

Without Fear or Favour

A Collection of Articles by

Frank
Moraes

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ed by

C Cooper

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A Selection of Articles
by Frank Moraes

Edited by
R. C. Cooper



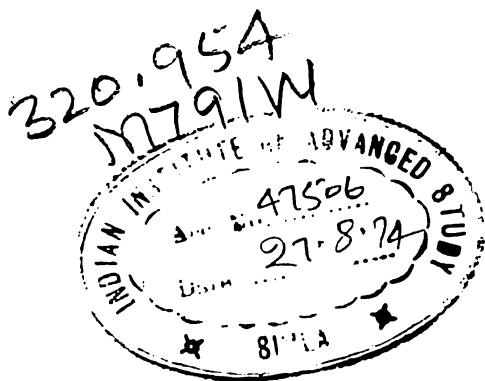
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This book is a collage of Frank Moraes' essays on the Indian scene unfolding over a number of years. They have two distinct qualities, qualities that have made Frank Moraes a towering personality among the thoughtful commentators on the vicissitudes of India.

First, the quality of indomitable courage, a rare virtue in our time and land. "Courage," said James Barrie, "goes all the way," and so it is with Frank Moraes. He never hesitated to say boldly what he honestly thought of the powers that be and their policies, unmindful of any personal consequences to him. That is why down the years the readers turned to his column in the papers to get his pungent analysis of the news behind the news.

Second, his essays, couched in language far above tiresome journalese, convey to the reader Frank Moraes' concern for the preservation of freedom in India and for the true welfare of our people. The ring of sincerity and truth is unmistakable and irresistible.

It has been said that those who do not learn the lessons of history are condemned to repeat it. The youth of India should read and re-read this absorbing book which affords a luminous glimpse of our times, and learn well its lessons.

December 1973

N.A. PALKHIVALA

The departure of Frank Moraes from the Indian journalistic scene marks the end of an era. His retirement has left a lacuna which we can never hope to bridge, for in the annals of Indian journalism there has been no greater champion of democratic freedom than Frank Moraes. His deep sense of patriotism was only matched by the depth of his commitment to the democratic way of life. He tenderly nurtured the precious plant of freedom and maintained a ceaseless vigil against threats to the democratic system.

Frank Moraes was much more than a mere journalist. He was an institution in himself and the keeper of the country's conscience. He was fiercely independent and totally honest. In an age of pygmies, he towered over the Indian journalistic scene like a mighty colossus. His incisive and penetrating mind could pierce through a mountain of obscure facts and identify the principles involved.

The writings of Frank Moraes have a timeless and enduring significance for all those who cherish democracy, for he had a deep sense of history and wrote with a historical perspective. In bringing together this small selection of his writings, we wish to pay a tribute to an indefatigable crusader of freedom. We are confident that this book will be a continuous source of inspiration to those who have fought to prevent the feeble flame of freedom from being snuffed out by anti-democratic forces.

The book is divided into three sections. The first of these deals with the drama featuring Mrs Gandhi's drive to capture power which culminated in the break-up of the Congress party

and marked the most notorious chapter of the country's political history. It dramatises how, atlas-like, Frank Moraes held aloft the democratic edifice even as its other pillars were crumbling all round. The second section focuses on the attempt to undermine the key pillars of democracy—the judiciary, the legislature, the constitution and the press. The final section highlights the menace of communism and exposes the insidious efforts of the communist to subvert the democratic system.

The Adult Education Institute is grateful to the Indian Express Newspapers (Bombay) Private Ltd., for having kindly granted the permission to reproduce the articles of Frank Moraes which were published earlier in the *Indian Express*.

In making this volume possible I wish to express my gratitude to the management of the *Indian Express* for kindly permitting me to reproduce the articles and editorials of Frank Moraes that appeared from time to time in their paper. I am also thankful to K.V. Mathew, Mrs T.D 'Souza and Mrs R. Irani for the patience and diligence with which they helped in typing the manuscript, and to S.V. Raju for his assistance in proof reading.

December 1973

R. C. COOPER

Frank Robert Moraes, the doyen of Indian journalism for over two decades, was born in 1906 of Goan parents. He spent part of his early youth in Poona and Bombay, but as his father was a government servant he lived more in the villages of Maharashtra than in the cities. Unlike most Goans, he has always considered himself an Indian first. As a boy he sometimes visited Goa, but never picked up either Konkani or Portuguese.

After graduating in economics and history from St. Xavier's College, Bombay, Frank left for Oxford in 1927. There he was greatly moved by the gnawing poverty of the East End of London, and was attracted to left wing politics. At Oxford, Frank was President of the Indian Majlis, and later, as a law student, was president of the Indian Students' Association. For a year he edited a magazine, *Bharat*, sponsored by the Indian Majlis.

He returned to India in 1934, a greatly changed man after seven years abroad. It did not take him long to realise he was not cut out to be a lawyer. Frank realised that journalism was in his bones and he set out to establish himself in this field. After an initial introduction to *The Times of India* through a series called "Law for the Layman", he joined the paper as an Assistant Editor.

During the Second World War, Frank served as a correspondent in the Burma campaign and in China, where he got an exclusive interview and a message to India from Chiang Kai-shek. This was a great boost to his journalistic career.

After the war, he became a Special Correspondent for *The*

Times of India in New Delhi where he came to know a number of our senior political leaders and covered the Cripps Mission in 1946. After this he took up an assignment as editor of *The Times of Ceylon*, a post he occupied till 1949 when he returned to *The Times of India* as its first Indian editor.

His forthright way of writing and the scathing attacks on Cabinet Ministers and high government officials often got Frank into trouble. Relations with *The Times of India* management became strained and on one not so fine morning he was summarily dismissed. This was in 1957. The same year he took over as Editor-in-Chief of *Indian Express*, a post he held till December 1972. He quickly transformed the paper making it very readable and boosting the circulation tremendously. His Monday morning articles became very popular and a certain section of *The Times of India* readers were known to specially buy *Indian Express* on Mondays.

It was in *Indian Express* that Frank matured as a journalist. His cool, cold-blooded assessment of a situation, his constructive criticism of the government and his shrewd reading of world politics made him the leading journalist in the country. His flowing style and literary allusions made him very readable.

During the 1971 war with Pakistan, Frank at the age of sixty-five visited the front as a war correspondent. In December 1972 he retired and has settled in England.

Though he continues to write for *Indian Express*, it will not be the same, for Frank Moraes has moved away from the centre of the stage. The curtain has rung down on a long and illustrious career.

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IT IS A MIRACLE THAT THE YOUNG INDIAN DEMOCRACY SURVIVED THE BREAK-UP OF THE INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS AND MRS GANDHI'S POWER STRUGGLE. THE EVENTS PRECEDING THE SPLIT POSED THE GRAVEST EVER THREAT TO THE DEMOCRATIC FRAMEWORK SINCE THE FORMATION OF THE REPUBLIC. MRS GANDHI'S PHENOMENAL VICTORY AT THE 1971 POLLS UNFORTUNATELY DIVERTED THE COUNTRY'S ATTENTION FROM THE MEANS THROUGH WHICH IT WAS ACHIEVED. TO MAKE THE COUNTRY SAFE FOR DEMOCRACY, IT IS NECESSARY TO RETRACE THIS CHAPTER OF INDIA'S POLITICAL HISTORY. FOR THE DEMOCRATIC WAY OF LIFE MAY NOT SURVIVE A REPETITION OF AS UNPRINCIPLED AN EXERCISE AS MRS GANDHI'S QUEST FOR POLITICAL SUPREMACY.

POLITICAL PARTIES ARE THE BEDROCK ON WHICH THE DEMOCRATIC EDIFICE OF A COUNTRY IS BUILT. IT IS THROUGH THEM THAT THE MASS OF THE PEOPLE EXERCISE THEIR CHOICE OF WHO SHOULD GOVERN THEM AND BY WHAT PRINCIPLES. POLITICAL PARTIES, THEREFORE, HAVE A VERY GREAT RESPONSIBILITY IN UPHOLDING THE DEMOCRATIC TRADITIONS OF THE COUNTRY.

DUE TO HISTORICAL REASONS, A SINGLE MONOLITHIC PARTY, THE INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS, CAME TO DOMINATE THE COUNTRY'S POLITICAL SCENE. TO START WITH, THE CONGRESS WAS MERELY A MOVEMENT TO SECURE INDEPENDENCE. AS THIS WAS A GOAL WHICH ALL SECTIONS OF OPINION IN THE COUNTRY UNRESERVEDLY SUPPORTED, PEOPLE OF DIVERSE IDEOLOGICAL PROFESSIONS COULD FIND SHELTER UNDER ITS WINGS. BUT WITH THE ATTAINMENT OF INDEPENDENCE THE PARTY HAD TO FORGE

AN IDENTITY. THOUGH, IN TIME TO COME, DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISM CAME TO BE ENSHRINED AS THE LOADSTAR OF THE CONGRESS FIRMAMENT, EVEN IN THE TOP LEADERSHIP MANY DID NOT SUBSCRIBE TO THIS GOAL. YET, THEY WERE LOATH TO LEAVE THE PARTY AS IT WAS THE CORRIDOR TO POWER.

FOR A LONG TIME, THE PARTY HAD AN EMBATTLED EXISTENCE WITH THE VARIOUS FACTIONS ENGAGED IN CONSTANT WRANGLES. THANKS TO THE TOWERING PRESENCE OF JAWAHARLAL NEHRU, WHO COMMANDED UNIVERSAL RESPECT IN THE PARTY, MOST OF THESE DISPUTES WERE AMICABLY SETTLED AND THE PARTY SURVIVED CRISIS AFTER CRISIS. WITH THE PASSING AWAY OF THE COLOSSUS, ALL HELL BROKE LOOSE. THE VARIOUS SECTIONS OF THE PARTY WERE INVOLVED IN AN UNASHAMED SCRAMBLE FOR POWER. THE DIFFERENCES IN THE PARTY WHICH HAD ALWAYS BEEN SUPPRESSED BEGAN COMING TO THE SURFACE. THE BATTLE LINES WERE SOON DRAWN. THE LEFT AND THE RIGHT DECLARED WAR ON EACH OTHER. THE TOP LEADERSHIP OF THE PARTY WAS AT SIXES AND SEVENS. BY MUTUAL ACCOMMODATION AND THE DEEPER LOYALTY TO THE ORGANISATION, A SPLIT IN THE PARTY WAS AVERTED. NONE OF THE TOP LEADERSHIP WAS BRASH ENOUGH TO RISK THE OPPROBRIUM OF HAVING CAUSED THE BREAK-UP OF THE PARTY IN THE PROCESS OF STORMING THE CITADELS OF POWER.

BUT MRS GANDHI HAD NO SUCH INHIBITIONS. SHE WAS DETERMINED TO CAPTURE POWER AT ALL AND ANY COST. SHE HAD NO USE FOR THE ADVICE OF THE SENIOR LEADERS OF THE PARTY. SHE HAD RADICAL INCLINATIONS AND WAS IMPATIENT WITH THE GRADUALIST APPROACH OF THE OLD GUARD. SHE SOUGHT UNFETTERED CONTROL OVER THE NATION'S DESTINY, A CONCEPT WHOLLY ALIEN TO THE DEMOCRATIC WAY OF LIFE. WHEN SHE FOUND HERSELF THWARTED IN HER ATTEMPT AT STORMING THE CITADELS OF POWER WITH SOCIALISTIC BOMBAST, SHE LAUNCHED AN OFFENSIVE AGAINST THE PARTY LEADERSHIP. FRANK MORAES LIFTS THE VEIL OVER THE NIGHTMARISH DRAMA AND ANALYSES THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE EVENTS OF THAT PERIOD FOR THE FUTURE OF DEMOCRACY IN THE COUNTRY.

The curtain rose on the drama which culminated in the break-up of the Congress and all but destroyed the democratic edifice in March 1969. Mrs Gandhi began preparing the ground for seizing control over the party. The war of attrition began with a subtle campaign against the old guard. Pressure had been building up for some time past for an inquiry into the affairs of the Birla group of companies. But the Congress Working Committee set its face against it. Mrs Gandhi's supporters insinuated that Deputy Prime Minister Morarji Desai was responsible for scuttling the probe. The Prime Minister herself lent tacit support to the smear campaign by maintaining a stony silence in the face of repeated pleas from Morarji Desai to Mrs Gandhi to restrain her henchmen. As if this were not enough, C. Subramaniam resigned from the Working Committee protesting against the High Command decision to enter into a coalition with the Janta party in Orissa. Mrs Gandhi again created the impression that it was the old guard which was to blame and dissociated herself from the decision collectively arrived at by the committee of which she was a member.

THE COUNTRY AND CONGRESS 24 March 1969

A signed front page article by the writer last week seems to have stirred some ripples in certain political circles. While its object was to stress on the Prime Minister the importance of respecting the principle of collective responsibility in her dealings with her Cabinet and party colleagues, it was impelled primarily by the urgency of stopping the rot within the Congress and of keeping the party together in the interests of the country.

