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MOONSTRUCK

THE three American astronauts who left on a moon mission should be back on earth the day this issue is published. If all goes well, and we hope it will, they will have accomplished, when these lines appear in print, a mission of great courage, endurance and ingenuity—and the USA an unprecedented technological feat. The hazards were known well before the journey was undertaken; that the attempt was still made is a measure of both technological confidence and human daring. Both command admiration, irrespective of the outcome of the mission. Yet admiration for the spectacular should not preclude a calmer judgment of value. The Apollo-6 mission alone will have cost some \$30 million, apart from the incomparably larger expenditure on research and development to make the mission possible. The Americans can afford all this and more; the Vietnam war has been costing them, at least until recently, more than twice this amount in a single day. If the war has kept certain American industries going, the space programme has also given new life to a declining aircraft industry. If the war stops or is stepped down, the industry may become more dependent on such fancy projects as space flights.

Even in prosperous America there are tasks of much greater relevance to its own people which languish for lack of funds. The Vietnam war has forced Washington drastically to cut the budgets for such vital programmes as education, urban housing and eradication of poverty, particularly among Negroes. Even scientific research and development have in many cases been starved of adequate financial support. And, of what is left after the demands of the war have been met, an inordinately large amount is claimed, and often taken away, by the space boys. If the present trend persists, one in every four science graduate in the USA will soon be drafted for space service. Only the ignorant or the gullible believe that the space programme is aimed entirely or even primarily at promoting science or making science an instrument of human welfare. At the purely scientific level, more information about, and clearer understanding of, space and the celestial bodies are undoubtedly of great importance. But even at that level there are subjects of much greater importance which are not being adequately investigated for want of money. Besides, the information and understanding that the space programme promises to yield could be acquired at much less cost and with much less risk to human life

than are involved in such projects as landing men on the moon. This is the point that Sir Bernard Lovell made in his recent controversial comment on the Apollo-8 flight. Still more fundamental is the question whether exploration of space is a more urgent task than investigation and possible solution of problems that afflict ordinary mortals on this poor earth.

It will not do, however, to blame the Americans alone for a distorted sense of priorities. They at least have certain compulsions of capitalist economy; what are the Russians trying to prove? The latter have sometimes claimed that their fabulous successes in space have demonstrated the merits of the socialist system; it is depressing that these merits have not, in Russian eyes, found a more inspiring demonstration, inspiring, that is, to ordinary people who would like to be assured of food and shelter on earth before dreaming of a castle on the moon. National status symbols have a habit of blurring a nation's view of its real tasks. And why blame the Americans and Russians alone? The Chinese claimed that their success in developing nuclear weapons demonstrated the strength of Chairman Mao's thoughts. They may well have needed to develop these weapons and they deserve praise for their remarkable technical accomplishment; but why try to invest this accomplishment with qualities that should be associated with wider, starker and more basic human endeavour?

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Apathy And Consent

In this season of goodwill and merriment will some thoughts turn to the prisoners in Darjeeling and Siliguri jails who are on hunger-strike demanding classification as political prisoners? Among them are leaders of last year's Naxalbari movement, Kanu Sanyal and Jangal Santal—familiar names in the country today. On Christmas Day Jangal Santal completed two months of fasting; Kanu Sanyal was short by some days. There are some twenty others undergoing a similar ordeal. Neither the obstinate refusal by the Government to meet their demands nor the calculated indifference of the political parties has been able to break their will. But there is a limit to what the physique can endure. Nasal feeding is a torture to which the jail authorities are frequently resorting—out of what consideration they alone know. The prisoners did not have an easy time before the Government could get at them. Many of them undertook the fast almost immediately after months of life as a fugitive with the police constantly on their trail. All this has begun to tell on their health though certainly not on spirit. Kanu Sanyal was removed to hospital, and even official reports admit that he is losing weight and his condition is deteriorating. Jangal Santal is no better; so must be the condition of some others also. The bureaucratic capacity for under-statement in such matters is unlimited, and for all one knows the hunger-strike may be fast nearing a tragedy.

The Government's attitude has been determined more by guile than by the merits of the demand. In the beginning it placed Kanu Sanyal and Jangal Santal in a higher category because of their "economic and social status". The Naxalbari leaders saw through this design to create a division among the prisoners and demanded equal privileges for all. Frustrated in its attempt, the Government has now taken the position that they cannot be regarded as political prisoners and is quoting chapter and verse in support of this absurdity. Even Mr

Chavan, not a friend of the Naxalites, has not gone this far. For weeks the Home Minister has been belching threats and goading the State governments to sterner action; he has rounded up the campaign in Parliament with a proposal to assume fresh legislative powers to curb the Naxalites. But he has not questioned the political character of the movement in Naxalbari or, for that matter, any movement of that kind. He has said, on the contrary, that the activities of the "extremists" would have to be countered "politically" and the challenge posed by them would have to be met by "solving the people's problems" as far as possible. There would have been no stir over Naxalbari had it not been the symbol of an emerging trend in the country's politics. West Bengal's volatile Governor is, however, incapable of distinguishing between Naxalbari and Chambal Valley and is trying to justify the denial of political classification to Kanu Sanyal and others by maligning them even before they have been held guilty by the court. The police may arrest a person—any person—on fantastic charges, but that does not make him a criminal. In that event the courts would have been redundant. The miniature jail delivery that the Supreme Court is ordering from time to time of detenus held in the interest of "public order" under the Preventive Detention Act shows how frivolous the police can be. The Naxalbari prisoners do not become criminals at the pleasure of the police or the Governor.

The attitude of the bureaucracy is understandable. In the present circumstances, it cannot perhaps be otherwise. But the United Front could have behaved differently. Indeed, it appears to have become a party to the conspiracy of silence over what is happening in Siliguri and Darjeeling jails. Certain Press reports notwithstanding, it is doubtful if the UF has formally endorsed the demand of the Naxalbari prisoners. The gesture, if at all made, was belated and, therefore, reluctant. None of the UF parties has thought it necessary to come out separately in support of the fasting prisoners. The CPI may be an excep-

tion, but the motivation, here as also in Kerala, is unclear. It may not have been moved solely by a sudden access of comradely concern; the itch to score over the CPI(M) may have been irresistible. Anyway, such formal support, extended jointly or separately, has no meaning unless backed by a decision to agitate. This the UF is scrupulously avoiding. The UF leaders, who do not seem to lose any opportunity to call on the Governor to seek redress of their grievances, have not yet found time to discuss the eight-week-old hunger-strike with the Government. There would have been a deluge of statements had the fasting prisoners belonged to any of the UF parties. A uniformly callous attitude is being maintained by the Front towards all issues involving the Naxalites. Not a ripple has been caused by the State Government's announcement that contrary to past practice, the political detenus would not be released before the election this time as they are all non-believers in election; the cases of political workers in preventive detention as criminals have been quietly forgotten. The parliamentary left is in rapport with the Government over Naxalite philistinism. It is one of the spheres in which Mr Chavan can confidently hope for cooperative endeavour by the Centre and the State even if the UF is returned to power.

“New” Foreign Policy

Those who complained that Indian foreign policy, apart from preaching the teachings of Buddha, Gandhi and others, involved no action but only clumsy reaction to others' actions have now to be discreet. India, no matter whatever portion of her currency is in foreign hands or how many sectors of national life are remote-controlled from Washington and Moscow, is allegedly going to decide her policy towards Asia. Twenty-six heads of Indian diplomatic missions in South and South-East Asia met recently in New Delhi reportedly with this purpose. What policy emerged out of the conference will be better revealed when

put into practice. But there need be no confusion about the general direction of Indian policy.

Some people accused Mrs Gandhi of equivocation when she said during her South-East Asian safari that the security of the region was guaranteed by the super-Powers and that South-East Asian countries should themselves tackle the problem of 'subversion'. But she in fact summarised the lesson of the decade's liberation wars and that of U.S.-Soviet detente which people trained in the cold war school find difficult to understand. In a world where interests of the super-Powers converge military blocs like NATO and SEATO are outmoded. It might be convenient for domestic reasons to raise the bogey of Chinese hordes overrunning the rice-bowl of Asia but the rulers of South-East Asian countries know it fully well that the threat to their rule comes from their own hungry people. In such a situation the presence of foreign troops to fight the imaginary Chinese threat would only expose their puppet character and hasten their doom. Americans, to be sure, would now think twice even if they are invited to fight for 'democracy' on Asian soil. So the best course, as Mrs Gandhi suggested, would be to keep them in the background with their vague guarantee of Asian security and intensify, with their aid and advice, anti-people policies in the name of tackling subversion. The policy is as logical as the policy of a ruling class should be. South-East Asian countries would of course co-operate in this business of fighting 'subversion'. Witness Indo-Burmese collaboration in suppressing insurgency, Thai-Malaysian co-operation in napalming people. This can be done through bilateral pacts without joining any military pact in the full glare of publicity.

Thanks to fabulous defence spending India is now claiming to be self-sufficient in small arms if not in any basic necessities of life. So India can assist the embattled South-East Asian nations with the essential 'counter-insurgency' weapons as well as training. The world's only napalm producing firm, Dow Chemicals, is said

to have set up an office in New Delhi having strings with some Bombay firm reportedly producing ingredients of napalm. So the other anti-guerilla weapon might not be in short supply.

