

# frontier

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## POSTURES

AFTER a time strong men begin to look silly and of course Mr Chavan is no exception. What heightens the comic effect in his case is his habit of quoting the Constitution. His solemn contortions of this scripture, his cogitations over the powers of subadars of different States, his different yardsticks in measuring affairs, say in Bombay, Assam and West Bengal, his ambition to rule this big country like a great Mogul have become a weariness of the flesh. The wonder is that he is still taken so seriously. Perhaps he is because the rulers in the States also behave like men of straw at decisive moments.

Why the furore over the Bengal bandh of last week? The drastic action against the Central Government employees for their participation in the partial September strike of last year has left behind strong pockets of discontent and misery here and there. Hungry, jobless men do not read the Constitution. They want to work and survive. The 'leniency' announced in instalments has not been put into effect in many States; the men affected are becoming impatient, feelings against the Centre are running particularly high in non-Congress States. For this anger against the Centre Mr Chavan is responsible to a large degree. The agitation at Cossipore was an aftermath of September 19, 1968, complicated, maybe, by secret instructions to those in charge of Central installations to be tough with any kind of agitation—does Mr Chavan see a Chinese hand at Durgapur, Cossipore or elsewhere?

There was no doubt whatsoever that the general strike called in protest against the Cossipore murders would be complete. The tension connected with previous general strikes was, however, absent—because the police were not posted in strength. There were no issues for the public to force. Where there was—at Kanchrapara—there was trouble.

A general strike can be used to further a mass movement—as it was on many occasions in Pakistan between November and March. Each stoppage of work there was a blow to the administration and a step forward. In West Bengal, the situation of course was different. The Government approved of the strike, and the agencies of the Centre were asked not to function—a wise action which New Delhi should have appreciated. And Mr Chavan should know that a peaceful general strike which generates a feeling of solidarity and unity—and of relief—can also act as a safety valve.

ritual, and leave people where they It can be a symbolic gesture, a were, unless the other party cooks up something to disturb the balance. It looks as if certain political forces in New Delhi are getting uneasy about rumoured moves for some sort of a change in the set-up there, some sort of a peaceful coup, and are trying to forestall any untoward development by fighting some of the States. And here in West Bengal the Centre-State confrontation can also neutralise attention to such obnoxious business as the one at Rabindra Sarobar on April 6. Anyone trying to probe the disgraceful incidents there would perhaps be called a Congress-Naxalite agent out to discredit the infant UF regime. It is forgotten that silence begets unsavoury rumours which multiply like summer flies and the total effect, in the long run, may not always be in favour of even a popular Government.

## Telengana Tangle

After a series of all-party conferences and high-level talks to extricate her party and Government from the Telengana tangle, Mrs Gandhi has come out with an eight-point plan. To cure the disease she wants to set up several committees, some central, some regional, some high-power, some with jurists and some reactivated SRC committee. But from the reports available it can be predicted that the committees, like an overdose of penicillin, will bring no response from the patient. The disease in fact is not Telengana's nor Andhra's, it is the Congress leadership which is diseased. Nobody has cared to know why the SRC recommended originally a separate State for Telengana and why today statehood for Telengana cannot just be considered viable. Everybody, on the contrary, seems to be overwrought with the mythical operation of the National Integrity Council and the concocted fear of 'balkanisation of India'. Neither

Mrs Gandhi nor Mr Chavan nor Mr Desai considered it necessary to visit Andhra to assess the situation; maybe the experiences of Mr Desai in Bombay were too haggard... The local satrap, Mr Brahmananda Reddy, considers the situation nothing more than a law and order problem. He has even refused to entertain any parliamentary party mission to Andhra although Parliament has a direct responsibility to see that the safeguards incorporated in the Constitution are properly implemented by the Telengana Regional Committee. His answer to the problem was police, and police excesses have snowballed into hundreds of separate Telengana camps that have sprouted all over Hyderabad and Secunderabad where students go on relay hungerstrike.

What in fact is the picture? It will be fatuous to imagine that Telengana will be a prosperous region if only given regional autonomy or separate statehood. The whole of India being what it is, Telengana surpluses, computed by a deputy of the Comptroller and Auditor General at Rs. 34.10 crores till March 31, 1968, are pathetically meagre to improve the region. It cannot be said either that funds under the Plans, allocated to Andhra, were not spent in Telengana too. Under the Second and Third Plans, resources were made available to Andhra and Telengana regions in the proportion of two to one. It is not again true that the Telenganaites were wholly denied job opportunities—fifty per cent of the high posts in Andhra are held by Telenganaites. Mr Reddy in his haste to appease the agitators announced the formation of 2,000 new Government posts—a novel way to waste the Telengana surpluses.

Why then the agitation? Are the agitators spuriously motivated? One would be lured to imagine that the whole thing has been brewed up by the PSP, Swatantra and Republican Party—for these are the parties that are supporting the agitators, with an eye on the 1972 elections. But one should not be misled by these self-styled leaders. The movement was

started by students, who later brought in their fold the Telengana Non-Gazetted Officers' Union, primary and secondary school teachers, and recently a signatory to the Gentlemen's Agreement of 1956, a former Chairman of the Telengana Regional Committee, a former Andhra Cabinet Minister, an ever increasing number of MLAs and Dr Chenna Reddy, the only rival to Mr Brahmananda Reddy in Andhra. The call for strike on April 15, given by the Telengana Praja Samithi, was certain to cause a further dent in the no more monolithic Pradesh Congress. Even the lawyers of the region supported the strike. About 1,50,000 teachers and employees—and workers too—were involved.

When the movement is so widespread, the communist interpretation of the situation seems to be as wide off the mark as the Congress interpretation. A Congress MP told the Lok Sabha that UP, Gujarati and Rajasthani businessmen and industrialists had provoked the agitation because their long domination was threatened by coastal Andhra and Rayalseema entrepreneurs. The CPI (M), which has no particular stake or base in Andhra, has denounced the separatist movement which, it considers, is being organised by the landlord politicians of the Telengana wing of the Andhra Congress. None of these assessments explain how the agitation could draw in the enlightened sections of Telengana in a movement which has been sustained over three months on an extremely high pitch.

The remedial measures as recommended by the CPI are however absolutely true to its form. It has confined itself to the demand for removing the Reddy Ministry, as if some other faction of the Congress would be any better, as if Telengana could prosper with the remaining of India languishing. There is no way out. Telengana, a separate State or a part of Andhra, would be no better than it is today, so long as the Congress leadership is there and at the Centre.

## Words, Words

Nobody is any longer even waiting for the Plan. It is taken for granted that even though the Fourth Plan document may be made ready, its contents will have little to do with what is known as planning in the rigorous sense. The National Development Council is nonetheless meeting on April 19 and 20 to give its seal of approval to the twenty-odd essays that have been put together. One reason why the document could not be released before the commencement of the fiscal season was the reported dissatisfaction of the Prime Minister with the introductory chapter, which apparently did not contain enough of high-flowing phrases in praise of such ethereal objectives as egalitarianism, social justice, and so on. The backroom boys were therefore asked to insert a few additional sentences to indicate that the heart of the politicians was still in the right place.

If egalitarianism could be brought about by phrase-mongering, the country would have ushered in an equal society a long while ago. This device of social revolution through paragraph-writing may be acceptable gimmickry in New Delhi, but the politicians will be fooling themselves if they continue to harbour the impression that the people at large will be fooled any more. Investments under the Plan having been severely cut back during the last four or five years, whatever developmental impulse there once was in the economy has dampened down to what is now a state of near-atrophy. New Delhi officialdom seems to be waiting for some miracle to emerge out of agriculture, which could then rapidly affect the other sectors of the economy. No such occurrence is however likely without the creation of new physical assets. Despite the newspaper headlines, the process of capitalist-oriented agricultural development has not spread beyond wheat. The level of productivity per acre for nearly all the commercial crops, and the majority of food crops remains where it was a decade ago. Outside

agriculture, some surplus capacity exists in the capital goods sector, but is likely to be used up soon. There is excess capacity in a number of consumer industries too, but here demand is unlikely to pick up unless a substantial increase takes place in per capita incomes in the first place.

Viewed in this context, the timid document composed by the Planning Commission is an irrelevance. But to meet asinity by parallel asinity is scarcely helpful. As an anti-Yojana Bhavan exercise, the Chief Minister of Kerala has prepared another set of essays concerning the tasks of planning. These are not qualitatively any better than the ones the Planning Commission has composed; a number of shop-worn leftwing cliches are assembled, but they illuminate neither choice nor priorities. There are two critical matters on which the prospects of economic planning in the country would hinge during the next few years: first, whether the politicians will have the collective courage to slash defence expenditure by at least one-half, and thereby release the equivalent of 3 per cent of the national income for socially necessary investments; second, whether they can come down hard on the rural gentry for raising fresh taxes. It is only when resources for development are thus squeezed out that one can think in terms of relative priorities and co-ordination between sectors and units.