From the repercussions reaching the writer's ears it appears to be generating a somewhat different effect. That the position of the Congress is not merely parlous but perilous is obvious to all. In the circumstances one would have thought that the first duty of Congress leaders would be to call for a stop to the infighting and ceaseless bickering which have been going on at the highest echelons of the party for the past three years.

Neither the rebuffs of the 1967 general elections nor the reverses of the mid-term elections of February seem to have taught the Congress anything. The goings-on continue.

It is a measure of the demoralisation and degradation to which Congress politics have descended that a frank attack on some of the Prime Minister's policies and modes of political behaviour is immediately seized upon by her opponents in the party and construed as an invitation for them to dislodge her. Similarly, strong criticism of the tactics or views of her party opponents is pounced upon by the Prime Minister's supporters to encourage her in her more didactic postures and incite her to defiant attitudinising.

Neither of these types of behaviourism flatters either followers or principals. To imagine that the Congress party will be revolutionised and revitalised by inserting old faces in new places by substituting B for A and C for D is to indulge in infantile political thinking. There are no saviours in the wings who by stepping to the centre of the stage can galvanise the party into new life. What the Congress needs are not new props but a return to its old way of dedicated service to the people.

It can do this only by sloughing off the skin of selfishness or "self first" which grips the organisation and leaders. On the homely principle of the un wisdom of changing horses in mid-stream, the Congress would be wise in leaving the top leadership untouched, for in the present mood and temper of the party and its leaders any attempt to do so can have only one result: it will split the party wide open from top to bottom.

The split will not be confined to the Congress Parliamentary Party at the Centre but will affect State Congress Parliamentary Party organisations throughout the country. The present fractured condition of the Congress not only divided by rightists and leftists but criss-crossed with factions based on regionalism, caste and other divisive factors, makes it a highly vulnerable structure liable to come apart under the stress of internal

combustion or external explosion. To refrain from tempering with the top leadership would therefore appear to be the soundest policy particularly with less than three years to go before the next general elections. Indeed the time has come to examine frankly the consequences likely to follow in the event of Mrs Gandhi being eased out of the Prime Ministership.

Mrs Gandhi stands left of Centre whereas it would not be unfair to describe her party opponents, with one significant exception, as standing to the right of her. The exception is Kamaraj who, though he is individually opposed to the Prime Minister, is politically nearer her than he is, say, to Atulya Ghosh or S. K. Patil. Kamaraj's socialism may be earthy but politically he is a leftist. He will be embarrassed keeping political company with the rightists.

A further consideration appears to have entered into Kamaraj's thinking. With the death of Annadurai and with growing rivalries within the D.M.K. the chances of the Congress staging a comeback in Tamil Nadu appear to have improved. Kamaraj would like a united Congress party to face the electorate. But if a split occurs in the Congress Parliamentary Party at the Centre the fissure could infect the Tamil Nadu Congress party. C. Subramaniam is a loyal supporter of the Prime Minister and according to recent reports, has also made his political peace with Kamaraj. Hence the dilemma which faces Kamaraj.

In the unlikely event of an attempt being made to prize her out of office, Mrs Gandhi who is not of a temperament to yield ground easily even if the majority of the State Congress battalions at the Centre are trained against her, will fight to the last ditch. The Congress Parliamentary Party will then be split apart with similar repercussions in a majority of the States. For all practical purposes this will mean a country-wide crack in the Congress organisation. Mrs Gandhi's colleagues, having dislodged their leader from office, cannot insist on her political loyalty since their own loyalty to their leader will

then be proved to be extremely tenuous.

Apart from her personal tenacity, the Prime Minister has developed considerable political finesse over the past three years which her opponents within the party have reason to realise. Even if the mood of the Congress party is rightist, the Prime Minister is aware that the trend of the country is leftist and, therefore, more inclined to her than to her opponents. This in itself may not induce a majority of the Congress Parliamentary Party to support her. But in the long-term view, apart from the Congress being split, it will face the country as a derelict party at the next general election when the likelihood is that the people's mood will favour the Congress leftists rather than the rightists.

These considerations are doubtless in the Prime Minister's mind. There are others. A Congress tie-up with the Jana Sangh would bring a vast segment of the minorities on the side of the Congress leftists just as a Congress tie-up with the Swatantra would alienate the left inclined Congress voters. A growing rapprochement seems to be developing between the Congress leftists and the D.M.K. This could also attract a sizeable proportion of Harijans. Additionally, there is keen awareness among the younger voters of the generation gap between the Prime Minister and her party opponents. The young constitute the majority of voters. For all of which reasons, it would be best to leave well alone in the case of the leadership and give it a chance to revitalise the party before the next general election.

The writer pleads for a closer understanding between the Prime Minister and the Congress President, believing that only thereby could the Congress be salvaged and strengthened. It is the writer's feeling that if the Congress breaks up it will be calamitous for the country.

One inevitable consequence is a coalition government at the Centre in 1972, in which the Congress conceivably might not have a place. Coalition governments are dele-

terious to the growth of well-defined independent parties. Coalitions cut across party alignments, merge and confuse them. They encourage and breed groupism of a vicious character, as France demonstrated between the two World Wars when cynical groupism brought democracy to the brink of ruin. France's fate in those years is a lesson for India.

The ground had now been prepared. The campaign against Morarji Desai and the other senior leaders was stepped up and reached a crescendo at the Faridabad session of the Congress. Mrs Gandhi's camp launched a bitter attack on the old guard, accusing them of thwarting the country's onward march towards socialism. Subramaniam expounded a new ten-point programme which held out the promise of ushering in the millenium. The programme marked a radical departure from the traditional Congress policy of socialistic gradualism and had strong leftist overtones. It was patently an attempt to put the Syndicate of the old guard on the defence. They swallowed the bait and reacted vehemently to Subramaniam's proposal. In doing so they played into the hands of the Prime Minister. Her followers were given a fresh handle to beat the old guard with. Mrs Gandhi exploited the situation to the hilt in projecting herself as the strongest champion of socialism while charging her opponents within the party of being reactionaries.

WHILE ROME BURNED 28 April 1969

Nero fiddled while Rome burned. In Faridabad the Congress *pandal* went up in flames while Congressmen talked. There was nothing particularly combustible in their speeches for they had not, as at the moment of writing, got down to the main business of bawling out one another. Perhaps nature played her inscrutable hand.

It will need more than nature to restore some semblance of order and sanity in the Congress party's day-to-day conduct of its own affairs, to say nothing of national affairs. In the period before and after their *pandal* went roaring up to heaven, our earth-bound Congressmen were still on the old mundane themes of whether they stood to the right or the left or whether they should pursue the middle of the roadway. Mrs Gandhi favoured the latter course, and in the process added a new word to the limited Congress vocabulary. The word is *polarisation* which, no doubt, will be bandied around a great deal in the

months and possibly years to come.

If the order is "no polarisation", as Mrs Gandhi ordained, there will be no S. K. Patil waltzing on the right and no K. D. Malaviya dancing a fandango on the left. The Prime Minister, who has staked her place at the Centre, insists on keeping the party to the middle of the road. It is a wise decision. For the one thing capable of rehabilitating the Congress image in the eyes of the country before the day of reckoning comes three years hence is for the party to speak as a united body which knows its mind and is sufficiently responsible to keep away from the lunatic fringes on the extreme right and left.

Until now the Congress has been a victim of its confused slogans and ideologies. The Congress can only make up its mind when Mrs Gandhi as Prime Minister makes up her own. One noted with pleasure that she has come round to the view that the decisions of the Government she heads are also hers. The centrist course which the Prime Minister has charted for the country is the one course along which India can steer her way safely. Centrism spells pragmatism and common sense. It disdains the idiot's delight in the absolute. When Chester Bowles the other day expressed his fear that Indian democracy in the not distant future might be suffocated by its slogans he was voicing the fear of many thoughtful Indians. Light does not only come from the left as Mrs Gandhi is prone to think. The compulsive left wing orientation which characterises most Congress policies has time and again landed the country in avoidable difficulties. *Hindi - Chini bhai - bhai* brought the Chinese across our frontier and had Nehru's government bawling for help from the United States and Britain. Obsession with outdated economic theories has edged us into equally frustrating and infructuous situations.

The country cannot but be irked by a government at the Centre which for the past twenty-two years has made it the plaything of its obsolete thinking and theorising. Governments

are not run by theories but by methods and policies calculated to yield the best practical results. This is what centrism spells and signifies. Insofar as it denotes a turning away by the Congress from its heavily left oriented way of thinking and acting the country should welcome the change. Faridabad might yet mark a watershed in the post-independence career of the Congress.

Having seen the light, the Congress should follow its new star. It is often forgotten by our policy makers that the external influence a country enjoys is determined by the internal image it presents in terms of stability and strength—political, economic and military. India's external prestige has declined in recent years because the internal picture she proffers is one of political and economic instability. The former will not improve unless the latter does. The impact of a country's foreign policy depends to a large extent on its internal virility and viability.

Being left oriented at home the Congress Union Government has so far pursued a left oriented policy abroad. This was seen in the early phases when non-aligned India leaned heavily in favour of the Communist bloc then headed by Russia and China. When *Hindi-Chini bhai-bhai* was given the go-by, the *bhai-bhai* by a process of political thought transference was attached to Soviet Russia. This is where it now is.

But with centrism at home, will our foreign policy also be centrist in the sense of holding the scales even between the communist and non-communist worlds? Despite our infinite capacity for tergiversation it will be difficult to present one face at home and another abroad. With her Faridabad commitment the Prime Minister has set a problem for her External Affairs Minister who so far has been content to nestle on Moscow's bosom.

With a centrist policy, which means taking a good hard look at ourselves and others, another problem arises. For a country which spends a considerable part of its budget on military allotments we appear to be peculiarly allergic to things military.

We are, for instance, prepared to get our share of trade and commerce in South-East Asia on the basis of philanthropy and ten per cent but are strongly averse to entering into defence commitments with our neighbours for the safety of themselves and ourselves. Commerce is a lovely word. But defence has a dirty taint.

Why? It may be that our outward aversion to things military, though contradicted by our inward insistence on large-scale military expenditure at home, is a pacifist hangover from Gandhian days. Pacifism, however, is not noticeably prominent in the conduct of our Congress exemplars. If we would shout for military help from the West while the going was rough with communist China, a day may conceivably come when our South-East Asian neighbours might legitimately look to us for military assistance in their moments of stress and need. Will we deny it to them remembering our own situation during the Chinese confrontation? And if, indeed, we proffer military aid, what is there wrong in buttressing our economic commitments which are to the common advantage with military commitments for the protection of all concerned? What is there unclean about it?

It is now common knowledge that because of our unwillingness to assume any military responsibilities in South-East Asia, the governments of Malaysia and Singapore are turning away from us towards Australia, New Zealand and Japan. Who can blame them? Surely India has a responsibility for Asian security. Malaysia and Singapore were two countries in South-East Asia which unequivocally supported India in the 1964 conflict with Pakistan. Political memories are notoriously short and gratitude even more short-termed. But it is difficult to explain the policy of a country which sees no harm in asking and accepting military aid for itself in moments of duress and refusing to enter into any like commitment to others in the event of a similar eventuality overtaking them.

Till now it was all shadow boxing. But at the Bangalore session Mrs Gandhi came out in the open and declared war against the old guard. Though only three months before it had been decided that social control of banks had proved effective, Mrs Gandhi resurrected the bogey of nationalisation—in a note circulated to the Bangalore session of the A.I.C.C. When the A.I.C.C. refused to oblige, the Prime Minister, by passing a suitable resolution, nationalised the banks by an ordinance. Soon it became evident that the object of the whole exercise was to get Morarji Desai out of the way because he acted as a check on Mrs Gandhi's authoritarian instincts. In the wake of the ordinance she deprived Morarji Desai of the Finance portfolio, implying thereby that he was the main stumbling block to the party's pursuit of socialism. All of which left Morarji with no option but to resign from the party. The assault on democracy had commenced. It became clear that Mrs Gandhi would stop at nothing to storm the citadels of power.

FACING THE FACTS 21 July 1969

If Mrs Gandhi's note on bank nationalisation to the Congress chiefs assembled in Bangalore was a calculated time-bomb, her radio announcement from New Delhi to nationalise fourteen of the country's leading banks by ordinance came like a delayed-action bomb. In between, Morarji Desai, hustled out of the Finance Ministry, was left with no option but to resign. The three consecutive episodes were part of a planned pattern. It is an old military axiom that the best form of defence is attack, and the Prime Minister's tactics were based on this strategy. Having seized the initiative with her first time-bomb, she never let go but with every step took the war deeper into her critics' camp. The invidious position of Kamaraj and Chavan, who were committed to the nationalisation of banks but who for their own not so inscrutable reasons had temporarily aligned themselves with the Syndicate, was part of Mrs Gandhi's strength and strategy. Jagjivan Ram, hopping on the point of

a needle, was also alongside the Prime Minister on this issue as, less expectedly, was the big boss of capitalist West Bengal, Atulya Ghosh.

