

# frontier

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## CLUMSY BRINKMANSHIP

THE clumsy brinkmen of the United Front have to thank themselves for the collapse of their dear Front and the dearer 13-month old Ministry run by it. After the petty intrigues of the past few months, carried on with the least regard for those whom the UF parties claim to represent, there is no doubt that none of them wanted to quit the Front, the Bangla Congress not excepted. Neither the Gandhian unattachedness of Mr Ajoy Mukherjee nor the crusading zeal of Mr Sushil Dhara prevented the party from waiting unto the last, though it knew quite well that it had tied itself in a knot from which it might not be able to extricate itself. Mr Mukherjee has obliged his "friends", parties like the CPI, Forward Bloc and SUC, who used him as their cover for sniping at the CPM. He is eminently suited for this role, for unlike his friends he has no pretension to Marxism and can wrap his anti-communism in the ideological cloak of non-violence and class harmony.

The friends of the Bangla Congress had not bargained for the kind of development that threatens to overwhelm them at the time of writing. It is the CPI which fired the first shot in the battle which has led to the undoing of the UF—the controversy over the alleged attack on some of its men in Baranagar by some CPM supporters was quickly converted into a campaign of no-confidence in Mr Jyoti Basu. The Bangla Congress took the cue several weeks later; other like-minded parties were tardier. The CPI offensive had synchronised with the first signs of crack in the Indian National Congress; the party wanted to use the UF as an instrument of its policy to curry favour with Mrs Gandhi. The Bangla Congress could have no objection to falling in line for it has no real difference with the Prime Minister's Congress; some others acquiesced, not so much for love of the Ruling Congress as for their hatred of the CPM. Banking on the CPM's craving for office they reasoned that the Marxist Communists would accept any terms they might choose to lay down so that the party might not be thrown out of the Front. They could not imagine that the Marxists might try to take advantage of the same weakness in them and refuse to be "contained" beyond a stage.

They could not foresee either that Mr Mukherjee and Mr Dhara might not always remain obedient handy men and might demand a price for their labours once the point of no return had been reached. They

funked when the Bangla Congress wanted its underground allies to come in the open and form a government excluding the CPM. On its part, the Bangla Congress miscalculated when it thought that its friends would relent if confronted with a fait accompli. The friends continued to be stubborn perhaps because of the fear that the people of West Bengal were not shedding their anti-Congressism as fast as these parties would have liked them to. The Prime Minister's reported reluctance to intervene is dictated purely by self-interest. She has her hands full, and West Bengal may well prove one too many. The instinct of self-preservation has prevailed, maybe for the time being, though she might have egged on the Bangla Congress and its accomplices earlier. She knows that her so-called admirers among the UF constituents want the

Centre to do the dirty work that may be necessary to suppress the upheaval threatened by the CPM in the event of Mr Mukherjee's resignation; they want to wait in the wings in the mean time, with the Assembly in a state of suspension. The Prime Minister may ultimately agree, but she has to ensure that her party gets a fair price for her endeavours. There is little possibility of the present combination of circumstances putting the Marxists on top, though they are shouting themselves hoarse that given a chance they would form a Ministry. What exactly the future holds in store is not yet clear. The only thing that can be said with certitude is that a respite from turmoil is not in sight. And, as the hartal clashes and deaths show, the turmoil will further divide the people murderously.

of his speech had however a point. What he said must have been authenticated by his party and is therefore worth taking note of.

The CPM believes that the revolutionary potential of the UF is not yet exhausted and therefore it is prepared to go along with all the UF constituents if they are willing. Even if the Bangla Congress was betraying the cause of the UF, Mr Konar believes that 10/33th parts of the Bangla Congress were still revolutionary because 10 of its 33 Assembly members would probably defy the Ajoy-Sushil leadership if the party quits the UF. The UF cannot be deemed broken just because one constituent is preparing to stray off and the CPM cannot be accused of trying to form a mini-front by trying to give leadership to the rest, because the CPM has not deserted the UF. The CPM of course is not sure that it enjoys the confidence of all the rest but even then it would force the Governor to ask it to form the ministry; by taking this course the CPM would force the other parties to commit their positions. This is now essential, for the people must know who's who in the UF.

## The Maidan Rally

*A correspondent writes:*

The CPM's Maidan rally on March 15 had a significance in more than one sense. Whether it was the biggest rally ever, bigger than the Khrushchev-Bulgarian rally, hereunto the biggest, is for the Maidan-watchers to say. Mr Harekrishna Konar raised the point during his speech and dropped it inconclusively. Many believed that it was, but that by itself was not vitally important. The significance primarily lay in the fact that the anti-CPM minifronters were believed to be so scared by the burgeoning strength of the CPM that they had to stall their toppling move till the CPM held its rally. The rally, the minifronters believed, would let the tension off.

The CPM, on its turn, has made the point, no doubt about it. It was not an easy-going rally, convened to celebrate any victory or formally take a pledge. The moment was too critical for the CPM to let matters drift. That the people who gathered were tensely aware of the situation was evident from their rapt attention to what was being said—no lounging on the grass, no chewing nuts, no gossi-

ping with the neighbouring squatters, or no sleeping off the rigours of a march under a blighting sun. Not only the hard-core members or sympathisers of the party, the meeting drew among its audience Marwaris with hearing-aids and polished young men with sideburns, who it appeared wanted to have a hang of the moment. A man believed to be a minifronter quipped about the setting sun behind the rostrum but he was silenced, not by the helmet-wearing red guards or lathi-wielding girl volunteers but by a candle-hawker, who was out to sell candles to *foochka* vendors in case the meeting spilled into late evening and who forgot his business and gawked at the hysteric outbursts of Mr Promode Dasgupta.

The limelight was however stolen by Mr Konar. It was hard to believe, but he brought it off. Raising the pitch to the level of Nirmalendu Lahiri in the role of Siraj-ud-daulla in his last-minute frantic bid to rouse the patriotism of the betrayers, and sustaining it for over one hour, he, there's no denying it, held the lakhs of people spell-bound. Leaving aside his pitch and vocabulary, the content

The CPM of course is well aware that the UF regime of 13 months did not achieve much. It is even prepared to admit that much else was expected than the massive success of tea, jute, engineering and cotton textile workers and the pay-rise of Government employees. But then, the CPM is not ashamed of its not too big success. As Mr Konar put it, the CPM never expected to play the part of a mother suckling the masses. All it expected to do was to inspire the workers and peasants to fight back. The CPM had succeeded in this mission. And that's precisely that. The CPM believes that the peasants of West Bengal have been lifted out of the slough of despondency and the credit goes all to the Home Minister who blunted the police well and good. The revisionists had nothing to lose by following the Marxists, the CPM almost said, except their revisionism.

