should be left entirely to him. In the absence of any commitment, his position in the Syndicate is untenable as it is in Mrs Gandhi's Cabinet. There are vague reports that any reshuffle in the immediate future would involve the Home portfolio. But Mr Chavan might well buy his peace with Mrs Gandhi in the mean time.

The more important development in the whole drama is the emergence of a rival power group which is something of a parallel to the Syndicate, whatever name one calls it. The "Indicate" is an alternative focus to the Syndicate in Congress politics.

The origins of the Syndicate go beyond the much publicised Tirupati summit late in 1963 when the bosses are supposed to have decided on Nehru's successor. It originated in 1958, when Mr Nehru asked Mr Kamaraj to rig Mrs Gandhi's election as Congress President to succeed Mr Dhebar. This is one thing Mr Kamaraj regrets to this day. The emergence of the Syndicate underlined a basic fact: there would be no leader of all-India stature of acceptability after Mr Nehru and it has to be collective leadership operating through a "front" man like Mr Shastri. Mr Shastri's premature death distorted the situation but the validity of the premise remained. The Syndicate, to begin with, was a vertical interlocking

of dominant factions in some of the Pradesh Congresses. It was a combination of party strongmen (whoever controlled the Pradesh Congress, either as PCC president or as Chief Minister or as just bosses without holding any office in particular). The extension of the hard-core Syndicate (bosses like Atulya Ghosh, Kamaraj, Nijalingappa, Sanjiva Reddy and Biju Patnaik in those days) was the bosses from non-Syndicate States which turned out to be the most decisive and powerful power factor at the Centre which could determine the choice of a Prime Minister. The Syndicate was not a faction but was the nucleus of a faction because factionalism in a virulent form had not been transmitted to the Centre from below. The Syndicate wanted to stagemanage the succession when Mr Nehru died and later Mr Shastri in the hope it could wield effective power by virtue of its control of the party machinery. All the Syndicate bosses were organisation men without many ideological pretensions though some of them were spurious socialists in public.

#### Beginning of Conflict

The conflict between the Prime Minister and the Syndicate can be said to have begun even in Mr Shastri's days when he began acting independently of the organisation. The Syndicate is made up of bosses who when they were not Chief Ministers in their States played hell with any recalcitrant Chief Minister and always maintained their grip on the legislature wing through their control of the party. But Mrs Gandhi belongs to a different tradition. Mr Nehru had always kept the Congress President at a distance. He came into conflict with two Presidents, Mr Purushottam Das Tandon and Acharya Kripalani and won out against both.

Luckily for Mrs Gandhi, the bosses

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who catapulted her to power were defeated in the 1967 elections and it took some time for Mr Kamaraj and Mr Patil to rehabilitate themselves politically through by-elections while Mr Atulya Ghosh is still in the wilderness. With the Congress rout in Orissa, Mr Biju Patnaik ceased to be a force in all-India politics. With Mr Morarji Desai's exit from the Cabinet, he is also a political have-not. The Syndicate is a coterie of political have-nots who were once in complete control of the party in their respective regions but have gradually lost control and their relevance is slowly eroding. All they can attempt is a control of the government through their control of the party and by bringing the Prime Minister under effective party control. But their main weakness is that some of them could not retain their respective States for the Congress (Tamil Nadu and West Bengal). The peripheral following of the Syndicate at the all-India level has always been an uncertain quantity. Chief Ministers like Mr Mohanlal Sukhadia and Mr C. B. Gupta have been with the Syndicate off and on but have always backed the Prime Minister off and on. The elusive Mr D. P. Mishra of Madhya Pradesh is yet another leader of this category. Mr Chavan was a late-comer into the Syndicate's parlour because of his allergy to Mr S. K. Patil had stood in the way of his open identification with the Syndicate.

At best the Syndicate can promise a share of power in a new dispensation in return for support to oust Mrs Gandhi. Mr Chavan has to make up his mind one way or the other but he seems to think that by keeping the pot of "unity" moves boiling he can put off his own decision.

Mrs Gandhi is now building her parallel Syndicate, of Pradesh bosses. When Mr Nijalingappa was threatening disciplinary action, Mrs Gandhi began working on some of the bosses who had supported Mr Reddy in the election—Mr C. B. Gupta, Mr Mohanlal Sukhadia in that order. She tried (before the poll and after) to enlist the support of Pradesh Congress Committees and Presidents on

her side. A polarisation was coming among the PCCs, some supporting her and some the Syndicate. The crisis at the Congress centre was being transmitted to the Pradeshes and below, down to the grass-roots.

Will Mrs Gandhi leave the Congress to form a party of her own? It is check-mate politics, be it at the Working Committee (to meet tomorrow) or in the AICC later. For one thing, she does not have the organisation men to build a rival Congress party. Even if some Pradeshes cast their lot with her and constitute units of her new party, the Prime Minister would still lack an all-India base. The Syndicate is in control of three major Congress-ruled States—Gujarat, Maharashtra and Mysore (assuming the Maharashtra Congress will not go over to Mrs Gandhi completely).

Thus it will be a long battle between the Prime Minister and the Syndicate and whatever the vicissitudes in the factional struggle, the political challenge of the Syndicate remains.

August 24, 1969

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AUGUST 30, 1969

# Calcutta Diary

CHARAN GUPTA

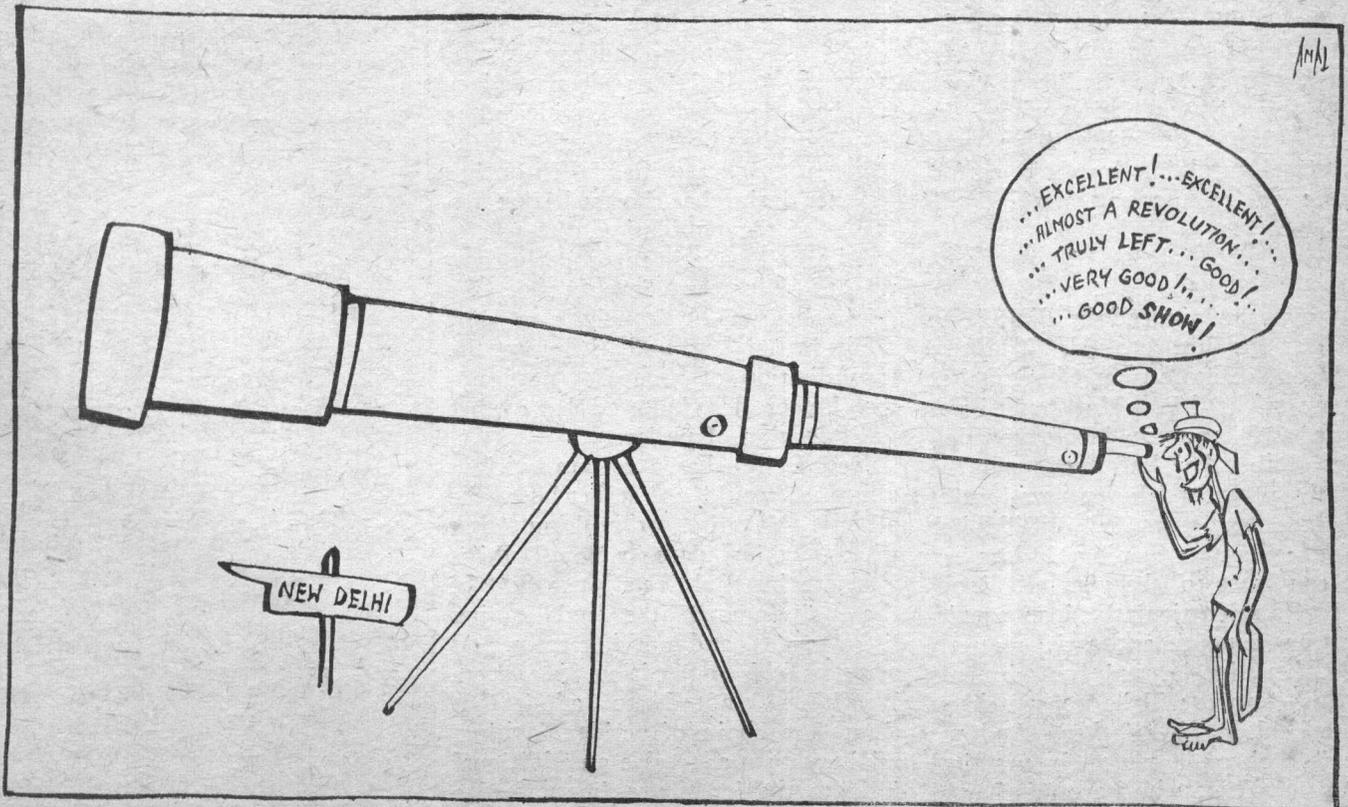
WHY did the assorted leaders of the United Front rush to New Delhi on the eve of counting of votes in the Presidential election? There was no particular reason for the CPI(M) Politbureau's not meeting at its Calcutta headquarters, unless it be that the party had *a priori* confidential information about hell breaking loose in the capital in the immediate aftermath of the announcement of the result of the poll. Well, hell has not broken loose. Or if it has, it is controlled hell and the CPI(M)'s waiting-in-the-wing exercise looks particularly foolish in retrospect. Of course, Mr Promode Das Gupta and Mr Jyoti Basu's party was not the only one to be bowled over by New Delhi's razzle-dazzle. They were all there: the SSP, the PSP, the RSP, the Forward Bloc; you name them, and New Delhi had them in animated congregation last week. Lest he

