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THE DINOSAUR DIES

THERE is a certain grimness—and also something farcial—in the way a once-great party, the Indian National Congress, came apart in the course of the last one week. It would be idle to pretend that this event is of no consequence. Not that splits in the Congress have not been in the past. Every now and then, men have broken away from the ancient, altogether heterogenous mass which the party has always been; sometimes ideological disenchantment goaded their decision; at other times, the provocation has been more subjective. Some amongst those who had moved away subsequently found it possible to return to the old mass, again induced by a mixed bag of reasons. In fact, the Congress has been very much like the Hindu religion itself: a general air of permissiveness has pervaded its acts and thoughts—and non-thoughts—; people have entered its fold and have left it with about equal ease; no particular codes of behaviour have been demanded of its membership; it has sort of bumbled along, the ancient trooper, despite seasonal accretions and seasonal desertions. Peripheral disturbances have not affected the central nervous system of the huge inert body.

All this was true last week, but is no longer. The fissure this time is vertically down the middle. No amount of structural engineering at the margin can now restore the old Congress, which has as of mid-August 1969, ceased to be. Whatever the result of the Presidential poll (not known at the time of going to press), the consequence would be identical. The death of the Congress is, with effect from this week, official. There is of course little doubt that the two warring camps would each claim to be the sole legatees of the dead dinosaur and would assail their opponents as imposters and interlopers. Such postings of claims will be entirely natural, and equally entirely ultra vires of reality. The anachronism which was the Congress, the absurdity which was the Congress, that fantastic hotchpotch of contraries and contradictions, can no longer be put together, either by Mrs Gandhi and her associates or by the Syndicate. The Congress is dead.

That this death has come as a happenstance does not negate the fact itself. True, despite the Prime Minister's perorations, the break-up of the Congress has not followed the causality of class alignments. Those who are presuming otherwise are only deluding themselves. Mrs Gandhi

has been uttering shibboleths apropos the poor and the downtrodden. These are exercises in convenience and merely indicate that the results of the mid-term poll have carried a lesson for the lady: given the temper in the country, come 1972, the only possibility for her to survive in power would lie in a radical overhauling of the Congress party's—and failing the Congress party, her own—image. There is this apocrypha about the protracted negotiations between the representatives of the German Wehrmacht and Trotsky at Brest-Litovsk for the cessation of hostilities in the early months of 1918; how at the end of the negotiations the Germans threw a banquet which Trotsky was supposed to attend donned in formal attire; how he wired for instructions from Moscow whether, as a General of the proletariat Red Army, it would be proper for him to go to the banquet in dinner jacket and tails; and how Lenin cabled back to say that, so long the Germans are willing to sign the Treaty, if they insist, Trotsky must attend even in petticoats. It could be the pragmatic Mrs Gandhi has discovered the circumstances to be similarly desperate, calling for desperate measures. It is perhaps equally true that, among her present company, there are several who would in all seasons gravitate wherever the gravy is: one can identify a fair assortment of kulaks and capitalists who are today mouthing brave socialist slogans because they have been convinced by the Prime Minister that only thereby could they preserve their El Dorados.

It would therefore be a mistake to go into raptures over the developments during the past week. But to attempt to hoo-hoo the consequences of these developments would be a blunder of about equal proportion. The death of a party which was the principal agency of political transformation in the country for more than eight decades is going to cause reverberations all around. Neither the polity nor the economy is going to be the same from now

on. Politics, after all, is the business of capturing power; economics concerns itself with the distribution of incomes which is made possible by such capture of power. On both scores, very significant shifts are likely to occur in the wake of the dissolution of the Congress. These shifts cannot—and will not—follow particular patterns laid down in the scriptures on the processes of social and political development. But that disproves neither the basic tenets of

the scriptures nor the reality of the deep import of the current happenings in the Indian scene. Historical development has always been generously assisted by particular accidents at this or that moment of time. Such accidents cannot be written about *a priori* in the textbooks. But they do still take place. To shut our eyes to these events and to refuse to incorporate their lessons into the corpus of received knowledge will be behaving like an ostrich.

Border Clashes

That the Khabarovsk talks on border river navigation did not break down was good news, but the announcement that the commission will not meet again until next year indicated that the wider question of the Sino-Soviet border, which the Chinese have been attempting to introduce, had been shelved. The bloody clashes in Sinkiang have shattered hopes of a pause and may have dangerous consequences.

If the Chinese know where to nibble, the Russians know where to strike. The odds are against the Chinese in Sinkiang because of poor communications with the rest of the country and the presence of vital nuclear and petro-chemical complexes. Besides, there is, according to Russians, a restive minority in the province whom the Kremlin has tried to exploit. It is easier for the Russians to move their troops and armour into Sinkiang in a great show of strength and a pre-emptive strike on the nuclear installations may be pretty tempting for the army command—as it was with the Americans—which in the Far East is now headed by a rocket expert. There are historic precedents to inspire the Russians, for instance, the crushing blow they inflicted on the Japanese in 1939. The concept of blitzkrieg dies hard. The 'Leninist' virtues of an offensive strategy are being debated among generals in Moscow.

Border disputes are sickening, the more so when they occur between

States like Russia and China—altogether shocking to those who in 1950 thought that the road to a bigger revolution via China, if not India, had emerged in sharp relief. Instead, after a few years, came the ideological dispute which tore asunder the international communist movement. The battle of words has now given way to bloody clashes and the future is uncertain. Even the unthinkable may happen—a Sino-Soviet war.

On the border question, the general belief is that the Chinese are bloody and aggressive. The reason for this is perhaps that since 1949 the Chinese have been involved in operations in Korea, Tibet, against India, and now Russia, while the Russians had merely shed fraternal blood—East German, Hungarian, Czechoslovak and Chinese. The once heroic Red Army has been turned into a ruthless gendarme of Russian imperial interests, but since no Americans or Indians are affected, they can turn a blind eye to the postures and practices of the Kremlin when it goes in for the Chinese.

Contrary to the general assumption, the Chinese do not want abrogation of what they and the first red-blooded Leninists called unequal treaties imposed on a weak and divided China by the Czars. One can recall a bit of history here. On July 25, 1919, the Russian Deputy Commissar for Foreign Affairs, Karakhan, said, in the course of a famous but

forgotten pronouncement: "We hereby address the Chinese people with the object of making them thoroughly understand that the Soviet Government has given up all the conquests made by the Government of the Czar, which took away from China Manchuria and other territories..." A year later a draft Treaty of Friendship proposed by Soviet Russia to China opened with the following clause: "The Government of the Russian Socialist Federated Soviet Republic declares null and void all the treaties concluded with China by the former governments of Russia, renounces all seizures of Chinese territory and all the Russian concessions in China, and restores to China, without any compensation and favour, all that had been predatorily seized from her by the Czarist Government and the Russian bourgeoisie."

For many reasons, some of them valid no doubt, these declarations of the original Bolsheviks were never put into effect. But—and this is important—the Chinese, while insisting on the injustice of the treaties, do not want the areas with their considerable Soviet population and industry, to be handed back to them. What they say deserves quoting at some length: "The Chinese Government holds it must be confirmed that the treaties relating to the present Sino-Soviet boundary are all unequal treaties imposed on China by Czarist Russian imperialism. But taking into consideration the facts that it was Czarist Russian imperialism which compelled China to sign these treaties when power was in the hands of neither the Chinese people nor the Russian people, and the Soviet people bear no responsibility, and that large numbers of Soviet labouring people have lived on the land over a long period of time, the Chinese Government, out of the desire to safeguard the revolutionary friendship between the Chinese and Soviet peoples, is still ready to take these unequal treaties as the basis for determining the entire alignment of the boundary line between the two coun-

tries and for settling all existing questions relating to the boundary. Any side which occupies the territory of the other side in violation of the treaties must, in principle, return it wholly and unconditionally to the other side, and this brooks no ambiguity. The Chinese Government maintains that what should be done is to hold negotiations for the overall settlement of the Sino-Soviet boundary question and the conclusion of a new treaty to replace the old unequal ones, and not to hold 'consultations' for 'clarification of individual sections of the Soviet-Chinese State border line'... The Chinese Government once again proposes: each side ensures that it shall maintain the status quo of the boundary and not push forward by any means the line of actual control on the border... each side ensures that it

shall avert conflicts and that under no circumstances shall the frontier guards of its side fire at the other side; there should be no interference in the normal productive activities carried out by the border inhabitants of both sides according to habitual practice."

This habitual practice, however, may lead to great trouble. Don't the Chinese push cattle and farmers in Sinkiang in front or fishermen in the Far East as a cover for penetration? Stray cattle and shepherds can thus provide a pretext to the other side to open fire, to exercise strongmanship. The Americans have learnt some lessons in Korea and Vietnam. The new Russian bourgeoisie are yet to learn it in their eagerness to take over the American role in Asia. They are yet to realise that China is not Czechoslovakia.

Mere Watch And Ward ?