Military assistance apart, recession-hit Indian industrialists are now trying in a way out of the mess. So the Indian diplomats in South-East Asia are being instructed to study the market conditions of the assigned country and supply the necessary commercial intelligence. Dependent as they are on foreign capital the Indian capitalists are trying to export capital goods or textile, jute and paper manufactures. At a time when cotton and jute mills have to be closed down for lack of raw material and markets, when millions cannot afford a strip of cloth, India is going to usher in an era of co-operation by founding textile mills in Malaysia. Still more sickening is the attempt to boost the purchasing power of the client nations by offering credits and grants while Indian debt per head has passed the Rs. 100 mark. And this is, we are told, the 'economic diplomacy' India is going to pursue.

Up Against Whom?

The leftist leaders arranged throughout last week "massive" protest rallies against the reprisal measures adopted by the Central Government after the September 19 strike of its employees. We are assured that we would see more such rallies this week too. The unceremonious withdrawal of the work-to-rule operations after the partial token strike and the pleadings of the leaders for reasonableness which they expect from the Union Ministers have however taken all the sting off such rallies and threats of bigger movements. It would not hurt the Government employees much if they care to see for themselves what sort of reasonableness their employers possess and, if they insist on constitutional fights, they ought to know what the leaders of the country think of the Constitution.

"Government servants", said Mr K. Hanumanthaiya at Jaipur on Decem-

ber 15, "enjoy sovereign powers and therefore should not abuse sovereign powers. When they join the services, they will have to behave like model citizens because they exercise part of the sovereignty which is invested in Government." Sovereignty of the Government! It could have been a slip of the tongue, but the proclamation of the Essential Services Maintenance Ordinance to throttle the September strike should dispel all such comfortable doubts. The logic of the argument, the gist of which was that the Government employees had no right to strike, may sound fantastic but it happens to be the opinion of Mr Hanumanthaiya, the Chairman of the Administrative Reforms Commission, who for all one knows may insist on the incorporation of some such logic in the reformed administrative frame.

Mr V. C. Shukla, the Minister of State for Home Affairs, while he piloted the Essential Services Maintenance Bill, said that it was intended to wean away the employees from political parties. Evidently he has no particular regard for another fundamental right—the right of association. His boss, Mr Chavan, however invoked the sanctity of this very right and could not ban the RSS and a communal Muslim organisation.

For the non-gazetted employees, harder days are ahead. Mr Desai was surprised to learn the other day that employees are paid for overtime. He has promised to look up the matter and wondered how government employees, who are 24-hour servants, get paid for overtime. It should not surprise the employees if Mr Desai, after looking up the matter, says that the employees have no right to salaries either because they happen to be 24-hour government servants. The employees should get prepared heretofore to meet all travel expenses too at times of transfer, for isn't their service, under the rules, described as transferable?

Not that the provision of overtime allowances is never abused. Everybody knows that government officers use public money, through such allowances, to make themselves popular bosses and bestow overtime jobs on only their favourites. But the employ-

ees will be pained to know the context in which Mr Desai got his surprise. Asked how he would meet the gap of Rs. 289 crores in the budget, he said he would cut down on infructuous expenditures, of which the provision of overtime allowances happens to be one. It needs mentioning here that overtime allowances paid this year are just Rs. 24.31 lakhs—spread over six months and all over the country. The employees cannot be given need-based wages because there are poorer people in the country, said Mr. Desai earlier. Now he would not allow meagre additions of overtime allowances to their miserable paypackets because he has to meet his budget. Tax collections meanwhile continue to be done in the same old way. Income tax arrears still amount to Rs. 600 crores.

Birla House

It is all so unreal, but it tallies with the unreal character of New Delhi. Politicians of all hues, several Members of Parliament included, are currently agitating in the capital. They are demanding that Birla House, where Mahatma Gandhi was assassinated twenty-one years ago be taken over by the State; one from amongst the motley crowd is reportedly on fast for bolstering the cause. Pressure groups being pressure groups, the Government of India would seem to have already half-conceded the demand; the Union Minister of State for Works and Housing has made an announcement that, even if not the entire property, a part of the grounds where Gandhiji fell by the assassin's bullet would be appropriated on behalf of the nation. This has not satisfied the zealots, who are maintaining the view that Birla House in entirety should be acquired. Much quasi-metaphysical verbiage is being expended on defining the exact spot where Gandhiji died, whether his last breath flickered away while he was still lying on the grass, or after he had been carried inside the building.

These politicians are badly in need of some rudimentary education, but maybe it is already too late in the day.

There can be no earthly good done to anybody—and not even to Gandhiji's departed soul—by arranging for the transfer of Birla House to the public sector. Any such transfer would mean the leakage of some funds from out of the public exchequer to the Birlas. The loss to the Birla family will be nothing, for they can use the money to build an equally imposing palace somewhere else in New Delhi. Given the obsolescence of the old structure, the Birlas may in fact be only too happy to sell it off to the Government and to move on to newer architectures. A cynical view could be that perhaps some of the Birlas themselves have instigated the demand for acquisition of the building. It is something to ponder over that not one among the clamouring politicians has suggested confiscation of the property; they all want the Birlas to be paid, and presumably handsomely.

Of course, Mr G. D. Birla could have proffered a gesture and gifted the house to the nation. Since he has not done so, it will be criminal waste of public revenues to dip into the hard-to-come-by tax coffers for the pastime of bailing out rich people. The very same group of MPs, who are for State purchase of Birla House, are generally vociferously against all measures of additional taxation whenever these are brought before Parliament. They have little business to press for extra items of expenditure when they are reluctant to make the necessary appropriations. If these ladies and gentlemen are, for their pleasure, that much interested in acquiring Birla House, they should on their own raise an endowment and hand over the money so collected to the Government for the purpose. If the sentiments still are for an enabling legislation, that could then be easily arranged. We can be almost sure that there will be no takers of this proposal from amongst the agitating politicians.

Canton Fair

A correspondent writes:

"The Maoist regime totters inexorably toward final collapse", wrote the

Financial Times of London last year. "All that is needed to complete the historic pattern is a series of disastrous calamities and widespread famine." For these "friends" of China wailing over her collapse under the impact of the Cultural Revolution, there is good news from 8,000 or so businessmen returning from the autumn Cantor Fair, held last month. They did not bring any scoop from Red Guard *dazibao* but returned happy with what a China 'ravaged' by the Cultural Revolution was ready to sell and buy. One old China hand, veteran of 24 Canton Fairs, decided it was his best ever and almost everyone of the visiting merchants shared his view.

The most striking aspect of Chinese purchases was the order for steel and agricultural chemicals. The total iron and steel sales to China contracted might have been 750,000 tons. This is in addition to her own steel production, estimated at between 12 and 18 million tons annually. Although the Chinese now manufacture a variety of petro-chemical products like polyethylene (displayed at the Fair) and expanded polysterene, they

placed orders for agricultural chemicals and base materials for insecticide and pesticide. For the third consecutive year they did not offer coal for sale. All these facts, together with the frugality campaign inside the country, indicate that they may be stockpiling materials for the agricultural and industrial leap forward next year to which the Cultural Revolution was a prelude. Foreign observers have also noted that they showed little interest in luxury items offered by the West. They placed orders for 1.5 million tons of Canadian wheat.

The Chinese sold a considerable amount of animal by-products like hides and skins, casings and wool. The world rice price being weak they were said to be not very successful in selling their rice. Tea was sold and sale of Chinese medicine, according to Kowloon merchants, recorded a 20 per cent increase. As the conservative Hong Kong journal, *Far Eastern Economic Review* reported, "foodstuffs were enormously popular. Buyers from all over the world seem to have no difficulty in passing on to their customers canned goods they buy from

China. They are of course splendid home." There was also a huge supply of frozen meat.

Textile and cotton piecegoods offered at the latest Fair were larger than the last two. A lot of cotton piecegoods were sold as usual, particularly towels, the cheapest in the world. They also had a considerable amount of raw silk, more than at the last Fair, for sale. Improved qualities of leather goods—gloves and jackets—had a good market.

The exhibition side of the Fair was also impressive. As the *Review* reported, "Chinese machinery was on view, and some visitors were impressed by the range of equipment which the Chinese now produce. Many of the machines were labelled 1968, which suggests that industry has perhaps been less disturbed by this year's Cultural Revolution than had been thought. There were some innovations at the machinery section which tend to support this. For instance since the Spring Fair the Chinese have introduced a blow-moulding machine and their microscopes seem rather more advanced".

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The Lost Image

FROM A POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

THE Government's image needs a new veneer on the eve of the mini-general election. Mr Chester Bowles, who is leaving India shortly, and Mr Skachkov tried to play Santa Claus with New Delhi this Christmas eve but the Fourth Plan is still in the doldrums. The cancellation of the Prime Minister's meeting with the Deputy Prime Minister and the Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission fixed for Friday (December 20) to discuss the plan size and resources was dramatic. The differences between the Finance Ministry and the Planning Commission have reached the point of no return. But a Plan, if knocked together in good time, would prove the best supplementary election

manifesto for the Congress in the mid-term polls. Nevertheless, the Government has to think of new gimmicks.

One of them is the plan to revalue the rupee, marginally that is, and time the announcement to secure utmost political advantage in the elections. Such a revaluation would create the illusion that the economy is now stable and the rupee has grown stronger. At any rate, it would create the illusion that the rupee would not be devalued further.