is missed, West Bengal's celebrated Minister of State for Sports too made it a point to rush to the nation's capital. I need not separately mention the presence of the CPI leaders. For the latter, last week was certainly a consummation of both theorisation and hope, and they simply had to be present in New Delhi. Hadn't they all along proclaimed that there are progressive elements in the Congress, who would one day come out of the fold and join the great national coalition against the reactionaries? Never mind, if the leader of the Congress progressives in this State is somebody else and not Shri Pratap Chandra Chunder, whose many reported virtues the CPI had proclaimed till very recently. Never mind too if Shri K. Kamaraj, that erstwhile great socialist, is now a proven reactionary and if Shri C. Subramaniam, that

erstwhile agent of American imperialism, is now a standard-bearer of the progressive camp. These little inconveniences never worry the CPI's formula pedlars; Shri Sanjiva Reddy's defeat is their great vindication, and please do not ask any adventurist questions.

\* \*

No, I would not waste any time on the CPI, nor on the antics of those other parties which consist in entirety of otherwise unemployed leaders without any mass base. Many of them no doubt are dreaming hopelessly premature dreams of a United Front regime in New Delhi: the possibility of a short cut to celestial power, without struggle, without hard work, has understandably a great attraction for the opportunists and lazy-bones. But I consider it altogether incomprehensible that the Left Communists should join this sorry procession. To vote for a particular candidate is one thing, but to threaten a general strike in the event of that candidate not succeeding can scarcely



be squared with the CPI (M) Politbureau's subsequent resolution issued from New Delhi. Maybe on arriving in the capital, the CPI (M) leaders discovered that, contrary to what they have been led to believe, no millennium is round the corner. Despite her stupendous victory, Mrs Indira Gandhi is keeping her cool. In this State the Left Communist leaders should keep theirs. If power at the Centre ever comes to them it will come on account of their demonstrated strength, in strategic parts of the country, amongst peasants and workers and the middle class. Pride should go along with this strength—pride and a certain dignity, a commodity which was so sadly lacking in last week's helter-skelter rush to New Delhi. Besides, even if one considers the thing purely in the context of bargaining manoeuvres, such eagerness to be next to Indira Gandhi would chalk up a minus point. If, for her own survival, Mrs Gandhi would ever need support from the left, she should do the seeking; the overtures—including the public ones—must come from her. It is gross folly to provide her with the impression that, in her confrontation with the Syndicate, the parties on the left who matter would always be with her, *irrespective of terms and conditions*. But this is precisely what the CPI (M) and the others have now succeeded in doing by their performance during the past week.

\* \* \*

It may now indeed be difficult to retrieve the lost ground. Contrary to what the morons in Chowringhee Square might think, Mrs Gandhi was never, and is not, an ideologue; despite all that has happened over the last six weeks and her perorations at the meetings organised outside her residence every evening, I dare say she continues to be generally innocent of any particularly deep convictions on economic and social matters; even, her intellectual commitments in this respect will be no patch on those held by her father. And yet she is a shrewd, extremely practical woman. Those who have met her in

recent months have been struck by her constant harpings on the results of the mid-term poll, particularly in West Bengal, and the stunningly good performance of the Left Communists. Given the datum of parliamentary democracy and adult suffrage she well realise that her only chance of survival in power beyond 1972 is through donning a radical image. She has done that donning now. In the process, she has settled a few old scores with the foggies in her party. With the help of heterogeneous outside elements, she has also succeeded in getting her own nominee elected as President. Thus far, it has been roses all the way. It is a matter of weeks—or at most months—before the Congress organisation is captured by her men, lock, stock and barrel: having been vanquished in warfare, the Syndicate has little option but to surrender to her. Some of the hotheads on the extreme right might prefer death to dishonour, but the large opportunist core would cling on to the Prime Minister. A formal split might or might not occur in the Congress, but the bulk of the party *apparat* will without question be her heritage. But the process could come to a stop there. Mrs Gandhi might feel that no further innovations are called for: her nominee has been installed as President, the Syndicate has been smashed and the Congress machinery has fallen on her lap, her daring has charmed large segments of the population, the parties on the Left have been properly compliant. Nineteen Seventy-two, she might legitimately conclude, is now safely in her bag, and, therefore, the radicalisation of speeches need not any longer be followed by further radicalisation of policy.

New Delhi has a certain vicious allure. I would not subscribe to the all-out Naxalite proposition that what is taking place in New Delhi is a mere internal re-arrangement of the spoils among the feudal-capitalist elements, and nothing more. As of now, this proposition is correct. But it will not do to admit that through a chain of accidents, things might so turn as to give an additional fillip to the forces pressing toward a

thorough social re-ordering. Rather than spurning even a consideration of various possibilities, the leadership on the Left should certainly keep their options open. But by all means they can do so successfully if they jealously guard their flanks, and do not allow themselves to be outmanoeuvred in strategy. If Mrs Gandhi is looking for a temporary alliance, her overtures should be responded to, but only on terms set by the Left, and these terms must contain a hard core of policy. By their puerile behaviour during the past ten days, the Left leaders have managed to squander much of their initial advantage. They have celebrated Shri Giri's victory by taking a holiday on Monday; apparently they have also taken a holiday from commonsense, not to speak of the more high falutin revolutionary logic.