Despite the present chaotic state of Centre-State relations, a kind of rough coherence in regard to investment activities can still be hammered out, purely on a short-term basis, provided the picture in regard to finances is fairly clear. But there can be no resources for the Plan without hurting specific class interests. The politicians are nobody's fools, they realise this. Which is why sleeping dogs will be allowed to lie. The Chief Ministers will do some huffing and puffing at the meeting of the National Development Council, but will finally give in to all the meaningless phraseology indulged in by the Planning Commission. The phrases will not harm anybody, but they are incapable of doing any good either. And as

Mr Namboodiripad's *riposte* to Mr Dange shows, he too is a great believer in phrases, *sans* ideas—or in pure ideas till so long as they are not attempted to be applied into practice.

## No Phoney Peace

Saigon and Washington should have known that their latest proposals would be totally unacceptable to people who have suffered so much in an epic struggle and yet retain the will to continue the fight to the finish. The National Liberation Front has rejected not only the so-called peace plan put forward by Mr Thieu but also the American proposal for mutual withdrawal of forces. Thieu had the cheek to suggest that members and supporters of the NLF would be allowed to participate freely in South Vietnam's national life only if they abandoned, at least nominally, their faith in communism. In other words, the Vietcong should disband themselves, reorganize themselves into a non-communist, non-violent opposition group owing allegiance to a Constitution framed by the American puppets in Saigon, and then take their chance in elections which would surely be rigged. The NLF knows better than to fall into so obvious a trap.

The contents of the so-called Nixon plan are not yet known, but the U.S. Secretary of State has reiterated that the Americans are ready to pull out on a mutual basis. The USA would probably insist on the withdrawal of not only North Vietnamese but also "other subversive" forces, meaning by the latter many elements of the Vietcong which Washington claims to be of Northern origin. Why the Vietcong should leave their own country, or why—for that matter—the North Vietnamese who have come to the aid of their struggling brethren in the South should be equated with the American forces of aggression, can be clear only in the light of U.S. imperialist logic. Neither Hanoi nor the NLF can be interested in such mysteries. Besides, no U.S. proposal for a settlement in Vietnam can have much re-

levance unless it honestly faces the political aspect of the problem, and the political questions can be solved only after Washington recognizes the NLF as representative of the majority of the people in South Vietnam and agrees to the Front's assuming the dominant role in the conduct of the country's affairs.

Both Saigon and Washington have gone some way towards accepting the reality of the NLF and its fighting arm—the Vietcong. The course of the struggle in Vietnam has compelled at least partial acceptance. Continuing pressure of events should complete the process; impatience with Washington's Vietnam policy, which is both barbarous and barren, has been steadily mounting in the USA; the Americans who once used to claim that they could hold out as long as their opponents have begun to sing a different tune; too many American lives are being lost to be good for the morale of the Great Society. In such a situation, it should not be very long before the Vietnamese struggle reaches its end in victory. But certain indications are disturbing, and the indications come from the two countries which have helped this struggle most. The Russians seem increasingly anxious for a detente with Washington, and concessions over Vietnam may be a part of the price that Moscow would pay for this deal. Neither Hanoi nor the NLF would be happy, but it is no use pretending that they need not bother about the Russian attitude at all. So far as the Chinese are concerned, there is no question of supporting any compromise but the increasing tensions between China and the Soviet Union are unlikely to contribute to the flow of as much help as the Vietnamese people still need from the two countries. Reports about Chinese obstruction of Russian supplies to North Vietnam may be exaggerated or even invented, but in the present state of bitterness thoughtless acts by individuals or groups are by no means inconceivable.

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## The Sick Press

*A correspondent writes :*

A conglomeration of superannuated journalists turned public relations officers-cum-editors, absentee editors, dummy editors and proprietor-editors and/or their in-laws and nephews that goes by the pompous name of the All-India Newspaper Editors Conference should have been the last organisation to concern itself with pathological imponderables like "What Ails the Indian Press."

The recent seminar in New Delhi on the subject turned out to be an elaborate but pointless exercise. The self-pity of the so-called small language newspapers going to the wall, the cliche thinking about the need for brighter papers and platitudes about the bygone era of great editors and great reporting in Indian journalism were all predictable and added little to one's knowledge of the ailments of the flabby Indian Press, affluent through rute and cement connections or surreptitious foreign subsidies or open government patronage.

It was all good to say that a newspaper had to be economically independent to be free. But independence does not necessarily make the Press free because it is not merely a question of breaking even. The pattern of ownership is the thing and in India the big business newspaper is invariably an extension of some other industry. All the affluence has not restored to the big business newspapers the lost sense of craft. One paper looks as uniformly dull as the other. One more round of editorial musical chairs and all of them would be so genteel and slick and therefore indistinguishable.

One of the indefatigable seminarists who held forth on the problems of the Indian Press was speaking the medico-surgical patois all the time, heart transplant and all that tripe and discovered that the newspapers should set apart two per cent of their spending on research and be less niggardly in their payment to independent writers. (As for the poor working journalist, well such things are just

not discussed in the edifying milieu of a seminar of the kind). The semi-professional, semi-amateur "independent writer" who can produce instant if ill-informed columns of a highly personalised nature is a comparatively recent phenomenon. The same article is rehashed in half a dozen different forms and fobbed off on editors from the Pacific to the Arabian Sea as independent pieces while the more honest thing would have been to syndicate them without pretension. Poor payment by newspapers is held out as justification for the new kind of traffic in public credulity.

As for heart transplant, the heart has to be located in the first place. All that one knows is that the Press is sick, morbid and putrefying in its affluence while the unaffluent Press is suffering from anaemia. Then there is the sector of the Press owned by political parties and almost all these papers are going modern with a vengeance. The CPI's official weekly prides in regaling its readers to quietly whispered "inside" stories (by its competent "insiders") about the silk underwear allegedly worn by a woman Congress MP, all in the interest of class struggle and revolution. There is the yellow streak all over and we hope even party-line hacking is a lively profession these days.

The category sought to be made respectable includes the editor-proprietor as distinguished from the proprietor-editor. It is much more respectable for the proprietor-editor to declass himself into an editor-proprietor and the conscience is eased. And of course the bandwagon is there. The kind of editor-proprietors (like the gentlemen farmers) the seminar sought to idealise are a terribly affluent lot, getting the best of both the worlds by identifying themselves with the establishment, even while professing martyrdom and confessing to jail wishes.

The ailment of the Press thus lies in its conformism. Technical backwardness, lack of resources and poor training in the craft are things that could be overcome some day and economically viable newspapers are not hard to build. But where is the cure

to conformism and what is the process of reversing the historic accident of the Press being the adjunct of some other industry?

## Harijans Again

Manu, the ancient Hindu law-giver, says somewhere in his notorious treatise that if a twice-born were to rape a Harijan woman, he should only be subjected to the mild humiliation of his tuft being cut-off in public by the guardians of order. On the other hand, the law-giver stipulated that if a Harijan were to be found guilty of the same crime, his head should be chopped off. The speech made by a guru at the Second World Hindu Sammelan held at Patna only confirms the view held by some that despite the coming into being of industry and technology, Bharat has not progressed much beyond Manu's time. Let there be no mistake: When "His Holiness" said that untouchability was a part of the Hindu Dharma, and that the Harijan should stay put in the same social rung that the all-pervading "karma" has fixed for him, he perhaps struck an agreeable note in many an upper-caste Hindu heart. The sophisticated Hindus who discuss Picasso's blue period or Tansen's ragas are not always in basic disagreement with these views, though they may disapprove of the "native style" in which these were put. Even the father of our nation was not fully convinced of the need to shatter the Varna system. He only suggested a flexible caste system which permitted some kind of an upward mobility for the down-trodden. It appears in hindsight that the modifications suggested were primarily designed to provide a safety-valve to forestall any determined declaration of war against the Caste Hindus by the pariahs of our society.

The Patna incident no doubt has provided an opportunity for many to practise verbal-acrobatics extolling the virtues of a casteless and classless society, but it is worth noting that display of emotions does not really constitute a change of heart among the Caste Hindus.

"His Holiness" had at least the courage to state his views. But the majority among our elite who are no less cruel to their helpless brethren conceal their attitude in well-meaning phrases. In fact, it is these disguised

obscurantists who are more dangerous. They are like the social democrats whom Lenin took to task. No doubt, the Gurus deserve to be hanged. But there are millions of others who also qualify for this honour.

## View from Delhi

# Getting Tough?

FROM A POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

MR Chavan's statement in Parliament on the Bengal Bandh indicates a toughening Central attitude to West Bengal. If the Centre decides to throw the United Front out, it would not be through a method like defections because arithmetically that is ruled out in West Bengal. It would be direct intervention on the grounds of a law and order breakdown. Much the same thing holds good for Kerala and Mr Namboodiripad has realised it more than anyone else in the party. How else does one explain the unseemly wrangle between him and Mr A. K. Gopalan? Mr Gopalan has repeatedly charged a section of the Kerala police headed by the Inspector-General of conspiring with some Union Minister to topple the United Front Ministry. But the Chief Minister has given a clean chit to his police chief. It is exemplary conduct indeed for any Chief Minister to give his police chief a pat on the back for the firing in Idikki. Either it is perfect division of labour between the two leaders—Mr Gopalan blaming the police and the Centre for a plot all the time and Mr Namboodiripad playing the role of an unflappable Chief Minister, or Mr Namboodiripad wants to play safe with the Centre or has come to terms with it. As for a conspiracy in West Bengal, the State Ministers ought to know better because one day last week a tenth of the Ministry was functioning from Banga Bhavan in New Delhi, with three of the ten Ministers setting up their camp offices here. Banga Bhavan wears a mela look these days, with a dizzy procession of ministers trooping in and out and the new-found friends of the United Front from among the coterie of anti-communist Bengali special correspondents

hanging around all the time. News management in Calcutta's big dailies is better done from Banga Bhavan, which indeed should be a lesson for other States. In the Secretariat corridors one often hears of the new respect the Centre has developed for the West Bengal Ministry's sweet reasonableness at the New Delhi end in spite of all the tough-talking at the Calcutta end. So the Ministers who commute to New Delhi almost as a habit should know better if any Central conspiracy is in the offing. One presumes there is already a broad agreement between the State and the Centre over the ground rules of any intervention in the future.