The Congress leadership is more or less agreed now that the devaluation of the rupee proved the party's undoing in the 1967 elections. The defeat of all the three musketeers of the devaluation episode, Mr Sachin Chaudhuri, Mr C. Subramaniam and Mr S. K. Patil, is not enough to retrieve the lost image of the Congress.

The exercises now on in the economic ministries in New Delhi are for the proposed revaluation of the rupee. Mr McNamara is believed to have told the Government that the rupee was undervalued at the moment, which indeed was worse than successive devaluations. By some queer logic he is believed to have convinced New Delhi that a marginal revaluation of the rupee would have a favourable effect on the aid-giving countries, though it is hard to grasp how.

"Subversive Activities"

The Home Ministry is engaged in its own exercise, to bring the Naxalite groups within the purview of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (which, one presumes, does not cover unlawful thoughts at the moment). Mr Chavan had always taken the stand that political parties cannot be banned under the existing law and the Government does not believe in banning parties. A shift in the Government's thinking was indicated in the Lok Sabha when Mr Chavan hinted

at legislation to curb "subversive activities."

The Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act covers only organised secessionist activity and the Mizo National Front is the only organisation to have been banned under the Act, which was passed as part of the preparation for lifting the State of Emergency and the Defence of India Rules.

Now that the Essential Services (Maintenance) Act will take care of subversive activities by Central employees like going on token strikes, Mr Chavan's attention is on the communist extremists. The streamlined efficiency and clock-like precision with which agents provocateurs had been set putting up Maoist posters in places as far removed as Bombay and Allahabad could only mean that another immaculate White Paper of the Gulzarilal Nanda type is coming in justification of a countrywide crackdown on extremists. Acts of crime which do not come a million miles near political activity of any group are being credited to Naxalites and in private, officials admit that it is so.

What would indeed make any legislation to bring political parties and groups within the purview of the Unlawful Activities Act would be the all-party consensus that Mr Chavan would seek shortly. For purposes of the proposed law, the communist extremists may not be regarded as a political party and curbs on them would not amount to restrictions on political activity. More and more are joining the chorus for such action and no party in Parliament can oppose the move if the Home Minister rationalises it with his usual care.

For all its fury marked by a dramatic walk-out and the tearing up of copies of the Bill, the left opposition gave in tamely over the legislation banning strikes by Central employees. But it had enough diversions, far more innocuous than calling a protest gene-

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ral strike or the like against the black Bill, like the Birla House take-over campaign.

The demand for Birla House take-over came at the Goa session of the AICC early in November and the Opposition parties never thought of it earlier. Mr Sashi Bhusan belongs to the brand of Congress MPs who think gingery acts like a fast to demand the Birla House take-over is being angry and young. Political leaders and those who have no political locus standi converged on Birla House to tag their names on to the agitation for it looked as though there was no other issue left to fight in the country. The name of Mahatma Gandhi came in handy and attention was diverted from the black Bill. The leftist parties which control the trade unions might have got the Bill denounced in Parliament through their spokesmen but there was no move to organise any opposition to it outside. After the Central staff, it might be the State government staff, the public sector workers and then private industry, all in the name of maintaining essential services. The new-look Unlawful Activities Act will be there soon to supplement other laws.

The political parties perhaps thought that if they launched a movement against the Bill, they would not have time to organise their campaign for the mid-term polls. Or if they started a movement, it might overtake the parties. The only dividend the political parties got for the working class during the winter session is the imminent threat to their right to strike.

And this perhaps has emboldened the Government to think of curbs on political parties because a measure of consensus has already been arrived at inside Parliament. It would not be difficult to secure the consensus of State governments or of even political parties outside the House. The Home Secretary, Mr L. P. Singh's letter to five State governments on Naxalite activities, (referred to in this column last week) links up with what Mr Chavan said in the Lok Sabha and the exercise his Ministry is engaged in.

December 22, 1968

Letter from America

The Medium Is The Message

ROBI CHAKRAVORTI

EVERY American administration gets a label: Kennedy's was the politics of new frontier and Johnson's was of Great Society. The terms are picked from a key speech of the President concerned and then tagged on by enterprising newspapermen.

It's too early to put a label on Nixon's forthcoming administration. But this correspondent would take a chance. Let the Nixon Administration be hailed in advance for its "extra dimension". This is a term the President-elect himself used in presenting his Cabinet before a nationwide television audience. No other President-elect in history has done a television show, announcing his Cabinet, but then Nixon has become a President at an unusual time and he is also an unusual President—once beaten twice smart.

In introducing each Cabinet member before a prime time television audience Nixon used the term "extra dimension". This, he said, was the criterion which tilted the balance of choice in favour of the candidate. Let's look at the extra dimensions of some of the candidates: Secretary of State Rogers, the "best negotiator" (it does not matter at all whether he had any foreign policy experience nor should you ask for his credentials as the "best negotiator"); Secretary of Treasury Kennedy, he understands "men as well as money" (as if bankers do not know how to please customers); Attorney-General Mitchell, "coolness under fire" (don't ask for evidence: he was Nixon's law partner); Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare Finch "a passionate concern" (one thing he has been passionately concerned about for a long time is his California pal, Richard Milhaus Nixon, for he acted as his aide through rain and shine), and Secretary of the Interior Hickel of Alaska, "man of the

frontier" (How cold up there, Governor?).

The stern fact is that Nixon's Cabinet does not include a single Democrat or a well-known liberal Republican—there were quite a few candidates for the Cabinet in this category and all with miles of "extra dimension", such as Senator Hatfield of Oregon or Mayor Lindsay of New York for instance. The Cabinet is neither bipartisan nor does it contain any prominent Republican with the exception of Governor Romney of Michigan and Governor Volpe of Massachusetts. Nixon has long talked of a talent hunt for his Cabinet, but when it was finally announced it was found to be a bland assortment of lawyers, businessmen, cronies and Republican politicians whose political ambitions had reached a dead end.

In fairness to Nixon, it must be mentioned, however, that some of his White House aides—Cabinet members—have "extra dimensions", that is they lend extra inches to Nixon's stature in the eyes of the American academic circles where his prestige has been traditionally low. Henry Kissinger, Paul McCracken, David Moynihan and Lee DuBridge are well-known names in their respective fields. Add to the list the Chancellor of the University of Nebraska and the Dean of the Graduate School of Business of the University of Chicago who accepted Cabinet posts.

The character and composition of Nixon's Cabinet are less important than how Nixon presented it before the television audience. This is the first time in history that a President used television to announce his Cabinet and to present its members and their views. It was a news event packaged like a commercial TV show. Clean-shaven Nixon entered smilingly like a television emcee and spoke lines which, it was apparent to everyone but the

most gullible, were well-rehearsed in advance. The same style of careful appearance under controlled conditions of a well-laid out stage that marked Nixon's campaign featured his first act as President-elect. Joe Alsop, the famous columnist covering Nixon's campaign, is reported to have growled: "Look at him—just like a trained chimpanzee. I would love to see him scratch once!" For Nixon, it appears that the projection of the right image through the mass media is going to be a prime concern. The Cabinet presentation on TV is just the beginning.

As McLuhan, the controversial expert on mass media once said, the medium is the message, and as we watched Nixon on television, we felt that a new chapter is going to open in American politics. Advertising techniques would from now on be deliberately and elaborately used to "sell" the President and his policies on a scale never attempted before. It should be pointed out that Eisenhower, Kennedy and Johnson also had expert advice on television appearance, but what was a side activity is now being converted into a central institution of the political process. It is going to be increasingly difficult to separate appearance from truth, rhetoric from reality. In so far as the policies and premises of the policies are concerned, there will be little or almost no change, but an illusion of change will be created through careful advertising campaigns at the service of the President's office. Appropriately, a White House aide of the President-elect is a former Vice-President of the world's largest advertising agency.

Sweetness and Light?

Some critics of Nixon, however, argue that Nixon has to achieve some substantive changes which his advertising experts may blow up as big changes. Their speculation is that Nixon would like to see the end of the Vietnam war as a gambit for popularity. Assuming that Nixon succeeds in ending the Vietnam war, it would be foolish to believe, however, that an era of sweetness and

light will follow. A glimpse of Nixon's approach to foreign relations can be had from his thinking on defence. During campaign, his aides had announced that Nixon hoped to spending \$87 billion on defence by his fourth year in office. Aides said that this figure which assumed a Vietnam peace, includes \$10 to \$15 billion for rebuilding and policing Vietnam and the remaining \$72 to \$77 billion for "non-Vietnam spending". This projection entails an increase of up to 60 per cent in "non-Vietnam spending" over the current level of \$48 billion. Nixon's aides argued that these boosts in defence spending can be accomplished without further taxation, for the projected national growth would produce an additional \$25 billion in federal revenues per year.

If these figures are true, then it is clear that Nixon is going to yield not only to the Pentagon's demands for more nuclear missiles and anti-missiles but also for conventional weapons and training of armies in "friendly" countries in farflung parts of the world. To the "military-industrial complex", Nixon appears to be a push-over. But before we begin to blame Nixon, we should remember that his predecessors too could not fight the power of this complex. It is often forgotten that John F. Kennedy campaigned on the issue of "missile gap" when, many experts argued (including McNamara himself), there was none. It is one of the ironies of recent history that Nixon revived this campaign ghost with talk of "security gap". As Senator McCarthy said during the campaign: we have enough nuclear weapons to kill each Russian three times over and the Russians have enough weapons to kill us one and a half time over. What do we need more missiles for unless we want to kill cats too?