The Central Industrial Security Force is nothing but another form of watch and ward, according to the Union Home Minister. But it is not clear why there should be a central watch and ward for the Union's public undertakings. The Home Minister is yet to give a convincing reason. The workers in Durgapur, who led protest demonstrations on August 13 and 14 and are thinking of a call for a Durgapur-Asansol bandh, view the matter in an altogether different light. The Durgapur affair in which the local watch and ward staff were themselves the victims makes their suspicions all the more strong. The workers contend that the Centre is making its hold on the local industrial security forces tighter by bringing the cadres under central surveillance. The sole purpose of the tighter bureaucratic vise is nothing but a stifling of the local allegiance and sympathy that the Durgapur watch and ward staff may possess. If this be the reason for unifying the Industrial Security Forces—and there is no other reason conceivable now—it is difficult to explain away the role of the

CISF as that of mere watch and ward. On the other hand, as the Durgapur workers see it, the CISF is but a parallel police force which draws directions and incentives straight from the Centre and which stands in relation to the local authorities much as the central services cadres stand in relation to the State Governments.

It is entirely natural that the Deputy Commissioner of Dhanbad would view things accordingly. His advice to owners of collieries ("Stand on your own legs") perfectly fits in with the Home Minister's attitude. The mine-owners should not all the time rely on the police for maintaining discipline in the mines; now and then they should teach the workers a lesson on their own. The Home Minister, who wants the Central Industrial Security Forces to maintain discipline within public undertakings premises, said, however, that he was surprised by the DC's statement and that he would take him to task. Why should he? He is too old not to know that bureaucrats cannot live upon periphrasis alone; they have to act on the directives and in action

cannot but lay bare the circumlo-
cuted truth.

The Burragarh colliery managers too worked on the essence of the Home Minister's new philosophy, made clear to them by the DC, Dhanbad. They did not rely on the police, but killed one worker and maimed six others by electric shocks and rods. They have however put

up a case of theft against the victims. But even their compatriots in other collieries have not taken the allegation seriously. They have already disowned the Burragarh managers whose act they said was heinous. It remains to be seen whether the Home Minister owns himself up to the original crime.

Woman vs Woman

A correspondent writes :

Politics apart, in which almost everything goes these days, the contenders are often not divided even on the basis of sex. Neither Mrs Tarakeswari Sinha nor Mrs Kripalani, both distinguished Congresswomen, one a former Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, did seem to care much for Mrs Indira Gandhi's recent stand on the Presidential election. On August 16 Mrs Sinha went to the extent of writing to Mr Nijalingappa, Congress President, urging removal of the Prime Minister, Mrs Gandhi. Women of the country have apparently not united.

Mrs Sinha's letter makes very interesting reading. Mrs Gandhi has to go if Mr Reddy wins. Mrs Gandhi has to go if Mr Giri wins. Mrs Gandhi has to go if the official Congress candidate, Mr Sanjiva Reddy, loses. This is wonderful. It is stated that the leader of the Congress Parliamentary Party, and hence Prime Minister, can hardly stay if her advice to "vote against Mr Sanjiva Reddy" is disregarded by a majority of Congress members. It is not stated that Mrs Gandhi has given no such advice, at least openly. A free vote can be equated with advocacy for a particular candidate only on certain unproven assumptions, while Mr Nijalingappa's approaches to the Swatantra and the Jana Sangh admit of only one interpretation. The second argument given is that if a majority of Congress legislators reject Mrs Gandhi's advice to vote against Mr Reddy, something that does not exist, the Congress must repudiate

the Prime Minister who must also be condemned by the country. How come? Where does the country come in when what is under discussion is how Mrs Gandhi may or may not have behaved as a Congresswoman? Thirdly, it is said that if Mr Reddy loses—"which is extremely unlikely"—the Congress has to find an alternative leader for the present leader's failure to get her party's candidate elected. Mrs Sinha forgets that by August 16 Mr Reddy had ceased to be the candidate of the Congress; he had become a candidate of the Jana Sangh and the Swatantra too.

Both Mr Nijalingappa, to say nothing of his cohorts, and Mrs Gandhi must know that political principles were just about irrelevant to the recent dispute. It was a question of power on both sides. What else is politics about, in any country or at any time? The mildly saddening conclusion remains that women are no more capable of putting up a united stand than men have proved through history. The message of congratulation from the world's first woman Prime Minister to the world's second was indeed heartwarming; but Mrs Gandhi must ask herself why so many of her sisters in the country have so little affection for her. This is, of course, no argument against women occupying positions of power as often as men. Whatever the upshot, Mrs Gandhi has certainly shown that she could take on a formidable array of crafty practitioners of the political game—even without much support from women in her own party.

Devalued Franc

A correspondent writes :

The eighth devaluation of the French franc since World War II has been welcomed as a piece of political finesse. The announcement of the 11.1 per cent reduction in the franc's gold parity to coincide with the "economy's progress towards equilibrium" and the determination of the authorities not to yield to the temptation of a higher devaluation, say 20 per cent, which would have had a snowballing effect on other international currencies, point to a fundamental change in France's attitude after de Gaulle lost the referendum on regional administration and the Senate. Last November, de Gaulle overruled M Ortoli's proposal for a modest devaluation of 11 per cent to check the currency's steady fall in the exchange markets. The old parity established since the 17 per cent devaluation on December 29, 1958, when the General came to power to cleanse the economy, had become a prestige issue. A major currency disaster could be staved off at the Bonn conclave of finance ministers through a patchwork. But the operation of the complicated currency system depends on the willingness of the financial authorities to realign their overvalued or under-priced currencies. A majority of President Pompidou's *inspecteurs de finance* were of the opinion that the periodic raids on the currency were immensely harmful for the country's gold reserve and it was essential to take the franc to a position where it would not be regarded as the most overvalued currency.

A recent analysis has shown that prior to the establishment of ECM agricultural policy, French shoppers could easily absorb the impact of a 20 per cent devaluation since they consume very little of imported goods. As agricultural products in the domestic market are now priced in dollars, their costs will surely go up by the extent of devaluation. What will be the EEC partners' reaction to the additional subsidy granted to French agriculture? As it

is not politically acceptable, a process of tax and subsidy changes may ensue and ultimately, there could be a reimposition of barriers at the national frontiers. The EEC members are shocked that France did not take them into confidence according to custom and Common Market rules. Against French tradition, the decision which was taken on July 16 remained a secret until its pronouncement. Therefore, there was no panic, no run on the franc, although the currency had been cashed abroad for some time at 10 per cent or 15 per cent discount. The speculators had September in mind when the general election in West Germany will be held and the member countries of the International Monetary Fund assemble for the annual meeting. The devaluation is a recognition of France's economic disorder. A continuing inflation has been steadily raising the cost of living—the prices went up by 6.3 per cent during the year ended June last. The first half of the current year was marked by a 27 per cent rise in exports, against 35 per cent in imports. France's foreign exchange reserves dropped from a comfortable \$6.9 billion to \$3.6 billion of which about \$2 billion is due to the IMF and the Basle partners. In this situation, devaluation became unavoidable.

To restore health to the economy and make French products competitive in foreign markets, the Government has tightened credit and exchange controls and promised a balanced budget for 1970. In spite of the Government's desire to limit private and public spending, the labour unions are determined to force a wage increase when last year's agreement comes up for review in October. The French workers will have to tighten their belts further following the reduction in purchasing power after devaluation. Reports from Paris say that union leaders were unimpressed by the talks they had with the Labour Minister, Joseph Fontanet. They have warned that if the Government does not go beyond Fontanet's position, the return to work after the summer holidays could be stormy.

The logical follow-up of the devaluation is an upvaluation of the Deutschmark. Germany's monthly trade surplus is at the height of a boom. When the period of cooling off comes, the trade and balance of payments surplus will further rise,

making a change in the German exchange rate inevitable. But this would not be before the parliamentary election in September as the political parties do not want to make revaluation an election issue.

View from Delhi

The Next Round

FROM A POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

WHATEVER the outcome of Saturday's poll Mrs Indira Gandhi's future as Prime Minister is uncertain. If Mr Giri wins, she would have won the current round, a major one and just that, against the Syndicate. That does not guarantee her final victory. On the contrary, if Mr Sanjiva Reddy wins, she might last out a little longer because the Syndicate might give her a long rope.

The Presidential contest only epitomises the issues and does not clinch them. But its outcome would have its impact on the pattern and course of Congress politics and to that extent the country's politics. The immediate issue in the Congress is one of the Prime Minister's accountability to the party. The larger issue is one of the allies the Congress should choose for the next round of power adjustment at the Centre.