They went all out to wreck the CPM, during 1962 and 1965, but the fact that the CPM has come out the biggest party, inside and outside the Assembly, proves that the revolutionary masses of West Bengal protected and reared the fledgeling CPM into the eagle of today. Mr Konar finished his apocryphal speech by referring to Plassey where the independence of Indians was lost but was bound to be reborn.

The rallying people had probably nothing to doubt about the reactionary role of the minifronters. But as they marched back along the Jawaharlal Nehru Road where signs of its habitual glittering life collapsed under the thud of the marchers and as the vast Maidan was aglow with paper torches, an outsider could not but ask himself: How militant is this mass? Can it stand the real enemy?

ancestors? Despite denials, Mr Sadiq is in serious trouble. That the threat has come not from outside Mrs Gandhi's camp but from a fellow Requisitionist does not make it the less serious.

In fact, it is the absence of any fundamental cohesion among her followers that may yet lead to the lady's undoing. Even in Uttar Pradesh, as was seen last weekend, the battle is not over. Not really because the Congress (O) has acquired new vitality or popular support, but because Mr Charan Singh's revolutionary transformation was essentially opportunistic. When no principle or policy is involved, an alliance between two or more parties is bound to leave some people less than satiated with a sense of well-being. Mr Kamalapati Tripathi is still wondering about his own pay-off, and with so slippery a customer as Mr Charan Singh on her hands it cannot be easy for Mrs Gandhi to take a final decision about Mr Tripathi. No less important, because potentially troublesome, are many lesser fry. This is no less true in Kashmir, nor will it turn out to be less valid in Orissa where an emissary of Mrs Gandhi has found it necessary to conduct secret confabulations even with the redoubtable Mr Harekrushna Mahtab. But all this could be exciting in a way. Politics, à la Madame Gandhi, could be the elixir of life.

## The Ruling Revolution

Everything, we reminded ourselves last week, is fair in politics. So an alliance between the Swatantra Party and our progressive Prime Minister's standard-bearers will not be surprising. Asked whether Mr Krishna Menon should not now join the ruling Congress, Mr Jagjivan Ram said in Ahmedabad last Saturday that anyone was welcome provided he or she accepted the party's policies and programmes. Apparently the Swatantra Party accepts them at least in part. How else can the Congress (R) think of joining the Swatantra in trying to topple the Hitendra Desai Ministry in Gujarat? Joining does not mean merger, but will the support continue even after the projected change of power? Will there, in other words, be a Swatantra-led Government with the support of Mrs Gandhi's socialists? In Orissa, the Congress (R) is at least teaming up with a party that calls itself socialist, albeit of the Praja variety. There is also the CPI to lend the alliance revolutionary respectability. Couldn't someone like Mr Suslov explain how the changing correlation of forces makes it dialectically desirable for Mrs Gandhi to work in the Swatantra interest in Gujarat and try to wreck a Swatantra-led coalition in Orissa?

At a less obscure level, the Congress (R) could argue that the Congress (O) continues to be the main enemy in the principal contradiction and hence a tactical and temporary joining of hands with a lesser enemy

to overthrow the dominant one is perfectly defensible. Those who see hardly any contradiction at all between the different parties involved may, however, be tempted to conclude that the matter is very much simpler. It is a question of purely personal survival and factional consolidation. The faction that rules in Delhi is still not out of the woods in the country as a whole, and without the States fully under control Mrs Gandhi's uncrowned head cannot be free from all unease. And the latest developments have not been all that cheerful. Mr Biju Patnaik in Orissa may be under no particular cloud at the moment, but Mr D. P. Mishra in Madhya Pradesh is now seen to have been far too careless. And how about the lovely valley that reared the leading lady's noble

## Incidents In Cambodia

After weeks of the beating the Americans have received from the Philippines to Laos nothing could be more encouraging to Washington than the recent incidents in Phnom Penh. The Cambodian authorities, maintaining strict neutrality, looked on while organized bands of hoodlums neatly sacked the North Vietnamese and the PRG (Vietcong) embassies there. The show was rounded off by the Cambodian government's 'ultimatum' to the Vietcong to leave its territory within two days. The next

logical step would be to call in the good Americans to deliver the country from "foreign aggressors". If such a course is avoided because it is too fraught with danger, the Americans have meanwhile got a much needed shot in the arm after the Plain of Jars debacle as well as an excellent excuse for the barbarities they have been perpetrating in Cambodian border provinces.

The charge of Vietcong presence within Cambodia which ostensibly sparked off the anti-Vietnamese out-

burst last week is as old as the American intervention in Vietnam. Till March last year this charge was stoutly denied by Prince Sihanouk, who had often taken American correspondents and members of the ICC round the border provinces to prove the baseless nature of the charge. If occasionally some Vietcong units did stray into Cambodia, Prince Sihanouk emphasised, that was due to "the pressure of the American ground and air forces, who literally push into Cambodia the units opposed to them", and they leave immediately. Although in March last year Prince Sihanouk made a somersault and started speaking about Vietcong presence inside Cambodia, even last month Cambodian officials in the border provinces, as reported by an American correspondent, scoffed at the stories put out in Phnom Penh that there are 10,000 Vietnamese troops in Cambodia. "There are," said an official in Rattankiri province, "less than 50 Vietnamese soldiers in this province." And now Cambodia speaks of the presence of 60,000 Vietnamese troops in Cambodia.

He has not cared to explain, nor have his generals, why Hanoi and the NLF, who had so long scrupulously respected the Cambodian frontier (and were one of the first to recognise it), should suddenly choose to be aggressive towards Cambodia. All other considerations apart, for the NLF Sihanouk's moral support in their struggle is anything but an expendable commodity. But not so with Sihanouk, an anti-communist at home and anti-imperialist abroad. With a mounting left-wing opposition to his rule he has started revising his external posture bringing it in line with his domestic policy. His attempt to develop the backward Cambodian economy along capitalist lines, to be more precise, through bureaucratic state capitalism, has led the country into a *cul de sac*. Growing trade imbalance, budget deficit inflation, corruption and unemployment steadily eroded this "island of peace" in South-East Asia, leading finally to the outbreak of guerilla warfare in early 1967. Oppressed

peasants and the tribal Loeu people in the north-west rose in arms. Sihanouk responded to the challenge by denationalising the trade, opening the door wide to American capital and sending in troops to suppress the rebellion. An intensive 'pacification' campaign, notwithstanding guerilla warfare, spread to new areas. Sihanouk would not, however, admit that there is an opposition to his rule within Cambodia. The blame was laid squarely on the Vietnamese and Chinese communists. And it is not just a coincidence that Vietcong presence is alleged in the provinces most affected by guerilla warfare. Nor is it accidental that Sihanouk's denunciation of American imperialism has since been in a low key. American bombing of Cambodian territory which once brought about rupture of diplomatic relations with the U.S. has now become a valuable foreign exchange earner! Americans now pay the Cambodian Government compensation at a fixed rate: \$400 for a Cambodian killed, \$150 for one

seriously injured etc.