The military-industrial complex feeds itself on the paranoid core of American politics. While warnings have often been sounded in public, neither JFK nor Johnson could stand up against the pressure of this complex. Johnson had to agree to a

"thin" system of anti-ballistic missiles although he and his Defence Secretary knew that this was only a wastage of money which would lead to further wastages. The juggernaut could not be stopped by Kennedy and Johnson; under Nixon, its wheels will be regularly greased.

The interesting item of defence expenditure that Nixon people are thinking about is "non-Vietnam" spending. This item possibly indicates a shift in the tactic of American foreign policy. The only lesson that Washington seems to have learnt from Vietnam is that direct American troop commitments should be kept at a low level in future trouble spots in Asia. This can be done only through extensive arming of troops in countries on the vast rim of China. American commitments would henceforth be on the level of planned arms supplies and training only, and it is on the cards that the Nixon Administration would like to revive "regional" arrangements among Asian countries. In a series of answers to questions put to him by the *New Republic* magazine during the campaign, Nixon said that through "regionalism" and "regional approaches", the U.S. would be in a better position to meet its commitments. Professor Kissinger, Nixon's White House aide on national security affairs, is also interested in regional arrangements. The motive of this shift—if you can call it a shift—is simple: to guard against direct troop commitments and consequent loss of American lives in future encounters, if and when they arise.

Domestic Politics

Likewise, in domestic politics, there is going to be little change. The problem of the cities and of the Negroes is of such a magnitude that mere tax rebates to industries cannot do much. As Michael Harrington rightly pointed out, private business is interested only in profit and it cannot make profit in slum areas unless massive "social investments" are made to improve the condition in the ghettos and the core cities. As Johnson's National Commission on Urban Problems pointed out in its recently published report,

the policy of tax incentives to private enterprise would be ineffective. "It is frequently forgotten that tax incentives may cause a drain on the treasury as great or greater than direct subsidies."

Harrington made another point: the Johnson Administration had talked a great deal about war against poverty but has done precious little about it. There is a gap here between plans and their accomplishments. The public housing programme, for instance, systematically undernourished by Congressional hostility has produced only 650,000 units in the past 30 years whereas the Riot Commission proposed that 600,000 low and moderate income housing units be built in 1969 alone and 6 million units in the next five years.

There is no indication that Nixon has even the conceptual ability to understand the problems. Michael Harrington says that he does not believe in the "demon theory" of Nixon—Nixon is simply a "genuine, sophisticated reactionary". But, then, why blame Nixon alone when some of the worst features of his ideology are shared also by his supposedly more liberal and enlightened predecessors? The Negro problem has been a-brewing for more than a decade—King's Montgomery bus boycott is so far back in history that one often forgets the date of this first sign of Negro stirrings. The problem of poverty is nothing new either—it was Harrington's *The Other America* which made the problem visible to the Kennedy Administration. Vietnam, likewise, was the creation of Kennedy intellectuals whose computers could not comprehend the human or moral equations.

And, finally, the representatives of the popular will—the Congressmen who always jump for action when military budgets are presented, but turn lukewarm, if not hostile, when proposals for radical social and economic change are made. American eggheads, who deplore the slow pace of change in the "traditional" societies should turn their attention to an analysis of their own "modern" society before advising poor underdeveloped

countries.

So, the prognosis of the next four years by this correspondent is that there will be no change in the basic contours of the domestic or foreign policies. But there will be a change in style. Modern salesmanship and advertising techniques have now come

to stay. Nixon's will be an ideal-type of image politics. Even when there is no or little change, Nixon will project the image of a vast change. His carefully controlled use of the mass media will be the "extra dimension" of his Administration. The show has just begun.

The Middle Of A Play

T. DATTA

THE curtains have not perhaps finally rung down on the bewildering Czechoslovak drama. There was the first act with Dubcek kissing pretty girls, the palavering at Bratislava; in the second act came the Russian tanks, the talk of resistance in the streets and the one-hour general strike. The third act, of cowardice, compromise and lies is just over. Lights are now on, there is a good deal of shuffling of feet and munching of popcorn and yawning and idly wondering how it is all going to end. Well not quite the season's best but, then, a change from the other, marathon Vietnam show.

Time was when one country attacked another simply because one was stronger and would like to have exercises (and whatever the other has). So perverse are the times we live in that even violence and murder have lost their innocence. Now a bigger country bombs a smaller one for the sake of freedom and sends tanks and soldiers in the name of socialism. Even the Nazi acts of aggression with calls for living space and the rights of a superior race were so much less bizarre.

The corruption is not merely linguistic. It is profoundly and relentlessly moral. Listen to all the arguments for and against the invasion of Czechoslovakia and one feels they are a net stretched across an abyss.

Leave alone what our rightist friends and Congress liberal hacks say. The outstanding characteristic of all rightist thinking has been a spectacular coition of animal cunning with a lack of normal intelligence. What they say

and do may only be a subject matter of socio-anthropological study side by side with the mating habit of iguanas.

But just to listen to the apologists for the Soviet aggression is to face mental depravity and a lack of ordinary moral sense. The very prose reeks of the rot, the miasma, the stench of equivocation: the decision could not have been an easy one... it will perhaps be regretted most by the Government of the Soviet Union and the other socialist nations who certainly would have avoided such an eventuality if any other course were open to them... the full facts are not yet available about the danger which forced the Soviet Union and her allies to conclude that failure to act would mean the abetment of the reactionary forces and anti-socialist tendencies in Czechoslovakia and disruption of the socialist camp which could irreparably damage peace in Europe and provoke the forces of world war... This should not be ignored by those who... clack clack clack, sayeth the parrot. This is what Orwell called, speaking of the *New Statesman*, the mentality of a harlot. One needs listen to this if only to understand Hannah Arendt's thesis on the banality of evil, that the Nazis who operated gas ovens for the Jews in the morning were all perfectly normal people who kissed their wives, loved their children, spent their Sunday pottering about in the garden and held hands under the moon.

Those who have spoken against the action have been at pains to regret the comparison with Hungary (nobody seems to have mentioned the uncanny

similarity with the Munich Settlement). Oh no, not at all—since we had swallowed whole the Soviet line at that time, still believing in the papal infallibility of Khrushchev. The defence of the Soviet State was at stake then, the capitalist dogs could have attacked Soviet Russia, the sputniks had not yet gone up (as one gathers, the sputniks were a kind of super H-Bomb), ordinary party members were being murdered by known fascists (translation: ordinary people killed some members of the secret police). In all these arguments (used by *Frontier*.—Editor) one thing does not find mention. That the rights we grant to Cuba, to the Dominican Republic and Vietnam were equally applicable to Hungary, that the way the Hungarian people wanted to live was their business and if we did not like it we had to lump it. Marx must have turned in his grave to hear of a communist republic sending tanks to another communist State in defiance of the overwhelmingly popular government, arresting the Prime Minister and then shooting him without trial, all in the name of the defence of the socialist system. But then Marx was the greatest free-thinker of his time, an intellectual par excellence and would have probably been equally

nauseated by the canine devotion and the inquisition mentality of his adherents. The Czechoslovak tragedy has now given birth to the doctrine of conditional sovereignty which in sheer breathtaking brazenness and gall, out matches the infamous Monroe Doctrine.

The blue-collar communists, the activists, are of course encrusted with a different brand of faith. Yes, socialism was being eroded away in Czechoslovakia. Yes the fascists were raising their heads (don't you know, some Czech intellectual said that he was happy Israel won the war with the Arabs? Doesn't it prove that they are all fascists? The fact that in all probability the intellectual might have been Jewish and should therefore retain some instinctive sympathy for this tragic race, the fact that Sartre also said the same thing, from a similar sympathy probably, does not occur to any). But what right does the Soviet Union have to interfere when she herself has allowed similar corruption of socialism? Again absent is any mention of the fact that Czechoslovakia has the same rights as Cuba, Vietnam or any State, that contiguity to any communist State cannot rob a country of the right to determine its internal affairs. Apparently, had Soviet Russia been ideologically pure, as China supposedly is, it would have been quite alright to invade Czechoslovakia. This is neither Marxism, nor morality not even realpolitik. This is just plain political Calvinism.

The laity of course finds it difficult to understand the mental processes of the committed. But one can at least hope that after 1956, after Hungary, after the great Sino-Soviet schism, a little more air and sunlight would enter 'Marxism'. Orwell said in 1945 that ten years hence it might be as dangerous to praise Stalin as it was to condemn then; but that would not be progress, for nothing is gained by teaching the parrot a new word. But then Orwell was only a fascist hyena and Beria the real noble Marxist. When Trotsky spoke of the permanent revolution, that was proof enough that he was in the pay of the White Russians. Now Mao speaks of the same

concept in a different language and that is the inner core of Marxism. The Cultural Revolution in China is hailed as a great device for preventing the bureaucratisation of the revolution, of creation of a privileged class who eat up the revolution. Djilas wrote of the same thing and he became a traitor and liar. The USA is corrupt and evil, hooked on power and LSD. Its war on Vietnam has loosed such a storm of protest in that country that one autocratic President has retired from politics and the youth of the nation is sundered; many a squeak is heard from the Soviet people against the invasion of Czechoslovakia or for that matter the rich-uncle treatment Moscow is handing out to Hanoi. The inability to digest any of these moral questions is what has made contemporary Marxism such a source of stench. It is a great thing, faith, as Groucho Marx might have said, but great revolutions, from that of Luther and Castro, have been built less on faith than on a devastating lack of it.