The occasion for the prolonged presence of three West Bengal Ministers in New Delhi was the National Council meeting of the Communist Party of India which ultimately lined itself up behind Moscow on the intervention in Czechoslovakia. Even old-time supporters of the Czech cause like Mr Somnath Lahiri appear to have relented and adjusted themselves to the official line. What clinched the issue was the compulsive need to move as close to the CPI(M) as possible out of sheer survival instinct. The CPI(M)'s bid for international legitimacy forced it to take a blatantly pro-Soviet stand on the Czech issue while the CPI was divided. Now the entire Soviet mass media, especially its radio and Press correspondents in India, have been given a directive to refer to the CPI(M) as one of the two communist parties in India and not as splitters. There is obvious Moscow pressure for unity in action between the two parties under the threat that if the CPI does not see reason, Moscow would be forced to

confer full recognition on the CPI(M). The CPI's stand on Czechoslovakia seems to have secured the official blessings of the Government of India.

The Government's own equivocation on the Sino-Soviet border dispute ended last week though Mr Dinesh Singh continued to speak like a Delphic oracle about the Government's opposition to changing historically settled borders. Paraphrased it meant support to the Soviet stand, followed by the screening of a Soviet film report of the Damansky clash over the Delhi television on Sunday. But surprisingly a major foreign policy statement Mr Dinesh Singh did not make was made by the Defence Minister, Mr Swaran Singh. The short-duration debate in the Lok Sabha on Soviet arms for Pakistan provided Mr Swaran Singh the opening for a controversial statement with serious policy implications. He said the Soviet attitude to India had changed after the Tashkent agreement. Mr Dinesh Singh could not have said it or would not say it but the Defence Minister could. Marshal Grechko's speeches in Pakistan

(the visit followed his earlier visit to India) unnerved New Delhi but the public stance that the Soviet attitude to India had not changed was being maintained.

The Foreign Office itself is in a mess. Two of Mrs Indira Gandhi's supporters among the officials resent Mr Dinesh Singh's elevation to the External Affairs Ministry because the little Raja was a Second Secretary while the officials were in higher positions then. Mr Swaran Singh was the Foreign Minister when Mr Dinesh Singh was only a deputy of his. Many of the policy pronouncements are coloured by personal considerations and it is hard to tell if Mr Swaran Singh's statement on the Soviet attitude to Pakistan really reflects the official policy. Mr Swaran Singh and Mr Dinesh Singh backed different persons for the post of the Chief of Army Staff. General Kumaramangalam's successor was chosen out of several political considerations and the General who was connected with Operation Hooghly will now be a power factor in New Delhi.

Mr Dinesh Singh has been the rising star in the New Delhi firmament and many who have been watching the star rise have become its satellite. When he was the Commerce Minister, he had a coterie of special correspondents who willingly put a special slant on all Cabinet stories, based on Mr Dinesh Singh's private briefings. Now it is a somewhat different set, though several personalities are still common. Perhaps this coterie knows better whether there is any shift in Government's foreign policy or not. For all that one knows, after Marshal Grechko's visit, the exercise towards a dialogue with China has been dropped without ceremony. Mr Dinesh Singh's speech in the Lok Sabha invited a special Peking broadside and a little earlier some wise man from the Soviet Union talked of a Soviet-Indian-Burmese plan to contain China. This roughly coincided with Mrs Indira Gandhi's four-day visit to Burma.

Tailpiece : *L' Express* of Paris says that the pro-Chinese Communist Party in West Bengal is headed by Mr Jyoti Basu "who is rarely seen laughing."

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## Maharashtra

### Bombay Has A New Mayor

SHAHUL

EXCITEMENT ran high and there was spitfire belligerence, the atmosphere was tense on April 4 when it was anybody's guess as to who would become our First Citizen by sunset that day. BPCC-man J. K. Joshi was being engaged in a fierce contest by "Opposition"-backed Boman Behram who by his own right had become a political Rustum in south Bombay. Joshi however was absolutely sure of winning, what with all the 66 votes of Congressmen and the many winking "ayarams" on the other side!

But Boman Behram had no doubt at all, backed as he was by the mighty "opposition" led by the revenge-seeking firebrands of the Shiv Sena, out to give the BPCC a licking. If one side spoke for high principles and ethics, the other side was absolutely committed to great ideals and dedicated service to the people of Bombay. Consensus of opinion among the opinion-makers and local papers seemed to be that Joshi was by far the right choice although Boman Behram could add glory to the Chair as nobody also could. If Joshi was a pure Gandhian from Gujarat dedicated to the noble causes of Shri S. K. Patil all these years, Boman Behram had proved his non-violent and estimable credentials by firmly opposing the liberation of Goa and upholding true justice in the high courts of law and the courtly councils of Colaba. Canvassing was feverish, and both sides had the "first speech", garlands etc. ready.

When the result was announced Joshi had 73 votes out of the 138 cast, and up went the cry: "Victory to Congress and India's unity!" "This is betrayal!" shouted the oppositionists, and spoke bitterly about the unprincipled opportunism of "some men" who could sell their souls

for a mess of pottage. The heat and excitement however subsided in a few minutes, all taking refreshments, and Behram was the first man to congratulate Joshi on his splendid victory. BPCC men immediately declared that they had nothing at all against Shri Boman Behram whom, in fact, they held in "great respect".

People outside Bombay might be wondering what exactly were the principles and ideologies involved, to cause so much excitement after all? They might just as well ask why there was excitement when Mohan Bagan and the Tata Club fought for the Rovers' Cup. And those who take party labels that seriously will do well to spend some time in Bombay for further education.

#### Patil Takes The Plunge

"With kumkum on his forehead and a coconut in his hand" Shri S. K. Patil filed his nomination at Palanpur on April 2 for the by-election in Banaskantha. Reports also indicate that Banaskantha is in the most backward and hottest part of north Gujarat, a constituency which has been "safe" enough for the Swatantra man, Manubhai Amersey. Still a candidate, Himmat Singhji, professing intention to withdraw in favour of Patil although an "Independent" candidate, Himmat Singhji, professing the Krishna Menon brand of socialism, is also contesting. Himmat Singhji, 54, says that Patil is too old and reactionary, and no "local man"; the oil-rich north Gujarat can be saved from foreign oil companies, cooperatives can be started in the area, and more schools can be set up if he gets elected. He is hopeful of saving also Avadi socialism from the reactionaries inside the Congress if only he is helped to defeat Patil at Banaskantha, and it appears there is yet another hope; that is, his friend Amersey, with whom he is "constantly in touch", may withdraw in his favour. And Patil who is not unfamiliar with his business is also "very hopeful of winning the election".

Nearly 85% of the people in Banaskantha are said to be illiterate and are not likely to know the fine

political distinctions between Patil and Singhji or Amersey; and Patil can be expected to open his campaign with a "Bapuji ne kaha tha" speech vigorously condemning all and sundry in the Circar for the local sufferings leaving not much that way for the rivals to talk about. Amersey will in all probability withdraw, and if Himmat Singhji also does not withdraw, some opposition and excitement may be expected. Not that it will make a mighty lot of difference as to which one of the "Bada Sahebs" goes to the Lok Sabha, but another contested election and opposition campaigning should be welcomed in so far as it might accelerate political awakening among the local people. Patil has already repudiated his old "local man" theory employed against Menon, and if that is going to be the only stick with which the opposition hopes to face him, the Banaskantha contest will have no more significance than the fight for the Mayor's chair in Bombay. Opposition will have served some purpose if an effort is made to educate the local people on their real problems.

## Uttar Pradesh

### Swear In Hindi

C. K. ARORA

HOW Hindi fanatics entrenched in the U.P. administration were recently instrumental in forcing eleven MLAs to take the oath of membership in a language which they said they did not know is now well known. Their task was made easier by the ideologically blunt left opposition. However, their central leadership appeared agitated over the issues: Mr Bhupesh Gupta and Mr Rajnaraian raised it in the Rajya Sabha and succeeded in wresting an assurance from the Prime Minister that provision would be made for administering the oath in one's mother-tongue.

But the U.P. Chief Minister, Mr C. B. Gupta, told the State Vidhan

Sabha that a change in the language of oath called for an amendment in the rules of the House. Whatever the feelings of the central leadership on the controversy, it was for the House to decide whether or not to change its rules. So one does not know how the Prime Minister's assurance will be implemented.