The Syndicate is a coterie of under-employed political bosses who have long been out of office. On its periphery are Mr Morarji Desai, just eased out of office, and Mr Y. B. Chavan, a possible target in the next Cabinet reshuffle. In its heyday, the Syndicate stagemanaged two successions and managed Mrs Gandhi's election as Prime Minister twice. But once in office, Mrs Gandhi assumed for herself a supra-party role. There was very little accountability to the party in the sense that she began acting on the assumption that there was already a fusion of the government leadership and the party leadership in her. This was bound to

lead her to a confrontation with the Syndicate, still the major power faction in the Congress. Mrs Gandhi had no power base but only an image but the Syndicate still has considerable hold over the party apparatus. Mrs Gandhi's strength lies in her liaison with leftist parties and the control she has of the government machinery and the patronage she can dispense as Prime Minister. She has a following among MPs because she is already in office.

But last week she had to declare an open war on the Syndicate by going against the party candidate in the Presidential contest. Fighting for survival, she left nothing to chance. The entire government machinery swung into action to back Mr Giri. One Chief Minister after another was asked to ditch Mr Sanjiva Reddy and campaign for the Prime Minister's candidate. In fact, one of the Chief Ministers has quietly tape-recorded the Prime Minister's telephonic instructions to him to work for Mr Giri lest he is framed up on any charge.

Even as polling was on last Saturday, election petitions were being got ready by the Syndicate, to be filed if Mr Sanjiva Reddy lost by any chance. The worst the Prime Minister's camp could prove against the Syndicate is the issue of whips which are supposed to amount to coercive practice. But the Syndicate is talking of damning evidence of misuse of governmental machinery. Whoever wins, the result is going to be challenged through election petitions.

Mrs Gandhi has tried to explain her refusal to issue a whip. The first Fakhruddin Ali-Jagjivan Ram letter was drafted by Mr Siddharta Sankar Ray. That was before Mr Asoke Sen defected from the Syndicate and took over the role of honorary adviser to the Prime Minister's camp in the midnight missive war in which the issue of Mr Nijalingappa's coalition talks with the Swatantra and Jana Sangh leaders became the central issue.

It is quite possible that the Syndicate has been holding talks with the right parties for a coalition but the Prime Minister too, the Syndicate pointed out, made overtures to the parties of the left. Two days before the poll, the Mysore Chief Minister, Mr Veerendra Patil, was kept waiting outside the Prime Minister's parlour for over an hour and he returned without meeting her because she was holding talks with a prominent CPI leader.

The signature campaign in the Congress Parliamentary Party for a "free vote" was meant to demonstrate the Prime Minister's strength. The Syndicate launched a counter-signature campaign and there was a lot of "cross-signing" as it were. But the climax in the Parliamentary Party came on Friday when the executive started a whisper campaign that if Mr Giri won it would mean dissolution of Parliament. Which indeed should have been a forbidding prospect for any MP especially after they

had voted themselves a raise in salaries and allowance to conform to the socialist pattern.

The issue is still open whether Mrs Gandhi would seek dissolution of the Lok Sabha if Mr Giri wins and if the Syndicate tries to topple her. In such an event, she must also be prepared to lead defections from the party and fight the elections on her own, against the official Congress.

In any case, it would be good to see the Congress break up and all the sedulously fostered myths dissolve. That would underline the irrelevance of some of the Opposition parties. If Mrs Gandhi has rediscovered a radical elan for the Congress, as the CPI thinks, the CPI itself would become an irrelevant factor in the Indian political calculus. The PSP has been left high and dry and will cease to be of any relevance now. That would leave only the CPI (M) and the SSP in the left. Among the rightist parties, the Jana Sangh, which has neither supported bank nationalisation nor welcomed it, would face a slow erosion of strength. A split in the Congress leading to polarisation outside should be most welcome but not to the parties engaged in the power game. The leftist outcry over Mr Nijalingappa's clandestine negotiations with the right reaction is as meaningless as the bogey raised over Mrs Gandhi's liaison with the communists. The more important point missed is the polarisation of Marwari capital and non-Marwari capital in the Presidential contest. One Marwari newspaper after another gave up its open opposition to Mrs Gandhi and lined up quietly behind her while the non-Marwari Press continued its offensive. The scribe who thinks that all the Congress politics of the last twelve months hinge on two issues—a fertiliser plant scheme that did not come through and the probe against a big business house that was not instituted—may not be far wrong. Both the groups of big business had high stakes in the Presidential contest and they will have higher stakes in the next round, though one cannot readily explain why.

August 17, 1969

War Clouds ?

By A CORRESPONDENT

"IT is worthy of note", *Pravda* wrote two years ago, "that the Western press persistently exaggerates reports of tension on the Soviet-Chinese border in connection with China's territorial claims." But now with Soviet ambassadors scurrying to foreign chancelleries of West Germany and Japan, not to mention the U.S., to report about the clashes with the Chinese, and "Radio Peace and Progress" solemnly warning the Chinese of nuclear attacks, there is obviously no need to exaggerate the state of affairs prevailing along the Sino-Soviet border. Ever since the Ussuri clash in March there have been persistent reports about a build-up along the border and stray skirmishes. The latest clashes on the Sinkiang border seem only to confirm the gloomy forebodings of an all-out war voiced in recent reports from Moscow and Peking.

A most important report about the Soviet build-up comes from Harrison Salisbury, *New York Times'* specialist writer on Russian affairs, one of the few Western reporters to have visited the Sino-Soviet border after the Ussuri clash. And if Salisbury reporting from Hanoi can be taken seriously (as indeed he was in 1966-67) there is no reason to doubt the basic contention of his present report. Salisbury writes: "The plain fact is, as I quickly found out when I managed to penetrate the security belt with which Russia and China now shield their frontiers, that preparations for war are already far advanced. On the Soviet side hundreds of thousands of troops have been brought into position or are stationed in holding areas adjacent to the region of probable operations against China. Massive new air installations have been constructed across Siberia, and existing facilities have been radically expanded.

"The build-up of Russian troops is turning Mongolia into an armed camp. The Russian have emplaced the most sophisticated weapons in

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the armoury of contemporary warfare in forward positions both in Mongolia and along the Sino-Soviet frontiers."

Although following the Ussuri clash visits by foreigners to Siberia have been sharply curtailed, a trickle is allowed into Mongolia. And "it was a visit to Mongolia", Salisbury writes, "that gave me a chance to make first hand observations of the crisis area. Not that the Mongols were lifting the lid on any important military secrets. But to one who first visited this strategic area 10 years ago, the changes told more than any words. The first thing I saw on arriving at Ulan Bator airport was Soviet M.P.s in marked jeeps, and Soviet transport planes ferrying Soviet officers from the capital to their stations in the remote countryside. Every evening, near the central post office, Russian sergeants and corporals rendezvous with brightly dressed and made-up Mongol girls, the couples then vanishing into nearby parks. Soviet military headquarters has outgrown the enormous official Soviet compound and has been transferred to its own base, 10 or 12 miles outside the capital. In the hinterland, particularly in travelling along the north-south axis of the trans-Mongolian railroad. I saw entire towns built by Soviet army engineers."

Nuclear War

Salisbury also does not consider the threat of nuclear war as an "idle one". He reports that "Soviet nuclear missile units are in place along frontiers east of Lake Baikal and deep in Mongolia. The Chinese say the Russians openly warn that their guided missile units in trans-Baikal and along the Chinese-Mongolian borders are ready to deliver a crushing nuclear rebuff to China. The location of the principal Soviet forces in Mongolia, stationed in the extreme eastern tip and in the south and within missile range of the Chinese nuclear production facilities at Pao-tow and Lanchow, suggests that the Russians are prepared to make good the threat if the order for battle is given."

In Moscow "books, military studies

and memoirs pour about the Zhukov campaign at Khalkin Gol River in eastern Mongolia, and about the Soviet blitzkrieg against Japan by Marshals Vasilevsky and Malinovsky at the end of World War II. It is no coincidence that Russia's tank forces today are deployed in the same position they occupied in August, 1939, and August 1945".

"Soviet military men", he says, "speak with confidence of their ability to deal with China quickly: a swift strike, as was carried out in 1939 and 1945; a pre-emptive nuclear blow at the Chinese nuclear facilities; the seizure of Peking within 10 days or less and the replacement of the 'mad' Mao regime with one of genuine communists, friendly to Moscow."

"No one knows for sure," Salisbury wonders, "whether there are those in Moscow who recall the Japanese adventure—the brave Japanese hopes and the disaster that followed—or who realistically relate a Soviet blitzkrieg to China's population of 800 or 900 million; to the highly politicised Chinese masses; to the militarized leadership of the Mao regime; to the patriotic chauvinism that war with Russia would stimulate; to the existence of Chinese plans to fight a 100 year war, if necessary, against a nuclear power; to the ability of China to absorb and contain the elite Soviet missile armoured forces; to the potential that China possesses for nuclear retaliation; and to the ease with which a 'short, swift war' on the Mongolian frontier might escalate to embrace all of Asia and the world." The irony of an American journalist warning Soviet leaders against the dangers of getting bogged down in a land war in Asia hardly needs to be emphasised.

