

frontier

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WHO IS AFRAID OF A POLL ?

SOMETHING has got to give. Mrs Indira Gandhi has to arrange some further defections from the Syndicate stragglers, or she will have to lean consistently on the communist prop, or throw in the sponge and decide to dissolve the Lok Sabha and face the hazards of fresh elections. Despite her comfortable victory in Parliament on Monday, there are too many tight ropes to walk simultaneously. The Syndicate conglomeration is of course an uneasy alliance of heterogeneities, but their hatred for the Prime Minister will ensure that they stay together at least till Budget time. The cohesion on the right—the Syndicate, the Swatantra group, the Jana Sangh, roughly half of the SSP, and perhaps three-quarters of the PSP—will therefore be in a position to mount the maximum pressure on the Government. Rabat can be ignored, the Preventive Detention (Amendment) Bill could for the present be conveniently put under the carpet, but the communist MPs of both variants will be caught in a jam in case there is going to be a demand for division on the issue of, say, Shri Jagjivan Ram's belated tax returns. The CPI's capacity to concoct instant dialectical logic might allow it to swallow even this particular gnat, but what about the CPI(M)? Deliberate absenteeism could provide the road to revolutionary escape on one or two occasions, but Mrs Gandhi would be hard put to rely on this outside stratagem for survival till 1972—or till such time as she is not able to convince herself that the pocketful tricks deployed by her add up to a psephological miracle. An involuntary dissolution of the Lok Sabha thus looks very much on the cards as of this midweek.

This is not to deny that the bandwagon of assorted pseudo-radicals could still snare away more persons from the Syndicate's bower, permitting the Prime Minister to breathe somewhat more easily. Performance in the week-end show of the requisitioned AICC will be decisive: the presence of even three-fifths of the genuine membership of the body, if that could be contrived and proved to the satisfaction of the gawking yet suspicious members of the Press, may swing another score of MPs to the Safdarjang camp, thereby reducing both the dilemma of the communists (sic) and the embarrassment of Mrs Gandhi. That would be very nearly Act III, Sc. 2 in the jargon of Tudor drama.

Only morons—and Comrade Dange—will equate such accretion of