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## The NGO Menace

RAMJI

THE non gazetted government officers (NGOs) have become a menace. Their insatiable thirst for more and more public resources and their supreme indifference to duty and service have turned them into an exploiting class. With the advent of the United Front Government, the NGO Union in the State, with the support of the Marxists, assumed a stature and strength which made them a force to be reckoned with. Very much conscious of their collective might, they began to flout elementary discipline without which no office can function effectively in the interests of the public. The situation became such that it was safer for the man in the street to approach the top officers to get things done rather than face the so-called lowly NGOs.

The NGOs agitated for a better deal and a trade union oriented UF Government had no hesitation in jacking up their pay and other emoluments. The share of the NGOs from the State revenue shot up to 55 per cent entailing an additional expenditure of Rs 18 crores in a small State where developmental works are at best at a rudimentary stage.

With this pay rise the NGOs obviously felt a rise in their stature also. Anyway, work at their level, never a bright patch of the administration, became murky and unpredictable. The day-to-day administration suffered in consequence. But the NGOs could not care less. They secured powers of patronage and a capacity for evil which made the officers themselves very wary in their dealings with their "subordinates".

The NGOs have again started asking for more. This time there is a difference in that the demand is being made by a newly formed rival union. The new union, known as the Joint Council, is under the thumb of the CPI. The present demand reflects the tactics of the CPI to increase its

influence on the trade union front, primarily at the expense of the Marxists and ultimately at the expense of the State. The CPI feels that with the launching of the agitation by the new union, there would be large-scale defections from the old NGO Union, to swell the ranks of the Joint Council. In addition, this would help discomfit the Marxists, a supreme compulsion with the CPI.

As a result of the pampering of the NGOs welfare and developmental work in the State has almost come to a standstill. Where such activities are on, the meagre funds expended have gone mostly into the pockets of private parties, thanks to the rampant corruption which is now a built-in feature of the administration. Officials at various levels and many local leaders of the UF are having a glorious time: no responsibility and a bank cheque for loot of public money.

Though the UF parties had cried themselves hoarse over the over-staffing in Government offices, after the advent of the UF Government, the number of officials—sinecure ones at that—has increased enormously. New and purely decorative offices and berths sprout up every now and then, at the least provocation.

The root of the trouble is the mutual distrust and rivalry among the partners of the United Front. Each is bent upon boosting his party through patronage and new recruits to the party at the expense of public resources. It is a co-prosperity scheme alright by the UF partners at the expense of the vital interests of the State.

Basic schemes for the development of agriculture and industry are languishing, allegedly, for want of funds; and where funds are expended the results hardly ever reach the grass-roots level.

As for the chronic crisis among the United Front partners, the CPI beat a retreat about a month ago but it turned out to be a strategic retreat and the party is back again at the old game of Marxist baiting. The absence of the Chief Minister (now in GDR undergoing treatment) has been seized by the CPI who, with some

other partners of the UF, mainly the Muslim League and the ISP, has turned the Assembly into a mud-slinging arena. The clamour for an enquiry against the Health Minister (KTP) and the Minister for Forests (Marxist), which the Chief Minister had ruled out, has erupted once again. The Marxists say that this issue cannot be reopened until the Chief Minister returns. The struggle over this issue is likely to go on and things may take an unexpected turn. What will happen when the adjourned Assembly meets again is not clear at the time writing.

Bank nationalisation had its impact on the Pradesh Congress. The Youth Congress elements welcomed it wholeheartedly. But the Pradesh Congress leadership is behind the Syndicate. Thus, when a resolution congratulating the move was sponsored by the Youth Congress in the Aleppy District Congress Committee, its President, known popularly as a US agent, ruled it out. At the Pradesh level a similar resolution was trimmed to suit the conscience and outlook of the old guard. The Youth Congress resolution was one which congratulated Mrs Indira Gandhi. The old guard had the name removed and passed a resolution in support of nationalisation, the least they could prudently do. The split at the Centre has generated a similar split at the State level. The pro-Indira elements, mainly made up of Youth Congress and students, have a pusillanimous leadership which, though it protested against the reactionary stand of the Pradesh bosses over nationalisation and announced that the Youth Congress was not under the PCC, ultimately bowed down to the old guard by cancelling its agitation against corruption in the administration in obedience to the mandate of the PCC. The Pradesh Congress leadership has mounted a whispering campaign against non-reactionary elements in the Congress, and in the very near future, if the Syndicate is not worsted at the Centre, there is likely to be a mass cleansing campaign in the Congress fold, by the old guard under the sweeping label of 'discipline'.

## The Malik Affair

M. S. P.

SOME days ago, there was quite a rumpus in the Assam Assembly. It was followed by high-sounding editorials disapproving of noisy scenes in legislatures, and even AIR condescended to take note of affairs in Assam in one of its spotlight programmes. Predictable observations were made about the 'sanctity' of the legislature—we are nothing if not holy—and fears were expressed about the future of parliamentary procedures if such goings-on were unchecked. The occasion for all these admirable sentiments was the 'scenes' that took place in the Assembly chamber at Shillong on August 8, when the Industries Minister admitted that an application for an industrial loan made by Prof Syed Abdul Malik had to be turned down because of "adverse police report." Prof Malik wanted the loan to start nothing more subversive than a press. A little analysis of the case tells us a lot about the ambivalence that characterises the Indian, or more specifically, the Hindu mind.

What is most interesting to an observer about the Malik affair is not the rumpus in the Assembly itself, but its aftermath, or rather the lack of an aftermath. The scenes in the House were themselves reported to be impressive. To a man the opposition was united and challenged the Minister to place the police report on the table. The leader of one of the opposition groups protested against this at the top of his voice and was heard saying: "This is an insult to Assamese nationality, Assamese personality. This is intolerable." Three days later, when the Speaker was about to give his ruling over the issue (whether the Minister should be compelled to place the adverse police report on the table or not), more uproarious scenes were enacted, including what the newspapers, with pardonable exaggeration, described as gheraoing of the Speaker. There was

much heat, much indignation. How dare the Government refuse a loan to a great Assamese writer, one who by all accounts is our best novelist, and general secretary of the Assam Sahitya Sabha, to boot?

The following day, there was nothing but sweet reasonableness in the Assembly chamber. Let consensus and sanctity prevail. The Chief Minister, the Leader of the Opposition, the communist chief, all fell over each others' necks and promised to behave and uphold the 'dignity' of the House. The Chief Minister appealed to members on both sides to "forget and forgive". The newspaper report of the day's proceedings (*Assam Tribune*, August 12) did not even mention Prof Malik's name. It is difficult to imagine if hypocrisy could go further, though events connected with the presidential election indicate that when it comes to an exercise of hypocrisy, the national leadership naturally seems to have an edge over mere State leadership. It is unlikely that the 'adverse police report' against Prof Malik was in any way due to his marginal left leanings some years ago. And even these minor aberrations (adopting the CPI symbol to fight a parliamentary election unsuccessfully; a trip to Moscow as part of a cultural delegation) were of such a variety as to scarcely cause concern on grounds of security. One may even argue that if anything, they are about the most respectable things one could do. The adverse police report could also not have been based on Prof Malik's Muslim League associations of more ancient vintage. Even a junior police officer could not be so stupid as to interpret Muslim League associations of the 1940s as evidence of treachery in the sixties. Could Prof Malik be a Pakistani spy in disguise? Nobody wants to face the question squarely. But surely, the application for a small loan would not have been turned down if he did not bear the name he does; if, as far as this correspondent has been able to make out, he did not insist on both a Muslim identity and an Assamese identity. But let us, for the sake of argument, assume that he is a spy and a traitor.