But after last week's incident Prince Sihanouk must be repenting the trick to whitewash his internal opposition. The bogey of Vietcong infiltration that he raised has now been successfully turned against him by the ultra right-wing General Lon Nol and acting Premier Sirik Matak. As a circumspect politician Sihanouk preferred to cover his slow retreat from anti-Americanism by verbal pyrotechnics. But taking advantage of his absence from Cambodia pro-American elements have virtually pulled off a coup as much against the Vietnamese as against Sihanouk's gradualism. His dramatic dash to Moscow and Peking to secure withdrawal of Vietnamese troops (in fact to persuade the communists to end the insurgency) is a gimmick that can hardly restrain his right-wing associates bent upon joining the American bandwagon. Caught between a peasant insurgency and the pro-American generals Sihanouk's moment of truth seems to be near.

## Rhodesia

Rhodesia's formal severance of the last tenuous link with the British Government is not in itself any striking news, but the dilemmas of Harold Wilson and President Nixon in this situation merit close scrutiny. From the Unilateral Declaration of Independence to a republic should have been a small step if the romantic feeling of Ian Smith for the British sovereign and his earlier expectation that the Tories would romp home in the U.K. elections did not delay Salisbury's decision to join the white supremacist ranks of South Africa. The promise of today's Rhodesia was seen in the 1961 Constitution in the formulation of which Duncan Sandys played a prominent role. Its apartheid nature led to a sharp polarisation of politics between white and black. Those African nationalists still pinning their faith on the constitutional struggle were alienated from the mainstream of the black

movement which emphasised direct confrontation with the white rulers. The experience of the Africans was that granting of concessions was always preceded by protests, riots and violence.

The Rhodesian Front while exploiting the white man's premonition about racial integration in the country mounted pressure on Whitehall for independence on its own terms. At the same time, through the indiscriminate application of the Unlawful Organizations Act and the Law and Order (Maintenance) Act the local people were subjected to greater repression. The death sentence was made mandatory for a wide range of offences.

The immediate provocation for UDI was the British renunciation of military means to discipline the Smith regime. Sanctions could have proved effective in wresting concessions from Salisbury for the five million blacks,

if not to overthrow the rebel Government, if they were not applied in doses and half-heartedly. Principle, if there was any, became the victim of convenience. Because of the strong economic support extended by South Africa and Portugal and sanctions-busting on the individual level, the Smith regime did not find it necessary to buy sanctions off in exchange for political concessions to the blacks. Rhodesian tobacco has been finding international outlet through some East European ports. Russia has been buying Rhodesian chrome from Japanese sources to tranship it to the USA at a 150 per cent premium. Thereby the Kremlin is committing a double crime, first by buying Rhodesian goods and secondly, by selling chrome to the Americans for their defence uses. But then what is the validity of a mandate of a dead institution like the U.N.? In respect of Rhodesia, Britain has been always a shirker of responsibility. The pointless talks aboard HMS Tiger and HMS Fearless had shown Wilson's backpedalling to the extent of abandoning the NIBMAR pledge (No Independence Before Majority Rule)

## Friendly Cultures

Mr Dinesh Singh has denied that he submitted resignation on, among other issues, his differences with Mrs Gandhi regarding the closure of foreign cultural centres. Therefore, presumably, there should be no speculation over Mr K. B. Keating's meeting with Mrs Gandhi at which, it was reported, Mr Keating expressed displeasure with the Government decision. Mr Singh's about-turn on the decision however does not indicate that all's well that started well. In fact, from the very beginning, the whole affair smacked of dilettantism. Parliament was told on February 26 that the Government had received reports that information and cultural centres of foreign missions set up without permission had in the past indulged in undesirable and political activities. Mr Dinesh Singh

was all support for Mr Singh at the time because he did not know that the decision to close foreign centres might be stretched to cover Indo-Soviet friendship societies too. In the official statement on the issue however Mr Singh did not mention the political activities. All he said was that some missions had established centres without authorisation. In fact, he said, the Government had in 1954 decided to close down those centres but 'somehow or other' the decision was not implemented! The Trivandrum affair had nothing to do with Mr Singh's decision except the fact, he admitted, that it did highlight the issue. Mr Singh's net however was too thin and short to cover all the cultural centres that were subsequently discovered to have been established without authorisation. Before the three-month ultimatum expired, the Government has come out with the proposal that the cultural centres should be converted into libraries so that these could be granted permission. It might be inferred that the Government has no objection to operation of libraries; all it objects to is lectures, seminars and film shows—the other activities of the cultural centres—which are either by themselves 'political activities' or so many covers.

Mr Singh's plight calls for some sympathy. It is not his fault that the 1954 decision has been put in abeyance so long. It is not his fault that there is an international practice of establishing embassies, consular officers and all the rest of them where everything goes. It is not his fault to think that cultural centres were so many brain-washing instruments. All he wanted was to guard his dear countrymen from the pernicious influence of some friendly countries whom he did not consider exactly friendly. What he did not know was that he could not possibly check American influence by closing five centres in a country which has received till date aid of \$4 billion from the U.S. 'Influence' works at supra-cultural levels too and on those levels is built the superstructure.

## Bengal Kaleidoscope

FROM A POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

WHO killed the West Bengal United Front (if it is dead, that is)? Nobody wants credit for the slick Operation Hooghly this time and everybody wants to emerge in the role of a saviour. All, when it was found that the plan for a mini-front ministry has made a clumsy belly-landing and the CPI(M), through a deft manoeuvre, had caught the CPI in a pincer move.

At the time of writing this column on Sunday afternoon (March 15), nothing appears closed, for there are reports here that the Governor intends calling the largest single party, the CPI(M), to attempt ministry formation. The Achutha Menon Ministry did not have to prove its majority before forming the ministry and there is no reason why Mr Jyoti Basu has to prove his. It has to be proved on the floor of the State Assembly and it would be good to see the CPI come out openly against a budget it had endorsed in the Cabinet. There is a funereal air in the CPI camp in New Delhi and Mr Bhupesh Gupta, who travelled back from Calcutta with Mr Krishna Menon, knows that the CPI(M) might be called to form a ministry. What the CPI says about the CPI(M) is exactly what the CPI(M) said about the CPI when the Namboodiripad ministry was voted out in October last. The roles have been reversed.

There are other possibilities besides, in a purely theoretical sense, of averting President's Rule in the State. Mr Ajoy Mukherjee could still form a non-Marxist government with the CPI supporting it from without or participating in it. This is on the assumption that his decision to quit and stay on in the United Front is final. He might still agree to the compro-

mise formula. It is clear now that President's Rule is the last thing the Centre wants in West Bengal because the political consequences might be disastrous for Mrs Gandhi. It is agreed in several quarters that the CPI overshot its target and is anxious to wriggle out of a situation it has created for itself.