Faced with this formidable, if miscellaneous, array it came as no surprise that the first member of the Syndicate to accept the situation was S. K. Patil who, while admitting that the decision was in line with the Bangalore AICC resolution on economic policy, regretted "the hasty manner" in which it had been implemented by the Prime Minister. Realist that he is, Patil was facing the facts. Congressmen who have endorsed the principle of bank nationalisation are in no position to repudiate it when the principle is implemented as policy. There is a moral in this episode for those Congressmen who are ever ready against their better judgement and convictions to lend their name to any policy or principle which suits their temporary political convenience. Patil is one of a large company which unfortunately also includes Morarji Desai, now a victim to his own commitment.

The fact of the nationalisation of banks must now be accepted and faced, however regrettable the decision and however deleterious its economic consequences might be. There is no alternative, and the best one can hope for is that it is not the beginning of an era of wholesale nationalisation. In her broadcast the Prime Minister affirmed this, but the trend of her present policies, political and economic, does little to allay deep doubts and misgivings. As an avowed democrat, what was the urgency which led her to ram through bank nationalisation by ordinance two days before Parliament meets? Rajaji has rightly dubbed the move "immoral". Why also was it necessary to humiliate a veteran Congress leader like Morarji Desai who, whatever his drawbacks and limitations might be, has rendered meritorious service to his country, and to force him out of office in this paltry fashion?

The future of the country, it is true, does not lie in the hands of its old men but of its youth. It is they who must decide

whether the extreme leftist policies now being pursued by Mrs Gandhi and her juvenile hatchet-men are in the real interest of India. Under the Prime Minister's stewardship the country is being deliberately mortgaged to the Soviet Union whose growing influence is perceptible not only in the conduct of our foreign affairs but in the trend of our internal policies, particularly economic. Sometimes one wonders whether India is ruled from New Delhi or Moscow. Mrs Gandhi's over-dramatic nationalisation of banks will doubtless earn her the plaudits of her patrons in the Kremlin.

The youth of India must think deeply, and act when under our Constitution the time comes again to elect our rulers at the Centre and in the States. Communism and socialism have their exotic appeal, but India's youth must ask themselves where the application of these philosophies over the past twenty years has brought this country. Internally there is political chaos and economic deterioration. In the public sector never has so little been done by so many for so few. A government unable to run relatively small public undertakings efficiently or profitably is now attempting to swallow up and fritter away the bank savings of millions of small, defenceless people to bolster up its discredited economic policies. It is robbing Peter to pay Paul. It is experimenting with other people's money at their cost. The harassment and delays to which the nationalised Life Insurance Corporation subjects widows and orphans are widely known and experienced. How safe the people's money will be in nationalised banks remains to be seen. Abroad the prestige of a great country like India has sunk, is sinking, and in the hands of blinkered political and economic ideologists is certain to sink lower.

The answer and the remedy are in the hands of India's people, particularly of its youth. A country gets the government it deserves.

The presidential election was approaching, The Congress Working Committee chose Sanjiva Reddy despite the opposition of the Prime Minister, who favoured Giri's elevation to the Presidency. While her disapproval of Sanjiva Reddy's candidature was well known, it was expected that she would accept the decision of the party as a disciplined member of a great organisation. It soon became obvious that she was by no means reconciled to the situation. Her supporters started expressing doubts about Sanjiva Reddy's suitability for the post. It was suggested that his candidature was part of a conspiracy against Mrs Gandhi. Nijalingappa, President of the Congress, unwittingly provided them with just the excuse they needed to cloak their operation to subvert Sanjiva Reddy's candidature with an aura of respectability. Alleging that Nijalingappa's action in canvassing the support of the opposition parties for Sanjiva Reddy had compromised his candidature, they demanded a review of his nomination. When this plea was dismissed with the contempt it deserved, the campaign for a conscience vote was launched. Senior leaders of the party close to the Prime Minister lent their support. Just before the election, the Prime Minister herself joined the chorus and gave a call for a free vote by refusing to issue a whip to the members of the Parliamentary Party. By this flagrant act of indiscipline, she doomed Sanjiva Reddy's candidature and ensured the victory of the rival candidate Giri. Never before in political history has the leader of a party campaigned against the official candidate. The point of no return had been reached. The break-up of the party became inevitable.

PLAYING IT BOTH WAYS 8 September 1969

Ambivalence is a posture familiar in politics and politicians. When is peace not peace but a truce? Judging by recent events, when one transaction spells different things to two sides. Bank nationalisation left no room for Congressmen to exercise either their conscience or freedom to vote. But the presidential

election did. No other country but India and no other party but the Congress has witnessed the strange spectacle of the official proposer of a defeated candidate joyfully receiving congratulations and acclaim from those who had backed the winner.

It is as if the Salvation Army were to take to their heels on the day of judgement. This same ambivalence is noticeable in the two differing interpretations being given by the Prime Minister's supporters to her recent policies. To the Russians they are projected as leading to the paradise of socialism, not necessarily democratic. The C.P.I. and Kosygin on his way to Hanoi have been quick to bestow their accolade on them. Kosygin sombrely noted that Indo-Soviet relations (unlike Sino-Soviet relations) were moving "in the direction of being further strengthened". Simultaneously, the Prime Minister's supporters have been selling her policies to the West, particularly to the Americans, as designed to steal the thunder from the left and to contain the communists. Noticeably, again, the American ambassador in India, Keating, recently put his particular gloss on the Prime Minister's policies.

If it is the right interpretation, Mrs Gandhi is entitled to more support from her critics than she has received, for it is a shrewd long-ranging policy and one better designed than most to rehabilitate the waning political fortunes of the Congress while simultaneously pulling the rug from under the feet of the communists. But is it? Ambivalence is a game at which more than one can play. The Prime Minister's intention may be to use the communists for her own political purposes. But a similar thought vis-a-vis herself is probably latent in the minds of her Marxist friends. Who is going to outwit whom?

For one exposed for many years to the influence of the Mahatma, it is surprising that Mrs Gandhi should be so impervious to his doctrine of means and ends. Most of her ends, particularly that of bridging the great divide between

the affluent and the poor, are obviously justified. But the means she deploys are often questionable. She was constitutionally correct in insisting that as Prime Minister she had the right to choose her Cabinet colleagues or dispense with them. But the manner in which she hustled a senior colleague like Morarji Desai out of office, as part of what was obviously a calculated train of action, smacked of political skullduggery. She was constitutionally right again when she affirmed that as Prime Minister her responsibility was to Parliament and to the Congress Parliamentary Party who had elected her as their leader, and that in her capacity as Prime Minister she was not subject to the directives of the President of the Congress party. This accords with British parliamentary practice though it might be argued that India being a federation with distinctive and, as it happens today differing Centre-State relations, the analogy is not absolute. Nevertheless, the principle which Mrs Gandhi enunciated was constitutionally proper. This, however, neither explains nor justifies her curious conduct over the presidential election where as Prime Minister she had a responsibility not only to her parliamentary colleagues but to the organisation.

Should Mrs Gandhi really have as her objective the containment of the communists by radicalising the policies and image of the Congress, her following would be far wider than it is today and would cut across even the semblance of class divisions. It would mobilise national unity for national, not class purposes. The Prime Minister rightly bases her status and strength on Parliament. But her recent habit of seeking the suffrage of the streets is not calculated to strengthen either parliamentary government or democracy. It can only strengthen the hands of the communists who by encouraging and inciting her to appeal to the mob serve their own ends and purposes. If the Prime Minister persists in these tactics she will sooner or later find herself a captive of the communists.

As between the Congress organisational wing who would like

to have her on their leading strings and the communists who are designedly exploiting her, Mrs Gandhi, if she is to emerge as a truly national leader, should pursue a truly national line. The good of India and the Indian people should be her sole criterion, not the isms, the ifs, and perhaps and buts of her ideological hangers-on and others who would guide her by remote control. The ideal of democratic socialism which her father envisaged and of which Gandhiji would have approved should be her guiding star, but in the pursuit of socialism, democracy should not be forgotten. Democracy is what the communists would like the Prime Minister to forget.

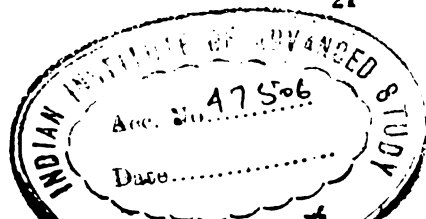
The logical thing to follow bank nationalisation (though the writer does not approve of either this policy or the method of its implementation) is land reform. Judging from what one hears and personally encounters these days, the masses of poor people, ranging from taxi drivers, bank employees, clerks, peasants and unemployed youth are waiting for a miracle to happen overnight when manna will descend on them from the banks. They little know they have a long way to trudge through the desert before the miracle happens. But there is no reason why it cannot happen at a certain starting point with at least some people.

The other evening the writer had a most instructive talk with a man whom he greatly respects, Wolf Ladejinsky of the World Bank, who is the leading foreign authority on rural India and perhaps knows that aspect of our country better than most of our own widely advertised experts. Over the past twenty years Ladejinsky has been eighteen times to India, always going for protracted periods to the countryside to see the fields and farmers.

He spoke of the effect which the new technology or sophisticated mechanisation was having on the green revolution in Punjab where as a result, paradoxically enough, the gap was growing between the rich and poor farmers. Owner-farmers with irrigated land are making money hand over fist. The bigger

the farm the more they make. In their wisdom the Congress government at the Centre, with their eye on rural votes, have pegged agricultural taxation low. Land values are spiralling, rents are going up. But the condition of the tenant farmers is no better, perhaps worse. Underemployment is likely to increase. It is time the government recognised the interdependence between technology and socio-economic reform. Ladejinsky also spoke of rural conditions in Bihar where the lot of the small farmers, labourers and share-croppers does not add up to a pretty story. Here the new agricultural policy with its emphasis on greater productivity hardly applies to these down-trodden sections with no security of tenure since the names of the share-croppers, their leased plots, and the rents they pay are not inscribed in the records of rights. Rents are not regulated nor are there ceilings on land ownership. A land structure as inequitable as it is inefficient is being perpetuated.

Mrs Gandhi might usefully turn her attention to more urgent matters. She could take her war from the streets to the fields.



All was not lost yet. The Congress President was prepared to forgive if not forget, if Mrs Gandhi expressed a proper regret for her behaviour. But Mrs Gandhi was not only unrepentant but continued her attacks on the old guard. The Congress President could not overlook the actions of senior members of the party which resulted in the defeat of Sanjiva Reddy. He felt compelled to act in the interest of party discipline and expelled Subramaniam and Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed from the Working Committee. But the Prime Minister was intent on getting her way irrespective of what happened to the party. She retaliated by sacking four junior Ministers who had refused to join her bandwagon. Nijalingappa, rudely rebuffed, despaired of making the Prime Minister see reason. To continue to condone the Prime Minister's action would be to invite total chaos. He, therefore, called upon the Prime Minister to explain her conduct and when no response came, expelled her from the party. Now there was no going back. The split in the party became formalised. Indira Gandhi convened a separate meeting of the Working Committee claiming that her group was the genuine Congress party.

A PLAGUE ON BOTH HOUSES 3 November 1969

What sort of charade do the Prime Minister, her supporters, and opponents think they are playing? By their antics in New Delhi over the weekend, Congress leaders have only invited ridicule on themselves and their organisation. For over three months government and the administration have been brought to a standstill while those entrusted with the duty of discharging both have concentrated their attention on preserving themselves and knifing their opponents. Action and reaction have been equal and opposite. No holds have been barred on either side.

Jayaprakash Narayan put it mildly when he said the other day that the current Congress warfare was a disservice to the nation and had caused a fall in ethical standards. It has murdered ethical standards. Leaders who stoop to the lowest type

of strategem to subvert one another are unworthy of the people's respect. So low has political morality sunk that a Minister of State controlling the government's mass media of communication was emboldened last week to plant a fictitious story on a gullible or servile news agency.

The Prime Minister, who with good reason describes herself as a member of the Congress "almost from birth", might occasionally take time off to reflect on the values for which the Mahatma stood. "Truth is God" was one of Gandhiji's favourite sayings. Truth has been the major casualty in the Congress Night of the Long Knives. Goebbels refined the technique of making it difficult for truth to catch up with the big lie. Our leaders have gone a step further. They have devised the technique of first projecting a lie and then blandly withdrawing it when it has served its purpose. In the so-called unity resolution it was conceded that the Congress President had in fact at no stage conspired with the Jana Sangh or the Swatantra party as had previously with malice aforethought been put about. Not that the old guard have fought with clean hands. Some of their tactics have been equally subterranean and devious.

Truth is the prime casualty in Gandhiji's centenary year. There are other ironies. The communal carnage in the Mahatma's home State might have been avoided and could have been mitigated had our Congress rulers been more concerned with the people's welfare than with their own. Preoccupation with the business of keeping themselves in power had the Congress top brass engaged in neutralising one another. For a long time government and administration have rated very low in New Delhi's priorities. "The people, what have the people to do with laws except to obey them," exclaimed a French king faced with popular unrest. When politicians run amuck, the people and the people's interests count for little.