The controversy had a dramatic beginning. On March 15, at the special session of the U.P. Assembly convened to administer the oath to new members, a Muslim MLA pleaded his ignorance of Hindi and wanted to be sworn in, in the language that he knew—Urdu.

The Presiding Officer, a senior Congressman, refused pointblank. The only concession he could make was that he would read out the oath and the member could repeat it. The member said there was no sense in uttering words he did not understand.

The Presiding Officer expressed his helplessness and the member returned to his seat without being sworn in.

After him ten other Muslim MLAs came to the dais one by one, had similar arguments with the Presiding Officer and returned without taking the oath.

At the conclusion of the oath-taking ceremony, the Presiding Officer, in consultation with the Vidhan Sabha secretariat, held out a warning: Those who had refused to take the oath, would not be allowed to take part in the election of the Speaker of the Assembly listed for the next day. The threat worked. Out of 11 MLAs who had refused to take the oath earlier, six agreed to accept it in Hindi. The remaining MLAs followed suit the next day. Thus all the 11 were made to take the oath in a language they did not understand.

The matter has for the present ended. But it has created bitterness in a State where people are badly divided in the name of caste and community. The Jana Sangh, active from the very beginning, drove home its point. In the 422-member State Assembly, the 48-member Jana Sangh

was the only party which openly opposed the administration of oath in Urdu. The Congress did not challenge the ruling of the Chair and allowed the Jana Sangh to have the last laugh.

Though the Jana Sangh received a severe mauling in the recent mid-term poll, the inroads it had made in the State administration during the SVD Government have of late begun to pay dividends. The CPI, which helped the Jana Sangh enter the Administration, has now begun to admit its mistake, though in private.

But the 11 Muslim MLAs demonstrated a pathetic lack of seriousness and tenacity. They should not have raised such a sensitive issue when they lacked the guts to pursue it to the end. They did not make any attempt to bring the other Muslim MLAs, whose number is not less than 25, round their point of view. They caused more harm to Urdu which they want to defend. The haste they showed has raised doubts about their bona fides amongst the general public. The State capital is agog with

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numerous theories—Pakistan is naturally a common theme.

But there is growing belief that these MLAs were guided by the Muslim Majlis, which is friendly to the Congress these days, it is alleged. The Majlis, to ensure a Congress victory in the election of the Speaker, tried to keep the 11 MLAs, all non-Congress, out of the voting. But when agreement was reached between the opposition and the Congress over the

candidate for the Speakership, the Majlis asked these MLAs to give up their resistance and take the oath in Hindi.

Whatever be the cause, these gentlemen have not served the cause of Urdu. It would be better in the interests of the State as well as the Muslim community if the so-called "Muslim leaders" give up the habit of isolating their community more and more on real or imaginary issues.

every indication that the Chinese were greatly aware of the issues involved. In fact as later events proved, they were more determined about their claims than the KMT. But their views were kept secret for obvious political reasons. Even in 1950 when the Sino-Soviet Friendship and Mutual Aid Treaty was signed, the Chinese communists accepted without murmur the independence of Outer Mongolia and significantly were silent on the Sino-Soviet border question. The Chinese also conceded at that time the Soviet demands for the continuance of joint stock companies in places like Sinkiang. The Chinese had perhaps decided to raise the border issue on a later date. The Chinese Premier, Mr Chou En-lai, said in 1964 that the Chinese had raised the issue of territorial claims in 1957, but Khrushchev brushed them aside.

#### *Far from Peaceful*

However the situation on the border was far from peaceful. In the troubled Chinese frontier province of Sinkiang where lack of proper communication made Chinese tasks difficult, and where the Soviets enjoyed better access, the border issue became significant in 1960-61. The unrest among the Sinkiang minority people was tacitly supported by the Soviets, who provided asylum to the rebels. The Chinese Government also accused the Soviets of interfering in the Manchurian sector of the border. However, a public discussion of the dispute came up only in the wake of the Cuban missiles crisis of 1962.

The Chinese characterised the Soviet action of placing the missiles in Cuba as "adventurist" and their later removal under American pressure as "capitulationist". The Soviets counter-attacked by stating that China has a "double-standard" in evaluating revolutionary action. The Soviets pointed out that China has not liberated Hongkong although she claimed herself to be the Mecca of revolutionaries.

The American Communist Party also attacked the Chinese on similar lines. Replying to these points, the

## The Sino-Soviet Frontier—I

N. R. KALPATHI

OF all the facets of the Sino-Soviet dispute the least publicised and discussed was the question of the border. While all other vital questions of the day like war and peace were debated, the border issue was not raised at all for a long time in the public controversy. It was only in 1963 when the chances of a rapprochement with the Soviet Union were irretrievably lost that Communist China announced to the world for the first time the existence of a border problem between the two countries. China made it clear that her decision-makers had not given up the course championed, although hopelessly, by the Mandarins for nearly 300 years.

Extending from the biting cold of the Manchurian region to the blinding heat of the deserts of Turkestan, the Sino-Soviet border is the longest frontier anywhere between two nations, measuring 4150 miles. It could be broadly divided into three sections : (a) the Far Eastern region north of Manchuria, (b) the region west of China's Sinkiang province, and (c) the region in the Aichu-Pamir mountains bordering Soviet Tadzhikistan.

The frontier dispute between the two countries dates back to the 17th century when Czarist Russia and the Manchu Empire clashed for the first time in the Amur river region. The fighting continued for 9 years, and in 1689 the Treaty of Nerchinsk signed by the two countries ended the war. That was the first agreement between the Middle Kingdom and a European

State. The treaty demarcated the Chinese border in the Amur river region, and also stated that Eastern Mongolia and Chinese Turkestan (Northern Sinkiang) are under the benign shade of the Sun of Heaven. It remained in force till the middle of the 19th century when a weak and declining China became the meat of the imperialist Powers. Czarist Russia, as expansionist as other Powers, exploited the situation and imposed the Treaty of Aigun (1858) on China and annexed more territories. This was followed by the Treaty of Peking (1860) and in all these agreements China was the loser.

The change of government in both the countries—the Russian Revolution and the establishment of the People's Republic in China—did not fundamentally change the state of affairs on the Sino-Soviet border. Although in 1919 the famous Karakhan declaration was issued by the Soviet Government stating that the Soviet Union was willing to make null and void all unequal treaties signed between the two countries, it did not achieve any result. For the Soviet Government refused to renounce the annexed territories unilaterally and cautiously added that the declaration could be a good starting point for negotiations regarding the border. The events in China became complicated in the following years and in 1949 when the communists finally outmanoeuvred the Kuomintang, the border problem assumed a new significance. There was

## FRONTIER

Chinese Government, obviously hinting at the Sino-Soviet border problem, said that "we are of the unshakeable opinion that all unresolved problems left over from the past must be solved in a peaceful manner when conditions are ripe for their solution. Until then the status quo must be preserved. Such is the case with... all frontiers which were not fixed on a bilateral basis." As a consequence of such discussions in 1964 a border commission was established by the two countries but the commission soon broke up without achieving anything. In short, the Soviets indicated that no Chinese territorial claims would ever be entertained. In May 1964 as a result of the continuing ideological battle between the two countries, the Soviets again accused China of following double standards. The Soviets alleged that China was making some investments in Hongkong and remarked: "How can one speak of class struggle and revolutionary irreconcilability if capital from the People's Republic of China is peacefully collaborating with British and American capital in Hongkong, jointly exploiting the working people?"

The Chinese Communist Party responded to the Soviet challenge and opened Pandora's box. Mao Tsetung in a historic discussion with a delegation of the Japanese Socialist Party deputies on July 10, 1964 recounted in vivid detail Soviet occupation of other's territories. He said: "There are too many places occupied by the Soviet Union." He cited the case of Mongolia, and added "They (Soviet Union) also appropriated part of Rumania... They detached part of Poland, annexed it to the Soviet Union, and gave a part of East Germany to Poland as compensation. The same thing took place in Finland. The Russians took everything they could..." He referred to the Russian occupation of Chinese territory and said that "about a hundred years ago, the area east of Lake Baikal became Russian territory, and since then Vladivostok, Khabarovsk, Kamchatka and other areas have been Soviet territory. We have not yet presented our account for this list." Mao Tse-

tung also supported the Japanese claim to the Kurile islands. (This interview was reported for the first time in the Japanese paper *Sekai Shoho* on August 11, 1964).

The hardened Soviet attitude, particularly in the period of the Sino-Soviet dispute, marked the beginning of the second stage in the border dispute. In December 1966 the Soviets sent 13 divisions to the Chinese border, obviously to impress the latter with a show of might. In the following year when the Cultural Revolution in China was at its height with militant anti-Soviet campaigns, the Soviet Premier Kosygin visited the border areas, making anti-Chinese speeches. In the early part of the same year the Red Guards of Heilungkiang demonstrated on the Amur for return of China's lost territories. The year 1968 also marked increased tension on the borders. In September 1968 the Chinese protested against the alleged Russian violation of Chinese airspace near Vladivostok and accused the Soviets of creating a dangerous situation. In the Rumanian Embassy National Day reception held in Peking, Premier Chou En-lai, while condemning the Soviet action in Czechoslovakia, also squarely put the blame on the Soviets for all the tensions that existed on the Sino-Soviet border.