It was all in the week's labour, between the Bangla Congress executive's decision to quit the United Front and the execution of the decision. For the first time, the Prime Minister managed to appear not in the role of a toppler or an interventionist, but that of a benign peace-maker with equal solicitude for the CPI and the CPI(M) though the CPI has obligingly played Mrs Gandhi's game everywhere.

The CPI in West Bengal seems to have thought that the CPI(M) would not attempt formation of an alternative ministry and rushed in with a call for mid-term elections. But it got cold feet when faced with the possibility of a movement by the CPI(M). The pattern of voting in the Kerala Assembly proved that the Achutha Menon ministry, minus Mrs Gandhi's support, cannot last and the CPI(M) could prop an SSP-led minority alliance. At this stage, the CPI(M) in West Bengal sprang a surprise calling for a United Front ministry sans Bangla Congress. The CPI has been trying hard to save its face.

### Reasonable Formula

There is another side to the story. The CPI(M) has been putting pressure on Mrs Gandhi to persuade Mr Ajoy Mukherjee not to resign but to come to terms on the basis of a reasonable formula. So when Mr Mukherjee met the Prime Minister,

he found himself confronted with a request to continue. The line of Mrs Gandhi's argument was predictable: if Mr Ajoy Mukherjee packed up, any Government that might take its place would continue to be dominated by the CPI(M). This is because the Prime Minister's political advisers had assessed that a mini-front would not last long and the CPI might find it difficult to join it. However, Mr Ajoy Mukherjee found that his party's mandate to him was unambiguous and it would be impossible for him not to resign before March 16 except on the basis of a revised mandate from his party.

At this stage, the official assessment of the law and order implications of any political change in West Bengal was as follows: the CPI(M)'s ability to stage large-scale disturbances in Calcutta were exaggerated and the army can clean up everything in three days. An earlier assessment had given any CPI(M)-led movement exactly five days.

Other mediators got busy at this stage as the CPI took on a righteous posture: no question of joining a ministry that excluded the Bangla Congress. If the same standards had been applied in Kerala, the CPI should not have formed a ministry in Kerala without the CPI(M) because as in West Bengal, the United Front in Kerala had won power on the basis of a pre-election understanding and an agreed programme for an alternative Government. The CPI(M) was being opportunistic too because in Kerala it had maintained that with the defeat of the E.M.S. Namboodiripad ministry the basis for the United Front did not exist any more. The CPI(M)'s plan for a government minus the Bangla Congress was in the least untenable by its own norms.

The CPI leaders were saying in Parliament lobbies that public opinion had been created in West Bengal against the CPI(M) holding the Home portfolio and it should now

be possible to divest Mr Jyoti Basu of this vital portfolio. At this stage, the Prime Minister sent a frantic invitation to Mr Jyoti Basu. Meantime, the hardliners in the CPI(M) seem to have prevailed over the softliners who were maintaining liaison with the Prime Minister. Mr Jyoti Basu turned the invitation down.

Who mooted the "advisory committee" formula is not clear yet. But there was at least one alternative to it, authorised by Mr V. K. Krishna Menon who seemed to have realised, 1. that he represents a constituency in West Bengal, even if he might not remember its name, and 2. he was elected on the ticket of one of the United Front constituents, namely, the Bangla Congress.

Mr Menon wanted an extra-constitutional solution to the tangle. The Governor, Mr S. S. Dhawan, who happens to be a former judge, should be the arbiter in the case of any dispute between the Chief Minister and the Home Minister relating to Home affairs. The formula was shot down in no time. This minor episode underlines the anxiety of everyone remotely concerned with West Bengal to tag his name on to some formula or the other. But there is particular tragedy to Mr Krishna Menon's role now. When elected from Midnapore, he is believed to have promised the Bangla Congress that he would underwrite the expenses of running the party's office in New Delhi. But the office never came into being and the Bangla Congress circles are bitter with their Hon'ble Member from Midnapore who has not made a single speech in the Lok Sabha since his election, about Bengal affairs or any affair.

On the balance, it would appear that the Centre finds that a mini-

front is not possible and President's Rule is not desirable because that would have to be followed by a mid-term election which would go in favour of the CPI(M). It tries to avert President's Rule but at the same time does not want a CPI(M)-led ministry. The option was limited to securing the continuance of Mr Ajoy Mukherjee which was also what the CPI(M) wanted after its initial bravado.

The best Mrs Gandhi can do in this situation to salvage her own position is to make it appear that she is not responsible for anything that has happened in West Bengal and she is not hostile to the CPI(M) though she is in a position to survive without its 19-member group's support in the Lok Sabha. She has got the PSP on her side to make up for the possible loss of CPI(M) support. The CPI(M) is known to have voted against her only once during the budget session, and that in the knowledge that the vote will not lead to the defeat of her Ministry.

#### "Reliable Allies"

The Prime Minister's supporters argue, with a measure of justification, that she is not against the CPI(M). The argument sounds hardly credible after the West Bengal developments. Mr Chavan spelt the rest of the line clearly when he answered questions on the General Cariappa episode in Parliament: the extremists on the Left who did not believe in peaceful parliamentary methods and the extremists on the right like the RSS and those who propagated the Indianisation theory endangered the country. By implication, the CPI(M) and the CPI are reliable allies of the Centre even if they are sniping at each other. The Prime Minister's supporters are worried that the CPI(M) might turn to the Congress-O if the party is rocked and rolled out of office in both its major bases. But then, Mr Jagjivan Ram has no objection to installing a Swarantra ministry in Gujarat in place of the Congress-O ministry. The Swatantra ministry in Orissa has no in-

hibition about looking to Cong-O support for survival while the Swatantra party in Gujarat is getting ready to overthrow Mr Hitendra Desai's government. All this suggests the crumbling ideological barriers between parties and it is one vast smash and grab drama across the sprawling country. The Constitution itself has lost its relevance and meaningful administration has come to an end in several States and at the Centre. The Constitution will come under new strains and there will be greater recourse to extra-constitutional methods.

The total absence of direction in the country's parliamentary politics is underlined by the blooming contradictions within the ruling party at the Centre. It is divided on issues like abolition of privy purses, and abolition of the fundamental right to property. The Nath Pai bill may not clear the obstacle created by the Golaknath Case and the bill itself might be struck down. Only a Constituent Assembly can achieve the objective of Mr Nath Pai's bill. Which means the country should move towards a Second Republic.

March 15, 1970

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MARCH 21, 1970

# The Centre And West Bengal

R. P. MULLICK

IT now appears certain that the new Congress is as adamant as the old one to intervene in the States. Take West Bengal. The base is being prepared since December. Those who thought that the Centre would play it soft and slow in its attempts to remove the UF Cabinet—since the Union Cabinet is dependent on Communist and left opposition party votes—have found that Mrs Gandhi of 1970 is much the same as the Indira Gandhi of 1959. There is this difference, however: the final intervention is not to be hustled but paced slowly, with always a wary eye on any potential cohorts from among the defectors.