Studying India's Constitution in some depth and poring over some of its articles, clauses, and sub-clauses one is left with the

inescapable impression that its framers thought of the Congress in terms of immortality. What would Tilak, Dadabhai Naoroji or Surendranath Bannerjee have said if somebody had told them that the Congress would cease to survive or function effectively fifty years or a little more after their death? Yet the unbelievable and the unpredictable are happening before our eyes. Mrs Gandhi has chosen to preside over the obsequies of the Congress. In whatever form it might be resurrected or continue it will never be the same Congress. That it should die or be torn apart in Gandhiji's centenary year is another major irony.

In their battle for power the two Congress factions have put their personal interests above the good of their party or their country. Had they paused to think of either party or country or of both, the struggle would not have ended in the way it is doing. What India is facing is a crisis of character. The events of the last three months have proved that what our leaders lack most is character. The other day in Delhi, the radical humanists, who might be described as followers of the late Manabendra Nath Roy, held their annual conference and submitted a statement deserving of closer scrutiny and notice than it has received. The statement, analysing the country's present sad state, holds that regional and linguistic fanaticism, deterioration of moral values, scramble for power and the inability of the Central and State governments to take principled decisions on conflicting issues are primarily responsible for India's present plight. In the context of this article it is the scramble for power at the top which stands out as one of the chief contributory causes of our decline. Mrs Gandhi, it is true, represents the forward-looking, modern generation as against the fossilised thinking of the old guard. But one would sometimes wish that she were not so enveloped by old and young men so obviously on the political make.

In many of her recent actions and reactions the need for more mature, adult thinking peeps out. Rajaji has been quick to

detect this. Whatever might be said at the present juncture, history will crucify Mrs Gandhi as the destroyer of the Congress. By her deeds and words in recent months as also by those of her opponents, the Congress has lost caste in Indian eyes. This simply is not the Congress one knew and respected. It is a Congress which places self first and the people last. It is a Congress which has turned its back on people. The time has come for India's people to turn their back on the Congress.

Hope lies elsewhere.

Even though her's was the break-away group, Mrs Gandhi insisted that it was the genuine Congress party. She exploited her office of Prime Ministership to strengthen her position. By a lavish distribution of executive patronage she managed to persuade many Congressmen to defect to her ranks. Nor did she stop at that. Her supporters made attempts to seize the offices of the party. The rival Congresses carried their battle to the streets. Mrs Gandhi's supporters manhandled the old Congress leaders with impunity, even as the police stood watching. All reason had fled and principles thrown overboard. Mrs Gandhi's supporters ran amuck but the police would not lift a restraining finger. On the contrary, when a demonstrator slapped Mrs Tarakeshwari Sinha, a senior member of the party of the Nijalingappa camp, the police let him go scot-free and arrested Tarakeshwari instead. Democracy was reduced to a mockery. Despotism was rearing its ugly head.

DEMOCRACY OR MOBOCRACY? 17 November 1969

Judging from last week's street incidents in Delhi, it looks as if the stage is being set for the descent of mobocracy on India. Coming events cast their shadows, and over the past four months they have loomed large. Jam-packed in trucks and buses, for which obviously they were in no position to pay, shoals of individuals have been taken on spontaneous pilgrimages of homage and acclaim. Some of the more worshipful have gone on foot. All have been treated to the rousing message of "we and they", differentiating the oppressed from the oppressors, with an invitation to the former to throw off their shackles and to follow the new Messiah into the promised land.

What is happening today in Delhi and will probably soon be happening all over the country is an inevitable consequence of this incitement. You cannot take politics into the streets without inviting trouble. Mobocracy is not democracy. Predictably and understandably the mob has taken to politics with

a vengeance.

Some of the manifestations of this new awareness were seen in Delhi last week when Congress opponents of the Prime Minister meeting peacefully for their own separate conclave in the A.I.C.C. office were abused and jostled around by some ruffians while the police looked on. The chief target was the Congress President, Nijalingappa. Later in the week a woman M.P., Mrs Tarakeshwari Sinha, one of the Prime Minister's more vociferous opponents, was abused and set upon by demonstrators gathered in support of Mrs Gandhi not far from the precincts of Parliament House. Mrs Sinha, a woman of some spirit, is said to have slapped one of the demonstrators. This time the police were quick to intervene. Mrs Sinha was arrested and whisked away to be held in detention. Later she was released.

Both incidents were followed by the usual outpouring of contrite statements from Mrs Gandhi's camp. But such ritualism is meaningless in the context of what has happened and is happening. The two incidents are not the only incidents. If they were published it was because of the personalities involved. For some time now in Delhi, hooligans have been allowed to abuse and revile peaceful citizens whose only sin is that their political opinions do not conform with those supported by the hoodlums. Political scores have begun to be settled by intimidation on the streets. Why bother to settle them by debate and discussion in Parliament ?

Whoever is conniving at the game of politics on the streets is doing his party or faction and the country serious damage. The habit of violence is already distressingly widespread throughout the country and the Union Government cannot convincingly demand discipline and respect for law and order from others when political gangsterism flourishes and is allowed to flourish on its doorstep. If mobocracy finally prevails, tearing democracy apart, the present government of India and the Congress party, already rent wide open, will have

much to answer for.

Lust for place and power has brought the Congress to its present sad state. The blame rests on both factions who have clawed at each other oblivious of the fact that the collapse of the Congress spells instability to the country. Much could be said in support of Mrs Gandhi's aim to get the country moving in a fresh direction more in consonance with its mood and needs had this policy been purposefully planned and not been precipitated by pique. It is not the Prime Minister's policies so much as her motives and methods that arouse disquiet and distrust. For only when her own personal political position was threatened did she go into a whirligig of manoeuvres to outwit and outflank her opponents, the blitzkrieg being spearheaded by the nationalisation of banks in which for four years she had shown small interest or concern. Opportunism has also led her to turn a blind eye on Delhi's street battles. Incited by some of her younger and over-enthusiastic supporters, they have evoked no censure from Mrs Gandhi save in the form of mild reproofs when personalities were involved.

Contrariwise, the motivations of the old guard, though inspired by the same lust for place and power, have been less devious than the Prime Minister's. Their misfortune is that they have no new policies to offer. Additionally, in tactics and strategy they have trailed miles behind Mrs Gandhi. In fact they have been left standing. Morally, however, if one may use the term broadly, they have emerged less tarnished than the Prime Minister. But where does morality come into politics? They also seem more sensitive to the needs and responsibilities of democracy than Mrs Gandhi does. Certainly they would have been less tolerant of the activities of Delhi's street mobs.

Whether all is over with the Congress, bar the shouting, depends on how effectively the Prime Minister is likely to weather the storm in Parliament. She has yet to prove herself

adept in parliamentary tactics as she has shown herself to be in purely party tactics outside. Her chief concern as pressures build from the right will be to keep herself from being manoeuvred into the arms of the left. The likelihood, therefore, is that her policies will be forced to keep to the centre with her logical stance. In that event a rapprochement between the two factions of the Congress before 1972 could emerge.

Obviously this would be to the country's good. Time may yet prove to be the great healer. The running war between the two Congress factions has led both to stoop to stratagems detrimental to the party and the country. Greater respect for true democratic values by the Prime Minister could stave off the threat of mobocracy. If the two factions come together at the same time, it could be extinguished.

Mrs Gandhi next addressed herself to the task of garnering popular support for the party she had created. Sooner or later there would be an election to be fought and it was necessary to convince the masses that her group was the true heir to the traditions of the undivided Congress. With the aid of the formidable government propaganda machinery at her disposal, a massive campaign was launched. Mrs Gandhi alleged that she had been thwarted in her desire to initiate progressive measures by the old guard. Now that the party was purged of the reactionary elements, the path to the socialistic millenium was clear, or so the argument went. The Prime Minister's brain trust came out with a radical programme, guaranteed to fire the imagination of the electorate. The vintage wine was offered in attractive new bottles. A frontal assault on poverty was promised. The road to the socialistic heaven would be paved with ceilings and nationalisations. The stage was set for the first meeting of the All India Congress Committee after the split. "Quit Poverty" was the tantalising new slogan.

ALL SET FOR BOMBAY 15 December 1969

The flags flutter, the bands bray. Mrs Gandhi's Congress is set for the march on Bombay. Like Sir Galahad, Subramaniam is out on a search for the holy grail waving the banner of Quit Poverty. It is not clear what the slogan couched in rather dubious English signifies. Whom is the knight in shining armour asking to quit? If it is poverty which three successive Five Year Plans have failed to abate or eradicate he is setting his sights pretty high. Even under the basilisk stare of Subramaniam it is doubtful if poverty will take to its heels and flee the country. Perhaps the invocation is not addressed to poverty but to the people of India to rid themselves of this incubus much as Gandhiji called on the British twenty-seven years ago to Quit India "leaving the country to anarchy and to God".

Subramaniam invokes this parallel. The slogan of Quit

Poverty, he points out, follows the slogan of Quit India. What about the in-between slogan of Quit Party which Mrs Gandhi after the accomplishment of the act cries in repeated anguish she was trying desperately to prevent? Gandhiji called on the British to leave India to anarchy and to God. Subramaniam is more modest. He is content to leave it to anarchy and Jagjivan Ram. If that gentleman can be induced to overcome his bouts of forgetfulness there is no reason why the slogan of Quit Poverty should not shine steadfastly as a beacon to light the way of the New Congress. Unhappily progress is not born of slogans as the experience of this country over the last two decades demonstrates. At Bombay the architects of the Prime Minister's new economic policy, who between them number K.D. Malaviya, Chandra Shekhar and T.T. Krishnamachari, are expected to unfurl their blueprint. The Prime Minister's coterie of advisers is beginning to rouse comment abroad. A British newspaper notes, "Mrs Gandhi's judgement in her choice of close advisers has long mystified Delhi political observers. Now it is worrying even her friends."

The sycophants and professional grovellers who abase themselves around every seat of power can hardly be described as friends. They are fair-weather courtiers. "Put not your trust in princes," said Archbishop Laud on his way to execution. Mrs Gandhi would be wise not to put excessive trust in her fawning courtiers and yes-men. Surrounded by a thicket of politicians on the make it is difficult to see the wood for the trees.

Whether all the things said or done in her name emanate from the fountainhead one cannot always discern or tell. Some of them seem out of character. The *goondas* let loose on the streets to intimidate political opponents, going to the length of slapping women do not accord with a Joan of Arc image. Sharp public reaction to these outrages compelled those masterminding this operation hastily to withdraw their *goondas* from the streets. But the damage to the Prime

Minister's reputation was done. Some fairly prominent political followers of Mrs Gandhi were openly associated with the demonstrators.

It is difficult again to couple the Prime Minister with the churlish pettiness reportedly directed against the family of the late Lal Bahadur Shastri. Following the alleged reluctance of his son, Hari Krishna, to be dragooned into the New Congress, the family are said to have been served with a demand for payment of a sum of about Rs 3,000 apparently incurred during the former Prime Minister's lifetime. The total includes a telephone bill of around Rs 750 for calls made by Shastri some six years ago, after he had been axed as a Minister under the Kamaraj Plan. The other outstandings relate to some furniture and fittings installed in the Shastri household. That the demand should be made some four years after the former Prime Minister's death is odd. That it should follow his son's reluctance to join Mrs Gandhi's Congress makes it sinister. Such behaviour towards the family of a man who in his lifetime had rendered considerable service to his country is not merely contemptible. It is beneath contempt.

The Shastri episode is only one instance of many. The harassments, big and small, to which a number of the Prime Minister's political opponents are being subjected are widely discussed and commented upon. In their over-enthusiasm some of her more zealous minions might be outstepping the bounds of discretion and decency unknown to her. But all this does not redound to the Prime Minister's good name. The authoritarian use of a national-owned and nation-wide medium of communication such as All India Radio is a scandal bringing disgrace to an avowedly democratic country. The widely trotted phrase "social commitment" seems nothing but a synonym for "New Congress commitment". The only active building-up going on is the build-up of a personality cult.

How else can one explain the disdain for national urgencies

when these do not accord with individual interests ? For various reasons, notably the sustained fisticuffs between the two Congress factions, the country's administrative machinery has been reduced to virtual immobility. Yet since the aftermath of the Bangalore session brought a long casualty list of Ministers in its train, no attempt has been made to reshuffle the Cabinet lest this disturb the equation between the Prime Minister and her long list of Micawbers who are waiting for something to turn up. As a result not only is the administrative but the ministerial wing of the Central complex hamstrung.

Four Cabinet Ministers, Morarji Desai (Finance), Dr Ram Subagh Singh (Railways), C.M. Poonacha (Steel and Heavy Engineering) and Jaisukhlal Hathi (Labour and Rehabilitation) are out. But not one of them has been replaced. Instead their Ministries have been casually latched on in a most incongruous fashion to various other Ministries. Thus Steel and Heavy Engineering have been tacked on to Swaran Singh's Defence Ministry. Labour and Rehabilitation have been given to Jagjivan Ram who is already in charge of the Ministry of Food and Agriculture. Railways have been shunted into the backyard of the Law Ministry, while the Prime Minister, having shown Morarji Desai the door, has lightheartedly taken on the Finance Ministry, her pervasive domain already including Atomic Energy, Economic Coordination and the chairmanship of the Planning Commission, the Internal Affairs Committee and various other bodies.