War Psychosis

Preparations for war cannot be complete without building up a war psychosis. The Soviet build-up along the border has been duly accompanied by well-orchestrated campaigns against China in the Soviet radio and press. *Pravda*, for instance, published in May two lengthy articles by Konstantin Simonov entitled "Think-

ing Aloud". The articles were based on a journey to the Ussuri and the Pacific coasts. "When a hostile power appears before our eyes", Simonov wrote, "the power which, if given the green light, stands ready to present humanity with not only tens and hundreds of graves but with tens and hundreds and millions of graves, then a bitter but iron logic comes into force: this power must feel that none of its actions will stay unpunished, from its very beginning, from its first step..." "Even though we are peaceful people we know how to handle weapons. We don't like to mention this but in view of the circumstances at the border we have to do so." Making a lot of 'loud thinking' Simonov said how he felt "something close to personal hatred" toward Mao Tse-tung and how some day "I would have to come here (Ussuri) again as a war correspondent."

An article published in the weekly news magazine *Literary Gazette* in July accused Mao Tse-tung of seeing himself as an Asian Bonaparte who dreamed of conquering neighbouring countries "almost as far as the Black Sea". The article said Mao was a successor to Churchill, Hitler and Dulles, all of whom had tried to encircle the Soviet Union at various times. The article asserted that China was planning to seize or subvert the Mongolian Republic, Korea, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Burma, Indonesia, and even India and the Arab countries. Mao wanted to start a third world war to put his plans into effect.

Even the poets are not idle. Yev-tushenko identifies today's Chinese with the Mongol hordes that overran Russia almost a millenium ago. "One must go back to Soviet anti-Nazi propaganda at the height of World War II", reports *New York Times*, "to find any parallel for the concentrated bitterness and hate the Yev-tushenko poem expresses against Mao's Chinese." And reports from Moscow testify to the racist feeling now running high in Russia. Harrison Salisbury in his article quotes a Soviet colonel as saying "It is time to teach those yellow bastards a

lesson." Some earlier reports also mentioned the vogue in Russia of calling the Chinese "little yellow coolies."

Chinese Steps

China too has been engaged for some time in strengthening her defences along the Soviet border. As New China News Agency reported on March 20, following the Ussuri clash eight million soldiers and civilians were engaged in strengthening the defences of China's north-west frontier with the Soviet Union. "They are resolved", the report said, "to make further efforts to arm themselves with the invincible thought of Mao Tse-tung so as to build the north-west frontier of the motherland into an impregnable wall of iron and to smash the Soviet revisionist renegade clique's anti-China provocations and aggressive ambitions."

However, as the Agence France Presse correspondent, Daniel Comparet, reported from Peking on August 4, "There are no visible signs that real war preparations are going on here in spite of numerous newspaper articles urging 'preparedness for war and scarcity'."

Hardly a day passes without vehement press attacks on the "Soviet social-imperialist revisionists", and of late the newspapers have been asking the people to economize in cereal consumption. The New China News Agency has accused Moscow of "undertaking frenetic war preparations in the central state of Kazakhstan." The Russians, it said, were building missile sites, strategic roads and nuclear testing grounds in the area and coercing young people into anti-Chinese para-military organizations.

Although Daniel Comparet could not find any "obvious signs of war preparation" there seems to be some evidence, he says, that "an economy drive is going on affecting both the agricultural and industrial sectors... However, there are no visible signs of a food shortage. The Peking markets are amply stocked and reports from some regions show that agriculture is doing well."

Daniel Comparet also notes that "Peking has tempered its call for preparedness with professions of China's peaceful intentions. An editorial article in a Peking newspaper recently proclaimed China's desire for peace and unwillingness to fight "even only for one day"—although it added that if necessary China would do so "to the end"."

The Economic Future Of Eastern India

ARJUN BARUI

BEFORE independence, Calcutta and Bombay used to be the two poles of industrial development in India. Calcutta's prosperity, however, was much more dependent than that of Bombay on the buoyancy of exports such as tea, coal, raw jute and jute manufactures and hence on the prosperity of world trade which was (and still is) in turn dominated by the fortunes of advanced capitalist nations. Bombay, and even more, Ahmedabad, produced manufactures mainly for the internal market. Most of the industry in Calcutta was controlled by the British: as soon as the latter saw political power slipping from their grip, their interest in investing in India slackened. Bombay had, for various historical reasons, a rigorous Indian business class who gained materially with every political concession wrested from the British by Indian nationals.

So Calcutta was declining relatively to Bombay even before independence. But independence, with its partition of Bengal, accelerated this decline. The factors behind this acceleration of the rate of decline in relation to Bombay and Gujarat were not all straightforwardly economic. The loss of the jute supply and the emergence of East Pakistan as a competitor did cause damage to the most important industry of West Bengal, namely, the jute industry; the further loss of the relatively prosperous rural market of East Bengal damaged the consumer goods industries of West Bengal. But some of this damage was repaired by shifting areas to jute cultivation; the loss of the East Bengal market was partially repaired through

the increased Government expenditure on such projects as the development of the Damodar Valley and the Durgapur Steel Plant.

But this was far from enough to repair the trauma of the partition and its after-effects. The explicit policy of the Government of India emphasised the development of backward regions, and West Bengal could not rank as a backward region in 1951 in terms of literacy, income per capita, or the degree of industrialisation. On the other hand, Maharashtra or Gujarat also could not rank as backward regions, compared with, say, Orissa, Bihar, Telengana or Rajasthan. At least initially, Maharashtra or Gujarat did not receive any special treatment from the Government of India. Then how does one explain the different rates of progress of Maharashtra, Gujarat and West Bengal (or Eastern India)?

The answer lies almost entirely in the peculiar structure and behaviour of private industrial and commercial capital in West Bengal. In West Bengal indigenous capital—primarily Marwari capital—inherited a sizeable fraction of the British industrial and commercial assets in Eastern India. These businessmen were not rooted in West Bengal in the same way as Gujarati businessmen were in Gujarat. Some of these groups—the Birlas, the Dalmias, Sahu Jains, the Thapars—had grown large enough to plan in terms of control of the whole Indian market. Eastern India (comprising West Bengal, Bihar, Orissa and Assam) continued to be the major source of profit of most of these groups; but their target was the

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whole Indian market. With that end in view, they fixed their attention on New Delhi for control of governmental policy. They did not want any special privileges for the State Governments concerned. What they wanted was that they should be left free to dispose of their profits as they pleased. The 'so-called policy of balanced regional development professed by the Government of India helped them in keeping their enterprises 'free'; whenever they wanted to exploit even cheaper labour than was available in West Bengal (Eastern India) or whenever they could obtain special concessions from other State Governments they appealed to this policy of decentralisation of industry. When this policy did not suit them, they ignored it or tried to bend its interpretation in their favour. That the professed policy of development of backward regions was totally ineffective is evidenced by the fact that Bihar with its tremendous endowment of mineral (and power) resources continues to be one of the poorest and one of the most industrially backward States in India.

British Control

The fact that West Bengal (and Eastern India) continued to have a large group of industrial enterprises in traditional fields—tea, coal, jute, engineering—under British control was a further obstacle to investment in industry or other selected fields. These foreign capitalists did not feel the same confidence in the good faith of the Government of India as the Indian businessmen did. They therefore tried to repatriate as much of their profits and capital as possible without losing their markets too quickly. (One of the biggest business groups was caught trying to smuggle out several crores of rupees in a single year, and there is no reason to believe that this was the only group doing such a thing or that the practice has ceased even now.)

By contrast, businessmen in Western India had long come to depend upon the internal market, confined their industrial operations mainly to Western India (with the major excep-

tion of the house of Tata), and had come to have a working partnership with their own State Governments. Even before independence, in Maharashtra and Gujarat the indigenous businessmen (with the exception of the Parsis) and the Congress politicians came from the same social class and often belonged to the same linguistic groups. With the British in the saddle of power in industry, a greater degree of self-government for pre-independence Bengal and Bihar meant a cleavage between the businessmen and the local politicians who were Bengalis or Biharis and who were landlords or professional groups. After independence the businessmen who inherited the mantle of dominance from the British belonged to minority linguistic groups in the States of Eastern India: they already were occupying monopolistic vantage-ground, so that there was little room for small businessmen belonging to the majority linguistic groups in Eastern India to be co-opted into the plutocracy and thus create a division along pure class lines. Class divisions along lines of linguistic divisions persisted and became enhanced in degree as Government policies favoured monopoly groups.

Paradoxically enough, the fact that the top businessmen in West Bengal (or Eastern India) were big people proved a severe handicap to the growth of industry in West Bengal (Eastern India) in more ways than one. We have already pointed out that they wanted to control markets on an all-India scale and invest their profits wherever they pleased. Moreover, they prevented the Government from effectively helping small industrial units whose base was the market of Eastern India only. Here a glance at Madras will provide a clue. Madras has a smaller population than West Bengal and a very much smaller base. Yet the loans sanctioned by the State Financial Corporation of Madras totalled Rs 19,32 lakhs during the period from 1960-61 to 1967-68 whereas the loans sanctioned by the State Financial Corporation of West Bengal during the same period

totalled only Rs. 11,37 lakhs. The loans from State Financial Corporations are supposed to help small and medium enterprises. Thus the Government of West Bengal in this direction made a much smaller effort to aid small-scale industry than the Government of Madras.