The recent events since the beginning of March are well known. Both sides have accused each other for the armed clashes on the Manchurian border. However, the charges and counter-charges are more bitter than ever before. The Russians have been more emphatic in their criticism of what they call the "adventurist" leadership of Mao. The Chinese, who described the Soviets as "Social-Imperialists" at the time of the invasion of Czechoslovakia, have gone a step ahead and have called the Soviet leaders "New Czars". The Soviet protest note of March 2, 1969 said that "the Soviet Government reserves the right to take resolute steps to cut short provocations on the Soviet-Chinese frontier and warns the Government of the People's Republic of China that the entire responsibility for

possible consequences of the adventurist policy, designed to aggravate the situation on the frontiers between China and the Soviet Union, rests with the Government of the People's Republic of China." The note warned that "the reckless provocative actions of the Chinese authorities will be met on our side by a rebuff and will be resolutely cut short."

The Chinese commentary was no less pungent in its attack. Blaming the Russians for the clash on Chen-pao island the article said: "Gone for ever are the days when the Chinese people were bullied by others. You are utterly blind and day-dreaming if you think you can deal with the great Chinese people by resorting to the same old tricks used by Czarist Russia. If you continue making military provocations you will certainly receive severe punishment. No matter in what strength and with whom you come we will wipe you out resolutely, thoroughly, wholly and completely." (emphasis original). (*Jen-min Jih-Pao*, March 4, 1969, P. 1).

The basic question in the Sino-Soviet border dispute is the Chinese contention that the Sino-Soviet frontier must be renegotiated, because the old unequal treaties which detached from China some territories cannot be taken as final for all time to come. The Chinese feel that these treaties are a bitter reminder of past humiliations in the hands of the imperialist Powers. An article in the Chinese Press in 1964 said that "Although old treaties relating to the Sino-Russian boundary are unequal treaties, the Chinese Government is nevertheless willing to respect them and take them as the basis of a reasonable settlement." The Soviet Government has time and again refused to accept this contention.

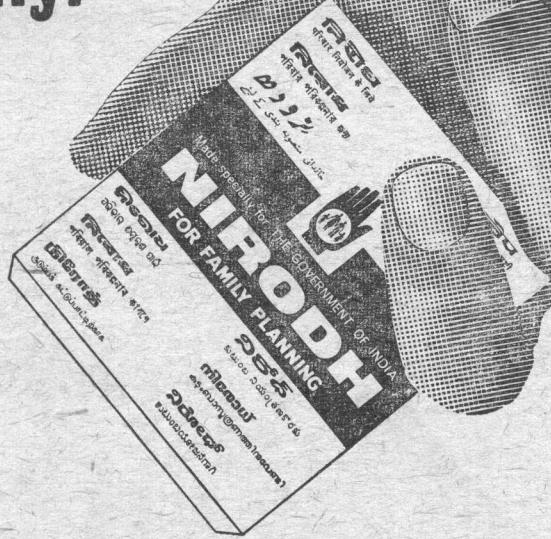
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# Calcutta Diary

CHARAN GUPTA

ONLY last week, we crossed the first year mark. It has been—and continues to be—a precarious existence in more senses than one. If ever there was a small-scale enterprise, *Frontier* is it. Funds are short, advertisement revenue is still negligible, the manner in which the journal is produced each week is as primitive as it can be. And while we have few friends, we seem to be creating fresh enemies at a steady rate. Recently, the attacks on us have piled up. A certain eclecticism is revealed in the roster of those who attack us: from the far out Left to the far out Right, there is criticism, often in intemperate language. It is no pleasure to be at the receiving end of butts and thrusts from each and all. Maybe the retort will be, it is no virtue to run down, without discrimination, each and all amongst the political groupings. I am afraid we will have to differ here. At least we can take pride that we do not discriminate between the groups and parties. The trouble with all our political parties is that none of them believes in encouraging a tolerance for dissent, they do not elect anybody as Vice-Chairman of Dissent. We have chosen to fill in the role and we are prepared to face the consequences.

\* \* \*

Take for example, the United Front Government. It is for the benefit of the Government itself that somebody should be there to separate the wheat of good work from the chaff of dubious performance. I have little doubt that my Naxalite friends are, as the expression goes, plain bonkers when they describe Mr Jyoti Basu as an up-and-coming Mussolini. One wild College Square speech does not make a fascist summer. While excesses—of the type launched against students—have to be condemned, it does nobody any good to jump to extravagant conclusions. If Mr Jyoti Basu was not in Writers' Buildings today, is there any doubt that Mr Kanu Sanyal would have continued to languish in prison?

To suggest that the United Front Government was forced to release Mr Sanyal because of the mighty movement launched by the Communist Revolutionaries is to indulge in self-delusion of the most pathetic kind. Mr Kanu Sanyal and several of his comrades went on hunger-strike sometime in December demanding political status in prison; the fast went on beyond sixty days, Mr Dharma Vira's sleep was not disturbed; the Naxalbari sympathisers staged one or two feeble shows in support of the demands of the hungerstriking prisoners but there was no "mightiness" in these shows.

The hungerstrikers had played themselves into an impossible corner, and a catastrophe could well have occurred if the results of the mid-term poll were otherwise. Of course, if it is now alleged that the release of the political prisoners is itself the manifestation of a deep-laid fascist plot, I am then ready to throw in the sponge. One cannot clearly have it both ways. Not being a Marxist ideologue of any hue, I find it altogether breathtaking how, on the basis of a single observation or a single piece of writing, a person is stamped as a social fascist or an agent of Yashwantrao Chavan.

\* \* \*

Render unto Caesar what belongs to Caesar. The release of the political prisoners by the UF Government is a good act, and deserves to be applauded. Particularly when contrasted to the contortioning dialectics which Mr Namboodiripad is trying out to justify his treatment of the Wynad prisoners, Mr Jyoti Basu's forthrightness in the matter does indeed stand out. Similarly, I think it will be positively wrong to take a jaundiced view of the set of measures Mr Harekrishna Konar has proposed for the redistribution of land in the countryside. The winking at the forcible occupation of vested land by the landless peasants is also a most sensible thing, inasmuch as it helps to cut athwart the inequities inherent in a socially biased legal sys-

tem. This is a dilemma which I would urge my Naxalbari friends to ponder over. While they are all worked up in ramming through the notion that cadres should spread eagle into the rural areas and organise the peasantry there, the CP(M), by making use of the power vested in the State Government howsoever limited, will in fact entrench itself much more solidly in the countryside than it is likely to be possible for the Communist Revolutionaries. It is of course a different matter what use the CP(M) makes of its enormously increased influence in the countryside tomorrow or the day after. Certainly the Naxalbari adherents will have a point if the party does not allow the peasant movement to go beyond the stage of 'economism'. But one has to wait and see; anticipatory condemnation is neither here nor there.

\* \* \*

No, if I occasionally feel derisive about the United Front Government, it is because till now, in a majority of cases, the emphasis in its decisions has been more on dramatics than on coherence. Playing to the gallery as well as playing by the ear are both debilitating games; the lustre falls off soon, and one day the perpetrators of the games discover that the stark, basic issues have remained where they were, while the stock of credibility with the public has eroded dangerously. Last week's Bengal Bandh was a spectacular success, but it has solved nothing. Incidents like in Durgapur and Cossipore are likely to crop up every now and then, and statements from the conveners of either the United Front or the Rashtriya Sangram Samiti will not lead to any change in the course of events. The chain of happenings is not a coincidence, but is following a pattern deliberately worked out in some Bhawan in New Delhi. Mrs Gandhi in private may have given some assurances of good conduct to Mr Jyoti Basu and Mr Ajoy Mukherjee, but the United Front should realise that the Prime Minister's writ scarcely runs over the entire Union Government. Even if she is taken at her face value there are others who are itching for a showdown with West

Bengal. Maintenance of law and order in the Union Government's undertakings located in the State is being fostered as the focal point of provocation. Following a series of Durgapur-Cossipore type incidents, it is entirely possible that the Centre might threaten either or both of these two manoeuvres: (a) a massive posting of Industrial Security Force, Defence Security Force and Central Reserve Police in these undertakings, thus ushering in a reign of terror to demoralise the workers; (b) a threat to shut down the plants and lay off workers—and even dismantle the equipment to send it to another State. Perhaps the functionaries in New Delhi think that a threat of this kind, which, if carried out, would render hundreds of thousands of workers unemployed, will break the back of both the United Front and the trade union movement in West Bengal. It does not seem that the Front has done even any preliminary thinking about how to face such contingencies. The episode over the proposal to take over Saxby and Farmer reveals as much the state of financial unpreparedness as that of mental unpreparedness too. The British proprietors are prepared to sell the firm to any taker at a token payment of Re 1.00. Mr Jyoti Basu wants the Union Government to do the taking over; when asked why the Government of West Bengal cannot undertake the purchase, the good Mr Ajoy Mukherjee shrugs, and says they have already enough to do with running the State Transport Corporation and the Calcutta Tramways. This is an amazing example of reactionary, petty bourgeois attitude. If only the State Government shows some zeal, Saxby and Farmer can be taken over. There will be no dearth of managers from the middle cadres who could keep the works going; the trade union itself could be actively brought into the picture which would ensure efficiency at the shop level, working funds could be raised by selling a part of the equity to the public. If the overriding concern is the flow of railway orders, the State Government ought to be in a position to do something about it through political nego-

tiations. What is then holding the State Government back? Similarly, if too much hocus pocus keeps going on in the Central undertakings in this State, the State Government can throw in a challenge to New Delhi. Suppose, for instance, Mr Jyoti Basu offers to manage the Durgapur Steel Plant on behalf of the Government of West Bengal? The Centre could be guaranteed a flow of production, which it would lift and sale, but the entire working of the plant could vest with the State Government. There will be no lack of socially conscious managers who would be glad to run the plant for the State Government, and the workers, with their wages and employment assured, are likely to offer the most enthusiastic cooperation. In return for guaranteed output, the State Government could then demand of the Centre a reciprocal guarantee regarding the supply of liquid funds, and a share from out of the additional profits—or a payment for reducing the present rate of losses.