The present political pattern in Delhi's ruling establishment makes it clear that the higher rungs of the rising affluent class have combined in their support to the Centre's efforts to remove the UF Ministry in West Bengal by hook or by crook. *The Times of India*, representative of the top-notch plutocrats, writes rather cautiously and furtively about West Bengal in its leading editorial of March 10: "One only hopes that the Union Home Ministry has a precious idea of the kind of challenge it will face in such an event and that it will have the means to cope with it". What is the event? It is the people's upsurge that might follow the crafty catapulting out of power of West Bengal's Ministry. But these elements calculate that the popular forces can be repressed by the forces of State coercion, namely by the military, the Central Reserve Police, the Border Security Force and the newly created units for 'protection' of the Centre's industrial units. The strategem of New Delhi's interventionists oscillates between two courses (i) imposition of President's rule straightaway, and then to actively support the forces of defection to help incubate and bring to birth a mini-front nucleus of some

numerical viability; (ii) to wait for inter-party rivalries to reach a stage of landslide secession from the United Front by constituent party units, on which the Centre is banking for a left-against-ultra-left revolt. *The Hindustan Times*, in an editorial published on the same day, says "If the Bangla Congress and its allies act actively even now they do have the numbers and moral authority to form a stable mini-front administration.....Nothing could be more fatuous or dishonest than to plead some mystic commitments to the people's mandate to the United Front....If the mini-front is unwilling to act, then the Governor will have no option but to invite Central intervention". However, the factors for immediately starting an "Operation Bengal"—as ex-Army Chief, Cariappa, would rather have had it—are not discernible yet.

It would be curious and interesting to note that the Jana Sangh, the archetypal party representing lower-strata vested interests, especially of the commercial middlemen sections, and advocating militant Hindu revivalism, has not thought of uprooting the present UF Ministry in West Bengal now. Why? Loss of popularity even in Northern India and the double-faced muddling over the Chandigarh issue in Haryana and Punjab have chastened its mood. Further, it has reportedly received secret reports from its Andhra and West Bengal units, which speak of a 'deluge sweeping over West Bengal, nay the entire Eastern region, once the buffer of a ministry in which the CPM functions, is removed from the scene. Obviously, the Jana Sangh, inheriting a tradition of RSS para-militarism, has a more sober and realistic assessment of the confrontation likely between the forces of armed popular resistance and those of the Centre's 'Law and Order'. The Swatantra Party

with its relatively greater isolation from the masses, and the Congress (O) with its increasing dependence on the monopoly sections of big business, have less maturity and hence can afford to go the whole hog in advocating and promoting Central intervention.

Not so is the dilemma for Mr Chavan. As in Parliament, the other day the Home Minister was flabbergasted—he had to disagree with those with whom he was secretly in league! In fact he let go the slip when he took the House into his confidence by saying that the military authorities of the region had advised the Centre about the law and order situation there, evidently from the latter's standpoint. Combined with this pretty piece of information is the statement given some time back by General Manekshaw, the present Army Chief, that the army did not feel itself called upon to take part in politics. Why indeed this disclaimer? It is well known that for a considerable time now the Army has been getting increasingly involved in taking sides with the forces of Law and Order against what are called forces of disruption and revolt. The Indian Army is one of the strongest and finest forces of offensive-defensive operation in South and South-East Asia. No wonder therefore that the Central Government is accepting the realities of its relative dependence on this instrument of State machinery for carrying out the tasks of ordinary civil administration. If a popular upsurge takes place in a delicately placed, and poised, State like West Bengal, and revolution simmers in adjoining areas,—what will happen if the last vestiges of constitutional government are subverted there? For people are likely to see things through in a short time, and tons of specious argument, appearing in big-money newspapers, hardly convince any. However the final phase of this essentially political episode is not likely to be ushered through political considerations alone, but by the security point of view and the conveniences as well as the pre-

dilections of the managerial bureaucracy. It is well known how the security aspect of the Naga question was misjudged for over one and a half decade before it took the present shape. It is perhaps not known to many that the present administration, with its high overtones of bureaucratism, often gets the Government involved in a way beyond the estimate of the initiators of a particular political policy. It would not be surprising therefore, if the higher-ups in the administrative set-

up lead the unwary policy-setters of the Central Government into an embarrassing situation, the consequences of which might be incalculable.

The Dharma Vira episode is too fresh in memory. But the apparently paradoxical position the ruling classes find themselves in is that the lessons of history seldom leave their impress on those who are out to cash in on specious fruits of pseudo-socialism and spurious growth rate.

March 13, 1970.

## Calcutta Diary

GYAN KAPUR

**D**YING gracefully is an art which few people learn. In general it comes naturally to those who live a full life which cannot be said of the UF. The regard for the successor government in the matter of the budget was of course quite touching. But the refusal to answer questions even was somewhat bewildering. Does it by implication mean that answers which are supposed to be based on facts will be different in other hands?

All this concern for the dying Front was quite touching. Everyone from the Prime Minister and the Governor down to local peace-makers became over-active. Neither the consultants nor the family physicians, however, were able to give any shot in the arm which could make the slightest impression on the patient. The question, however, seemed to be something else altogether. All physicians know of cases where they have to make the painful choice whether they should let the patient die in the natural course or make futile efforts which only prolong his agony. The Front seemed to have reached this critical stage where any prolongation of its life would have prolonged its misery with that of the people due to its inability to do anything effective.

MARCH 21, 1970

While the Front hovered between life and death and the unending controversy over the Home (Police) Department went on, the happiest persons must have been the police and their boss, the Police Commissioner. Mr Sen went about like a modern Haroun-al-Rashid and discovered all sorts of nasty things about life in Calcutta and these findings were duly reported in the 'free' press. According to Mr Sen, Calcutta was under a self-imposed curfew and people had stopped going out on the streets after 10 at night. Though he had not said anything, the implication of course was that he could have put a stop to all this had he only been allowed to do so.

In the meantime blackmarketeers and food adulterators are having a field day, with all the emphasis devoted to isolated instances of snatching and such-like things. Calcutta is a city of moods, if anything. Reports of a few children missing leave the citizens cold these days whereas only a few months back people went berserk over the scare of child-lifting and thought nothing of lynching anyone on the merest suspicion. Increase of prices as a result of the Central budget has left them cold

and nobody has demurred even at increase over and beyond the actual raise.

Adulterators, never inactive here, have again stepped up their activities, knowing full well that they can operate in safety. The mustard oil trade is still one of their favourable fields of operation. Widescale adulteration is again reported leading to deaths. The victims, I am told, suffer from a swelling of the feet and some other symptoms. Before any real treatment can be started they die within two or three days, of heart failure. I have personally heard of two such deaths, which came swiftly. How many are actually taking place all over the city and State, who knows? With the emphasis in the public mind on the squabbles of the Front apparently nobody cares also.