If somebody thinks that since West Bengal is already developed industrially and therefore the small industrialists here do not need Government financial help, then let him look at the figure for Maharashtra: the total amount of loans sanctioned by the State Financial Corporation of Maharashtra from 1960-61 to 1967-68 came to Rs 22,35 lakhs, which is almost exactly twice the same sanctioned by the State Financial Corporation of West Bengal during the same period.

It is not only in sanctioning loans that the State Government of West Bengal has lagged behind in aiding small-scale, or for that matter, large-scale industry. Other State Governments have in the past granted concessions in the form of rebates on electricity rates, cheap land for industrial estates, leases of minerals or sources of raw materials at extremely low cost, and so on; West Bengal has lagged behind in this also.

Stress on Agriculture

It would be wrong to conclude from this analysis that the trend of industry away from West Bengal could or should be reversed by the State Government going all out to aid industrialists at all costs. Given the fact that other regions such as Punjab, Maharashtra, Gujarat and Madras have been growing much faster economically than West Bengal in recent years, the public investment that the State Government itself might put into industry will not be nearly enough to reverse the trend of economic growth and therefore the direction of private investment; the same resources going into agriculture could yield much better results in terms of economic growth—if the prices of agricultural goods do not fall.

Secondly, given the fact that private industrialists operating on an all-

India scale will continue to regard any "leftist" government in West Bengal with suspicion, no concessions short of complete capitulation and abandonment can in fact win the favour of private industrialists. If private industrialists find out that the State Government is willing to bargain for more industrial investment, they would exact subsidies from the State for committing investments in the State which they were going to commit anyway, for reason of private profit.

Thirdly, in many new industries foreign capital has come to play a dominant role: foreign capital is even more chary of leftists in West Bengal than our home-made free enterprise men. The international monopolies will probably feel safe only with a Suharto-type Government in India: no leftist Government could win their favour without giving up socialist principles not only in practice but also in their platform speeches.

For all these reasons, it would be a mistake to believe that the State Government(s) could alter the trend of industrial production and investment in West Bengal (or Eastern India) without (a) managing to make agriculture a dynamic sector and (b) getting control over most of the investible resources of the State(s) with a view to increasing the total amount of investment in industry as well as agriculture—if need be, under the auspices of the public sector. Weak-kneed concessions to private monopoly interests—Indian or foreign—can in no way solve the problem of stagnation of West Bengal or Eastern India.

One can raise questions about the very slow growth of agriculture in Eastern India or about the dependence of West Bengal's industrial economy on investment programmes in the public sector controlled by the Central Government, but I believe that my conclusion in the previous paragraphs will stand in spite of such questions. I shall take this up in a later article.

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Off Balance

READER

THE days of a united Congress party are over. With the Prime Minister having made up her mind to play the game to the last it is now fairly certain that before long there will be a major split in the Congress. Even if the Presidential election, the result of which will be declared as this journal goes to press, does not prove to be the turning point in Indian history, it will certainly have a big impact on future happenings. Either way the result will lead to Congressmen aligning themselves openly with the leftist and the rightist camps which might in the near future result in a sharing of power in New Delhi.

As mentioned earlier in these columns, to the country's big newspapers the Congress has always been India. For understandable reasons also. The owners have never had it so good; here was a party which was always prepared to dance to the tune of the big bourgeoisie. A crack in the Congress thus naturally causes worries, particularly when the worst offenders are on the losing side. It is certainly with dismay that the Tatas and the Goenkas are finding Messrs Nijalingappa, Patil and Kamaraj turning into liabilities from fruitful assets. Thus after the Prime Minister finally rejected Mr Nijalingappa's request to issue a whip in favour of Mr Reddy, the papers have come out with the pitiable cry that the Congress is gone and so is the country.

The near-helpless condition in which the newspapers find themselves today makes one thing clear: their inability to correctly appreciate a situation and to act accordingly. The Prime Minister has certainly not gone socialist and the papers should not have had any trouble in backing her. That would also have been in keeping with their essentially opportunistic role. But then opportunism

is a tricky game. After a time it causes complacency. That is what happened to the Indian Press. The Syndicate was thought to be supreme (thanks to those wise members of the editorial staff, the political correspondents) and the Press acted blindly. While it shouted against the Prime Minister, large sections of Congressmen themselves sided with Mrs Gandhi and at the time of writing this despatch (August 16), the mighty editors must be gazing at one another in surprise. Particularly in West Bengal, where the major dailies never lost an opportunity to back the Congress since last February, the editors must be getting pale with rage at the treacherous conduct of these people in not paying heed to their editorials and deciding to side with Mrs Gandhi.

The most obstinate of the lot, *The Statesman*, cannot altogether abandon the hope that some of the potential defectors (in the Congress party) will pause at the brink and have second thoughts considering the far-reaching consequences of their action. Stating that the conflict in the Congress today is more personal than ideological, the paper wonders whether leaders like Mr Kamaraj and Mr Chavan, by no means conservative in their outlook, disapproved of Mrs Gandhi as she had tried to establish her personal supremacy both over the party and the Government. Referring to the Congress President's talks with the Jana Sangh and the Swatantra, the paper says he could legitimately have sought support in quarters in which he would most readily be able to find it. The leftist parties being committed to support Mrs Gandhi he could only have turned to the other camp.

It is rather a confused piece. If the conflict within the Congress party is personal then why should the Prime Minister and the party Presi-

dent seek support from divergent political camps? How is it possible that a personal quarrel should have developed immediately after bank nationalisation causing the Congress President to rush to a camp which can render support only to those with whom it has similarities in outlook? *The Statesman* of course has an answer to this. It is the communists, it says, who having infiltrated into the Congress caused both Mrs Gandhi and Mr Nijalingappa to fall victims to their tactic of division. Thus it seems the Syndicate is not so strong, it can be outmanoeuvred by the communists.

The post-election editorial in *The Statesman* touched a low water mark. There can be no doubt that the writer will be rewarded for his Swatantra frenzy.

Wishful thinking is noticable in the *Times of India*. It says, by a process of make-believe which is not easy to understand, an impression is being fostered that the success of one or other of the candidates will herald the dominance of one or the other power group in the ruling party. The fears expressed about possible changes in the scope and functions of the presidential office are derived from the imagination of political theorists. The crucial question is that of maintaining a coherent administration and a strong, united party. If the Congress party splits into two it will spell danger for the country as no other party can take its place. The present difference in the Congress party is stated to be not so much of principle as that of style and emphasis. The paper seems to be more concerned about the unity of the Congress party than the Congress itself. Incidentally it is strange that these papers should go on saying that the present quarrel has no principle involved when Mrs Gandhi herself has talked of basic differences. The editorial is, however, less attacking than before, which is understandable, considering the rapid change in the situation.

The *Indian Express* which has always been more direct in its attacks than the others, headlines its editorial

'The Wreckers'. Who these are, are not mentioned by name but one should have no difficulty in recognising the 'culprits'. Anyway the wreckers are told that while they seem bent on seeing their task through

they should realise that it is not only the Indian National Congress they are hacking into bits but something else also. The paper has certainly thrown up its hands in desperation and declared the game lost.

Book Review

The Credibility Gap

M. R.

BETWEEN THE LINES

By Kuldip Nayar

Allied Publications, pp. 231, Rs. 16

SHOULD a newspaperman tell—is an unreal question as posed by Mr Kuldip Nayar, because the fear of offending somebody should never be an inhibiting factor. It is a matter for one's conscience and no more. But the larger question here is whether a newspaperman can disclose what he came to know in the course of his duties as a government official and not as a newspaperman. The Official Secrets Act, one presumes, applies to all including Mr Kuldip Nayar. For instance, the soldiers, civilians and journalists who have written about the NEFA debacle of 1962 were deterred from disclosing many things they knew to be true lest they attracted action under the Official Secrets Act. Some of them disclosed things they normally should not have and got away with them because the Government did not invoke the law against them. If Mr Kuldip Nayar could disclose official secrets with impunity (and even quote from some of the official documents) he is one of the lucky few who belong to both the worlds. Those who knew their New Delhi beat would tell you that there is a gap between what they really know and what they can safely report. The information gap leads to a credibility gap and almost everybody plays the poor newspaper reader for a sucker.