Still, it would be unwise to brand him so because, very inconveniently for the Government, he also happens to be an exceptionally gifted writer; and in this part of the country, writers are still respected by the people, sometimes even by the Government. So the Government is caught in the ambivalent position of accepting Prof Malik as the general secretary of the Assam Sahitya Sabha—a terribly Establishment set-up—and at the same time indulging in all sorts of double-talk to justify its refusal to give a small loan to him. Hypocrisy could go no further.

### Self-Deception

But it does. And this brings us to the conduct of the righteously indignant opposition in the Assembly. Tables were thumped, chairs were broken, mikes uprooted, sleeves rolled up. But trust us Indians—particularly Hindus—to exercise unlimited self-deception. It was the Industries Minister (Sarma) who accused the Leader of the Opposition (Bhattacharjee) of *bhandami*. There is a kind of rough justice in the charge; hurrah for outspokenness! But it is much less important for the people of Assam to know who is a bigger hypocrite, than it is to know if a respected author could be smeared with impunity in the privileged Assembly chambers, with no opportunity for legal remedy, such as is available in the present set-up. Even in the Assembly, there were no charges, but only innuendoes, well designed to cause even greater damage to a writer's reputation. Judging by the editorial in the leading English daily of the State, as well as a couple of letters on the subject, one wonders if there is a frightful lot of concern over the issue. It is amazing to what extent most people seem to have taken for granted that there is perhaps something fishy. No smoke without fire! If the Muslims are bitter, they succeed in hiding their bitterness. For a minority, simulation in the presence of 'alien' groups, is second nature.

One often hears the articulate section of the Assamese people, particularly the youth, proclaim that

while there might be disruptive forces based on caste, religion etc at work in other regional groups, in Assam, the *Assamese*, identity is stronger than all other differences. (Let us for a moment forget the inconvenient things some Ahoms are saying. Best to explain them away as CIA agents.) We still speak of the Assamese nation, and by and large, I have found the differences between people based on religion and caste much less evident here than in other parts of India. But it now looks as if it was only less *evident*, not less present. "We are Assamese first, then Hindus, Muslims, Brahmans, Boros", etc is a sentiment often expressed, often even strongly felt and believed in. The Malik affair has suddenly shown that in some essential respects, Assam is no different from the rest of India, and while such a thought should gladden the hearts of the proponents of 'national integration' (deep in your hearts, you know they are right), it is nonetheless a tragic development. There is a peculiar kind of ambivalence in the articulate Assamese mind (Hindu), particularly over the Muslim question; even over the *Assamese* Muslim question, not to speak of the *immigrant* Muslim question, and the *infiltrant* Muslim question. In the final analysis, it is not very important if Prof Malik gets a loan or not, except perhaps to Prof Malik himself; and one imagines Prof Malik has enough strength and stoicism even to survive smear campaigns. But the damage the controversy has done to the 'Assamese identity', the silent but very real alienation it has caused and will continue to cause among the Assamese Muslims can never be overestimated.

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## Nixon And The Negro

SAM CLARK

AMERICAN society is both blessed with affluence and plagued with poverty. One of the most insidious myths perpetrated by contemporary liberal ideology is that in America all men are rich men, no men are paupers. And yet in New York City alone a population equivalent to that of many small-nation States is on some form of relief. As industrial society becomes more technological its labour demands become more restricted and the benefits of America's wealth are now increasingly reserved for those, and only those who have skills to sell to the economy. There continue to exist, however, persons with only limited skills. They are poor and most often black.

The fact that so many of these poor are black is of crucial importance. In a society in which the working class is far too split and differentiated to provide the solidarity necessary for organizing discontented persons into a protest group, race can serve as an effective substitute. The over-representation of blacks among the poor has greatly facilitated the formation of a cohesive and restless mass that currently threatens American society, perhaps as it has never been threatened before. There is virtually no one who is not conscious of this threat. Most aware of all have been left liberals such as the revered wise men on the Kerner Commission. They wrote :

In the long run the present policies risk a seriously greater probability of major disorders, worse, possibly, than those already experienced. If the Negro population as a whole developed even stronger feelings of being wrongly 'penned in' and discriminated against, many of its neighbours might come to support not only riots, but the rebellion now being preached by only a handful.

The "present policies" that the Commission referred to are, of course, poverty programmes that may help

relieve the pain of being poor, but do not "produce fundamental alterations in the relationships between the races." Welfare aids the poor but does not end their poverty. In the short run it may keep discontent within tolerable limits, and this is a form or survival for the society, precarious though it may be. But the adequacy of the welfare State as a real solution to America's social problems is, to put it mildly, questionable.

In the past few years poverty programmes have been of two kinds. On the one hand there are those measures that attempt to better the lot of the poor: housing projects, food stamp distributions and direct welfare payments. The problem with this kind of assistance is that it does not, indeed cannot go far enough to make up for the basic inequalities that the capitalist system creates. So long as the society itself is organised on the principle that reward should be commensurate with economic contribution, it is impossible for welfare to destroy the inequalities that the society itself is so intent on maintaining. The second kind of assistance recognizes this fact and attempts to redress inequality in a different way, that is, by improving the ability of the poor to make a contribution to the economic system and thereby benefit from its rewards. These measures are designed to provide the poor with access to the industrial system: job training programmes and educational programmes especially for children. The problem with this kind of assistance is that unfortunately formal training does not guarantee entrance into the industrial machine. In most cases the poor are irreparably crippled by their environment before these programmes get a go at them. They lack the incentive, the social contacts and a familiarity with "tricks of the trade" that are so much a part of the skills demanded by the capitalist system. In general educational programmes are based on the prin-

principle of equal opportunity in an unequal society—a principle that has for some time now been recognized as self-contradictory. Equal opportunity is impossible so long as basic inequalities exist in society.

#### Head Start Programme

The above limitations of welfare and related educational projects have not gone unnoticed even in Washington. For example, the Office of Economic Opportunity released a report in April on its Head Start programme showing that children who had been through the programme exhibited no better achievement ability than equally disadvantaged children who had not. The study was carried out by Westinghouse Learning Corporation between July 1968 and March 1969. Westinghouse attempted to measure the extent to which children in the first, second and third grades who had attended Head Start pre-school programmes differed "in their intellectual and socio-personal development from comparable children who did not attend." In all but one test, the differences were found to be statistically insignificant. Westinghouse quite properly suggests two possible explanations for this finding: that poor children have been so badly damaged by their lower class environment that Head Start cannot make much difference; or, that the effects of the programme are wiped out by poor teaching later on. In either case the conclusion is the same. Head Start represents such a small part of their life that it cannot overcome the rest of their environment.

Another Federal project that has done less than what had been hoped is the Job Corps programme. In April the General Accounting Office, an arm of Congress, issued a report criticizing the Job Corps, especially the Rural Conservation Camps, for failing to provide the training needed to compete in the urban labour market. Whether or not one accepts this specific accusation, the claim is symptomatic of the failure of the Job Corps programme to produce any real results.

Mr Nixon is, of course, as aware

as anyone of the failure of these government programmes. The growth of large and ineffectual welfare bureaucracies both at the federal and state levels of government has become a favourite target of the political right. In his campaign for the presidency, Nixon was quite willing to use this weapon against the Democratic establishment and to identify his opponents with a bureaucratic monster consuming an endless number of tax dollars just to keep itself in existence. Humphrey, for his part, behaved like a typical Pavlov dog of the Democratic Party and did not attempt to escape the title that Nixon was conferring on him. He openly talked about a "Marshall Plan for the cities", completely oblivious of the fact that American cities are too far gone to be saved by still another Federal Plan.