In addition two Ministers of State, Gurupadaswamy (Agriculture) and Parimal Ghosh (Railways) have gone, along with two Deputy Ministers, Muthiyal Rao and Jagannath Pahadia. No one has been appointed in place of the four junior Ministers. But the former Deputy Speaker, R.K. Khadilkar, one of Mrs Gandhi's up and coming brigade with pipelines at home and abroad, has been found a berth as Minister of State in independent charge of Supply. Nor does this exhaust

his versatility. Simultaneously he shares part of the Finance Minister's burden with P.C. Sethi, another Minister of State, under the eagle eye of the Prime Minister.

Freedom, said Shakespeare, broadens from precedent to precedent. With Mrs Gandhi, Ministries broaden from crisis to crisis while Ministers shrink.

The ostentation which characterised the Bombay session of the Indira Congress presented a sharp contrast to the socialistic slogans raised and dramatically exposed the hypocrisy of it all. It was galling to see those who were promising to quit poverty flaunting their vulgar riches in front of the multitudes. There was no tangible evidence of the party's lofty commitments to the people in the resolutions passed with so much aplomb. Nothing differentiated the neo-radicals from the alleged reactionaries. The Old Congress session, the week before in Ahmedabad, paled into insignificance before the lavishness of the Bombay session of the Indira Congress. Yet, it was the old Congress which was alleged to be the party of the money bags and the industrialists and the Indira Congress the party of the common man. The sixty-four million dollar question was—where did the money come for the Indira Congress extravaganza ?

THE STENCH OF POLITICS 29 December, 1969

The road to socialism in Bombay was paved with gold. Whose gold ? Nobody knows. But demonstrably it needed money to keep the self-proclaimed *avant garde* of socialists, communists and fellow-travellers who form the bulk of the New Congress in the eye of the down-trodden proletariat. Against a backdrop of triumphal arches, festive floats, flags and streamers, Maratha warriors in period costume, special trains and the presidential chariot drawn by four white horses the oppressed *hoi polloi* of Bombay were privileged to gape at and gaze upon their saviours. In this setting Subramaniam's revised slogan to Scrap Poverty (he no longer calls on poverty to quit) acquired a new meaning and dimension. Poverty was scrapped on one side of the fence.

The other day a wasp-tongued acquaintance remarked to the writer : "Between the pinheads of Bombay and the boneheads of Ahmedabad there is little to choose." The battle between the two is waged on a quantitative basis—in terms of the numbers who come, the quantity of verbiage they emit, the

length of speeches they spew and of resolutions they pass, and the sum total of slogans they hurl at one another. Laid end to end the bodies, speeches, slogans and resolutions projected at the two jamborees would stretch from the Himalayas to Kanya Kumari, and perhaps beyond into the Indian Ocean.

Quantitative norms are replacing qualitative standards with spokesmen of both Congress factions (to adopt Churchill's well-known phrase) compressing the maximum of words into the minimum of thought. Not even a schoolboy would be taken in by the jargon proffered by both sides as the latest and last word in economic wisdom. Each group steps up its leap into absurdity disappearing like a genie into nothingness. A covey of intellectuals were reportedly requisitioned in Bombay, presumably to fill the mental vacuum pervading the deliberations of the New Congress. But the end result reflected in the verbose economic policy resolution seems to have produced nothing positive. It is the old hash served as new.

Succinctly stated, the policy of the New Congress is one of robbing Peter to pay Paul. To get rich at other people's expense is the latest gimmick in economics as inscribed on the tablets of the law in Bombay. Perhaps conscious of past heroics, Mrs Gandhi has proclaimed that along with the gap between the rich and the poor the gap between Congress pledges and Congress performance must also go. If so, a new miracle awaits the new era of the New Congress in this country.

Of late all sorts of gaps have been surfacing to the public view. Apart from the perennial gap between rich and poor there has been the familiar gap between Congress pledges and performance. To these have been added the recently uncovered generation gap within the Congress resulting in the creation of yet another gap between the Old Congress and the New. The split this engendered has precipitated a sort of political schizophrenia throughout the country. The disintegration of the Congress personality has resulted in a disintegration of national personality. The break-up of the Congress entity has led to a

disorganised India.

In the faction fighting within the Congress, political morality was thrown to the four winds, vitiating in turn the moral atmosphere of the country. For this outcome both sides must be blamed, but Mrs Gandhi's Congress as the ruling Congress and as the government of the country must accept the major blame. The people instinctively take their cue from the government which is the ruling party. Regrettably it cannot be said that Mrs Gandhi's tactics have strengthened the country's moral fibre. The political atmosphere is outrageously amoral. Conscience was flaunted as a cloak for most unconscionable conduct. The rot followed in the divided Congress and country. Conscience and the country were the first casualties.

Whether Mrs Gandhi calculates to rise phoenix-like from the ashes of the country nobody can say. But it would seem that she is not averse to rising in this manner from the ashes of the Congress. Why otherwise cultivate parties like the D.M.K., caste-ridden and until recently ultra-regional in its loyalties, at the cost of the Congress in Tamil Nadu? It may be that thereby, as a not too dutiful political daughter, she might be able to settle some old scores with Papa Kamaraj. But what of that waif and orphan in the storm, Subramaniam, whom the Prime Minister befriends and politically cherishes. Is he to be left to the wayward winds of chance?

For cultivating the highly useful friendship of the D.M.K. the Prime Minister has loosened the governmental purse strings in Karunanidhi's favour more than somewhat. Andhra Pradesh, swept by three cyclones in a year, is on short commons so far as subsidies from the Union Government are concerned. But bountiful is New Delhi's benison for the D.M.K. in Tamil Nadu, a State whose urgent call on the Central purse could not exceed five crores. Meanwhile, recalcitrant C.B. Gupta, refusing to be tumbled out of the *gadi* of Uttar Pradesh, is being denied supplies.

The purpose of this exercise is self-evident. Mrs Gandhi's

aversion to a mid-term general election springs from her realisation that success is problematic unless and until the New Congress is in a position to capture and control the grassroots party organisations in the States. This, as of the present, she is demonstrably unable to do. The impressive rally of the old guard Congressmen from nearly all the States, excepting Maharashtra and Rajasthan, to the Ahmedabad session has intensified the doubts and fears of the New Congress. Unless she can capture the Congress party machine from the district level upwards, Mrs Gandhi, like Fabius, can only hope to conquer by delay. Hence her tactic to force the pace by attempting to undermine those Congress State governments hostile to her and simultaneously to sabotage the grassroots Congress complex in these areas.

Mrs Gandhi, in her capacity as leader of the New Congress, is entitled to do so. But in her capacity as Prime Minister of the country she is not entitled to deploy national funds which constitute the people's monies to narrow party or political purposes. Overpowering the D.M.K. in Tamil Nadu or cutting off supplies to C.B. Gupta's government in Uttar Pradesh does not seem designed to serve national ends.

In terms of internal stability the country paid a heavy price for the survival of Mrs Gandhi in power. All the energies of the administration were diverted to the political war and chaos descended on the country. There was a sharp deterioration in the law and order situation. Violence flared up in every part of the country. Within the span of a month, the army had to be called out ten times to restore law and order. While the Neros in the capital were busy improvising new propaganda tunes, the country was set aflame by lawlessness and disorder. The custodians of the law had become law breakers. Was it any wonder that the people followed suit ? If the salt itself loses its flavour wherewith shall the salt be salted ?

EYELESS IN DELHI 9 March 1970

The bane of India today is too much politics and too little administration. Indeed, reading the morning newspapers one often wonders whether any effective administration exists in the country. There was widespread indiscipline even before the happenings of July 1969. But the break-up of the Congress at the Centre apart from generating a political chain reaction in the States has had its deleterious effects on the entire administration throughout the country.

In the twelve months ending in February, the army was called upon to assist the civil authorities eighteen times for the purpose of maintaining law and order. This works out roughly to thrice over every two months. The areas affected were nine States and two Union Territories as far spread out as Haryana and Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat and Assam, Kerala and Bihar. A new type of public service enterprise also came into being with Centre or some States earmarking troops to temporarily run essential services such as electricity, water supply, plants and machinery. This happened at various periods with West Bengal and Himachal Pradesh. Join the army and see India.

Delegation of authority, however temporary, by a civilian government to the army is calculated to create a dangerous habit of mind and action. If resorted to often, it denigrates the notion of civilian government and may finally erode it. Happily our Armed Forces for the time being have kept above and away from politics. But they, like sentient individuals in their particular slot, are primarily men of action but also given to thought. The soldier, sailor and airman of today are required to have as much brain as brawn. This is inevitable in any growingly mechanised, technologically-geared force.

If the Armed Forces are increasingly to be drawn into the drag-net of selfish and often incompetent politicians, as is now apparently happening with their brethren in the bureaucracy and in some reaches of the judiciary, the democratic future for India is dark and bleak. Under the blast of wide public criticism, some government spokesmen and apologists have been attempting to explain away what they really meant when they demanded that civil servants, the judiciary and the press should be aware of their "social commitments". According to them this meant nothing partisan or sinister. It only meant commitment to their obligations to society—whatever that might mean.

Jagjivan Ram, however, was more explicit. He at least is no political innocent. According to a press report of a speech he recently made in Bombay, he explained what he and his colleagues meant by "a committed civil service". This is what he reportedly said: "The so-called neutral administrative machinery is not a help. The theory of a neutral bureaucracy is hardly relevant to Indian conditions. We need a service committed to the ideals of democracy, socialism and secularism."

But what if in the Indian conditions, Jagjivan Ram stresses, the Jana Sangh or the Swatantra were to be the dominating party at the Centre or in some States, as seems more likely? What are the civil servants in those States to do? Are they

along with the judiciary and the press to change their commitment to their new political masters? Or would they all be obliged to stand by changeless commitments to a government that has been pitchforked from the treasury benches to the opposition? This would hardly accord with Jagjivan Ram's first and cardinal principle—democracy. It is the essence of democracy that a man is permitted to change his mind.

Being themselves chairbound when they are not airbound, the New Congress Ministers would doubtless like to have the bureaucrats, judiciary and press chainbound. Considerable sections within the aforesaid three are already demoralised to the detriment of the democratic tone and climate of the country. If it goes further a rot will inevitably set in to the detriment of the entire country. It has already begun. There is a surfeit of politics and a deficiency of administration. Civil servants are demoralised to the point of not knowing where to turn. As a result a policy of masterly inactivity in the country's Secretariats has started.

There is little point in talking of a new political wind of change driving the country forward to Heaven-knows-where. In the ultimate event it is the civil servants who carry the burden of administration under which the wheels of progress run. As independent judiciary can be relied upon to hold the scales of justice even, not heavily weighed on one side like our non-alignment policy. A free press is one of the great bulwarks of a democratic society. In a dictatorship the first casualty is the press. When the army is contaminated by politics we shall probably have political generals whose main concern it will be to see that the politicians who contaminated them do not die in their beds.

Militant mass activists facing the governments at the Centre and in the States make normal administration difficult, if not impracticable. When political interests or considerations enter into administrative calculations the government finds itself paralysed or reduced to deliberate inertia. This is what

is happening in West Bengal on which the Union Home Ministry has too long turned a blind eye. Surely it is New Delhi's concern to probe the law and order situation there when United Front members themselves talk of several small bomb factories springing up in Calcutta and accuse the State police of not intervening even when information was supplied to them. In Bombay the other day the Maharashtra government stood by while the city was terrorised into a *bandh* by Shiv Sena *goondas*. The Shiv Sena later gloated over its "peaceful" *bandh*. From Delhi one heard the echo of a great silence.

Mrs Gandhi and her supporters have undoubtedly scored some impressive successes in their political infighting. But these successes have neither altered nor improved the dismal administrative situation in the country which, if anything, seems to be on a rapid and chaotic decline. The core of sound government is the maintenance of law and order. Since law and order do not exist, where is sound government? The new wind of change is blowing administratively in the wrong direction.

Eyeless is New Delhi. Nearly thirty-four years ago Aldous Huxley's brilliant novel *Eyeless in Gaza* was published. As a critic described it, "it might have been written by a twentieth century reincarnation of Savonarola and El Greco, for the book is inspired by the fierce disgust of the monk and the oblique vision of the painter". We have too many synthetic El Grecos in our midst. We need a few more Savonarolas.

There was some spring cleaning still to be done. Mrs Gandhi was in a hurry to establish herself as the undisputed leader of the party. She was still doubtful of the loyalties of some of the people around her. To forestall any threat to her position she reshuffled the Cabinet, cutting down to size all the potential rivals. Chavan had sat far too long on the fence in the days before the split to inspire much confidence. So he was eased out of the Home Ministry. Besides, Mrs Gandhi was only too conscious of the possibilities of reinforcing her personal position while decimating her foes. So she took charge of it herself, thus acquiring exclusive power over all appointments. Simultaneously she detached the intelligence wings from it and attached them to her personal secretariat. To top it all, she created a super committee on licensing, with herself as the chairman. All the levers of power were now concentrated in her person. And as loyalty is a function of power in politics, her position was now completely secure. She was indeed the lord and master of all she surveyed.