\* \*

Public memory is short but individual memories are long. Ex-Governor Dharma Vira had hardly had time to forget his spell of rule in West Bengal and the things he had to face here. He must have been laughing up his sleeve at the reported willingness of Mr Jyoti Basu to have the working of the Home (Police) Department scrutinized by the present West Bengal Governor, Mr S. S. Dhawan, with the gracious concession that he would do it as a former judge and not as Governor. Much water, indeed, has flown down the Ganges since Mr Dharma Vira left and the process of parliamentary democracy has a great mellowing effect.

\* \*

After Sealdah it is now the turn of Howrah. The beating of railway personnel by unruly mobs led to a 16-hour stoppage in protest on the Kharagpur line. As I have already written, these are amazing happenings with so much leftism about. Strangest of all is the silence of our 'working class' leaders. Instead of

condemning such attacks on the working class in strong and unmistakable terms, they are busy in their squabbles in splitting up organs of working class unity such as the AITUC. And the Deputy Minister could only advise them to start work first, without any promise of effective steps against such mobs.

The years of inaction against the

communal mobs have exacted their toll, it seems, in creating a feeling that if there are sufficient numbers involved it is a people's movement. Simply by following this principle the communal rioters have all gone free by sheer force of numbers. And now the smugglers, wagon breakers and other mobs are terrorizing public workers relying on their force of numbers to go scot free.

club which worshipped it was, as the red banner read, 'Apanjan' (named after a film). The members of 'Apanjan' also enacted a scene from the film, which showed two rival groups of mastans involved in a violent clash. At first we took it for a real one because of the ferocity with which the performers went about it. But then we realised our mistake when we saw some children, closely following them, giggling at the fun. No sooner had the spectators overcome the impact of this pleasant shock than came another event to fill the crowded bill. It was a reproduction of a scene from a Hindi movie. A boy, dressed as a female cabaret dancer, doing bust shaking and all that. And a group of young boys 'fighting' to win her love. The fight at last turned quite violent. Getting panicky, the 'dancer' made an attempt to run away but was caught by a boy who had by now bore down his rivals. The 'dancer' now fell victim to his amorous advances a la Hollywood.

Many other macabre performances took place one after another for full one hour. But, alas, at last loud voices shattered the charm of the whole show. It was now real skirmish. Some boys were running helter skelter with lathis in hand, as though on a weird witch-hunt and the gleeful faces of the spectators turned grim.

At this stage one old man, be-moaning the past, said, "Puja in our days was never like this".

"No, Babu, puja has never been better than this. Only the way they do it today has changed," said an equally old rickshaw puller.

## Saraswati At Agartala

ARUN KUMAR CHAKMA

**A**GARTALA: A few months back we came across an unusual exhibition of paintings in a desolate street corner. Some enterprising young men of the town had arranged it on their own initiative and resources without any outside patronage. This was quite evident from the somewhat strange fashion in which the show was put on: The paintings dangled from a thick rope tied to two bamboo poles and one boy held a kerosene lamp to light up the place.

Their works were pedestrian from the point of view of artistic skill. But they were bold in content. A few images of contemporary life—hunger, deprivation, amorality, perversion, thwarted human behaviour and all that—projected on simple sheets of paper, some in water colour, some in sketches. We could not but consider it a big event, for a town like Agartala, though the draw was not that big. So, there are still boys and girls in this town who are moved by the human condition.

There are not enough of them. The last Saraswati puja pushed us back into reality, into a region of life which had very much become an order rather than disorder.

The preparations started off with the local boys collecting "subscriptions" from door to door, no matter whether one could pay or not. As the puja day came nearer, costly pandals went up on whatever little space was available; decorations were done

with meticulous care; microphones kept blaring forth monotonous noise. Everything ready, now it was the time for puja-eve revelry. Till the late hours of night young boys and girls kept shaking and twisting to the tune of some old Billy Vaun numbers. The still younger ones were busy experimenting with the effect of light and shade produced on the swingers. The orgy reminded me of the olden days when our religious institutes used to be sanctified by the presence of 'devadasis'.

The puja night came. In the first instance it was a most auspicious occasion for the professional gangsters. It was on this night that they put into trial their latest innovations in their chosen realms. Rival groups got ready with their weapons, waiting for their prey, while some of their comrades were floundering in love with the girls. All of a sudden you heard a scream. Some boys were running with weapons after another boy belonging to a rival group who had dared to intrude into a forbidden area. He cried for help, but none came. He was caught and was left on the street after being beaten up.

Next evening images of the goddess were taken out in a big procession. A number of lorries carrying the image drove past closely followed by young boys who gave a demonstration of strip-tease. Another vehicle carrying the goddess appeared. The

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MARCH 21, 1970

## Before The Event

P.C.D.

THERE can hardly have been very many people who still felt overwhelming sympathy for either Ajoy Mukherjee or Jyoti Basu by the end of last week. There are exceptions. The *Hindusthan Standard*, for instance, admired the Bangla Congress for its 'courage of conviction'. Almost all the national newspapers—*The Statesman*, the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, *Hindusthan Standard*, *Hindustan Times*, *Times of India*, *Hindu* and *Patriot* wrote leaders on the decision of resignation by Ajoy Mukherjee and they drew a general lesson that 'the Marxists are the root of all troubles'. There was a dangerous unreality in this enforced togetherness and in the efforts for preserving an uneasy peace around an unsatisfactory status quo. To appear somewhat objective *Patriot* took to task both Promode Dasgupta and Sushil Dhara for failing to control each other's worst instincts but concluded that Promode was the cause and Sushil Dhara the effect. Almost all the papers painted a very grisly picture of the condition of law and order in West Bengal and what they believed lay in store for the people of West Bengal should the UF ministry, as it is, continue. *The Hindu* was the most categorical. It saw a break-up of the United Front a 'ray of hope for Bengal'. *The Amrita Bazar Patrika* tried to be clever and hoped that with the CPI(M) changing its attitude, which it must, agreement in the UF 'may turn for the better'. Both *Patrika* and the *Standard* were generally safely ambiguous and covered the subject 'from all angles' leaving a series of possibilities so that whatever eventually happened they would not be wrong. But they did not hesitate to soberly weigh the prospect of 'Marxist' domination over the United Front. All papers, above all the

locally-owned Calcutta papers along with their stable-mates, were unanimous in their assessment that another mid-term election as suggested by Jyoti Basu was not at all imperative. 'A mid-term election is not a child's play'. 'President's rule may continue right-up to the next general election', said the *Patrika*. *The Hindu*, again, was most emphatic—no election but President's rule was called for 'to root out lawless elements ruthlessly before venturing on election again'. It forewarned the powers that be not to make any fine distinction between the 'Marxists' and the Naxalites. Better they should be dead than we should be red. But *Patriot* wanted a mini-front along Kerala lines and so did the *Hindustan Times* and more or less the other papers. The *Hindustan Times* presented a picture of unrelieved catastrophe but managed to detect some hope short of President's rule. The *Times of India* thought that the prospect of a mini-front was not bright in West Bengal and that President's rule would be almost unavoidable. *The Hindu*, which knows better, was clear in its mind—a mini-front experiment along Kerala lines may prove both unstable and bloody. 'So what?' quipped the *Hindusthan Standard*. *The Statesman* is most engaging in its quaintness but the peculiar nature of the material it just dealt with could hardly hide the furies of private interest under threat. With malicious glee—of course with a little restraint, knowing the nature of Ajoy Mukherjee as it did—it heard in the 'irrevocable' stand of Mukherjee the 'deaththroes' of the Marxist dominated United Front.