Nixon, naturally, does not believe that what is wrong with welfare is that its task is hopeless so long as the social and economic organization of society fosters not equality but inequality. Rather he believes that the present welfare system is simply inefficient, and that what is needed is re-organization and re-direction. He made it clear very early after he was sworn in as president that the main purpose of his policies in the welfare field would be to consolidate duplicating programmes, to reduce the number of agencies operating in any one area and to re-organize the lines of authority to achieve greater efficiency.

Less ambitious, but perhaps more significant have been suggestions that Nixon intends to turn more of the poverty problem over to people whom he considers more efficient than civil servants, namely businessmen. Outside the poverty field this attitude is best exemplified in his plans to transform the postal department into an independent corporation to be run like a business. Within the poverty field, the best example is the scheme now being pushed by George Romney, Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, to enlist the co-operation of large corporations in the production of mass pre-fabricated low cost housing. Some of the corporations

he has in mind include United States Steel, General Electric, the Aluminum Company of America, Boise Cascade Corporation and Fruehauf Corporation.

#### Black Capitalism

Another example of this approach is Nixon's endorsement of "black capitalism". However his idea of black capitalism does not seem to be quite what the blacks themselves have in mind, at least those blacks who argue that the American Negro should end his dependence on white America's capitalist system. No, Nixon has a different notion of what capitalism should mean for the black man. Specifically he wants to incorporate Negroes into the existing economic system. As he said in a campaign speech last year: "The thrust of my programmes is to provide incentives to move capital into the ghetto, to develop local initiative and encourage local control, to provide the necessary training and encouragement, and thus to build pride and establish opportunity." More recently, with great satisfaction, the Nixon administration has announced that the Federal government will co-operate with a project for an industrial park in the Watts section of Los Angeles. A group of Negro and white businessmen of Los Angeles have formed a corporation and bought forty-five acres of junk-yard land in Watts. The Lockheed Aircraft Company agreed to become the first tenant and has leased a two-million-dollar plant for manufacturing aircraft parts. Although Federal aid to the project will be considerable, the Nixon administration emphasized that in their view the value of this endeavour lies most of all in the participation of private enterprise.

It is no accident that Lockheed was the first tenant for the Watts industrial park. Lockheed is linked to the gigantic American arms industry and this industry certainly will play a major role in taking over part of the poverty problem from fence Melvin Laird has indicated that government. Already Secretary of the Defence Department will shift

some of its present budget into a "new major programme to fight the nation's social problems." He has said that the programme will include poverty regions. According to Laird contracts have been set aside to provide an economic and employment lift to depressed areas.

Only in America, the land of unadorned pragmatism, could anyone get away with claiming that the nation's social problems are merely the result of inefficiency. And only here would anyone have the gall to suggest that inequality can be overcome by turning the problem over to businessmen. Traditional government assistance has by and large failed because it has not been able to keep pace with the inequalities produced by the economic system. To propose that the economic system itself will redress these inequalities is more than absurd, it's cruel deceit. The Nixon approach to black deprivation will do little more than keep discontent within the limits that can be effectively dealt with through police and military

agencies, and it may not even do that. The present form of economic organization crucially depends on the maintenance of inequalities and it is not about to do away with them simply on the basis of a request from the President.

#### **Backlashing**

Furthermore it is doubtful that this request itself is sincere. There is not really any good reason for believing that Nixon's promises on poverty are anything more than rhetoric. He certainly does not seem to have a genuine appreciation of the rights of American Negroes. The Civil Rights Division of the Justice Department has become nothing more or less than a farce. Its new head is Jerris Leonard of Wisconsin whose only claim to the job (other than being a financial friend of the Attorney General) is that he was one of the founders of the Catholic Interracial Council in Milwaukee. On the other side of the slate is Leonard's membership in the all-white Eagles

Club, his vocal anti-communism and his hard-line attitude towards student activists ("What these kids need is strap across the seat of their pants once in a while and a little rough treatment from the cop on the beat.")

While Leonard was being brought into the Nixon administration, Clifford Alexander Jr. was being given the boot. Alexander was head of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and had managed to incur the wrath of right-wing Congressmen. In March Everett Dirksen, the Republican Senate leader, charged that businessmen were being harassed by Alexander and that "either this punitive harassment is going to stop or somebody is going to lose his job." It became clear who this somebody was when the next day the White House announced that Alexander would be replaced as chairman of the Commission. As Alexander himself remarked, "The conclusion is inescapable. Vigorous efforts to enforce laws on employment discrimination

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are not among the goals of this administration."

Evidence in support of this contention is almost endless. Perhaps the one exception is Robert Finch, Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, who is determined to continue the use of federal funds as a lever to force integration in Southern schools. At the same time, however, John Volpe, the Secretary of Transportation, has told highway builders that they no longer have to meet Federal anti-discrimination standards when bidding on contracts. Deputy Defence Secretary David Packard ignored the Department of Labour and the Justice Department and made a private agreement with three major textile producers. Supposedly the agreement stipulated that they would cease to discriminate in order to meet Federal requirements for government contracts, but it was not sufficiently spelt out to have any hope of implementation. In response to criticism Packard has been more careful in recent months, but the incident showed where his heart is.

And Nixon's budget shows where his heart is too. In April he announced that four billion dollars more would be cut from the budget taking effect on July 1—about one billion from non-defence projects. Although some changes have been made since this announcement, it is clear what is getting the worst of the inflation cut-back and even clearer what is getting off the easiest. So long as these priorities exist Nixon's solution to the poverty problem will be even more of a hoax than that of his predecessor. However Nixon's priorities are not important in themselves, but are only symptoms of the inefficiency of poverty programmes. If these programmes go out of style in America it will happen not only because those in power have higher priorities but also because poverty programmes have proved to be a false idol. Indeed Nixon's presidential victory itself signified considerable public disappointment and frustration with left liberalism and left liberal solutions to social problems. Rather than searching for new solutions America has chosen to give the

political right a turn to bat. The implication of this is less faith in government and more faith in business to keep the ship afloat, which may in the end be poetic justice because, after all, it is their ship and sink it

inevitably will. But this is little consolation to the present-day generation of American Negroes who are being robbed of what is rightfully theirs. With Nixon in the White House things can only get worse.

## The Press

# New Stance

## READER

MR Giri has emerged victorious in the most toughly contested Presidential election so far, a contest which had the Congress Party divided into two and ended with a hard blow for the organisational bosses, the Syndicate. The first round of the battle which started at Bangalore this year is over and the Prime Minister has scored a point. While those who see in Mr Giri's victory a triumph of progress might be mistaken, it would certainly not be incorrect to see his success as a blow to reaction. The Prime Minister should also know that the ball, once set rolling, cannot be stopped now; attempts to do so might not lead to favourable results.