RESHUFFLING THE PACK 29 June 1970

Whether in dealing or reshuffling cards, the main purpose of a card-sharper is to draw attention away from the primary objective of his exercise. Without flattering card-sharpers or denigrating political leaders there is much of a muchness between the two of them. Viewed simplistically there appeared to be neither design nor purpose in the Prime Minister's black Friday night reshuffling of her Cabinet. As in Noah's ark the animals came in two by two. Some went out singly. The reshuffle was notable for the cards dealt out to protesting recipients who were aware that some sleight of hand was going on under their noses rejected the first deal only to accept it later. Mrs Gandhi could give a few lessons to the Wizard of Oz.

Towards that artful Maharashtrian, Yeshwantrao Chavan, the lady from Kashmir edged a card which looked suspiciously

like the joker in the pack. No descendant of Shivaji could fall for so obvious a ruse. Mr Chavan declined with many thanks, gushingly expressed. The lady was persistent. The Home Ministry, she explained, would shortly be clipped of some of its major wings including the important intelligence branches of the C.B.I. and C.I.B. along with the prized perquisite of appointments which hitherto has given the Home Ministry a stranglehold on the placement and displacement of bureaucrats.

Clipped of those wings Chavan was quick to realise that the Home Ministry rooster would be reduced to a chicken. When the Prime Minister further made it clear that she intended to add these adjuncts to her already ample appendage, Chavan apparently saw the light. He accepted the Grecian gift of Finance thrust on him, probably reassured by the lady's insistence that he was the only man for the job. The accolade of a true socialist now rests heavily on Chavan's broad shoulders. But it also carries a responsibility which makes him vulnerable if the New Congress's economic dreams come crashing down like a house of cards. Chavan has thereby placed himself in the unenviable position of target number one, exposed principally to the fire of Dange's communists who have been concentrating their barrage on him for some time in his capacity as Home Minister. It is curious that Chavan should be the first major ministerial casualty to Mrs Gandhi's pro-Soviet communist allies headed by Dange.

So far, administrative drill has required that intelligence reports or dossiers on individuals can only be routed to the Prime Minister via the Home Minister. By the simple expedient of taking away these portfolios from Home and attaching them to her secretariat Mrs Gandhi is now in direct possession and control of the intelligence dossiers on her colleagues and political opponents. This is a formidable armoury to control as the Soviet K.G.B. and its sinister predecessor, the O.G.P.U., know. The Prime Minister's peep into the private

and less public doings of politicians on her side of the fence and on the other could be embarrassing to both. The late Mr Kairon used such dossiers to devastating purposes. Nothing is more calculated to make a politician pliant than to be confronted with his past and, sometimes, with his present.

He who holds the key to appointments is the master of the bureaucratic world. Mrs Gandhi has for some months now been talking of the need to have bureaucrats alive to economic and social commitments, whatever that might mean. With the key to appointments in her hand the Prime Minister can now move the bureaucrats, committed or uncommitted, like pieces on a chessboard. The administrative services are in for a shake-up. Parenthetically, Chavan, like Sardar Patel, has always stoutly defended the officials of the administrative services against the political attacks mounted on them.

Dinesh Singh, like a flummoxed bride, rang the changes on no-no-yes, finally yielding but whether to threats or opportunities is not clear. In any case the end of the battle found him divested of one garment, industrial licensing, which curiously is again to be added to the Prime Minister's political wardrobe under the guise of a committee of the Cabinet presided over by her.

In the reshuffling Mrs Gandhi emerges with the trumps in her hand—licensing, which carries with it a powerful lever of patronage plus appointments which means control over the administrative services plus control over intelligence which means control over the C.B.I. and C.I.B. For good measure, planning and atomic development are also housed in the Prime Minister's cupboard, and, temporarily Home. The Bureau of Revenue Intelligence prised from Finance is also her perquisite. If the Cabinet reshuffle points to anything it is that every one of its members, senior or junior, is expendable save the Prime Minister. Chavan was given a plain hint with the clipping of the Home Ministry's wings. Fakhruddin Ahmed who with some cause believed himself to be at the centre

finds himself on the periphery. Jagjivan Ram's preferences are not known but whether in Defence he will find more ample elbow room for his undoubted talents only the future will reveal.

The faithful have been rewarded with two outcastes reinstated to junior ministerial rank. The wavering have been given notice of being there only on sufferance. Dr V.K.R.V. Rao still clutches Education minus the C.S.I.R. Other bread has also been cast on the waters. Company Affairs have been entrusted to that true blue Tory, Raghunatha Reddy. Hanumanthiya is an obvious counterpoise to the Lingayats who infest Mysore while that lone, amiable, New Congress wolf in Gujarat, N.S. Mahida, has been suitably recompensed. Another true blue Tory, K.R. Ganesh, finds lodgement in Finance. Her setback in Orissa notwithstanding, Mrs Nandini Satpathy is elevated in rank. Virtue brings its own reward.

Whether this piebald, ramshackle army, obviously oriented way left of centre, will carry the hustings before it whenever the polls come depends on the electorate. And so, with apologies to Sagittarius, one ends :

*Onward, Congress soldiers,
Armed for total war,
Sickle strong and hammer,
sowing as before.
Joan of Arc as leader
Tovarish in sight
Westward, no use looking
Eastward, it is bright !*

Everything was grist for the Indira mill. She pursued her desire for power with single minded devotion. Nothing was sacrosanct, not even the Judiciary or the Parliament. As a measure of good faith, Mrs Gandhi had abolished privy purses. She hoped that it would be acknowledged as a testimony to the depth of her commitment to socialism. But the Bill failed to secure the two-thirds majority required to make it a law. But Mrs Gandhi was not going to let Parliament frustrate her grand designs. Nothing daunted, she snatched back the privy purses restored to the princes by the Supreme Court, through a presidential ordinance. Here was a ominous glimpse of the shape of things to come. Mrs Gandhi was a power unto herself. The death knell of democracy was pealing clear and loud. She, who professed to be the greatest democrat of them all, had no patience with democratic niceties. Everything was secondary to personal gains.

HOW FUTILE CAN WE BE ? 7 September 1970

Some years ago the late B.G. Kher, Chief Minister of Bombay as it then was and later India's High Commissioner in London, told the writer of a talk he had with Churchill. Churchill expressed great admiration and feeling for Nehru whom he described as a man without fear and without hate. Lapsing later into a political mood Churchill exclaimed, "But, by God, look at the parliamentary majority he has; mine is only thirteen." I am not sure of the figure. It might have been thirty. Even so, the episode recalls to mind how Nehru's daughter, now Prime Minister of India at the head of a minority government, rides roughshod over constitutional precept and practice. Defeated in the Rajya Sabha by however microscopic a margin, she has reportedly invoked the President's unilateral authority to overthrow the bilateral verdict of Parliament. It is true that the Lok Sabha's vote was in her favour. But the vote of the Rajya Sabha, however marginal, was against her.

This might seem a small, inconsequential episode. It is not.

It could be the beginning of an erosion of democratic precepts and practice by a Prime Minister determined wilfully to have her own way. Whether the princes were justified or not in sticking to the letter of contractual law irrespective of conditions in the country is certainly a point which calls for consideration and reflection. It would seem that some, if not many, of the princes had second thoughts and were prepared to release the Union Government from its pledged obligations provided they were assured that the financial guarantees given to them by Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel were even partially honoured. The pledged word of a country's government is the pledged word of its people. If within a little over two decades of giving its pledge to a particular party the government, defeated in Parliament, invokes presidential intervention to pursue its own purposes it is not merely maligning Parliament. It is maligning the people of India. It is maligning democracy as that fact and term is understood today.

For her own personal political purposes, Mrs Gandhi might wish to build up her public image as a radical. She started it with the nationalisation of the banks and the dismissal of Morarji Desai, her Finance Minister, which led to nothing. It was an exercise in futility. Never has so much been done by so few for so little.

It is obvious that the Prime Minister's recent tactics and policies are motivated with an eye on the general elections, whenever these might take place. Heading a minority government she is heavily reliant on the pro-Moscow communists on the one hand and the so-called Young Turks who add up to nothing on the other. Mrs Gandhi is awaiting a favourable issue on which to fight the general elections.

The princes' issue, stymied by the Rajya Sabha, did not go in her favour. Land-grabbing had also its angularities. On the Naxalites she was forced to action which, but for the political opportunism and ineptitude of the Old Congress,

could have been brought about. Nothing is more distressing on the political landscape today than the futile tactics of the Old Congress which brand them as dated. They are in fact inconsequential.

What India needs is a new type of political, economic and social thinking. Indira Gandhi is as outdated as Morarji Desai. Economics have overtaken politics. The mean, small political thinking in narrow corridors in India has really no relevance or meaning. Technology, electronics, computers mean much more to the world than the electric button-pushing methods of voting in our Parliament which repeatedly go wrong. How futile can we be ?

Even before the split, the position of the undivided Congress in the States was none too comfortable. But following the split, there was a sharp deterioration in the fortunes of the ruling Congress. With an election round the corner, the situation could not be suffered to continue. So "Operation Toppling" was launched. In the President, the party had an invaluable ally, for he could be relied on to act according to the Prime Minister's dictates.

The ruling Congress took full advantage of the situation. The way it handled the Uttar Pradesh issue is a typical example. Uttar Pradesh accounts for the largest number of Parliamentary seats. Mrs Gandhi never lost sight of this fact. She first eased out the Old Congress Ministry led by C. B. Gupta by persuading the Opposition party, the Bharatiya Kranti Dal, to switch its loyalties to the ruling Congress, even going to the extent of offering the B.K.D. chief the Chief Ministership. But Charan Singh did not prove to be a very congenial partner, being a little too assertive for the lady's liking. The ruling Congress withdrew its support and the Ministry collapsed. To prevent the possibility of C. B. Gupta forming a Ministry again, presidential rule was hastily imposed, with President Giri, who was on an official tour of the Soviet Union, signing the ordinance in far away Kiev. The indecent haste with which this was done provided further evidence of the Prime Minister's total disregard for the decencies of democratic life.

MURDER OF DEMOCRACY 5 October 1970

"Freedom is in peril. Defend it with all your might," said Jawaharlal Nehru many years ago. Democracy is in peril today. If India is not to come under a dictatorship or be handed over on a platter to the communists, the people must defend democracy with all their might.

For clearly, whatever she might say, Mrs Gandhi is set on achieving either of these objectives. If she cannot be dictator of India, with or without communist help, which is obviously her first objective, it looks as if she will have no compunction

in allowing the communists to take over. History seems to have taught the Prime Minister nothing. She has read and observed history in vain. The first lesson of contemporary history is that he who plays with the communists plays with fire.

It matters little to India or the world whether Mrs Gandhi individually commits herself to the communists. It matters a great deal to India and possibly to the world, considering India's territorial size and geographical position, whether in the process she drags India into communism and on to the lap of the communists. The time has come to speak plainly. Over the past year the Prime Minister's actions have shown that she will stop at nothing to achieve her personal ambitions and political ends.

The sordid, unprincipled operation in Uttar Pradesh is only the most recent of a long series of similar episodes. It began in July of last year when, thwarted in Bangalore by the majority of the Working Committee, Mrs Gandhi took her revenge on Morarji Desai as the head and fount of the Opposition by forcing his resignation, appropriating the Finance Ministership and decreeing the nationalisation of banks by ordinance, although Parliament was to meet in a few days. It cannot be said that on this occasion the Prime Minister directly flouted Parliament. But her intention clearly was to bypass it. Parliament should have been warned. "Spontaneous" demonstrations, carefully organised by the Prime Minister's subservient courtiers, aided and abetted by subsidised cheer leaders, followed the nationalisation of banks which so far seems to have done very little, if anything, for the small man and has only aggravated the economic confusion in the country.

The next act in this sordid drama stretching over a year was the election of the President. It is true that Mrs Gandhi was not too enamoured of Sanjiva Reddy as candidate. However, the record shows that she supported him even after the nationalisation of the banks and her contretemps with Morarji Desai.

But behind the public front which Mrs Gandhi maintained, some of her principal supporters who could not have acted on their own were preparing a time bomb to detonate under Reddy's feet at the right moment. Significantly the Prime Minister set the fuse by publicly declaring that every Congressman was free to vote according to conscience. Never was conscience used for such cynical ends.

If petulance prompted the Prime Minister into forcing Morarji Desai out of office and nationalising the banks, only wilfulness could have dictated her conduct in the President's election. If she could not get what she wanted one way she would get it in another. Therefore, she has ridden high helped by the servility of her senior colleagues who could have stopped her in her stride had they chosen, instead of preferring to continue in office at any price. They are now cut down to size, and though driven, harried and whipped from pillar to post they would seem to be prepared to suffer any humiliation rather than relinquish their Ministership. What manner of men are these?