A part of Mr Kuldip Nayar's book is an "insider's" story and the rest, of a semi-insider. As an insider, he

was very much a part of the vicious game of news management. As the Information Officer of the Home Ministry, it was his job. The game had acquired a certain finesse by the time the late Mr Lal Bahadur Shastri got the portfolio. But it had started much earlier. Mr Kuldip Nayar narrates at length the drama behind the deliberations on the official language and the spurious bilingualism that was innovated as a sop to the non-Hindi sentiment. The Home Ministry was deliberately deceiving the nation when it created the impression that the Parliamentary Committee on Official Language was a Committee of Parliament when in fact it was not. When the intrepid Mr Frank Anthony began briefing the Press about the proceedings, Mr Kuldip Nayar psyched the press corps (pity their ignorance) into believing that reporting what Mr Anthony told them amounted to breach of Parliament's privileges. The myth was sustained till the end because the then Home Minister, Mr G. B. Pant, did not want the public, especially of the non-Hindi regions, to know about the sordid drama. The press corps stopped reporting them. Mr Nayar prided himself about this achievement of his in the art of news management at a seminar organised by the All-India Newspaper Editors Conference in New Delhi. But it is surprising that his chapter on bilingualism fails to record this vital fact, his role in misleading the Press.

In his prefatory piece, Mr Nayar says he was Mr Lal Bahadur Shastri's PRO. (This is the term used). Un-

Artists' Dilemma

MOHIM ROODRO

TODAY one wonders who the artist is to paint for. Such a situation there never was in the past, for he was never an independent producing unit. There was always somebody who was using him, kings or religions. He was more or less an order supplier, following the instructions of his keepers. He never had a free choice as to what he is going to paint or sculpt. No, he was part of a machine for propaganda. All talk about self-expression and independent vision is only from yesterday. Then how do we find ourselves left with the masterpieces of art? Can an order-supplier create masterpieces? Well, the order supply business had obvious loopholes, and in any case, wherever there is greatness, it has been smuggled into his job by the artist, knowingly or unknowingly. But there was one very important aiding factor conducive to greatness. The artist, one feels, had a sense of identification with the order that he was to supply. The religion was his own and it had a penetrating control on his thinking. His faith mixed with his inborn creative force to produce the great works. The painters of kings and their glories, I should imagine, could not have had such devotional identification. But there was a total acceptance of the inevitability of monarchy and the superiority of the royal personages. Thus again it was not a free thinking rebellious mind painting for royalty, but one that did not question the standing arrangement.

But those days are gone. I am not going into the history of the 'change, nevertheless one does not have to fight a duel to prove that the circumstances are different today. The kings are not there, and religions do no more sponsor art. What's more, with the development of thinking processes we now challenge everything, all established institutions, dogmas, creeds and doctrines. It is an age when the individual has been asked to think for himself. And the individual artist has no patron.

Marxists have their stock answer

wittingly he is giving away the truth about the Government of India's information officers in general. In theory, they are the information officials of the Ministry to which they are attached and their dealings are strictly limited to the news media. It cannot even extend to the public. An information officer represents his Ministry and not the Minister. But in practice, many officers have allowed themselves to be used as the PROs of their respective Ministers, a detestable practice that has developed of late, with publicity-conscious and publicity-hungry Ministers.

The book puts together facts and details which normally do not find their way into the news columns or commentaries. And in the process it makes certain intriguing disclosures and gives an insight into decision making in New Delhi. For instance, it was well known that the Government had decided to devalue the rupee under the World Bank's pressure. But one official denial after another of the newspaper reports were issued perhaps in the belief that a lie acquires credibility through sheer repetition. Mr Nayar's incisive account corroborates what indeed was known to be facts but was never admitted by the Government.

Tezpur

The book throws some new light on the evacuation of Tezpur amidst panic over the Chinese drive in NEFA. It is good to know that the Assam Government was not to blame for the scare evacuation but the Additional Secretary of the Home Minister, the controversial Mr L. P. Singh, now an all powerful man in New Delhi, who wrote out detailed instructions for the unseemly pull-out. We also owe Mr Nayar the knowledge that neither the Government nor its intelligence had any knowledge of the Chinese declaration of cease-fire and they knew about it from the newspapers. The newspapers hit the stands five or six hours after the news had broken and the Government was unaware of it! And we also owe Mr Nayar another piece of information, that Mrs Renu Chakravarti, "a Communist woman leader from West Bengal, gave Shastri the impression

that she was not opposed to the detention of E.M.S."

A book of this kind should always help fill the gaps in one's knowledge of the happenings and to that extent, this effort is timely and useful. But it is risky to place too much reliance on Mr Nayar's versions of certain episodes. For instance, he says that Madras politics was getting stickier for Mr Kamaraj day by day due to his "ambitious Finance Minister, C. Subramaniam." Mr Nayar says this in connection with the hush-hush conclave of the five Congress leaders at Tirupati in the summer of 1963 to decide who should succeed Nehru. The fact is, Mr Subramaniam left Madras politics in April 1962 and migrated to New Delhi to become a Minister at the Centre and certainly he was no longer Mr Kamaraj's Finance Minister in the Madras Cabinet. Again, Mr Nayar says that in 1962, Nehru wanted the outgoing Congress President, Mr Dhebar, to make Mrs Indira Gandhi the next Congress President. In 1962, the outgoing Congress President was Mr Sanjiva Reddy. Mrs Gandhi succeeded Mr Debbar as Congress President in 1958-59 and was instrumental in dismissing the Kerala communist Ministry. Another claim of the author which can be challenged is that Mr Kamaraj was the author of the plan that came to be known as the Kamaraj Plan. This is one of the myths sedulously fostered by the Press. But Michael Brecher (in his *Succession in India*) points out that the author in fact was Mr Biju Patnaik who discussed it with Mr Nehru. When Mr Patnaik mentioned Mr Kamaraj as one of those who could be brought to organisational work, Mr Nehru even doubted if Mr Kamaraj would agree to give up office to take up party work. And it was finally decided that the plan should be announced by a senior organisation man like Mr Kamaraj.

When Mr Nayar gets so many verifiable facts wrong, the credibility of an otherwise useful and engrossing book suffers. And the hardened cynic should be pardoned if he were to whisper: the book has to be read between the lines.

to this situation—the patrons will be the people. When the people come to power, when a new order, a new civilisation (that's what is promised) comes into being, all arts will thrive, provided they are people's art. One does not know where precisely one draws a line to describe people's art as against not people's art, but whatever and wherever it is, a hope is given. Identify yourselves with the people (who is he ?) and there is hope. But nobody answers a more simple and immediate question. What the artist should do just now ?

Actually, there is a simple answer. Stop it all, painting, sculpting and writing poetry. In an impassioned article in a Bengali publication a dedicated left-thinking intellectual more or less had to cry that out. It's the time for struggle, for sacrifice. It's the time for hatred, hatred of the enemy. There is no time for poetry.

Well, then there is no time for painting either. When the country looks like a vast concentration camp, emaciated people crawling around for

lack of basic human conditions who are you painting for ? Who cares if you paint or not ? Why paint ? Throw away the brushes, take up a banner, and go and join a political party whose promises and methods sound right to you and work for the uplift of the people, of the country, for the changes that will bring the country health and happiness, honesty and earnestness, sense and purpose.

More Messy

Do the left parties say this to the artists ? I don't know. But the problems lie deeper and are more messy. Can you really tell an artist to stop ? Can an artist stop ? And should an artist stop ? An artist is a person who paints, for he cannot but. It is his very existence ; he finds himself painting. One can choose to be an engineer or a doctor or an accountant or a businessman. Of course, even there the question of aptitude comes. But even if there is some possibility of making a selection of a career from amongst these, one

cannot choose to be an artist. Therefore, the only choice an artist is given is to be or not to be. A suppressed artist in all likelihood will only prove second or third rate in some other field. It's bad bargain, even for the revolution.

The other day I met my friend, an artist whose work I have so far have found of very high standard. He is a figurative artist but very modern. He is identified with one of the prominent left parties, and believes in the party's credo and policies and activity. A person who has gone through much hardship due to his political affiliations. He knows my art very well. Knows that I paint non-figurative abstract. In spite of our differences we have a deep sense of affinity and thus I ventured to discuss this topic with him. I asked him if he believed that what I am doing was reactionary, against people, if he suspected my honesty and sincerity as an artist. I was relieved when I got the reassurance from him that he did not think so, but he could not gua-

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rantee that his party or similar parties feel the same way as he does. However, leaving aside my own defence of my kind of work, I asked him how far he had been able to resolve his problem of people's art. Has he found out what his job is? Should he give up painting? He admitted that although everything looks grim and black, he is not sure if he can give up painting altogether. But what would be his theme? Well, he said, it would be to paint the sufferings of the masses and their struggles to overcome their sufferings, their fight against the present exploiting classes, to paint themes to inspire the people with visions of what can be done and what can be achieved. Who is people though? Surely, to count the few city-bred middle-class individuals as people will be gross inaccuracy. The people, in our country, are basically in the villages, those teeming millions who live in primitive sub-standard conditions, who work in the fields burning their brown backs into black, those underfed and illiterate skeletons. How will my friend's paintings reach them? Where will they see his paintings? And have those people time and the mental state to look at his paintings?

How to Exist

My friend had no answer. And, if the painter is to spend his time painting for the remote villages, for the cause, have the parties got any proposition as to how he will exist? How, if he is married and have children and has a mother and father and a sister etc, will his family survive? He has to make a living somehow.