The deaththroes are heard, of course, but whose deaththroes? Lawlessness and disorder are there of

course and are bound to aggravate with the deepening economic crisis but one has seen with what relative equanimity the newspapers report the perennial famines, lawlessness in the shape of communal and provincial riots and disorder and corruption that have been such a tragic feature in the pre- and non-united front India. It seems curious too that on the Congress terrorism in Srikakulam the liberal editorial conscience of the newspapers, so easily stirred on matters where the extremists are involved, was not aroused. And it strikes one as a little ironic that those who cry about democracy will not now hear any talk of a mid-term election. Still more striking, however, it is to find the 'anti-revisionist, Marxists displaying, even after so much manhandling, utmost devotion to parliamentary democracy and swallowing their slogan 'Peoples' Democratic Revolution', hook, line and sinker. In any case, the press cannot lumber the Marxists with all the blame for the 'crime wave'. Crime is inherent in the situation in Calcutta. The impression one gets from reading the editorials of our national newspapers is the paucity, indeed the virtual non-existence, of any thoughtful interpretation of the phenomenon. Even if dreadful things are happening, there is little to tell the reader why they are happening except in the shallowest possible terms.

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# Calcutta : Cultural And Social Profile

MOHIM ROODRO

RECENTLY, a seminar was organised by the Indian Anthropological Society on the Cultural and Social Profile of Calcutta. It came as the end-result of a brain wave of Dr Surajit Sinha, who is the current president of the society and the deputy director of the Anthropological Survey of India. It has been bothering him lately that whilst many facile statements are made on different aspects of Calcutta and its problems, when coming to brass tacks, very little is known in depth about the city by either its residents or the anthropologists who hover around here. Also, anthropologists are not used to taking up complex metropolises like Calcutta as their subject. They are on familiar grounds when dealing with smaller units, tribal groups, or ethnic units, specific communities etc. They have not actually considered big cities as within the purview of their studies. Thus, in a way, they are not equipped to tackle a project of such large dimensions.

The seminar ran for two days during which time sixteen papers were submitted. The proceedings were divided into four sessions: one, A City of Cultural Pluralism and Bengali Core, chaired by Prof Barun De, two, A City of Grinding Poverty, chaired by Prof Ramkrishna Mukherjee, three, A City of Creativity and Frustration, chaired by Prof Amlan Datta, and four, summing up, chaired by Prof Nirmal Kumar Bose.

The two days were very exciting. All the participants were keen and involved. But as for the time allotted there were too many papers, each paper received less scrutiny and discussion than it deserved. To that the sponsors had a fairly reasonable reply. These were the minimum number of papers they could have if they were to hold a seminar on Calcutta at all. There were many other subjects too that called for attention, but could not be included in the list, and to

stretch the seminar for longer than two days would have meant failure, as nobody thought it would be easy to get most of the participants to leave their respective fields of work and attend for a much longer period. Nevertheless, a start had to be made and it was.

My personal involvement was with the third session of the proceedings where I had a paper to read on "Communities of Artists and Sculptors in Calcutta." There were six other papers. They were (1) "Growing Community of Scientists in Calcutta" by Dr Purnima Sinha; (2) "Co-existence of many musical traditions and the Community of Musicians in Calcutta" by Rajyeswar Mitra; (3) "Community of Dancers in Calcutta" by Manjusree Chaki-Sircar; (4) "Movie-makers of Calcutta" by Mrinal Sen; (5) "The Drama Movement in Bengal 1944-69" by Samik Bandopadhyay; (6) "The Social and Cultural world of the Men of Literature in Calcutta" by Dr Alope Ranjan Dasgupta.

To many this session appeared the most lively. For one thing, it is not an everyday affair to get so many practitioners of different fields of arts to actually confront a gathering of social scientists and submit direct news from their own fields. True, a risk was ingrained, that of subjectivity, but the risk was well worth taking as this very subjectivity allows an insight into creativity which an objective outside viewing could never provide.

But the day ran out fast. Not much discussion could take place. The lack of it was felt keenly by many, more so by those who had read the papers.

A camera gathering was organised at Dr Sinha's residence, for the seven individuals who had read out papers on the different aspects of the creativity and frustration of this city. And of course there were some others, perhaps twenty in all. The idea was to

have a cross discussion amongst the seven and simultaneously to confront the seven with provocations, challenges and scrutiny.

## Near Unanimity

The idea worked out successfully. Much more came out and many details were gone over. One thing that was spectacularly noticeable was the near unanimity amongst the practitioners of the creative arts regarding most of the points raised. This, it seemed, was not quite what the anthropologists were prepared for. They had expected that there would be even more differences of opinion than their apparent rugged individuality promised. Perhaps they were probably even a bit disappointed, as though they were afraid that such unanimity of opinions would diminish the lustre they had expected if the movie-maker, and the dancer and the painter and the poet had clashed. But they were fortunate that evening. The conversation, and the discussion and occasional teaming up of the 'artists' vis-a-vis the anthropologists really reached a very interesting crescendo. The anthropologists are so used to living amongst and studying the tribals that we noticed that they could not help again and again making relative statements as though the artists and writers and poets and movie-makers and dancers and singers were just another primitive tribe like the Mundas or the Santals or something like that. The artists, of course, fought back every time this tendency became uncomfortably prominent.

One thing came sharply into focus. The conditions are dead against the artists in this city. It is a mystery that arts persist in this city and the only explanation the creative artists could put forward was that they are driven on by a faith in the people of Calcutta—it is a kind of mystique. For instance, Mrinal Sen said that of the eighteen pictures that he has made he has never had the same producer want him twice, except on one occasion, and that is by himself. Having produced *Bhuvan Shome*, he has now commissioned himself to produce another film. In all this

time it has been a constant struggle with want and handicaps. If ever he has been less than three months in arrear in paying the rent for his flat, he has thought it to be a lucky break. What is it that kept him going? What is that keeps any of the practitioners of any of the arts going? He described the condition of the creative artist as somewhat equivalent to that of a political party worker—those who have given up everything for their ideas. Even when, as he knew personally of one instance, a member was thrown out of the Communist Party, he could not do anything else, not due to lack of quality, but simply because his life was his ideal and his political work.