But that's the future. For the present Mr Giri's victory has caused widespread jubilation in the country and the Prime Minister's office seems to have regained much of its prestige, lost since the death of Mr Shastri. It is, however, not only the masses who have reacted favourably to Mr Giri's and indirectly Mrs Gandhi's success. At 10.15 p.m. on Wednesday, August 20, the majority of the country's newspapers modified to a great extent their earlier attitudes. With their hopes of a Syndicate victory, presumably strengthened after the first count, completely dashed the papers came out with editorials the next day which had little in common with their earlier pieces on the subject. Mrs Gandhi was no longer blamed for the split in the Congress party. While talk of a Congress split endangering the country continued to persist, this time the Syndicate was also reminded of its shortcomings. The general tone

in most papers was one of reconciliation; both sides were urged to forgive and forget, to reunite and start afresh, of course in the interest of the country.

How far this new stance will help the papers is yet to be seen. Right now it seems doubtful that Mrs Gandhi, even in her mood of victory, will forget the past, the bitter attacks launched against her by the monopoly Press, which often tended to cross the bounds of elementary decency. She is not likely to forget the cartoons which followed bank nationalisation—in fact on counting day itself the Delhi edition of *The Statesman* came out with one showing Mrs Gandhi in a sort of beauty contest. Earlier there had been cartoons showing Mr Reddy being stabbed in the back by her. These she is not likely to forget in a hurry.

Incidentally, the election result has made another thing clear. The complete failure of the political correspondents, observers and what have you, to correctly understand a situation. They had all the time been saying that if he couldn't make it in the first count, Mr Giri would be out of the contest. The result proved just the opposite. Why is it that these gentlemen did not take into consideration the BKD second preference votes? The possibility that some Congressmen who had voted for Mr Reddy might cast their second preferences for Mr Giri was also overlooked. It makes one feel that the despatches were written to please a particular combination of forces.

Much concerned for the health of

the Congress, the *Times of India* said after the election result was announced that the only way in which it could regain its health was for both sides to look calmly at the turbulent history of the last six weeks. If they do so they will find that they have both dangerously over-played their hands. Amends must now be made for what has happened. If Mrs Gandhi will be making a mistake in taking opportunity of Mr Giri's victory to humiliate the other side, the party bosses will also help no one in trying to discipline those who have disobeyed the party whip. Mrs Gandhi for her part has shown that she is capable of acting boldly; she has to prove now that she is capable of maintaining party unity while turning it into a more effective instrument of social change. The first need is to sort out the personal and policy issues which have got badly mixed in the recent in-fighting; the second is to establish a new working relationship between the party organisation and the Government.

The *Hindustan Times* is more categorical in discussing this latter issue. The Congress high command, it says, could function as a supreme body during the days of the freedom movement. The position today is very different. Mrs Gandhi is on strong ground in upholding the supremacy of the Prime Minister's office. If the office had been weakened it was because Mrs Gandhi herself had failed to assert her leadership.

Soft indeed has been the tone of the *Indian Express*. It does not hesitate to describe Mr Giri as the choice of the nation and goes on to reflect on the state of affairs in the Congress. To some extent, the paper feels, the differences within the leadership might be explained by the generation gap which separates Mrs Gandhi and her younger colleagues from Messrs Nijalingappa, Desai and Kamaraj. With remarkable impartiality, the paper makes the solemn remark: Old people may not always be wise. But neither are the young always infallible. A discourse on the need for a united Congress party for the country's good follows, concluding with another serious observation: the

country comes before the party and the party comes before any individual.

It is only *The Statesman* which can claim credit for not having budged from its earlier stand. The Prime Minister is asked to recognise that the party leaders are not so badly discredited in the country as she conveniently assumed in order to assert the primacy of the Prime Minister both over the party and the Government. The bulk of the Congress membership in many States standing solidly by the leadership (it is interesting to find even Andhra Pradesh

mentioned in this connexion) she cannot ignore it as irrelevant and continue to be guided in policy-making by political lightweights who have shown only a capacity for intrigue and have grossly misled her into taking grave risks with the party's future.

That the paper should continue to fume is understandable. While the others have lost only one candidate, Mr Reddy, it has also Mr Deshmukh to weep over. One only wonders if words spoken in anger would not be seriously taken note of.

### Book Review

## The Villager

NITYAPRIYA GHOSH

### MOTIVATION OF RURAL POPULATION IN A DEVELOPING COUNTRY

By Durganand Sinha  
Allied Publishers. Rs 6

LIFE in village India, Dr D. Sinha says, has for ages remained in a state of stagnation. There was seldom any urge towards material development. In spite of the deplorable conditions, people have shown contentment and an attitude of acceptance of the existing conditions. Quoting somebody Dr Sinha calls it placid, pathetic contentment and describes it in this way:

"Their lives were circumscribed within the limits of personal ken and the village folk, and their hopes, aspirations and fears seldom transcended the purely personal or familiar spheres. They were imprisoned in rural isolation confining their activities and interests largely to the matters of immediate economic necessities."

The purpose of the study, as stated by Dr Sinha in the monograph, was to find out how the government's community development programme changed this placid, pathetic contentment. The result of the c.d. projects Dr Sinha has found, is nil, so far as motivation is concerned. Even in the

villages which had shown economic progress due to c.d. programmes, the great majority of the rural population did not share in the urges for ever-rising standards of living. The impact was not sufficient to result in a continuous, vigorous, self-sustaining process of rapid economic growth in rural areas. This is because of the low aspirations of the rural people, Dr Sinha says.

Analysing why rural Indians cannot shake off their low aspirations, he says that the vital cause has been their weak-need structure. They continue to have small needs and hardly exert themselves to reach higher standards of living. Their concepts of needs are vague and indefinite. Wants are there, but in a general and diffused form. What is required, he says, is the conversion of general wants into specific needs: need for more land, better livestock, better health facilities, improved seeds, better food, etc.

The low aspirations of the villagers have made them adopt the attitude of playing safe, Dr Sinha continues. They are reluctant to go in for new technology and modern methods of farming. They set their goals very low. They exhibit a very moderate degree of risk taking and tie their goals very close to their past perfor-

mance. Their behaviour is characterised by extreme caution and lack of enterprise.

Low aspirations and low goal-discrepancy indices are marks of stagnation. A certain amount of risk-taking is an integral factor in economic development. Scientific farming is beset with an element of uncertainty. The attitude of playing safe, Dr Sinha holds, has proved for the Indian villagers a stumbling block in accepting new technology.

Dr Sinha observes that it is not poverty alone which is responsible for this attitude. The attitude has been ingrained in the form of habits which have their roots in the Indian practices of child-rearing and socialization of the growing child. Excessive sheltering of the child from possible dangers has inculcated in them an overcautious attitude.

Moreover, the villagers, rooted in religious belief and obsolete tradition, feel it morally wrong to want and strive for more material wealth.

Besides, the villagers are all the time fighting to make both ends meet. Generations of poverty have stunted the growth of their aspirations.

The community development programmes, Dr Sinha concludes, had not brought about the psychological mobilisation of urges and aspirations that could ensure all-round rural development at an accelerated pace.

He ascribes the failure of the community development idea primarily to the villagers themselves and secondarily to the Indian economists. About the latter, he says,

"They have generally taken a narrow view of the dynamics of human action and have taken for granted that given equal opportunity, financial incentives and resources, all persons and communities respond similarly in their productive effort and economic achievement."

This is, Dr Sinha states, an utter fallacy. Even in the blocks which had shown economic progress, he noted that the economic progress had not been associated with the amount of motivational changes essential for rapid economic development.

He therefore comes to the conclu-

sion: "Merely inducing economic growth through crash programmes and governmental effort is not enough. They remain in operation as long as the external forces are operating to sustain them. It is equally important to take stock of the motivational and social variables and generate such urges and attitudes which would accept the technological innovations readily and sustain economic growth through indigenous striving and enthusiasm."