No, the question of people's art does not arise now, for the people have no time for art as yet. When the good days come, we can sit down or stand up and fight over issues like, now that the people have time energy and inclination for art, what is people's art etc.

At the moment, the tragic situation for the artist will remain. For one doesn't have to look around too far. Who buys paintings in our country? Mainly outsiders. And a few insiders.

Whoever they are, they have to be fairly well off to wish to part with a few hundred rupees for the sake of possessing art.

And most artists are thoughtless. And like the rest of the country, spineless. Thus they dance to the tune of the buyers of our time. Even to the extent of producing modern 'Indian' art, you know gods and goddesses, temples and dancers, and such like. Fake 'Indian,' and fake modern. Such artists, such bargain-conscious, market conscious, depthless artists have always existed everywhere. With the times as they are, such people will naturally be found lurking around much more. That's expected.

Ultimately they don't even matter. There always will be some honest sincere artists, those who, no matter how the market wind blows, will remain true to themselves. What can these people do?

Well, they will carry on. Carry on with their truthful activity. They will paint what they believe they must paint. And, even if the buyers are but the odd few not-people who can afford paintings for their walls, they will have no choice but to sell to whoever wants to buy. They will of course paint for the people when the people want art, of course, if the people think that their works are people's art. But that's another issue.

Khasi Rajahs

W. H. STEN

PEOPLE in their colourful dresses are there in the Durbar Houses of the Syiemships every working day to complain against this or that, or just to give presents even as they used to do before the Sixth Schedule was attached to the Constitution of India. But something seems really wrong with the 25 ruling Syiems (Rajahs or Kings) of the Khasi Hills. They feel ignored, deserted and neglected, particularly so, when the autonomous hills State is taking concrete shape.

These Rajahs do not live together nor do they belong to the same family or lineage. They were elected. Past history shows that they did not work together for the welfare of the Khasis as a whole: what was poison to Tiro Singh during 1831-33 was meat to the then Syiem of Khyriem. Such was the case with the other Rajahs too. But closer understanding among them has, somehow, been developing since the last century. In fact during 1948-51, they were able to unite in such a manner that the Government of India delegated both administrative and judicial powers to their "Federation of the Khasi States".

Unlike those in the plains districts

before Independence, these Khasi Rajahs are not the owners of the land. They rule over people to whom the land belongs, and remain in office as long as they enjoy their confidence. That was, it is believed, one of the reasons why the Government of India thought it prudent to allow these small republics to continue in this part of the country even after the Rajahs in the plains ceased to enjoy their pre-independence rights to their kingdoms.

In administrative matters, the Syiems are assisted by their staff and advised by their Ministers (Myntris or Bakhras), each with a specific charge. A "memorial" dated June 15, 1968 which the Syiems submitted to the President of India summarises the services of the Syiemships. In the administration of the Khasi Syiemships all expenses necessary for running the same are met out of the Syiemships' Fund, such expenses being emoluments of the employees' salaries and assistance to teachers of existing primary schools, assistance to village and/or commune durbars, improvements of their markets and haats and the like, over and above, allowances to the durbaries as sanctioned by custom and usage. No

part of this huge expenditure was ever shared or contributed by the State Government or the District Council after it came into being".

According to the memorial, the Syiems derive finance from excise, land and forest revenue and tolls and rents from their own markets and haats etc. with which they run and manage their respective Syiemships.

Despite the special status they enjoy, the Rajahs feel neglected because, they say, the District Council ignores them. Their main complaints against the District Council are, firstly, it does not treat them as it should rulers of the people; secondly, the Executive Committee of the District Council does not consult them even in matters which directly affect their kingdoms; thirdly, the Executive Committee used to issue letters conveying the interrogative adverb, "why", hardly using the imperative "please"; and lastly, the District Council as a whole does not seem to need their co-operation.

Like those of the legislature, the members of the District Council also are elected. At present, the All-Party Hill Leaders' Conference (APHLC) is the ruling party in the Council. But the discontentment of the Syiems with the Council does not appear to be based on differences. Like the President of India, they are non-partymen. In truth, past records indicate that cordial relations between the two authorities did prevail during 1960-67 when Mr Edwingson Bareh and Mr Wilson Reade (both Conferencees) were chief executive members one after another. Quite a senior Congressman claimed that during the time when his party controlled the Council also there were "happy relations" between the Syiems (pronounce S'eems) and the District Council. It was prior to 1968 that all the Syiems contributed regularly 1/8th of their Syiemships' annual income to the Council's Fund. But today, very few of them pay that share. One or two have court cases against the District Council. But the latter, on the other hand, appears to be satisfied with the Supreme Court's verdict on Mr Jormanick (deposed Rajah of Myl-

liem) that the Syiems are "just like" officers of the District Council.

Although non-partymen, the Khasi Rajahs could not absolve themselves completely of the charges levelled against them by the public that they draw their inspiration from the Hill State People Democrats who are exploiting the defects of the APHLC as a whole. In fact some of the local journals also, instead of suggesting remedial measures to close the gap, magnify the complaints of the Syiems against the Council, thereby emboldening the former to let their anti-APHLC steam off here and there. The Syiem of Nongspung, in an interview recently, accused the APHLC of having shifted from the original stand to fight for a 'hill State' alone. "The APHLC", he said, "did not consult the Syiems when they accepted the autonomous State as they did when they started demanding a hill State". Most of the other Rajahs also feel like him, although Mr Franciwell, Rajah of Myllem and President of the Federation of the Syiems, has said that they "are not politicians to explain to the people" about the merits or demerits of any party.

Their feeling of being neglected by the leaders had once taken the Syiems to New Delhi in 1968 to request the President of India to ensure that the "Instrument of Accession" signed in August by the Syiems on the one hand and the Government of India on the other is not affected by the reorganisation of Assam.

The unhappiest Rajah at present is that of Myllem. He has several differences with the present Executive Committee; two of them are over "Khanapara" and Barabazar. Another quarrel is likely to take place over rights of fishery in the Umiam Hydel Project also, because the Council wishes that most of the income should come to it. It is recalled that during Mr Reade's time, Myllem State was ready to take only 40% of the profit that would accrue from the fishery in the Lake.

The Syiems, as it is now, are a catarrh to the District Council, and the District Council a common cold to the Syiems. The District Coun-

cillors, on the one hand, are out to tighten the "Appointment of Chiefs and Headmen Act" with amendments according as their past experiences prompt them. The Rajahs, on the other hand, are prepared for any legal action against the Council should the latter act against their will.

For most of the Syiems, of course, it will be very difficult to be at home with the present Executive Committee of the District Council and, for the matter of that, with any political party coming into power in the Council. The simple reason is: they did not accept the idea of having the District Council in Khasi Hills right from the beginning. In truth, the 'Black Flag Demonstration' against the District Council plan is still fresh in the minds of those who were at Shillong from 1948 to 1952.

The demonstration remains only in the memories of future leaders, but the Sixth Schedule was made applicable to the Khasi States also against the expectation of simple demonstrators, and accordingly the District Council (which is virtually a training centre for future hill leaders) has come to stay among the Syiems as a thorn in their flesh.

Such being the relations between them, in addition to cultivation of mutual understanding, an adoption by the Khasi Hills District Council of Clause (1) of Rule 2 of the Rules for the Election of the Members of the "Constitution-making Durbar of the Khasi States" (1948) may perhaps improve the relations between the two authorities, make the Rajahs feel at home with the Council; thereby removing the cloud of confusion which has been hanging on the minds of the common Khasis for about two years now. The Clause says that the members of the erstwhile "Constitution-making Durbar" includes "the heads of the 25 Khasi States. In the case of Shella and Mawlong which have more than one head, the heads shall elect one from among themselves in each State to represent them". The postscript of the Clause adds: "The head of each State will be a member even if he is a minor".

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Chamber Classicism

CHIDANANDA DAS GUPTA

ON the diminutive stage of Max Müller Bhavan, Rekha Devi's Bharatnatyam (on August 10) looked exquisite, acquiring a somewhat different hue from the expected grandeur of the style. As she stood in the *Kalaitzuki* stance (immortalised in the Chola Nataraja) she looked more like a perfect piece of sculpture than many a dancer I have seen. Not only in this, but in all the other postures she assumed, her presence was strongly felt, the lines were sharp and clean, the curves and angles clear. But the Bharatnatyam came to an abrupt halt almost exactly when Rekha was warming up to it, and when, despite the small stage and the inadequate singing, it was beginning to overcome the 'chamber' feeling of the programme. *Varnam*, the heart of Bharatnatyam, had to be abandoned because the original *nattunavar* had been taken ill during the day and could not come. But close to it in the test of a dancer is *Thillana*, in which Rekha gave a very good account of herself in spite of the weakness of the singing.