\* \* \*

Five years is too long a time to be whiled away in slogan-mongering alone. A set of positive policies has to be worked out, otherwise the Front will be caught napping times without number. Let me give another example of the consequence of taking snap decisions without thinking about them in the first place. The State Cabinet, without hardly any discussion, took a decision that the Government of India would be asked to keep the procurement price for wheat at Rs 76 per quintal as last year, as against the Agricultural Prices Commission's suggestion to lower it to Rs 70. Since imported wheat, which is much cheaper, will be distributed to a much lesser extent this year, to maintain the wheat procurement price at Rs 76 would mean that the Central issue price will have to be nearly Rs 8.50 more than what it currently is. Now, West Bengal produces barely 250,000 tonnes of wheat, of which not more than 60,000 tonnes are likely to be procured. If the procurement price was brought down by Rs 6 per quin-

tal as suggested by the Commission, the aggregate loss to West Bengal's farmers would amount to Rs 36 lakhs. But since we are likely to get from the Central stocks this year at least 12 lakh tonnes of wheat, keeping the procurement price at last year's level would be equivalent to an impost on the consumers to the tune of Rs 10.20 crores. At the Chief Ministers' Conference held earlier this month, West Bengal's Food Minister lined up with the Punjab Chief Minister demanding the maintenance of the status quo in wheat procurement price, the effect of which would be the gifting away of nearly Rs 10 crores to the lush Punjab kulak by the impoverished consumers here.

It is the absence of even rudimentary homework which I find staggering. There can be absolutely no explanation why a Government should think that a loss of Rs 36 lakhs to its farmers is of greater relevance than a loss of Rs 10.20 crores to its consumers: neither arithmetic nor rationality can provide an answer. If the UF Government is desperately in favour of protecting the interests of the surplus farmers, it could have simply offered them a straight subsidy of Rs 36 lakhs; it need not have squeezed its consumers to the extent of Rs 10-odd crores. Even fools and mad men, I am told, realise where their interests lie; going by this instance, it seems the United Front does not.

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## On The Bandh

COMMENTATOR

OUTside papers which have been in a fume ever since the UF victory in the mid-term poll have burst out over the Bangla Bandh. The solitary incident at Kanchrapara has been made much of, and an impression has been sought to be created that the strike was not peaceful. The Kanchrapara incident has been put completely out of perspective, and from the reports no one will be able to realise that the incident was the symptom of a malady from which the entire country is suffering. Clashes of the same nature on other occasions are generally blacked out; if they are published at all every care is taken to avoid a prominent display. Kanchrapara had its brief hour of front-page glory because the incident occurred on a day of general strike under the UF regime. Even the so-called incident at Maniktala was considered worth publishing by some papers though they generally ignore all incidents not involving firing. All papers conceded that the Bandh was total, but many ignored in the headlines that it was peaceful too. The editorial storms were gathering for days before the Bandh; special dispatches were bringing grist to the anti-UF mill. One paper quoted Mr Jyoti Basu as saying that the Centre's intention to institute a judicial inquiry into the Cossipore firing was "an undeclared war" on the UF, though other papers seem to have missed that part of Mr Basu's statement. With varying degrees of vehemence all papers have stressed that the UF Government should have kept quiet after the promise of a judicial inquiry by the Centre. The Bandh merely showed that the UF Government wanted to utilise the Cossipore incident as another point of friction with the Centre.

The bitterest criticism has come from *The Indian Express*, which, in

blind anger, has hit out at the Central Government for not disciplining the UF. Taking exception at some remarks reported to have been made by the Prime Minister to Mrs Renu Chakravarty the paper wonders at the "continued mollycoddling of parties and men whose notions of patriotism and loyalty to their country are dubious. "They should be branded for what they are and treated as such". A country's Central Government must either govern or get out. Mrs Gandhi should remember that as Prime Minister this applies equally to her. The paper says that the calling of a day's Statewide bandh under official auspices after the Union Government's decision to appoint a judicial inquiry provides significant clue to the mind and methods of the United Front Government. For Mr Jyoti Basu to say that the judicial probe is an act of "undeclared war" on the West Bengal Government is preposterous since the Government of India is well within its rights to order this inquiry and indeed deserves to be applauded rather than censured for its quick reaction. New Delhi has nothing to conceal and labours under no guilty apprehensions. It would welcome a verdict openly arrived at in an open way. A Minister of the United Front Government recently proclaimed that the maintenance of law and order in West Bengal was a matter for the people and not for the police. Presumably acting on that pattern Mr Jyoti Basu and his "political lamb", Mr Ajoy Mukherjee, ordered the people into the streets on April 10, thereby virtually holding the State to ransom by immobilising its industries, communications, posts and telegraphs, schools and colleges for a day. Whether West Bengal's languishing economy can afford this luxury the people will eventually be left to sort out while the politicians continue to play. But for how long can this sort of political buffoonery and infantilism, fraught as they are with the gravest consequences not only to West Bengal but to India as a whole, be allowed to go on? Judging by its hitherto "tender attitude" to the communists and fellow-travellers who

form the United Front Government, New Delhi seems to be suffering from cold in its feet and head. It appears either incapable of or indifferent to decisive action. Mrs Gandhi does not lessen her own difficulties or her colleagues' embarrassment by continuing to be equivocal on vital issues where the Cabinet, at least publicly, acts as one.

Describing the bandh as "a disgraceful *tamasha*", *The Hindustan Times* says the officially sponsored West Bengal bandh is not a triumph. It amounts to official robbery of many crores of rupees in terms of workers' wages and production and movement losses. Someone will have to pay the bill and the heaviest incidence in this settlement will fall on the people of West Bengal in whose name this *tamasha* has been staged. Referring to the "issue at stake" the paper says that in any circumstances, and more especially in view of the disputed facts, it was legitimate and proper for the Government of India promptly to order a judicial inquiry into an admittedly tragic incident in a Central ordnance factory. But this too has been strongly criticised by the State Government on the ground that it was not consulted. The State has indicated that it might set up a separate inquiry commission on its own. This again seems in furtherance of a policy of confrontation. The West Bengal Government cannot plausibly argue that the incident at Cossipore is part of a political conspiracy by a malevolent Centre to bring it into public disfavour and eventually pull it down. Even if it is assumed that the State Government's version of the facts is correct and the firing was completely unprovoked, there is no justification for impeding a quick judicial investigation and suitable punishment for those found guilty. There is certainly no cause for trying to whip up mass hysteria and to stage a bandh. The West Bengal Government can hardly forget that its own police has had to resort to firing in recent weeks. Nor should it be allowed to forget its own insistent demand for more funds to finance the State's development pro-

grammes. The bandh would suggest that the UF is less interested in development or the welfare of the working people than in playing petty politics at the cost of its constituents.

#### "Cynical Game"

To *The Times of India* the bandh appears to be a "cynical game". It says that the complete success of the 24-hours general strike called by the UF Government to protest against the firing on a group of defiant workers in the Cossipore factory may turn out to be only a Pyrrhic victory. Whether the factory authorities used force in excess of what was justified in the circumstances has still to be established. If any other issues were raised by the incident they related essentially to the problems of maintaining industrial peace. But the State Government deliberately ignored this aspect of the affair and chose instead to organise a massive agitation against the Centre simply because the firing had occurred in a Central Government undertaking which happens to be located in West Bengal. It is not the first time that the non-Congress coalition Governments in Kerala and West Bengal have taken recourse to this costly mode of protest. But the anti-Centre bandhs organised by them in 1967 had a saving grace in so far as they were meant to achieve a popular demand for a bigger food quota from the Centre. What exactly the UF in West Bengal hoped to gain on this occasion by trying to make the management of the Cossipore factory an object of public contempt is not at all clear. The State's Deputy Chief Minister, Mr Jyoti Basu, has said that he would soon set up a machinery to ensure close co-operation between the State Government and private entrepreneurs in all matters, including the management of labour relations. Does this imply that the authorities in charge of the Central Government undertakings will not be so favoured? Apart from discouraging the Centre from making any further investments in West Bengal any such discrimination is bound to make nonsense of the UF's socialist pretensions. The paper, however,

concedes that Mr Basu is on firmer ground when he complains that the Centre had failed to consult the State Government before instituting a judicial inquiry into the Cossipore incident. Public order is clearly the responsibility of the State Governments under the provisions of the Constitution, and whether the Centre has the right in the circumstances to entrust the probe to a sitting or a retired judge of the High Court is certainly debatable. But a massive hartal which brought normal life in the entire State to a halt was the worst possible way of making the point which Mr Basu had in mind.