All this leads to an eerie thought: probably not all of us turn to the thought of a political and social revolution from an active moral sense. Probably the great motivating factor for most of us is simple jealousy and a pathological, almost sexual, power lust. That is why probably revolutions tend to end up by replacing the tyranny of the capitalist with that of the glassy-eyed clerk in a cold room of a vast building. That at least is why the leftists in this country are such a cheerful example of high thinking and high living.

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DECEMBER 28, 1968

Calcutta Diary

GYAN KAPUR

DROPSY and blindness due to adulterated mustard oil are unfortunately a sad thing. But all this sudden activity on the part of Calcutta Corporation somehow rings hollow, particularly when all shades of councillors, the Mayor, the now out Commissioner and the Police Chief are so eager to root out adulteration. It cannot be ruled out that all this sudden activity is due to the entirely natural desire of all and sundry to improve their 'image' before the people now that elections are coming.

The true Calcuttan has learned to live dangerously. He has also learned to look for hidden meanings behind events. Adulteration of mustard oil, of course, is as old if not older than Calcutta Corporation. Even in my childhood, which was two score years back, I remember that our landlord, who was a doctor, used to get his mustard oil from the Alipore Jail where small quantities were supposed to be made by the convicts yoked to the press. Whether this was true or the oil was made by simpler and more humane methods I do not know. But adulteration has been there all along. I had heard from friends doing research in the University College of Science and Technology how the chemists could frequently make a little extra pocket money by analysing samples, obviously adulterated, to find out whether they would stand testing.

Patently, nobody believes the Corporation or any of the official busybodies will be able to do anything. The advice to give up mustard oil for ten days seems to have fallen on flat ears. In fact one cynical comment by a Calcutta citizen was that all this scare against mustard oil was inspired by nothing more but the desire to jack up prices of vanaspati and groundnut oil, the only two substitutes which can be used by the Bengali household in place of mustard oil. There could be more truth in it than one cares to like. In any case one thing is sure. In ten

days time nobody is going to root out an evil persisting for decades.

Adulteration, is part of a general evil, the desire of the Indian businessman to make a quick paisa, somehow, anyhow. Those who do not cheat in weights and measures and quality, cheat in taxes and those who do not do this also simply cheat their workers. The exceptions who do not by and large do these things are rare indeed. Which brings us to the question as to whether something drastic should or can be done. Of course summary punishment was promised to such people by the late Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. All this is now a forgotten chapter. For some time some people used to remind him of his promises. Now there is no one to be reminded of his promises too, it seems. Was it a 'point' of the United Front's programme last time to check adulteration of foodstuffs? But precious little was done about it.

In these columns I had commented some time back about the amusing proposal of some confectioners for exporting rosogollas to foreign countries, making fun of it in my ignorance. I should have known better, particularly as I had observed on another occasion that whatever the British left us, they never gave us a sense of humour.

Going through reports of Parliament recently I was quite taken aback to read of a discussion on rasogollas of all things in the Rajya Sabha. According to Comrade Bhupesh Gupta, as the reports go, rosogollas made the Bengalis what they are. Not their political awareness, culture, education or anything, mind you, but just rosogollas which have been banned on and off during the past few years.

Welcome support, it appears, came from Mr Raj Narain of the SSP who suggested the appointment of culinary experts for exporting rosogollas in large quantities, forgetting perhaps that the country has not enough milk for its children. But Comrade Bhupesh Gupta of course was more of a patriot. He wanted the whole of India to taste of rosogollas first before sending them out. Naturally the fittest place for

such a plan for popularising rosogollas should start in Parliament House and it is not to be surprised that Comrade Bhupesh Gupta expressed the hope that rosogollas would be available in Parliament House. The assurance was quick to come from the Vice-President, Mr V. V. Giri, that rosogollas would be available in Parliament House.

No doubt Comrade Gupta must have felt pleased that rosogolla culture was getting established in New Delhi. But perhaps a few others of his compatriots would feel equally happy at the exercise.

Among the various influences which show how a foreign culture is penetrating any place, is sport. Witness our sports, practically all inherited from the British. The popularity of cricket can be seen on Calcutta's Maidan during winter on Sundays and holidays with groups of young men dotting the entire Maidan, playing cricket of sorts. On a casual stroll one morning, however, it was a surprise to find that apart from the cricket enthusiasts on one stretch of the Maidan alone there were as many as six teams seriously playing baseball, the American game which failed to make any headway in any country which has passed through British influence. The players were mostly from a section of society who have practically no political power. But perhaps instinctively they are turning to the ways of the masters to be.

A friend decided on a sudden impulse to go to a matinee show of a popular picture one Sunday. All the tickets were sold out and he was thinking what to do next when he was approached by a man offering a Rs. 1.50 ticket for Rs. 2.00. He was debating with himself whether he should be a party to this blackmarketing, while some others bought and left. Then a policeman appeared on the scene and hauled away the ticket vendor. Before my friend left the spot, however, the ticket vendor had reappeared without the policeman and again started offering tickets. My friend finally decided to have one and held out Rs. 2.00 for it.

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The Press

Without Within

COMMENTATOR

FROM newspaper reports it would appear that the conference of Indian envoys in South and South-East Asian countries was a unique event. In the halcyon days of non-alignment such conferences used to be held periodically by Mr Nehru, especially on his visits abroad—perhaps to save foreign exchange. Not much came out of these conferences, as India's present international stature, or lack of it, will testify. Mrs Gandhi is merely trying to revive a practice which died a natural death. Just as her visits abroad, more frequent perhaps than her father's, have not rehabilitated India in world affairs, the New Delhi conference of envoys has produced nothing, except for a pious resolve appropriate for the season. Newspapers are not, however, deterred; they regard it as the beginning of a diplomatic offensive against China, a signal for a race to fill the power vacuum that will be created in the region by the withdrawal of Britain and the U.S.A. Not all papers are agreed on how India should go about this, though they are all in favour of a confrontation with China. Some of the papers doubt if economic confrontation alone will enable India to achieve its objective.

Pleading for a military alliance, obviously against China, *The Indian Express* says that officially we are allergic to the mere mention of war whereas the word peace sends us into starry-eyed raptures. Yet our frequent claim to be peace-loving has not prevented us from being embroiled in war. When in one and the same breath we disdain any military commitment on our part and insist that the responsibility for filling the gap

left by the withdrawal of the British military presence in this region is that of the neighbouring countries, where does India's responsibility come in? It is possible that India visualises its role in East and South-East Asia on the analogy of Japan whom circumstances have compelled to keep to a strictly economic plane. That is because Japan's defence is militarily under-written by the Powers which have forced her into an economic strait-jacket. But India has no such guarantee and its military defence is its own responsibility. Excepting the two super-Powers no country is in a position to defend itself militarily without some arrangement with its neighbours. India's refusal to do this while legitimately taking every opportunity to extend trade and commerce will only intensify its isolation without enlarging its influence. This is clear from the emergence of Australia as a leader in this region with a Government and people prepared to shoulder their military responsibilities while extending their economic influence. A country cannot seek the latter while disdaining the former.

The Hindustan Times does not agree with this for, in its opinion, the danger of communist expansionism in South-East Asia would seek to come not perhaps from a direct military confrontation by China but from internal subversion. The answer to it is not military alliances which may lead to counter-military alliances, but in strengthening the economic and political stability of the countries, as the Delhi conference has come to stress. Whether Prince Narodom Sihanouk will be content or not with President Ho Chi Minh's assurance that North

Vietnam will respect the "independence, sovereignty, neutrality, and territorial integrity" of Cambodia, the South-East Asian countries cannot afford to be taken off guard by Peking's recent overture to Washington for signing an agreement on the five principles of peaceful co-existence. China's working of the Panch Sheel with India is a warning in this respect. No *cordon sanitaire* against China is possible without Japan taking a lead in the matter, and Japan which has replaced Russia as the first among China's trading partners is in no mood to throw this position away. But China's behaviour will determine whether the nascent Japanese desire to become a military power once again will work up to a national consensus. For the present Japanese policy is centred on providing aid to South and South-East Asia. The Delhi conference has taken the only practical and realistic view that the political stability of the countries of this region is best ensured by building up their own defensive potential and that economic cooperation towards this end should be the keynote of Indian policy.