#### Psychology

Dr Sinha is Head of the Department of Psychology, University of Allahabad. It is but natural that he would be worked up more with psychology than with economics and politics. Apparently his findings are nothing new or wicked. The callousness of the Indian villagers is all taken for granted. They are ignorant, superstitious, greedy and therefore have failed the Government's noble efforts in modern irrigation, farming, cooperative societies and so on. It is significant that Dr Sinha studied the growth of rural economy—its motivation part to be sure—without taking any note of the nature of the development projects. He never mentions the nature of the governmental assistance offered to the villagers. What was the volume of assistance? Was it offered on a planned scale? What was the role of government officials in these block activities? Did the Government propagate the ideas competently? Dr Sinha, no doubt, talks about the need of educating the masses and inspiring them but, laying the blame all upon the placidly, pathetically complacent masses, he acquits the Government creditably. About such sociology, which hides the exploitation of the rulers and glosses over their failures, posters appeared all over the walls of Nantes in March 1968. The posters read:

Notice

Considering

that psychology as such aims at the systematic subordination of individual behaviour to false social norms;

Considering that psychology is increasingly being forced into the mould of American psycho-sociology, aimed at perfecting the system by conditioning the workers to consume more and more rubbish while acquiescing in economic exploitation;

Considering that psycho-sociology is nothing but the justification of 'ideal' norms and a means of concealing the monstrous discrepancy between the ideal and the real;

Considering that this type of psychology is being used on the one hand to subvert the workers' struggle and on the other hand is being disseminated by means of the universities, the professional classes and the advertising media;

Considering that many students have embraced psychology in ignorance of its true nature and because they are seduced by its professional glamour;

Considering that they have been deceived by a form of obscurantism hiding under a ridiculous pseudo-scientific cloak and representing a vicious assault upon liberty;

Considering that the total rejection of modern psychology is a reaffirmation of personal liberty, of the innocence of desire, of the forgotten joys of creativity, play, irony and happiness....  
THE AGEN-UNEF THEREFORE CALLS ON ALL STUDENTS OF PSYCHOLOGY TO ABANDON THEIR STUDIES.

## Festivals Galore

PRABODH KUMAR MAITRA

CLOSE on the heels of the Japanese film session, which was confined to film society audience, came the weeklong French film festival sponsored by the Government of India. It catered to a larger body of the public as it was commercially organised with its fringe benefits for film society members for whom

AUGUST 30, 1969

morning shows were held. Next month another Government sponsored festival of Rumanian films will be commercially held. And the high point is expected to be reached in December when the Fourth International Film Festival will give the filmgoers their none-too-frequent opportunity to see films from many countries within a week.

The French festival was a mixed bag in which Bresson and Resnais coexisted with less glamorous directors. But certainly it represents the reality in French film-making in which the famed ones who can afford to be less occupied with box office considerations go their way along with others who are frankly box office minded. Elsewhere the scene is unlikely to be vastly different. But in France the sustained work the dedicated have put in has earned for them their enviable position on the world film map.

In the recent festival Bresson was represented by his *Mouchette* where-in he relates the relentless passage through which a teen-aged girl goes before deciding to take her own life to end her pitiless existence. As in *Balthazar* Bresson is preoccupied with the little circles of cruelty. It shows the girl's suffering, the tyranny of the father, the humiliation in the school, the indifference of those around. But the little girl is rebellious against her mates, her neighbours, and above all against the father. Bresson is narrative, unfolds the state of experience she passes through by some touching details of her daily chores. Her warm relationship with her mother happens to be her only mooring which ends with the latter's death. Thus forsaken she resorts to the only course open to her.

From the beginning Bresson prepares us for the inexorable end. He holds his camera on some excruciating details like the ensnared bird or the shooting of the hares, and the sound effects in these sequences have a telling impact. In fact he relies more on visuals and sound effects than dialogue and music, and the result is a hauntingly beautiful film of deep pessimism.

Resnais seems to be getting irritatingly intricate in his obsession with the exploration of time and memory.

In *Je T'aime Je T'aime* he cooks up a sort of science fiction atmosphere to inject into his hero the urge to relive his past, albeit in a fragmented way. "We study time", the doctor declared to the jaded hero and he dives back into the past on the Riviera. The scientists here are a necessary part of the furniture. What follows is a series of non-sequences of events and a series of instants which hardly help the doctors who treat him as a guineapig in their experiment. The aggregate of images looks brilliantly fascinating if only a trifle deluding. The grimness however often melts because of the humorous edge of the dialogue.

*La Piscine* is sex, sentiment and suspense rolled in uneven proportions. The main characters journey from prurience to penance and in the middle distraction is caused by a Lolita. A dastardly murder finds a usual place as the cast is led by Alain Lelon (his reported real life-involvement in a recent gruesome murder is an interesting sidelight) whose image seems to suffer unless such a 'manly' act is performed by him. To run its full length the story fills itself with considerable padding of inessentials.

*Le Vieil, Homme et L'Enfant* is the touching story of a growing relationship between an old man, played by Michel Simon, and a child. Simon's excellent acting is a treat to watch. The child also acquires himself creditably in a demanding role. In their insulated existence during the war they find warmth and both come to trust each other despite initial hurdles. The delineation of it all makes it a moving human document.

*Alexandre Le Bienheureux* is a delightful film and it can easily be imagined why it became one of the most popular of the postwar French films. It has colour, humour and it responds to every man's dream of being able to be liberated from the confines of workday existence. The hero loses his wife soon enough and happily enough as she has been a fetter on his

dreamy childlike way. He has a better rapport with animals, birds and children. When he gets his freedom from her he decides to sleep his days, weeks and months out. It spreads like contagion and despite the entreaties of the neighbours and the wooing of a woman he runs away unfettered.

The theme in this lighthearted fantasy of riotous colour and uproarious fun is put across with imagination and deftness. Philippe Noiret gives a performance that immediately endears him.

Pierre Etaix's *Le Grande Amour* is another comedy to win admiration. Etaix is also the hero whose dream of amorous adventure gets shattered when it clashes with the reality of his existence, Etaix's strength lies in his acting ability and his inventiveness. He has assimilated much of what the silent cinema had to offer in slapstick situations.

An incorrigible daydreamer's expansive moments treated in a delectably funny way by the director. The characters and places appear in splendid recurrence and situations to generate fresh hilarity each time. Andre Cayatte's *Les Risques Du Metier*, with which the festival ended, is a refreshing revelation of the infatuation of adolescents. It is set in the French countryside, which is picturesquely photographed. The school teacher's agony in being falsely implicated and the reconstruction of the different versions of the situations in which the teacher is allegedly involved are deftly dealt with. The suspense is kept up till the last and in the end the village comes back to its normal keel. Rich acting is an important ingredient of the film which makes it a well sustained dramatic experience.