One obviously intended result of cutting her Ministers, particularly her senior Ministers, down to size was a further calculated concentration of power in the Prime Minister's hands. As a result, some key departments in Home, Defence and Commercial and Industrial Development have come under her control.

By acquiescing in their denigration the Union Ministers elevated the Prime Minister's status and political importance while simultaneously reducing their own. They were accomplices in their own humiliation. The Prime Minister thereby emerged not as first among equals, which is her constitutional position in a democratic State, but soaring way above her cowering Ministers. That way lies dictatorship.

The nationalisation of banks by ordinance with Parliament in the offing by-passed Parliament. It did not flout Parliament but ignored it. In the case of the privy purses the parliamentary process laid down called for a two-thirds majority in both Houses.

When the ruling party failed to get a two-thirds majority in the Rajya Sabha the Prime Minister promptly got the President to promulgate an ordinance derecognising the princes. This was flouting Parliament, for the deprivation of princely purses entailed no ordinary parliamentary Bill but a special measure required to be passed through special process. Unlike the Congress presidential election, Mrs Gandhi did not leave the issue of the princely followers. The U.P. operation was conducted in a more circumlocutory way. Here the Prime Minister's two hatchetmen were the President and the Governor of Uttar Pradesh.

In turn, the Prime Minister's subservience to Soviet Russia emerges more clearly every day. Her reliance on the C.P.I. is self-evident. The power of the C.P.I. was shown when Bhupesh Gupta virtually vetoed the application of the Preventive Detention Act to West Bengal. Chavan, obviously under directions, was quick to retreat.

Not a month passes which does not see the visit of an Indian Minister or mission to Moscow and a similar influx of Russian visitors to New Delhi. It was ironic but perhaps symbolic that President Giri should have set his official seal on the unprincipled imposition of President's rule in Uttar Pradesh on the sacred soil of Soviet Russia during his stay in Kiev.

A democratic constitution can be utilised and subverted to bring about either a dictatorship or communist rule. This is what is happening in India. In 1947 the Russians subverted Czechoslovakia's democratic constitution to bring that country under communist rule. Hitler used the Weimar constitution as a springboard to Nazi dictatorship. Either of these things could happen in India today the way events are developing.

Mrs Gandhi's strategy for the next general elections, whenever they come, is transparent and well known. It is to bring as many States as possible under the control of the New Congress in order to ensure the ruling party's success at the polls. Without the huge State of Uttar Pradesh the Prime Minister

would have been entering into a dubious battle. Now her position is more consolidated.

In what way is the country or at least those wedded to democracy to stop the drift to dictatorship or communist rule? Parties like the Old Congress, the Jana Sangh, the Swatantra and the Socialist groups could be relied upon to play their part. But that is not enough. Mrs Gandhi's own ministerial colleagues and followers who sincerely believe in democracy should assert themselves at this juncture. So also should the Chief Ministers of States whose future status is left very much in doubt by the latest eruption in U.P.

Democracy must be defended with all one's might by all democratic parties and persons, irrespective of whether they are in the ranks of the ruling party or the Opposition.

Sanjay Gandhi, the Prime Minister's son, sought and was granted a license to start a small car project. The Opposition determined to make political capital out of the incident, accused the Prime Minister of nepotism and worse. The incident showed Frank Moraes at his best. He has often been accused of adopting a partisan attitude to the Prime Minister after the split. His reaction to the situation proves beyond doubt that his posture was motivated not by any personal animus against the Prime Minister but a deep concern for the future of democracy in the country. For Frank defended the granting of a licence to Sanjay, insisting that he had as much a right to pursue his vocation as any lesser citizen. Not only that, he denounced the Opposition leaders who were raising the bogey of nepotism and made an impassioned plea for fairplay and decency.

THE PERSONALITY CULT 16 November 1970

The pother over Sanjay Gandhi's mini-car is reminiscent of the pother raised by the old women of both sexes on the mini-skirt. Mini-skirts may not be everybody's dish of tea. Beauty, they say, lies in the eyes of the beholder. To pillory the son of a Prime Minister of prominent personage and glorify the son of a peasant is a form of inverted snobbery. Where does nepotism begin and common decency to an individual end? The right of the son of a Prime Minister to embark on his own career is surely as incontestable as the right of anybody else's son.

The writer disagrees with and indeed disapproves of much for which Mrs Gandhi stands politically. But ordinary fairness has set him wondering over the past few days whether the uproar mounted against Sanjay Gandhi is because Mrs Gandhi is his mother or because she happens to be the Prime Minister of India. The same could have been said of Kanti Desai when his father was Finance Minister. The episode highlights the intense unhealthy personalisation of politics which is rife

in India today. For this Mrs Gandhi is not blameless. She has done nothing to discourage her followers from building a personality cult around her. Indira badges were a feature of the recent session of the New Congress in Bihar.

The growing trend to personalise politics and politicians is not confined to the government. It is more vehement on the Opposition benches. Judging by the verbal acrobatics of speakers in and outside Parliament, the primary object of public debate seems to be to draw attention to the Speaker and away from the subject of discussion. The babel almost daily enacted in Parliament denigrates that institution and its members. It brings parliamentary bodies and the rules of decorum which should govern parliamentary proceedings into contempt. An M.P. is within his right to attempt occasionally to catch the presiding officer's eye. But with a score of M.P.s jumping simultaneously to their feet and roaring simultaneously into space, nobody is the beneficiary. Neither Parliament, nor the country, nor bellowing M.P.s.

Such vociferous politicians do not really aim at catching the presiding officer's eye. They aim at catching the public eye. They seem more interested in making news than in projecting views. It is a common illusion among Ministers and politicians that newspapers and newspapermen enjoy exceptional freedom in the way of comment and writing. Actually, a newspaper's freedom to comment on public individuals and affairs is no more than that of a private citizen and is certainly less than that of an M.P. A newspaper is governed by the ordinary laws of libel and contempt. But an M.P. speaking in Parliament is above the laws of libel and contempt. The majesty of Parliament gives him immunity from legal prosecution.

Over the past five years the decline in parliamentary standards has seen a sad decline in values throughout the country. What is the personality cult but dotting the capital I? It is self before service. Our politicians might not set an example

in sartorial elegance but they are trendy enough to set the pace as go-getters, more obsessed with their own political fortunes than those of the country. It might be said that in this they conform to a type all over the world. Politicians are much of a muchness.

Enjoying legal immunity, it could justifiably be expected, M.P.s would exercise their unrestricted freedom to speak with a degree of responsibility. Yet the government and the Opposition give unbridled utterance to what they think of specific individuals or categories of persons from princes to bureaucrats and from businessmen to judges and journalists. The new doctrine of "social commitment" is nothing but the coward's euphemistic shield for "political commitment". What the government really desires is politically committed bureaucrats, judges and journalists. They dare not say so. The old Indian civil service was once labelled "the steel frame" of India. Today both the I.C.S and the I.A.S creak at the joints. Left to the mercy of politicians who don't seem to know their minds from day to day, they are no longer the permanent services, but the impermanent services. Yet their efficiency depends on security and confidence.

Today senior officers, versed by experience in the needs and workings of important government departments, are thoughtlessly being shuffled from pillar to post. As a result the already deteriorating standards of administration are bound to slump further. Without security and confidence, there can be no efficiency. If a decline in political standards is accompanied by a sharp slump in administrative efficiency there is no knowing where the country will drift. Constant and interested political tinkering with the administration can only undermine the latter's morale. The retention of certain key officers in key posts is a national investment in these critical and fluid times. Political favourites of proved incompetence find no difficulty in securing one lucrative niche after another. Their only sense of continuity seems to be continuity in political sine-

cures. But the administrative services have a job to do. They should be allowed to do it. The personality cult of politicians should not be permitted to get in the way of the services.

Truth is an expendable commodity in political campaigns. Almost everything is fair in love, war and politics. But even for an unprincipled an exercise, the campaign launched by the ruling Congress was unrivalled. Falsehood was heaped on falsehood. Facts were distorted beyond recognition. The official machinery was exploited to the hilt to further the interests of the party. Indian Air Force planes and helicopters were misused by the Prime Minister's camp with a gay abandon. No effort was spared to malign the Opposition. Dark hints were dropped about a conspiracy to murder the Prime Minister. Administrative rules were bent to the breaking point to garner funds for the party's lavish campaign.

And throughout, Mrs Gandhi maintained her holier-than-thou attitude. The ruling Congress could do no wrong. Its hands were lily white, while that of the Opposition were tainted by every conceivable crime. It was the Opposition that had all the money. The ruling party had the exclusive monopoly of all the progressive elements in the country. The Opposition was the seat of reaction. Socialism was the sole preserve of the ruling party. The myths multiplied. The falsehoods mounted. The assault on the Opposition grew in frenzy. It was left to Frank Moraes to place things in their proper perspective, to lay bare the cold facts, to sift the myths from the realities.

MYTH AND REALITY I 19 February 1971

At the best of times the average citizen finds it difficult to distinguish between myth and reality. At election time mythology has a field day. Let us examine some current myths in relation to realities.

Myth: India without Indira will collapse overnight. The wonderful stability which this country has enjoyed for the past five years will give way to chaos, violence and internecine strife. The serene state of law and order which Mrs Gandhi's government has ensured for India from West Bengal to Gujarat, and from the foothills of the Himalayas to Kanya

Kumari will be a thing of yesterday. If you want stability, law, and order, vote for Indira.

Reality: Never since independence has India known such chaos, violence, instability and defiant flouting of the law as over the past five years. West Bengal has become India's show-piece abroad. Seven murders within twenty-four hours were registered last Sunday in that haven of peace. Not a day passes without incidents from various parts of the country of cold-blooded killings, flagrant shootings, attempted assassinations, arson and loot. If this is stability the Prime Minister's supporters can enjoy it on a platter.

Myth: The Prime Minister, thwarted by reactionary forces, is fighting a lone battle single-handed against the demons of evil who threaten her. Even her very life which is dedicated selflessly to the nation is now menaced by the Jana Sangh. What can she do against these evil forces unless the country invests her with absolute, unchallenged power by retaining her at the head of an absolute, unchallenged majority? She is, of course, a committed democrat wedded indissolubly to democracy.

Reality: The Prime Minister might conceivably be threatened by reactionary forces, but so far according to her own testimony they have limited their opposition to her economic policies and to her intramural party politics. They have never deterred her from presenting a firm front to the forces which challenge law and order, whether communists, communalists or perverse lawless elements on a spree. Even assuming that the Prime Minister's reactionary opponents had frustrated her in her plan to ensure stability, peace, goodwill, law and order in the land, she cannot bypass the fact that within her five years of power she, on her own initiative, rid herself of the incubus of the reactionaries nearly two years ago. What has she been doing in the past two years? Lawlessness, murder, arsons and crime have, if anything escalated spectacularly in this period.

Myth : Granting that the Prime Minister has not been able to ensure stability, law and order in the country over the past five years, particularly during the past two years, she alone remains the symbol of stability. Who is the alternative to her ? She alone can ensure stability, but only if her authority is absolute and unchallenged. Therefore, the country must return her with an absolute majority.

Reality: This is simplistic logic and thinking. Mrs Gandhi is a self-willed person which is a different thing from being a strong-minded person. Admittedly the two things often go together. Hitler was a strong-minded person but the paramount trait or paranoia in his character was that he was self-willed. So was Mussolini. They both came to a sad end because their self-will dominated and in the end distorted their strong minds. Both dragged their countries down with them.

Germany and Italy have risen since, but not because of Hitler and Mussolini, but because the German and the Italian peoples have lifted themselves by their own bootstraps. You ask : who is the alternative to Mrs Gandhi ? The real and relevant question is : What is the alternative ? The alternative to her are the people of India. The British people demonstrated the truth of this equation when after the last war they threw their saviour, Churchill, another self-willed, strong-minded individual, on the political scrap heap and chose instead a colourless man, Clement Attlee. The British did not do badly.

We ourselves unconsciously emulated the British when after Nehru's death we chose a supposedly colourless man, Lal Bahadur Shastri, as our Prime Minister. Had he lived five years longer he might have been the salvation of India. Over centuries most of our rulers and politicians have dragged this country down. If India survives today it is not because of her politicians but because of her people. More than at any juncture in our history it is vital that the people assert

themselves by their votes today. The salvation of India rests on the Indian people. It does not rest on an individual Indian.

MYTH AND REALITY II 20 February 1971

A cynic has defined democracy as a system offering the largest number of carrots to the largest number of donkeys. At election time politicians the world over promise the electorate paradise on a platter. Our Indian politicians are no exception. The leaders of all parties, spearheaded by the Prime Minister, are offering the toiling, down-trodden masses a new heaven on earth.

God reportedly created the world in seven days. At the end of nearly twenty-five years of independence our political gods are still riding on the backs of the masses, prodding them forward with promises of an El Dorado to come through the divine grace of planning, public enterprise and licence control, to say nothing of the nationalisation of banks and the nationalisation of princes. The chief and only goddess in this pantheon of male deities is the Prime Minister who according to her more ardent supporters is also the only democrat left in India. There might be a plurality of gods, but there can be no plurality of democrats and feminine divinities.