The Times of India also is opposed to military alliance. It says that though the fear of Chinese expansionism or communist subversion may on the face of it appear to be a unifying force, the sense of a shared destiny in South-East Asia is much less pronounced than it is, say, among the Arabs or the Latin Americans. In fact, the decline of SEATO shows that each nation in the region prefers, for its own good reasons, to work out a separate equation with Peking and the Communists in its midst. In any case New Delhi has rightly decided that India's resources should not be extended beyond the defence of its own frontiers; the balance of considerations is likely to dictate a rigid adherence to the same course for many years to come. It is therefore natural that New Delhi is somewhat preoccupied at the moment with developing bilateral relations with the countries of the region in the economic and cultural spheres. The paper does not, however, want India to steer clear always of thorny political problems like

the inter-State disputes which erupt in the Asian region from time to time. A policy of judging issues on merits is bound to become sterile if it leads to political isolationism. It is precisely because New Delhi had backed Malaysia to the hilt in its confrontation with Jakarta during President Soekarno's rule that firm ground exists today for it to build up a close friendship both with Indonesia and Malaysia on the basis of mutual respect. The paper has recommended the immediate setting up of a permanent and powerful machinery for forward planning of the country's external relations in economic matters.

Chavan's Scare

The scare raised by Mr Chavan is spreading fast. Reports of Naxalite activities are pouring in from all sorts of places, not all of them likely. It is doubtful if the Naxalites themselves were aware that they had such a large following in the country and practically in all States, including the Congress citadel of Maharashtra. The Bombay police is busy erasing so-called Naxalite slogans from the walls of Bombay city, and a witch-hunt has started. Several political parties, including of course the Congress, the Swatantra, and the Jana Sangh, organised a demonstration in protest against the appearance of Naxalite slogans in the city. The demonstration burnt ceremonially an effigy of Mao Tse-tung. A four-column picture published in the front page of a Bombay paper shows the demonstrators carrying the effigy, their faces lit up with what is supposed to be patriotic fervour. Understandably, the leadership of the campaign has been assumed by Mr Bal Thackeray, leader of the notorious Shiv Sena. It would have been strange indeed if anybody else had done it when the cue was given by Mr Chavan himself. The SS leader has alleged that an engineering firm is harbouring Naxalites who have been brought to the city by an employee of the firm. It should be a safe bet that neither the owner of the firm nor the employee referred to is a Maharashtrian. In order that his party may not be left far behind a Swatantra leader

quickly discovered about 40 active Naxalites in the labour areas of Parel and Dadar.

Mr Chavan must have his own reasons for raising the alarm, and they may not be strictly limited to providing the State Governments with a pretext to detain politically inconvenient persons under the Preventive Detention Act. The arrests have already been quite widespread, and their impact on certain political parties is there for everybody to see. But the uses to which the scare is being put by the State Governments are many. The Lucknow correspondent of *Patriot* reports that the scare of Naxalbari type of revolt by the peasantry in Uttar Pradesh is being raised by supporters of vested interests and those who want to suppress the poor trying to assert their rights. Recently, there was talk of Naxalbari in the eastern districts of the State. What happened in fact in the area was some feeble attempts by the landless peasants to occupy unoccupied land for cultivation. In trying to occupy land "in an unauthorised manner" the landless peasants were doing nothing new; they were only trying to emulate the big landholders in the area who had initially grabbed large tracts with the connivance of the very authorities who are now obsessed with the movement of the landless peasantry. The authorities not only connived at the unauthorised occupation of land by the big moneyed farmers and farming "companies" but had, after a period of irregular occupation of land, regularised the illegal occupation. The district of Lakhimpurkheri in the Terai region on the Indo-Nepal border offers many typical examples of this behaviour by the authorities. Here large areas were occupied by big farmers illegally, and the occupation was later regularised. However, when some landless peasants also tried to do the same, the authorities rushed the police to prevent what they now call "Naxalbari". Last year armed police were sent twice to Palia subdivision of the district to evict the landless "Naxalites" from the land they had occupied. The police was, of course, helped by "law-abiding citizens" who had been earlier

allowed to encroach upon thousands of acres of land. In fact, the clashes between the big encroachers and the landless were made the pretext for police intervention. The big farmers, anticipating police support, were the first to attack the landless. When the latter retailed, the police rushed to establish law and order and forestall "Naxalbari" by evicting the landless from the land they had occupied. The police went through the usual routine of beating up the landless, burning down their huts, arresting them and prosecuting them under various charges of a serious nature.

The season of goodwill is upon us, and everyone must be preparing in his own way for the occasion. A Delhi paper has reported that the Prime Minister has decided to send a light yellow greeting card in hand-made paper with a sloka from Yajur Veda on it. The sloka is : May I be able to look upon all beings with the eye of a friend; may we look upon one another with the eye of a friend. The report indicates, appropriately it seems, that few people within the country can expect to get this card from the Prime Minister.

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Damning the Ultras

RATHINDRANATH CHATTAPADHYAY

ONLY a few months ago I had the opportunity of going through a wonderful Bengali short story. It was all about a priest, old and infirm, who had none but his young daughter to look after. His misery was somewhat ended when the students of a girls' college invited him to perform the pujas. Like all other priests he knew that soil from a brothel is a must for the pujas and decided to collect it himself, as the girls, all coming from respectable families, refused to do it. He, however, failed to collect soil from any brothel—as he was suspected to be a spy by the prostitutes and thrown out of the boundary. Injured, he stumbled back to his place only to find his daughter embracing a notorious young man of the locality. He shouted "Eureka" in joy and started collecting soil from his own courtyard. To his refined sensibility his daughter was a better prostitute than most of the professional ones.

Professional prostitutes do not appear very frequently in Bengali literature these days but amateur ones do. According to Funk and Wagnalls, pornography means a story about prostitutes. In the strict sense of the term, only a few of the current Bengali works are pornographic. But if pornography means "anti-life" literature, as Mr M. S. Prabhakar said in *Frontier* (September 28), most of the novels, novelettes and short stories published in recent times are nothing but pornographic.

This new trend in literature started with the publication of *Bibar*—a novelette by Samaresh Basu—in *Desh* magazine. We wonder whether Basu would have had the courage to write such a novelette had he not been backed by the daring *Desh* group. The typical Buddhadeva Bose-ish eroticism had long ceased to provoke readers. They were eagerly waiting for a new type. The older type of eroticism had moments of refinement but the lay man failed to grasp the inherent poetry. The demand,

therefore, was for something crude—something less poetic, more erotic. Cinema-oriented magazines—so long condemned as immoral—had a sudden boost in their circulation. They succeeded in meeting the demands of frustrated young men and women by publishing pictures of nude Hollywood actresses and half-nude Bombay heroines. These pictures alone enabled publishers to double their sales.

Although filled with erotic suggestions, *Bibar* was refreshingly novel and had patches of brilliance. Thus, enthusiasm for *Bibar* type literature rose to a new height. No doubt, *Bibar's* unprecedented success lay in the publisher's advertisement that it had something of Camus, Kafka and Sartre in it. Bengali literature is not the usual hunting ground of Bengali intellectuals, but when shades of Kafka, Camus, and Sartre are reported in any Bengali novel, it automatically becomes a favourite topic of discussion. So, intellectuals did not lose much time in finding existentialism in *Bibar*. Both the College Street Coffee House and the Letters to the Editor columns in *Desh* vibrated with intellectual gibberish and all aspects of the fine novelette were discussed at length. *Bibar* succeeded in creating a new literary trend within the shortest time possible.

This year my wife and I bought the following puja numbers—*Ultorath*, *Cinema Jagat*, *Dwipanwita*, *Bingsha Satabdi*, *Jalsa*, *Amrita* and *Navakallol*. All the magazines had at least once *Bibar* type novel or novelette. Samaresh Basu himself continued to do his job with almost childish zeal. In *Amrita*, he wrote *Patak* and within one week of its publication, this magazine, which very frequently shows a religious bias, had to be reprinted. *Patak*, like *Bibar*, is the story of a young man who knows all the evils of the world. He lives in a hostel, takes part in the most militant political agitations, visits brothels and murders his mother and a CIA agent out of sheer

disgust. There is no doubt that intellectuals will call it a great existentialist work. They will never realize that *Patak* is an attempt to ridicule existentialist philosophy. It is hard to believe that Samaresh Basu, who started his career as a Marxist, should be so diabolical as to ridicule students with a Marxist flair, but that is what precisely he does. There can be no doubt that the militant students—whom we call Naxalites—are his targets. But Basu is not the only man to have watched the Naxalites. We also have known and seen them. They are, as Charan Gupta said in his *Calcutta Diary* (September 28), nice young men and women, far more sensible than the beer-drinking, twist-dancing, brothel-frequenting ba-lams of businessmen. They are basically different from the upper middle class teddies—they are healthy in their thoughts and political in their behaviour. It is difficult to imagine a Naxalite going straight to a brothel after having a fierce battle with the police. Thus the question is—why does Basu try to portray them as immoral young men? The answer is obvious. If a bad man tries to prove that he is good, he will obviously try to shout at the top of his voice—"that man is bad, therefore, I am good." The failure of *Patak* lies in the fact that Basu tried to vilify a section of students who do not deserve to be vilified. Moreover, there is absolutely nothing of existentialism in *Patak*. Ralph Fox criticized Dickens for not penetrating deep into the heart of a man. He called Dickens unrealistic because Dickens failed to move beyond the surface, thanks to his belief that artificiality is reality. Dickens knew what reality is but always avoided realism at crucial moments because of his strong Victorian make-believe. Material prosperity forced the Victorians to evade realism. Basu, we fear, has forgotten what realism is. His realism is actually the creation of green eyeglasses. The more he tries to penetrate into the hearts of frustrated young men, the more he removes himself from the things he wants. His "life" is really "anti-life", his "existentialism" is the synonym of "anti-existentialism". His young man is having

a strength-of-fists competition with his friend Ranjan:—"It was extremely painful and yet I did not utter a single word. All the friends were requesting Ranjan to let me go. Ranjan, however, did not like the idea. He was looking at my wrinkled face. I knew that I was looking real bad at that time. All of a sudden Ranjan let me go . . . and then said, 'come on, stand me a bottle of beer!', Anath came to soothe me but before he could do so, I shouted, 'get out *sala banchot*'. Others laughed merrily at what I had said and Anath shouted 'this is simply bourgeois entertainment'. Before he could finish, Nitish taunted him—"my foot, this beggar has brought some bourgeois entertainment from nowhere." Nitish criticizes Anath's view that fist competition is a sort of bourgeois entertainment and gets the favour of the writer. Ranjan's mother is in love with Nitish and he knows that her fleshy body is for his delight! This Nitish is Basu's New Man; Anath belongs to the old world because, unlike Nitish, he does and says what he believes. Let us not forget that Nitish is also a revolutionary!