## Two Adaptations

MRIGANKA SEKHAR RAY

IN *Oliver*, the boisterous musical version of *Oliver Twist* (directed by Carol Reed), Dickens' ruthless social exposé has undergone a remarkable metamorphosis, attaining a sort of fairy-tale quality. The first reac-

tion is, of course, one of hostile indifference, because for one who knows Dickens as a grim realist it is hard to swallow this transition, but as the thing progresses, gradually unfolding Cinderella theme inherent in the story, apathy gives way to complete acceptance. For, in Dickens, despite his sharp focus on the contrast between rags and riches, there is a streak of romanticism which lends itself well to musical form. The script has been intelligent enough to skip the intrigue part of the novel, namely the collusion between Bill Sykes' gang and Oliver's cousin, thereby integrating the sequences into a rigid structure. The characters have also been redrawn to suit the peculiar mood of this version. Ron Moody's Fagin is a benevolent crook, playing Papa Fagin to his delinquent wards. Oliver Reed as Bill Sykes is rather unsure of his interpretation; probably Robert Newton's chip is heavy on his shoulder. Shani Wallis' powerful portrayal of Nancy as a kindly slut torn between her affection for Oliver and her attachment to Sykes is one of the real assets of the film. Mark Lester as Oliver and Jack Wild as the Artful Dodger invest the film with a kind of delicate charm. The songs are all excellent, but three really stand out, one is "Consider Yourself" sung by Oliver and the Artful Dodger during their hurricane jaunts through London streets, and the second is "Who Will Buy?" sung by Oliver and Bloomsbury hawkers, and the third is "I'd do anything", the chorus at Fagin's den. The choreography is brilliant and Oswald Moms' pleasing colour photography captures the period feeling with the sensitive probe of a Hogarth painting. Finally, kudos for the design team for their perfect creation of an old-world London, ranging from the posh elegance of Bloomsbury to the dirty hell-hole of Three Cripples.

*The Fox* (directed by Mark Rydell) based on the D. H. Lawrence novel concentrates on the relationships between two girls March (Anne Heywood) and Jill (Sandy Denis) living in blissful isolation in a farm in Canada. Into their world stumbles Paul and the complications begin,

the film turns into a complex mixture of love-triangle and strong Lesbian elements. For quite sometime the director shows promise in handling the characters and milieu but as the plot thickens, he loses his grip on the narrative and the whole thing degenerates into a pretentious and self-conscious juggling with the camera leading up to a banal climax with the dead fox, symbolic perhaps, of the intruding male.

## Letters

### After The Election

For Mr Giri's win in the presidential election, all radical left parties and progressive individuals are to be congratulated. Anti-Congressism cannot be branded progressive or pro-people, this general theory of the CPI(M) has been proved beyond doubt. The Swatantra, Jana Sangh company have come out in their true colours to protect class interests, and the Syndicate has been forced to think of a merger with them by giving up its hocus pocus of socialism. This presidential election proved Corade E. M. S. Namboodiripad's statement that coalition is the order of the day and one-party rule is a remnant of the past.

In your journal I said on March 1 that the mid-term poll in West Bengal will hasten political polarisation in India and sooner or later it will pave the way for a final showdown. We shall fight for the betterment of the masses by changing the Constitution from within; and we want to see how far Mrs Gandhi and her colleagues are ready to walk along with us.

PRIYADHAN NANDY  
Goralgacha, Hooghly

### Ray's Film

Mr Kamal Kanti Ray Choudhury in his sharp rejoinder (August 23), to Mr Mukhopadhyay's "Second Thoughts On Ray" (August 9) writes "... the Magician to me appears like the impartial power of science corrupted by

the power-hankering and intriguing present-day politician". Maybe it is so to him but not to Ray. Ray explained at the Max Mueller Bhavan that the onlookers can frame their own opinion according to their choice with which he has nothing to do. So, the comparison between the Chocolate Soldier in Shaw's *Arms and the Man* and the starved soldiers in Ray's film may be subtle but does not necessarily mean that the aims are the same.

Mr Ray Choudhury is not alone in stretching the imagination. One film critic went so far as to say that the States of Shundi and Halla possibly mean North and South Vietnam or India and Pakistan, and so on. But Ray did not intend to touch the fringe of these problems in his film. And I do not understand why some critics feel it necessary to goliathise the amusing sequences.

*Goopy Gyne Bagha Byne* is a film of unalloyed fantasy, though Ray categorically denies that it is a children's film. And whether GGGB's fantasy is really far from reality or not, let us not chop logic. For a suitable definition of fantasy, let us turn to Mr Karuna Sankar Ray's "More Thoughts On Goopy" (May 31) in which he points out that the one unique quality of a fantasy is that it is liberated from time and place, it does not remind one of a particular period or a distinct people or a particular country; it is marked by a most remarkable timelessness and universality of emotions. Realism, as commonly understood, is therefore, out of place in the treatment of fantasy.

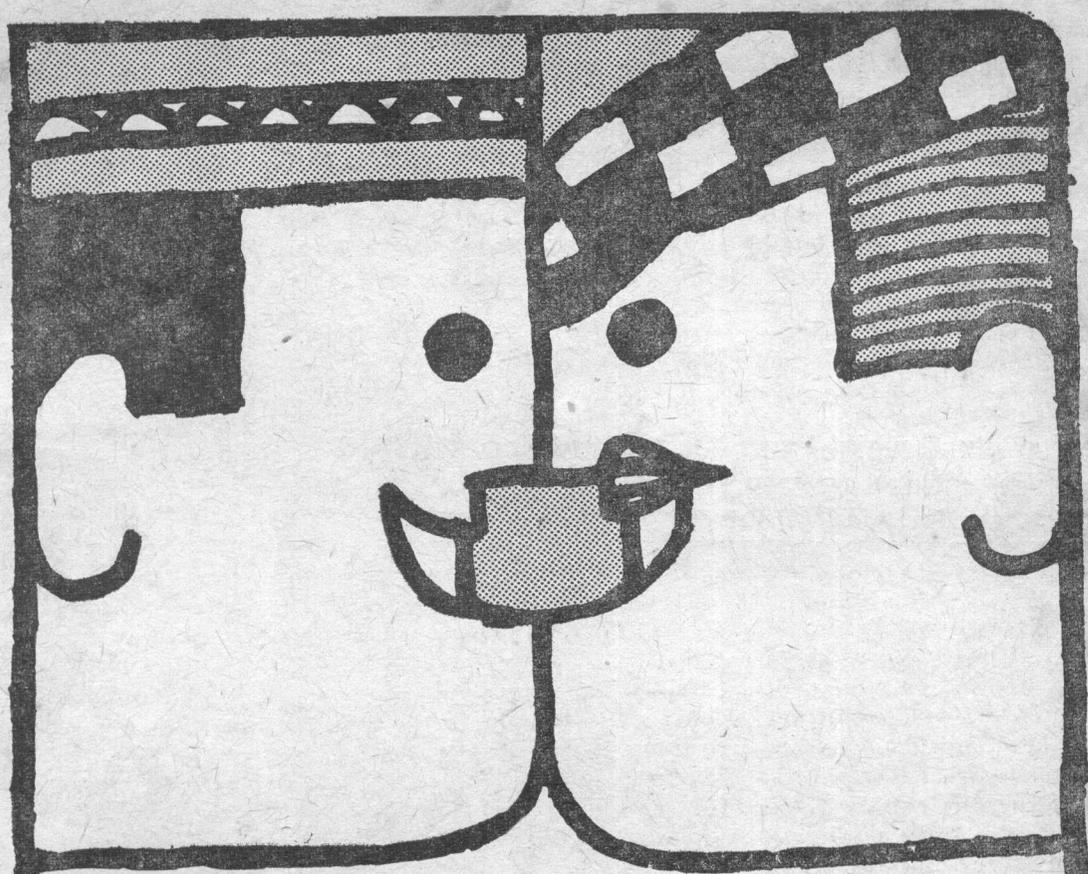
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