*Patriot* regards the prompt announcement of a high-power judicial inquiry by the Centre as a welcome sign of increasing awareness at the Centre of the need to minimise Centre-State friction. While the Cossipore incident by itself is serious enough to warrant a thorough inquiry, it is even more important as a symptom of Centre-State strains in the new situation in the country. The earlier Durgapur affair involving the CRP was another such symptom. But obviously the Centre is yet to get over the habit of doing even proper things in a manner capable of rousing resentment and suspicion. The West Bengal Government has complained that it was not consulted about the judicial inquiry. It is clear that the State Government is as much interested in a full probe as the Union Government is. It would have been conducive to better understanding if the Centre had taken the precaution of consulting the State Government and the inquiry had been made a joint one. Even now it is not too late to rectify the mistake. The Union Defence Minister should not find it difficult to secure the association of the State authorities with the proposed investigation. As Mr Jyoti Basu has pointed out, it will not be difficult for the State to embarrass the Centre by ordering a separate judicial inquiry on its own. There is no need for such a side conflict to develop if the Union Government proceeds with grace and objectivity.

## Fun With The Guns

PRABODH KUMAR MAITRA

IT was not accidental that the scriptwriters of Arthur Penn's *Bonnie and Clyde*, David Newman and Robert Benton, wanted either Truffaut or Godard, preferably the former, to do the film. For there are unmistakable signs of the scriptwriters' proclivity for things as they are done in France. But there is unlikely to be any remorse that the film has been directed by neither: Hollywood now pays tribute to France as the French new wave film-makers have never ceased to in respect of the American contribution to cinema. The mutual adulation might be equally rewarding in the years to come.

In the early thirties two real-life characters, Bonnie and Clyde, robbed banks and wielded their guns for fun and money much too frequently in Texas till they were ambushed by the police. Penn's film romanticises the episodes and evokes the past in nostalgic remembrance. The extraordinary colour photography and the sprightly style lend an air of playfulness to the killing and plundering involved in the story. In the imaginative reconstruction of banditry of the depression years the tone is amoral. The title sets the pace. The characters are introduced in a quick succession of snapshots in black and white, a reminder of the principal characters' practice of taking such snaps, which is made spontaneous use of in the film itself. The chance acquaintance of Clyde, an ex-convict, with Bonnie, his gal, triggers off a series of happenings that rock the countryside. Other acquaintances are picked up as easily as cars get stolen by them for their marauding journey. The relationship between Clyde and Bonnie grows and consummation takes place after initial failure, before their end comes.

The characters are life-size and the ordinary men are given an extraordinary dimension by cinematic ingenuity. It is "our way to make money", proclaim the characters. To

the onlookers or those affected it may seem an odd way but there they are. Violence is their self-assertion but not till the film is halfway through do we get an inkling of the course it may take. The first splash of blood when the bank clerk gets shot seems to dye the screen. From then on the relentless course is pursued. The point of no return is reached in utter disregard of the consequences. The acceptance of the playful mood is occasionally disturbed by the yelling diffidence of the brother's wife. But the pace is seldom broken. The lingering, painful death of the brother prepares the audience for the last scene when the visual shock of thudding death comes home with inexorable inevitability.

The scriptwriters and the director deserve accolade for a film that has come from Hollywood after many years of relative barrenness.

#### *Tin Bhubaner Parey*

Nearer home the scene continues to be dismal, a reminder of the utter inadequacy of the experimenting spirit in film-making. But though innovation continues to remain an unknown quantity, new film-makers should be welcomed. *Tin Bhubaner Parey*, one of the recent releases, has an interesting but not exactly original plot. In a way it is *Swamsiddha*, a Bengali film made over two decades back, brought up to date. The educated girl courts her pal to fulfil her "dream" of transforming him into an educated bhadralog. The dream is described as an "experiment" by her friend. In the end the guinea pig of the experiment attains respectability by becoming a bespectacled professor. The doctorate he obtains may very well be a sop to the stooping male vanity which has been subjected to intermittent affront. The girl with her mere M.A. remains her mawkish self.

The film shows pace and humour initially but slides into sentimentality after the marriage of the hero and the heroine. The swinging boys give a hilarious start. The claustrophobic milieu of their existence is fairly established. The comic veneer is well maintained for some time, but the flaw in the script becomes apparent

when solemnity takes over. A clever mixture of songs and the dreamy presence of a dancing girl show the director's unerring eye for box office. Snatches of conversation relate to victims of the social order and the hero's seemingly redundant brother takes his own life for no apparent reason. But the attitude underlying the presentation of the theme remains foggy. Graduation from delinquency to a decent existence, in which the girl becomes instrumental, is made more sombre than the situation can hold. Soumitra Chatterjee and Tanuja turn in a confident performance which holds the pieces together. Most other performers also acquit themselves well.

#### Letters

### "Opportunistic"

The politics of some of your correspondents become curioser day by day. Charan Gupta, who once showed humanistic kindness towards the 'brilliant' and lovable Naxalites, has begun to canvass for the UF. Your own leading articles attempt a liberal 'impartiality' which is at best confusing and certainly opportunistic.

Let us take your issue of March 22 —your comments on the gherao of the Calcutta University Vice-Chancellor. Your advice to the Naxalites shows an opportunism which is as blatant as it is unrealistic. It was precisely their sincerity (which made Charan Gupta so sentimental so recently) which impelled the Naxalites to do what they did. Because they dared to fight, they can dare to win.

Your comment on the weapon of gherao also revealed a sort of lily-white, non-violent liberalism one does not normally expect from *Frontier*. Is gherao to be forsaken because it causes the opponents physical inconvenience while the struggling people do not suffer the same? Apparently you consider satyagraha a better weapon. This goes ill with your occasionally revolutionary posture. You are out-Gandhiing Gandhi!

Finally, one would hope that "im-

partiality" should at least involve stating the whole truth. You attack the CPI, very correctly. But you do not mention the CPI (M)'s guilt, though both are partners in the same crime. For example, in "CPI and the Kulaks" you show that by wanting to raise the limit for the Rural Wealth Tax from Rs. 1 lakh to Rs 3 lakhs the CPI was openly advocating the cause of landlords and rich peasants. But you fail to mention that the CPI (M)'s reaction has not been different. Here is *People's Democracy* (9.3.69) on the Agricultural Wealth Tax: "It is true that Morarji by proposing tax on agricultural land without distinguishing between those who hold concentrated holdings and the small peasant, has not only confused the issue, but has made a deliberate attempt to pass on the main burden of the tax to the poorer strata" (emphasis added). India must be a very rich country where "small" peasants and "poorer strata" own agricultural land worth more than Rs. 1 lakh and have to pay Wealth Tax! There is so much deceit. There are so many questions.

We expect *Frontier* to probe these questions. Had we lacked faith in your journalistic courage we would not have written to you at all. We would however sympathise with your discretion. Cheers for fearless journalism can scarcely compensate for what the DYF can do to the offices of *Frontier*.

N. SARDAR  
Calcutta

### Amend Or Perish

You must either amend or perish. Now the CPI(M) weekly (*Deshitaishi*) has come out with a full-page article to unmask your 'counter-revolutionary' face. You may ignore this warning only at your peril. That you once incurred the wrath of the anti-UF circles for upholding the causes of the last UF regime is now of insignificant importance.

Perhaps no tears need be shed for you. You did go too far. Despite clear disapproval by India's 'national' Communists, you have so long cared little to arrest the pro-Peking bias in

some of your writings, which might very well pose a mortal danger to the cause of the Indian Revolution. That you could find in the slogans for anti-Centre struggles nothing else than 'shadow confrontation' only confirms the impression that you are in league with reactionaries of all shades. Then again, you have certainly no right to turn your weekly into a forum for free discussion on political affairs which should now be left entirely to the people's representatives in the Writers' Building and Assembly House. A still longer charge-sheet can be drawn against you to establish firmly that you have for sometime past been playing the role of an 'intellectual saboteur'. It is time you become silent or sing the tune of the UF and the CPI(M). If there is at all any failing in the UF activities, none else other than its constituents should have the right to bother. Any discordant voice will be throttled with all ruthlessness to defend the fruits of the February (9th) Revolution.

ACHINTYA MUKHERJEE  
Calcutta

### March 13-14

I cannot help crossing swords with Mr A. K. Sarcar when he praises the UF to the skies and brands the Naxalites as goondas and reactionaries (*Frontier*, April 5). As a student of Presidency College I saw in vivid detail the recent UF acrobatics.