In *Bingsha Satabdi*, Basu's *Andhakarer Gan* also has murder but less of "existentialism". Harish and Nagen managed to loot a lot of money. Nagen fled with the bag, was chased by the police and ultimately killed by a bullet. Harish was not known to the police. He had come in search of the bag. He knew that the bag must be in Nagen's home. He decided to sleep with Nagen's wife and find out the truth. He succeeded in sleeping with Nagen's widow (and that, too, within a month of Nagen's death); but could not find out the bag. He went on with the game. "It was dead at night, there was darkness all over. Minoti was lying on bed. One of her breasts was fully exposed. It would be hard to believe that she was the mother of two children. Her breasts reminded one of those of young girls—developed yet slightly soft. The sari was thrown in another corner of the bed. Her lower portion was partially covered with a sheet. Harish kept his mouth close to the open breast. Minoti wanted more of inti-

macy—her gaping mouth exposed lust, her eyes demanded conjugation." Existentialism? One would hate to associate the great philosophy with this sort of writing. In *Dwiparwita*, Basu had his third story with the background of murder.

Of course, one swallow does not make a summer. The puja numbers brought quite a few miniature Samaresh Basus to the forefront. One such litterateur is Sankar Chattopadhyay whose *Hriday Rajya* is a ludicrous attempt to imitate Basu. Moreover, traditional titillating writers like Prabodh Sanyal have not stopped writing this year—they are only more eloquent and less refined.

However, there is still a very healthy flow of sanity in Bengali literature even today and this is quite evident from some fine novelettes published this year. A unique story of the frustrations of young girls has been written by Ashapura Devi. I doubt whether this novelette will receive the attention it deserves, but it has all the qualities of a great novelette. Here is realism at its best. These are the girls whom we know and see every day in trams and buses. These are the girls with whom we sympathize. The same can be said of a story by Harinarayan Chattopadhyay in *Nabakallol*. But the novel by Banaphool in the same magazine is a class by itself. We are happy to note that age has developed (and not affected) his sense of refinement. He is, as he has always been, sarcastic, critical and simple.

It is high time writers and readers were conscious of the sinister designs of a group of influential publishers. There are people who, instead of being fish-sellers, are publishers by a strange joke of the Almighty. But the mentality of the fisherman remains. Students of serious literature should see them in their true colours.

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Year's Biggest

BY AN ART CRITIC

THE thirty-third annual exhibition of the Academy of Fine Arts, which was inaugurated on December 15 by Mr Atul Bose, is a show that, judged purely by size, justifies the sponsors' claim as being the climax to the year's art events. The exhibits number three hundred and seventy, the works of artists are from practically all over the country. There are paintings to suit all tastes: small, medium and large; abstract, semi-abstract and representational; oils, water colours, temperas, paper collages and three-dimensional collages, sketches and graphics. Besides, there are a number of sculptures which include some wood carvings.

The reviewer would like to begin with a candid confession: the reviewing of such a large and omnibus exhibition adequately is a job beyond his competence. Neither has he the inclination to pick on individual items and pontificate on them. Apart from jargoneering and giving vent to judgments of dubious validity such an attempt will make the review look like a slightly abridged version of the list of paintings in the exhibition catalogue. The review will, therefore, be confined to some broad general observations summing up his impressions of the exhibition.

The general standard of the exhibits this year seems to be better than that of the past few years. Understandably, there are quite a number of paintings that deserve to be hung only in their creators' archives, but such paintings are less visible than before. There are also paintings which look anonymous, a kind of miniature version of many one-man shows put up by painters whose zeal overruns their artistry. But a sizable percentage of paintings is technically competent, which is saying a lot. And the few good ones are fine jobs. To stress the obvious, the award-winning ones—there are twelve of them—are not necessarily the best but they reflect the taste of the panel of judges. The reviewer can readily mention three paintings

that have gone unhonoured which are in his view superior to some that have been honoured. Finally, some of the best works in the exhibition are by younger artists whose names are little known or unknown to most of us. Likewise, a few known veterans have contributed canvases of which a tyro would not be particularly proud.

The sculptures exhibited are few in number of which some are interesting.

The exhibition will continue till January 17 and will be both a Christmas and New Year attraction. It is hoped that the large number of people who will, undoubtedly, visit the exhibition will find it as interesting and enjoyable as this reviewer did. And those who have more than a layman's interest in paintings can repeat their visits and pick their own winners, a job on which the reviewer has fallen down rather badly.

A New Play

BY A DRAMA CRITIC

CHALACHAL'S fourth production in five years, that was how the president of the group described their new play in his prefatory speech at Rabindra Sadan the other evening. *Dhanapati Grepter*, directed by Rabi Ghosh, seeks to be profound in analysing social relations in a slapstick sort of way. The racketeer is exposed by a horde of burglars and ex-convicts in a state of drunken stupor. Dhanapati, the name signifies what he stands for, manages to be free from prison after a week through the manipulations of his politician lieutenant. Then by a strange coincidence, singularity of purpose, to be precise, as many as seven characters break into his chamber in search of wealth but find the author of many misdeeds that Dhanapati is. Each one has a story not very distinct from the other; the motivation, which is escape from hunger and privation, led them downhill. Apparently they are keen to steal a drink rather than a million from the capitalist's kitty.

Dhanapati and the rest have a confrontation. He is hauled up before an improvised court set by the thieves

themselves and is branded a super-thief who fattened himself at their expense. The police arrive late in the day to disperse the drunkards for disturbing the peace-loving, non-drinking neighbours. The spell is broken and Dhanapati scratches his head to bring himself back to reality.

As a production it leaves much to be desired. The excellent sets and proper lighting make it impressive looking but too many characters of the same type detract from the purpose. The director repeats the gags which also takes away much of the effects. The girl is not exactly a necessary party in the scheme of things. There are some good performances. When after Dhanapati (Robi Ghosh) has gone away to fetch his wife the others take the floor for quite some time, the audience yawns for his arrival back. Even in his mute movements he is expressive. Among others Bholu Dutta and Nemai Ghosh occupy the stage for the longest time but never seem tiring. One hopes one could say the same thing about everybody else.

Letters

Kerala

K. P. R. Gopalan described the attacks on the police stations at Telli-chery and Pulpally, a "betrayal of the teachings of Mao Tse-tung.

What are the facts? One fact is that poor Ajitha thought that thousands of people would join them when the "revolution" started.

Another fact relating to the 'thousands of people joining' is this: "If we tried to go on the offensive when the masses are not awakened, that would be adventurism. If we insisted on leading the masses against their will, we would certainly fail." And "the revolutionary war is the war of the masses; it can be waged only by mobilizing the masses and relying on them." (Mao Tse-tung). So the question arises, had the Narayanan family studied the situation of the masses? If they had, then the present position would never have been

reached, and by now the whole of Kerala would have been turned into a free Communist State!

If the 300 people who joined Narayanan were considered to be the masses of Kerala, then the whole adventure was completely divorced from reality.

Political power grows out of the barrel of a gun. But it is not only a gun which is necessary for revolution. In our country the so-called extremists have rejected the parliamentary form of struggle. Not only this, at some places they are even helping the Congress in the coming elections. But the Communist Party of China says, "the parliamentary form of struggle must be fully utilized". (Delegation of the CPC in the Soviet Union—November 10, 1957).

The Dangeites are calling this a Mao-style revolution. But was it a Mao-style revolution? No. In a Mao-style revolution the masses are totally involved. It is not a revolution of 300 people, with the masses looking on without sympathy.

I do not suggest that Mr Narayanan is a CIA or CBI agent. But I have to say that he is no true Maoist. Are these people the product of that left-wing communism which Lenin called "an infantile disorder?"

Marxism has no relation with adventurism and terrorism.