Dancer Manjusree Chaki-Sirkar placed before us a picture of difficulties that really were stupendous. She pointed out that, let alone other factors, most dancers do not even have a proper place to practise.

#### Indianness

Questions arose on the modernity of arts, whether they are losing their Indianness or not. For instance, regarding painting, modern art began in the West and today all those who are being modern artists in India, how much of it is genuine, how much spurious, how much Indian and how much just an imitation of the West etc? I submitted that modern art sprang from the West, true, but it came about as a result of the impact or the mixture of Western art with Oriental art, Mexican art, primitive art, African art, and so on. Modern art does not more belong to the West, it belongs to all mankind. Art all around the world is adopting a universal language, and there was no way of going back. Any Indianness in Indian art will simply come from the honest work of the Indian artists as Indian artists, but not with any preconceived idea of creating Indian art.

Mrinal Sen also laid down emphatically that his sole guide is his medium; his instruments decide for him his language, and he does not care whether it is Indian or not.

Manjusree Chaki also expressed her keen longing to see Indian dance

taking on new dimensions to express today's thoughts and feelings. Indian dancing, she said, has remained hamstrung to the olden times and the religious tales. The language necessary to express the emotional pattern of Indian womanhood, for instance, of one thousand years ago can simply not be adequate to communicate today's attitudes. She believes that there soon can be a day when dancers will not care whether their forms are Eastern or Western or Northern or Southern, they will simply and immediately adopt any gesture, any movement that suitably carries across the content of the dance. But alas, she said, Indian dancing is far from such an attitude. Hardly anybody is thinking about it seriously and creatively. Not even Uday Shankar. And the most dangerous thing that haunts the dancing world is the attitude and expectations of society from it. For instance, dancing has gradually slipped from expression in form and movement to the both subtle and overt catering for erotic sentiments. Sexuality is a fundamental thing, and nobody denies its place in the art of dancing, but if it replaces all other aspects of the art or most of them, then something is wrong. She finds that most dancers are developing the tendency to prettify their forms, removing the angularities and emphasizing the more entertaining aspects of dancing. The average member of the audience, she said, takes note of the age and physical charms of the female dancers before entering into the spirit of the dance offering. Whereas, Mrs Sirkar said, when she dances, she no more wishes to remember whether she is man or a woman, she only knows the dance. The lines, the forms, the movements, these are the important things, not that she is a woman, age so and so, height, contours, thus and thus.

Why does it seem that the modern creative artists are expressing themselves in a manner that the average man finds difficult to understand? Is it not that the 'modern' creative people are actually being enchanted by the Western experiments to such

a degree that they do not even realize that they have lost touch with their own people? All the creative artists present admitted that they are keen sufferers of this situation, but they do not think that the fault lies either with them or the public; the lacuna is due to an inevitable historical fact, that the modern approach in creativity in our country has come about as a result of an exposure to the West. The creative artists have been, or may even be said, allowed themselves to be exposed much more than the rest of the populace. As a result rapid changes came about in their ways of expression. However, they feel that it is not a question of being un-Indian, but to be in pace with the times. And they did not have the least hesitation in asserting that it was only a question of time, and the populace will soon catch up with them.

Don't the artists have a responsibility to reach out to the public, take their creations to it and educate and condition it so that the public should not feel a sense of detachment or even hostility towards the creative people of the modern styles? In general, everybody accepted and agreed that something in that nature should be done, but after a short discussion it was revealed that it was actually beyond the range of the Calcutta artists. Practically every one of them practises his or her art during the marginal spare time left after the day's work in some office or organisation or other. As a result, there was not much choice. He has either to turn into an educationist or remain an artist. If he has to practise his art sincerely and diligently, if he is severe enough with himself in wishing to maintain a standard in his work, he has very little time.

Another point that came out in sharp relief was that the practitioners of different arts in Calcutta are very much severed from each other. Dancers and musicians, writers and sculptors, painters and poets, dramatists, film-makers and actors and so on, they lead a life of separate existence. Whereas for true maturity and fruition in any one of these fields, con-

tact with the other ones is very necessary. Everybody felt that this lack of inter-communication needs to be bridged.

Mr Prasanta Sanyal made a couple of comments pointing out serious dichotomies in the personalities of the creative artists. It is no use thinking the populace was falling behind, it is more true that the creative artists are getting themselves isolated from society. One reason, he felt, was that we are modern and not really modern. We are modern in words and a certain degree of intellection, but in our day-to-day lives we are thoroughly orthodox.

### Letter

### Lessons

It is now evident that the holding of the rampart by the UF constituents during the past few months was useless. They could not deliver the goods to the people on whose

support they were returned, as they were hindered by vested interests both within and without. It is, therefore, all the more welcome that this precarious existence ends. The primary lesson is to realise the streak of hypocrisy that distinguishes Gandhite politicians. Their flaunting of socialism is nothing but a mask to perpetuate the rule of vested interests. And from this it is only one step to the realisation that corruption is an essential ingredient of the Gandhites. The second lesson is to identify the parties which pose as communists, like the CPI and SUC, but are ready to jettison the people's cause at the first opportunity to remain in power. They profess socialism to cover their kowtowing to the neo-revisionist Russia which continues its neo-colonialistic activities in India and is ever ready to woo the Indira Government even if that means the betrayal of the socialist cause in our country.

For the CPI(M) the lesson to be learnt is that it is one thing to form

a united front in parliamentary democracy with like-minded parties but quite another to share power with the lackeys of the bourgeoisie and capitalists. Such action alienates the party from the people—that reservoir from which it can draw strength and vitality to defend itself against the onslaught of vested interests and to strike, when the moment arrives, the final and decisive blow against the citadel of parliamentary democracy. Ministerial chairs of power and pelf, surrounded by the treacherous bureaucracy brought up and nursed in the imperialistic line by the Congress, the stooge of the neo-colonialists, unduly delay revolution and eventual victory. If, and only if, these lessons are not lost sight of, then surely nothing has yet been irretrievably lost.

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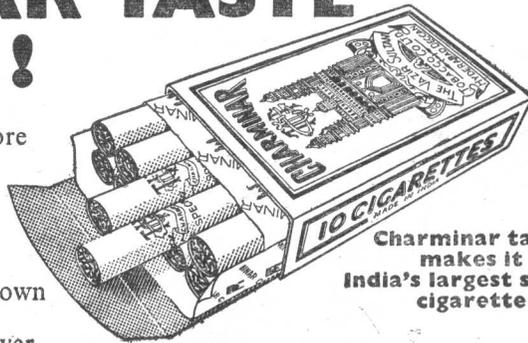
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Charminar taste comes from the flavour of pure tobaccos, carefully grown and carefully blended by experts.

Right now, lakhs of smokers all over India are enjoying the Charminar taste!



Charminar taste makes it India's largest selling cigarette

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