To start with, the 'student' volunteers of Mr Sarcar's fertile imagination were no students at all. They wore lungis, red scarves, carried lathis and daggers, and were stinking of alcohol. They were honest enough when they entered the Hindu Hostel shouting, "Amra Dorjiparar Cheley. Amra Paisa Chai. Amra Mal Khabo" (We are from Dorjipara. We want money to drink). With these words they looted about Rs. 2,500, 20-25 watches, burnt books and harassed the residents of the Hostel. In order to drive them away from Hindu Hostel and its environs the Naxalites had to be vigilant. A heavy clash took place and in the process Krishna Roy (an employee of the CESC and resident of

Beliaghata) died. Why should the UF sacrifice people to free a "former" (?) CIA agent from gherao, and loot Eden Hindu Hostel?

As a sequel to all this, the UF government issued police warrants on a number of Naxalite students, including a few residents of Hindu Hostel—all accused of "cold-blooded murder" of Krishna Roy, arson and looting of Presidency College, Coffee House and Hindu Hostel (looting their own rooms and stealing their own cash !)

SUMANTRA KUMAR GUHA  
Calcutta

### The Other Path

From Dankuni to Peking via Naxalbari is a long way, and Mr Probodh Chandra Dutta's attempt (*Frontier*, March 8) to traverse this path is diletantish and clumsy. Had he discussed the present political situation in West Bengal on a purely theoretical plane the readers of *Frontier* would perhaps have had a glimpse of a mind sincerely trying to think. But his digs at Messrs Jyoti Basu and Promod Das Gupta, particularly at the latter, smack of bad taste. The Naxalites of today were Mr Das Gupta's admirers during the Fourth General Elections and for a time even after that. (Did not one of the firebrands of the Naxalbari movement contest an Assembly seat in 1967?) The present leaders of the CPI(M) were suddenly branded as neo-revisionists after the Naxalbari incident. Therefore, contesting an Assembly seat or becoming ministers in the company of the revisionists was quite Marxian until that movement.

What is this Naxalbari affair? It is claimed that it is the starting point of the Indian revolution. But it is difficult to agree. The local administration conspired with Congressmen and the kulaks and opened fire on a procession of unarmed peasants. In those uncertain days of the United Front the police could afford to do so in complete disregard of Writers' Buildings. The capitalist press seized the opportunity and magnified the incident a thousand times. The CIA-

owned press too did not lag behind. It circulated similar stories throughout the world and was able to create an impression of a mini-revolution in Naxalbari.

From then onward some people have been systematically shouting for revolution. They are tarring the city walls here and there with slogans which are actually meant for the peasantry. Five or six journals have suddenly sprouted to educate the masses about revolution. Mr Dutta must have observed that the main task of these papers is not to hold high the banner of proletarian revolution but to vilify the CPI(M) in all possible ways.

In this context I should like to draw Mr Dutta's attention to a meaningful phenomenon. During the last thirty years the bourgeois press was never found to be much interested in the leftist movement of this country as it is today. Everyday we find the so-called "nationalist" and "impartial" newspapers giving front-page prominence to the activities of the Naxalites in minutest detail. What has happened all of a sudden that these papers have grown so fond of the communists? Will Mr Dutta please enlighten me on this point?

Mr Dutta would rather remain alone like Liebknecht to serve the cause of true revolution than collaborate with some "thoroughly unscrupulous politicians". But so far as we know, Liebknecht was rebuked by Marx for having lapsed into Austrophilism and a defence of particularism. Again, Mr Dutta prescribes schooling for "those undoubtedly honest broad strata of the masses who voted". This is something highly sensible. But the way the Naxalites talk and move gives the impression that this period of schooling is long over and the time was never more opportune for a revolution than it is today.

When in the last paragraph of his letter Mr Dutta says that before the conditions mature for the revolutionaries "the intermediate parties should come to power and expose themselves", I find much sense in it. Let the revisionists and the neo-revisionists fully expose themselves as collabora-

tors of the bourgeoisie. And, as we have seen, it is during the UF regime only that the Naxalites suddenly feel the urgency to raise a cacophony of "revolutionary" slogans. For them too the UF regime is a historical necessity.

ABHEE DAS GUPTA  
Jadavpur.

### Rabindra Sarobar

The shooting down of a young man on April 6 during the disturbances in the Rabindra Sarobar Stadium in South Calcutta must have been a "tragic necessity" to the police. I want also to refer to the women who were either robbed or molested or both during the melee and the men who were either wounded or drowned while running helter-skelter away from the Garden. It is becoming difficult to judge whether target-shooting by the Police is going to be a cultural success or not.

The crowd had to face a whiff of grape-shot because it was disorderly but the organizers of this 'cultural circus' faced merely some windy criticism for their mismanagement and group rivalries.

What is also disturbing is the report that the UF Government lent to the organisers of this private show the benches of the CAB. And why was the Stadium allowed to be used for such a function?

R. N. DEBBARMA  
Calcutta

### Cultural Unity

You in Calcutta have the Mukta Mela and all that, but I am charmed with another packet of a compromise brand of New Wave here at Murshidabad. In the Bongiyo Sahitya Sammelan in Kandi, we have such personalities rubbing shoulders together such as Subhas Mukhopadhyaya, Bengal's Mayakovski, Haripado Bharati, a Hindu communal fanatic, Rezaul Karim, who played Mr Atulya Ghosh's drummer boy during the impotent rebellion in ousting Mr Ajoy Mukherjee, Sri Jagodish Singh, who defeated the UF Candidate in the last mini-

election. Should we go the Beatles way and sing—"We Wanna Hold Your Hands, Yah, Yah".

A. GHATAK  
Berhampur, W. Bengal

### A Point Of View

Should someone be glorified for going to Delhi by a cart or on foot when one can easily use a plane or a train? The motive behind all the shouting over a row-boat journey to the Andamans perhaps lies elsewhere. When the fascist-anarchist culture fails to attract the youth and detract their attention from class struggle, the rulers need a different medium to blindfold them. Hence the noise over the Andamans expedition. I cannot remember any other occasion in the recent past which got so much publicity in bourgeois communications media. Even *Ganasakti* and *Kalantar*, supposed to belong to Marxist parties, joined in the jubilation. Whatever new efforts they make to confuse and befool the people, they will fail.

TARUN ROY  
Barrackpore

### Sikkim

Amidst all the excitement and tension, and final relief, of the mid-term poll in West Bengal, one cameo, a real gem stands out which, at least, provided an enchanting occasion for a hearty laugh, albeit a horse laugh. This was the sending of a congratulatory telegram to the Chief Minister of the victorious UF by the Chogyal of Sikkim.

His subsequent remark to newsmen that "after all, it is an elected Government there" is a bon mot from which we wonder if we are to infer that the Chogyal has suddenly developed an admiration for elected governments for every State except, of course, Sikkim. Or is it that he is now trying to play footsie with Calcutta—a game in which he is adept from long years of experience with Delhi.

If it were not for the fact of the stark tragedy that is being enacted in Sikkim daily, it would be merely

amusing; as it is, it is an apt example of double-talk.

The Sikkimese people are weary of feudalism and all its trappings, and they begin to feel that they are the victims of a lot of double-talk that emanates not only from Gangtok.

To students of the Sikkimese scene it is a source of amazement that the Letters of Exchange that took place following the signing of the Indo-Sikkim Treaty of 1950 were not implemented after the fiasco of the last elections, for it is clearly stated therein that "if a political situation arises in Sikkim which is contrary to the aspirations and welfare of the Sikkimese people, the GOI can intervene." Yet no such relief was given to the Sikkimese masses.

Is there any sense in holding elections in Sikkim when the Chogyal can reverse the mandate of the people at his sweet will? We have already had one shocking example, and from information gathered in Gangtok, the same procedure will be repeated after the next elections.

Is it possible that tiny feudal Sikkim, wedged between Asia's biggest bastion of communism and West Bengal whose largest single Party, the CPI (M), has just had a resounding victory, can continue to force her 150,000 people to trudge the road of obsolete feudalism, to tolerate political chicanery from the ruling clique? Is it not appalling that in this year of grace 1969 the Sikkimese people have no Fundamental Rights, no Constitution?

One can only hope (if all hope has not already been extinguished in the breasts of the plodding, miserable Sikkimese ryot) that the Latin tag "quem Deus vult perdere prior dementat" (whom the Gods wish to destroy they first turn mad) will, once again, prove the course of history and ensure the destruction of an outmoded absolutism which rules by proclamations, indulges in favouritism, and experiments cynically with the distortion of the mandate of the Sikkimese masses.

The writing is on the wall. Soon, very soon, it will be too late.

A CORRESPONDENT  
Gangtok



BETTER PRICE TO THE FARMER  
BETTER FOOD TO THE CONSUMER

	1965-66	1966-67	1967-68
<b>PROGRESS IN PURCHASES</b>			
Quantity (Tonnes)	26.42	39.01	61.63
Value (Rs. crores)	158.94	241.87	437.14
<b>PROGRESS IN SALES</b>			
Quantity (Tonnes)	17.75	35.86	49.45
Value (Rs. crores)	130.67	251.19	384.61
<b>GROWTH OF STORAGE CAPACITY</b>			
(lakh tonnes)	6.18	16.54	19.76
<b>FOODGRAINS MOVED INTER-STATE</b>			
(lakh tonnes)	6.59	7.42	15.04

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