N. K. S.

Foreign Capital

This letter has reference to the articles and letters published in *Frontier* on the "oil" crisis. The crisis has shown the influence of foreign capital on the Indian economy and the power it wields. The volume and importance of foreign capital in the economy can be shown by means of a simple two-way table as under:

	(Rs. in crores)	
	1961	1965
1. Total Plan outlay	7,700	11,610
2. Net liabilities of the official sector	1073.4	2341.6
3. Net liabilities of the private sector	649.0	905.0
4. Total (2+3)	1,722.4	3246.6

This table is too simple and has obvious limitations. (Those who are interested can consult the benchmark survey on Foreign Assets and Liabilities of India by the RBI and also a follow-up report published in its bulletin in March 1967). Moreover, these figures do not say anything about the various facilities given to the foreign investors in the form of relaxed conditions for collaboration, tax relief, repatriation guarantee and sundry other concessions (in fact, the recent proclamations of Mr Desai show that another spurt of concessions is in the offing.) Nevertheless, it shows in absolute terms the volume and trend of foreign capital in India: it shows that roughly about one-third of the total capital invested in India up to 1965 was drawn from various foreign sources, private and official (the report in the RBI bulletin in March 1967 predicts a rising trend).

The main sectors in which foreign capital has evinced interest are mainly petroleum, iron and steel, manufacturing industries, including heavy engineering, and projects leading to the creation of various social overheads like building up of dams, power generation and similar things. Obviously, the main source is the USA and various world bodies under direct or indirect control of the U.S. Other countries which have also contributed substantially are, in order of the volume of their 'aid', the UK and the USSR and West Germany.

Recently Soviet 'aid' has increased markedly. One notable feature of this aid is that, unlike the capitalistic aid, it has gone into the basic sectors. It may be too unjust to complain about the Soviet exploitation and perhaps too early to term it as social imperialism (the term was used by Lenin at a different point of history). But there is no denying the fact that the Soviet Union in these days is trekking the bourgeois path of diplomacy to fight the capitalist countries.

In short, we find that foreign capital has permeated into all the important sectors of our economy and has transformed it into an economic colony. In this exploitation its chief collaborator is the comprador capi-

talist class of India. The plans with their huge expenditure on transport and communication and other social overheads were formulated to help them in this plunder. An witness of it is the recently completed railway connecting Visakhapatnam to the mines of Boiladilla. Its purpose is to help Japan to exploit the iron ores of the region. Its historic parallel is the opening of railways in India by the British in the 19th century.

In this situation the talk of self-reliance by New Delhi is sheer hypocrisy; its purpose is to hoodwink the people. No redress of the grievances of workers or, for that matter, of the people can come from this quarter. It will be good if the leaders of our left institutions realise this and change the mode and terrain of the struggle.

A READER
Calcutta

Corruption!

Mohim Roodro's discussion in your issue of December 7 of a "left left left" who fiddled three rupees from his office account does not surprise me.

I have puzzled a "left left left" (who does not use contraceptives for reasons of vanity rather than pleasure) by my surprise at his lack of loyalty to his sexual partners. He explains, "But, Mrs Haldane, they are only very poor women. No, of course, I do not give them money, that would be prostitution and criminal, but I choose women who are so poor that it is impossible that they could arouse any emotion in me".

What should these women think of him? I fear some of them admire him partly as a consequence of his political activity, however little they may understand it. Should "a revolutionary" who "believes in changing society" partake of intimacy with someone precisely because that person is more economically oppressed than himself?

H. SPURWAY
(Mrs J. B. S. HALDANE)
Hyderabad

Marriage, Vedic Style

The article "Corruption! Corruption!" (December 7) is a timely exposure of pseudo-revolutionaries and phrase-mongers. The recent marriage of the daughter of an Andhra extremist leader, in the most traditional Hindu style with the chanting of vedichymns, shows how much faith he has in what he preaches as a revolutionary leader.

ONLOOKER
Hyderabad

Violence For What ?

I am inclined to disagree with Mr Khokan Majumdar's platitudinizing in *Frontier* (December 14). His contention that 'violence is not necessarily associated with crime' may be correct. But his 'endeavour to delve deep into the root cause of all this social malaise' has really been infructuous especially when there is hardly any instance of violence having ever been indulged in by the terylene shirted young students as a protest against any social malaise. Trains and trams and buses were not burnt to hammer home a demand for an increase in the rice ration in Calcutta; no demonstration was held to have the city communications improved. Nor were many men and women killed in July 1960 or enormous property destroyed in January 1968 in Assam as a protest against social injustices. Nor indeed did the BHU young men and the Lucknow students take to violence with a view to improving their lot.

Last year in Rajasthan I had the misfortune of seeing the students destroying anything that was English (except of course their trousers and shirts). Four months ago, in Indore some of us were derided and abused by some young students on the road for our conversation among ourselves in a language that was not Hindi.

Living as he does near Calcutta, Mr Majumdar should know better how many thousands in Calcutta are pavement dwellers. They are not known to have burnt any tram. Mr

McNamara was 'slighted' not because living conditions in Calcutta were considered sub-human. The reasons are too obvious.

So also are the reasons why Mr Majumdar sent his letter to *Frontier* instead of sending it to the English daily that carried the editorial 'Privileged Hoodlums'. As a reader of that daily, Mr Majumdar certainly knows that whatever 'bad name' it may have, it has at least the honesty to publish even the damndest thing said against it—a reputation that *Frontier* cannot also be credited with.

ASHITAVA GHOSH
Secunderabad

Irregular Appointment

Allow me to congratulate Mr J. Mukherji on his letter entitled "Irregular Appointments" (December 14) in which he criticizes the DPI for not taking active interest in the interviews and results of the empanelled teachers of Government sponsored colleges. As Mr Mukherji points out, this has led to the victimization of a number of teachers. Some of the evils of the British regime have recently been revived by the bureaucrats of Writers' Building. The worst is the system of promoting lecturers to assistant professors on the basis of interviews. For a long time, promotion on the basis of seniority was the rule. Thus even when freedom-loving lecturers were engaged in bitter quarrels with the Secretary or the DPI or the principals, they were promoted whenever vacancies occurred. The worst possible confidential reports could at best delay appointment, but the candidates used to achieve success ultimately. The interview system has deprived the teachers of a very legitimate right. Immediately before the last general election we had the opportunity of hearing a lot about departmental screening to be conducted by the "ruling party" if it returned to power. It did not, and the proposal for departmental screening was suspended by the bureaucrats. There is no doubt that President's rule in West Bengal has given these bureaucrats all the en-

couragement they wanted. The revival of promotion by interview has been helping them in their bid to screen "unwanted elements" in Government colleges. Wide breaches have already been seen in the civil list. Here is an example: a lecturer in History who ought to have been promoted on the basis of seniority has been superseded by a junior who, for a long time, was not engaged in delivering lectures in class-room. Another example: only a few weeks ago, substantive lecturers in English literature were asked to submit "papers" for two posts. It was stated in the notice that the promotions would be departmental. However, I have heard from the horse's mouth that the interview is going to be a farce. Some people were in England and elsewhere for "higher studies". They have decided to come back. A few of them have already done so. They will have to be accommodated. Fortunately, two persons have retired. So, a "departmental interview" is about to be staged. Some ten to fifteen unfortunates who have lost everything they had by shouting at the top of their voices in the class-rooms will gather together and be asked all sorts of odd questions not really connected with P.U. and B.A. studies. They have, at least, succeeded in letting the world know that they are far more powerful than people take them to be.

C. R.
Calcutta

Socialist State ?

One of the leftist parties holds that revisionists are in power in Soviet Russia, but all the same she is a socialist State! I find this contradictory. Lenin said that the internal character of the revisionists is bourgeois and their external character is that of helpers of imperialism. So a State where the revisionists, who are bourgeois in character, are in power should be called, not a socialist, but a capitalist State (or social-capitalist State).

I may be wrong because I am not a "Marixst"!

ASIM BHATTACHERJ
Ariadah

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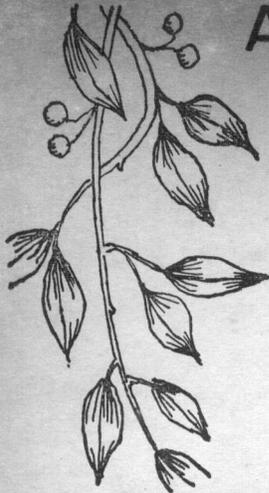
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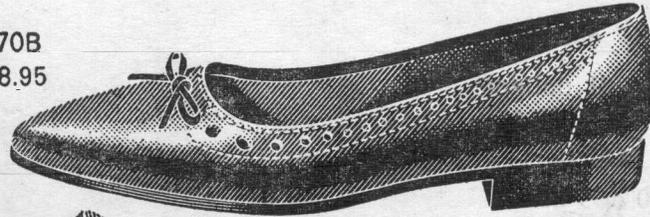
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A PLEASURE TO GIVE A JOY TO RECEIVE

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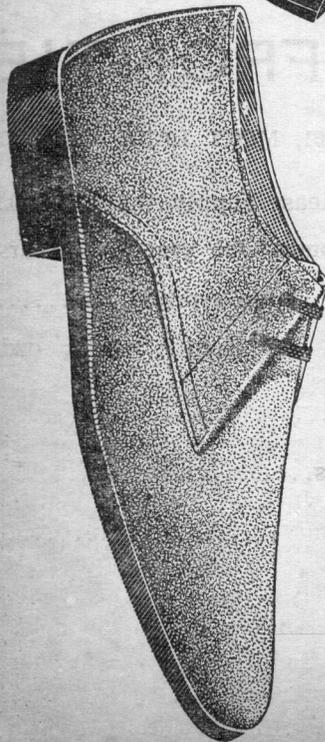
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