The programme began and ended with *Kuchipudi* which, despite the easy appeal of its folksy sweetness, has never endeared itself to my heart. Here the singer was very good but I felt a certain lack of cohesion in the performance; the flow from one stance or movement to another was not as perfect as the stances or the movements themselves. The *laya* was not, in other words, as perfect as the *tala*. The reason for this may have been the slow tempo in which Rekha chose to take the whole performance. As a result, she struck one as a very fine dancer who has certainly not been practising eight hours a day. The place of the exhilaration of fast footwork was mostly taken by the exquisiteness of the finely held postures and the beautifully executed individual movements which are so difficult to co-ordinate into a really smooth flow at such slow pace. Rekha's exquisiteness without gran-

deur (in this performance) is somewhat foreign to Bharatnatyam and it is this, rather than the smallness of the stage, the short duration of each item or the fragmentary nature of the programme, which gave the performance its feeling of chamber classicism. But it was plentifully obvious at the same time that, in a different set of circumstances, Rekha could assay all the grander facets of this superb dance form.

Letters

Cops In Rage

No, not even 'for once' the talk of conspiracy has proved its relevance. Through your leader, "Cops in Rage" (August 9), you have only joined the chorus with the pseudo-revolutionaries who are out to make political capital out of an incident which itself is an inescapable sequel to their own double-faced game. Let us not allow ourselves to be swayed by hackneyed expressions and derive momentary satisfaction from cheap anti-Congressism which, of late, has become the only weapon in the hands of UF leaders to keep their 'revolutionary' image untarnished. This is, however, not to suggest that a suspended police official or some Congressmen could not have had a hand in the matter. Perhaps they did. So what? It does not prove the revolutionary bona fides of the UF government. It is even well within the framework of parliamentary politics that an opposition party spares no chance to put the ruling party to trouble, even unseat it. Should we call it a 'deep-laid' conspiracy? It has to be viewed as an indispensable part of humdrum politics and there is no reason why the air of West Bengal should be made so thick with cries of conspiracy.

It seems, however, that the idea of 'conspiracy' when used by our UF leaders is intended to convey some deeper sense which again is never spelt out in very distinct terms. You too, in your editorial comments, preferred to remain vague about this

"great deal more" which "seems suspicious". You have used high-sounding phrases like "vested interests" and "reactionary forces" to portray the 'conspirators'. If the vested interests also include jotedars, hoarders and big businessmen, how can they dare to oppose the Government and in what way? Obviously, the only possible explanation is that the State machinery itself is there to serve the interests of these vested interests. Viewed from this angle too the talk of conspiracy leads us nowhere. For never did any of the UF leaders say that the 'mini-revolt' by the policemen was a product of the basically antagonistic contradiction between the State and the radical programme of the UF Government. Such a statement would have exposed their slogan of utilising the State machinery for furtherance of people's struggles. You, of course, made a passing reference to 'the State machinery of repression' but it sounds so ritualistic and apologetic when viewed against your feverish demand of a "major overhaul" in the administration within the existing social set-up. That the Marxists have little scruples about the class-character of the 'State' is demonstrated by their asking the "military authorities" to remain 'alert' against a possible 'counter-revolution'. Incidentally, were not the people told that it was on their strength that the UF Government should bank in a period of crisis? Is the military too now included in the ranks of the people?

The incident of the police rampage does have a most vital lesson which Mr Basu and his partners are trying to conceal behind the smokescreen of some vague, undefined conspiracy. The truth is coming out in the context of an acute countrywide political crisis. The "mini-revolt" by the police cuts at the very root of all talk of using the State machinery in promoting people's struggles. No Government in this social set-up can be a weapon in the hands of the toiling masses to fight the exploiters. People are not to blame if they take some of the words of UF leaders at their face value and go ahead for a confrontation with the ruling classes.

If in this process communists find themselves in an unenviable dilemma, one cannot help. All social democrats have got to face such a difficult choice one day or other. History does not provide a single instance of people marching ahead with their struggles without clashing with the police force whose chief task is to protect the interests of the propertied classes. The open revolt by some policemen is then at best a pressure tactic to warn the government to be more careful even in paying lip-services to the cause of the people who have started taking things too seriously. With Mr Jyoti Basu's stern warning to the people not to take the law into their own hands, one may be sure that the police revolt has had its desired effect on the UF Government.

ADITYA MAJUMDAR
Calcutta

INA

Reading "August anniversary" (August 9), what surprised me was your contention that the INA, which came off with flying colours in its war against the powerful British, would have acted at the behest of the Japanese, if it entered India. I think at the time of writing the correspondent did not care to remember that the Japanese attempt to dominate the INA led to a serious friction between Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose and the then Japanese Premier Tojo which severed the bond of friendship between them. The consequence for the INA was dire poverty and distress.

SAMARESH CHANDRA BASU
Calcutta

(The correspondent referred to the evidence then available.—Ed.)

Second Thoughts On Ray

Mr Mukhopadhyay while cobwebbing his "Second Thoughts on Ray" (August 9) by way of commenting on *Goopy Gyne Bagha Byne* writes: "... it should not be

glossed over that the form and content of the film are far from any of the present-day realities of India." This is said hardly before the ink of his almost preceding remark dries up: "For even high-class nonsense and fantasy have some local colour and to retain all the original spell in a translated version is a tough job. Maybe it is one of the reasons why *The Adventures of Goopy and Bagha* failed to click at the Berlin Film Festival."

That is to say, though Mr Mukhopadhyay ranks 'GGBB' with 'high-class nonsense and fantasy', he perhaps wants it to conform to some of "the present-day realities of India" in form and content. Nonsense and fantasy, far from being high-class, cease to be either, if they conform to present-day realities. And however maiden and bold an attempt in itself, it is perhaps here that something is wrong with Mr Ray as he tried to convey through his fantasy of the fantastic Orient some sort of a message. Whatever be his press briefing, this is more than a fact. To cite an instance, the Magician to me appears like the impartial power of science corrupted by the power-hankering and intriguing present-day politician. Again, the soldiers on the march against the neighbouring country who fall upon choice dishes dropped from the sky, are perhaps an echo of the Chocolate Soldier in Shaw's *Arms and the Man*. Soldiers are of flesh and blood who bother more about food than about army and war, but they are mere tools in the hands of those who control the milk and honey of their country. But with all its seriousness of theme, GGBB failed to make any impact on the West, where this theme has been dealt with in better form. It is the split Ray—whether the film is to be mere fantasy or both a fantasy and something above it—that makes it neither wholly a fantasy nor wholly a serious film. If Ray had treated it as fantasy, pure and simple, he would have, in a sense, treated a reality, for an escape from life has both the sanction of life and is for life's sake.

KAMAL KANTI RAY CHOUDHURY
Calcutta

A Space Odyssey

I am glad to find that Mr Prabodh Kumar Maitra (August 2) was also swept through limitless space like me by Stanley Kubrick's awe-inspiring film. The most baffling point in the film, the black slab, to me is the symbol of the unknown which has attracted man endlessly through the ages and which even a Hal computer will not be able to explain.

By the way, it is not the black slab which, when flung in the air by one of the apes, becomes a space-ship. It is a big bone (with which the ape first discovers the striking power) which is thrown up in the air to dissolve into a spacecraft.

SIDDHARTA DASGUPTA
Calcutta

Hospital Strike

The incidents that took place in front of the National Medical College Hospital the other day were shocking. Whether the cause for which the striking workers were fighting was just or not was altogether a different issue. But a democratic government was expected to look into their grievances sympathetically. Instead some of the chief constituent parties of the UF tried to superimpose their will on the strikers in a most deplorable manner.

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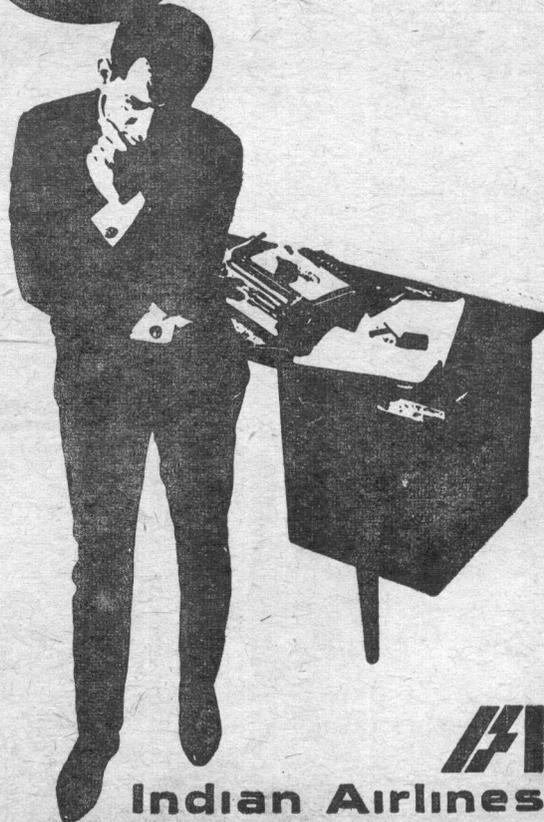
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