Let us examine the record.

Myth: The only genuine democratic leader left in India is the Prime Minister. Does she not daily weep over the plight of the poor and promise them, if only she is returned as unchallenged leader of an absolute majority, to change this state of affairs with a wave of her imperious wand? The only people her opponents can hobnob with are princes and capitalists.

Reality: True up to a point, Mrs Gandhi does shed copious tears over the plight of the toiling masses. But what has she

done for them in her five years of power? For close on four years she herself was hobnobbing with the princes and is still replenishing her party coffers with the aid of the capitalists. The pot is in no position to call the kettle black. After all, who have been Mrs Gandhi's principal supporters? The communists, through the open but blackmailing advocacy of C.P.I.; the lunatic fringes of the communalists like the Muslim League; the separatists and secessionists like the D.M.K. Are these people democrats? Then, of course, the Russians are her close friends, advisers and helpers. One sometimes wonders whether India is ruled from New Delhi or Moscow.

Myth: But has the Prime Minister not come out strongly in favour of the minorities, and of the weaker sections of society such as the poor? Is that not democracy?

Reality: It isn't democracy in itself. Democracy does not mean domination exercised by the majority no more than it means any sort of tyranny exercised by the minorities. The minorities are far more susceptible to political pressures and manipulations from the top than the majority. This is not helping the minorities. This is exploiting them for purely personal political ends. It isn't democracy. Nor is it democracy to promise the poor and unprivileged all sorts of benefits and do nothing about it in five years of power, but only do it through some fringe benefits to help your own personal ambitions a week or two before the elections. This is exploitation of the poor, you are exploiting the minorities and the poor for their votes. Is that democracy?

Myth: You overlook her democratic measures such as the nationalisation of the banks and the matter of the privy purses. Only a few days ago Mrs Gandhi's government announced a family pension scheme for industrial workers. She has followed this up by a new L.I.C. scheme to provide life insurance cover automatically to holders of small savings accounts in banks. Today I read of another scheme to benefit the agriculturists by a new type of life insurance policy under which their policies

will be kept in force even if there is a default in the payment of premia up to two years. How can you say that the interests of the poor are not at the core of her heart ?

Reality : They seem to be at the core of her tender heart only on the eve of elections. It's beautiful in one way. It's beautifully timed. What prevented the Prime Minister over the past five years, or even over the past two years when the reactionaries were out of her government to bring these measures in ? This is what I call humbug and pitiless political exploitation of the gullible poor for selfish electoral ends. Of the three measures you mentioned, one had to be brought in behind the back of Parliament by presidential ordinance to suit the Prime Minister's political convenience. The President has exposed himself as no more than a subservient rubber stamp. On the other two instant pre-election measures, the Prime Minister had the ready acquiescence of the official L.I.C. Again, both the earlier nationalisation of the banks and the affair of the privy purses were attempted to be rammed through by ordinance behind the back of Parliament. Is this democracy ?

MYTH AND REALITY III 22 February 1971

"Where have we the money to give?" The Prime Minister is reported to have plaintively asked some inquisitive newspapermen needling her on the startling incident of a defector decoyed to the ruling party allegedly by hard cash. Before his new patrons of the New Congress at a meeting in Palanpur called to witness his lightning conversion the defector turned tail. He threw the notes he had received in a fluttering cascade into the air. Apparently, like Paul he saw the light in a blinding flash. He returned to his old comrades, minus the cash but presumably with his conscience intact.

What are the facts and fancies behind political money-giving ?

Myth: It is not Mrs Gandhi's ruling party but the Opposition that has the money. The Opposition consists of princes and capitalists. The New Congress is dedicated to serving the masses, who have no money. Our only capital is the selfless devotion of the masses to our cause, and our devotion to theirs.

Reality: True. But man does not live on bread alone. He also needs money. Would it interest you to know what are the backdoor methods by which the ruling party circumvent the laws they themselves have made? Contributions for political purposes are prohibited by Section 293A of the Companies (Amendment) Act No. 17 of 1969. Yet having enacted this law the Prime Minister's party is flouting it by promising to publish four hundred souvenirs for her party just before the elections. This is quite innocuous, of course. But each page of advertisement in each souvenir costs Rs 2,000. Can you add? If you can, you will realise that one industrial or business company can contribute Rs 8 lakhs to Mrs Gandhi's Congress by taking one page in each souvenir.

Myth: You say all this, but the government of India which Mrs Gandhi heads is surely not privy to this.

Reality: Isn't it? Let me tell you this. The Ministry of Company Affairs has gone out of its way to issue a certificate that advertising in political souvenirs will not be treated as a breach of Section 293A of the Companies Act if the object is advertisement. Of course, other political parties have cashed in on the ruling party's shining example. But who is the principal beneficiary? Millions of rupees will be collected by Mrs Gandhi's ruling Congress in the way of advertisement charges whereas not a single company will have any object of advertisement in mind while making the payments.

Myth: All sorts of stories are being put about of how the Indian Cotton Mills Federation made a deal with the government under which one lakh bales of foreign cotton would be imported into India and distributed among the mills, who

would pay Rs 30 for each bale. It was alleged that the total collection would have been Rs 30 lakhs. This is palpably false and has been denied.

Reality: These are the facts and I know they are correct. The government can challenge me and produce specific evidence to the contrary, not broad denials. The deal was first exposed on the front page of the *Financial Express* of 11 February 1971. Thereupon the Secretary of the Minister in Charge of Foreign Trade, L.N. Mishra, contacted the Indian Cotton Mills Federation to say that the deal was off and no import of cotton would be made at least till the elections were over.

Myth: You make these charges. Are you prepared to face them in a court of law ?

Reality: Yes. I would additionally add two charges: (1) Foreign wool-tops were promised to the Woollen Manufacturers' Association in consideration of a sum of around Rs 70 lakhs. (2) It was indicated to general insurance that they might not be nationalised just now, so long as the government could conveniently stave off nationalisation.

Myth: You make these large charges. Can you tell me who collects the money ?

Reality : It is the Association of Industrialists which collects the money from its individual members. The representatives of the business associations pay their money to the ruling party. I am not trying to absolve the opponents of the ruling Congress. In my opinion they are also guilty of such malpractices. But a government which claims to have only the interests of the toiling, exploited masses at heart should disdain from taking tainted money. Most of all, quite frankly, I deplore the depth of degradation to which organised industries have been reduced.

What is socialism ? Wrapped in a mink coat Mrs Gandhi occasionally preaches socialism to India's hungry millions. Two World Wars have occurred since Karl Marx preached his doctrine of communism which Russia and China now talk of as socialism. The socialism of the 1930's of the Sydney Webbs is as dead as a doornail. The socialism of Harold Wilson and Willy Brandt has small relationship if any, to the socialism of Harold Laski. What is the myth and reality of Indian socialism as its champion, Mrs Gandhi preaches it.

Myth: A socialist India will bridge the gap between the 20 per cent rich and the 80 per cent poor. From each according to his capacity and to each according to his needs.

Reality: Well said. But let us start with the Ministers of the Government of India. These impoverished socialists eke out their existence on a taxable income of Rs 4,48,000 per year. The average yearly income of an Indian is a little over Rs 546 as estimated in 1968-69 at current prices, but at 1960-61 prices it is only Rs 319.3 per head per year.

Myth: That may be. Ministers have also got to live. The ruling Congress party is not only socialist. It is democratic.

Reality: So I have heard Mrs Gandhi say. We know by the standard of living of our Ministers what socialism means. What democracy means we are also gradually coming to know. The Prime Minister is greatly enamoured of and influenced by her Russian friends who today are India's conscience keepers. In the Marxist or socialist vocabulary once the dictatorship of the proletariat is established which has not yet happened in India, the reactionaries such as myself will have no right to express their opinions.

Myth: But you are expressing your opinion freely.

Reality: True. But Mrs Gandhi has still to win the elections. When and if she does, I have no doubt we shall be shown our proper place in the socialist heaven which will be India.

Myth: But how do you define socialism? It is the distribution of plenty among the poor.

Reality: Granted, provided you have the plenty to distribute. Socialism does not mean robbing Peter to pay Paul. Socialism broadly is ownership by the State of the means of production, distribution and exchange. This is a very broad definition of socialism but it is within the pattern and context. Socialism is very different from communism.

Myth: Are you trying to say that democracy is not reconcilable with communism? Russia and China are people's democracies.

Reality: Yes, if you accept the semantics of communism. I have been to China twice—when it was under the Kuomintang and when it was under the communists. I hold no brief for the Kuomintang. I think they were deservedly put away. Yet when my Communist Chinese friends talked of democracy at that time in Chungking, what did they mean?

Myth: You are an impossible person, posing as a democrat. The true democrats are the socialists who have the interest of the masses at heart, like Mrs Gandhi.

Reality: That might be. I wish you would read and examine history. When the Chinese communists or socialists as they described themselves spoke in Yenan of securing "democracy", they had only one thing in mind. They were out to wrest civil liberties from the people. The peasants in a democracy, they insisted, must have the right of free speech and organisation. Have they got it? Democracy in the Marxist vocabulary means the right of the Communists alone to preach their dogmas and doctrines. What has Mao Tse-tung said? This is what he has said and I quote him: "Yes, my friends, you are right. We are indeed setting up a dictatorship. The experience gained by the Chinese people through Soviet dictates has taught us the necessity of setting up a dictatorship of the people's democracy. This means that the reactionaries must be deprived of their right to express their

opinion and the people alone have the right to vote to express their opinion."

MYTH AND REALITY V 25 February 1971

What is legal is not always right or just. The Delhi High Court was legally correct in dismissing the writ petition against the Prime Minister for allegedly misusing official facilities for election purposes. The charge specifically related to the Prime Minister's use of I.A.F. planes and helicopters for election purposes. The petitioners had obviously not done their homework. The evidence they produced was flimsy. Mainly on the grounds of security the Prime Minister is entitled to use official facilities for official purposes.

Myth: Wasn't she doing this? With the Jana Sangh hollering for her life and threatening to murder her, the Prime Minister is entitled to maximum security. Air travel ensures this better than other forms of transport. What's wrong with her use of I.A.F. planes and helicopters even if incidentally she addresses an election meeting or two?

Reality: If you have read the high Court judgment carefully you will notice that it is by no means unqualified. The Court had to arrive at a decision on the testimony and evidence submitted to it. The petitioners had to prove that the Prime Minister's air journey were not for official purposes and that as Prime Minister she was not entitled to excessive security measures while travelling for party, political or personal purposes. This they demonstrably failed to do.

Myth: In that case, why all the hulla-baloo?

Reality: Because, as I have said before, what is legal is not always just or right. I have been interested in this matter for some time. For my facts and figures, I am indebted to the well-known Delhi fortnightly, *The States*, which has also been interested in this matter.

Myth: What are your facts and figures ?

Reality: These are the facts and figures as provided to *The States* by the A.I.C.C. office of the ruling Congress. They relate mainly to the Prime Minister's air travel by official aircraft during the mid-term poll in Uttar Pradesh. But they also cover other V.I.P.s.

Myth: Pandit Nehru started the practice of using I.A.F planes on the ground that security arrangements would cost less if he travelled by air. He paid for the use of these planes what he would as a passenger on a scheduled commercial service. What's wrong with that ?

Reality: Nothing. But let's examine some of the payments made by Mrs Gandhi for air lift on that basis not only for herself but for herself and her party. These facts and figures have been applied by her own A.I.C.C. office. From Deoria to Kasia the payment was Rs 6.56 and from Kasai to Gorakhpur Rs 8.61. This was on 31 January 1969. The flight from Deoria to Kasia took twenty minutes. The road distance is about 30 miles. It would cost between Rs 20 and Rs 25 to cover it by taxi.

Myth: But this is not peculiar to India. What about other countries ?

Reality: In Britain the Prime Minister does not use official transport for election campaigns. Canada has no written laws on the subject. There are, however, clear conventions regarding the use of official aircraft and transport by the Prime Minister. He is authorised to use Air Force planes and transport for official purposes. But he is not expected to utilise these aircraft and transport for political purposes or for election campaigning.

Myth: But surely it is different in the United States ?

Reality: No, it isn't. A U.S. Air Force plane named Air Force One is assigned to the President for his official air travel and no money is paid to the Air Force for such official use. If, however, the President flies to campaign in an election for

members of his party or on his own behalf, the National Committee of his party reimburses the Air Force for use of the plane on an actual cost basis according to the number of miles flown.

Myth: But you have yourself said that the Prime Minister also pays at a commercial rate for her use of Air Force planes when she uses them for non-official purposes.

Reality: Yes. But what is the payment? The President, Vice-President, Prime Minister and Defence Minister are entitled to use a Russian TU-124 jet for official purposes. The TU-124 can carry twenty-five passengers. It consumes aviation fuel costing Rs 1,880 per hour. The total cost of operating a TU-124 is roughly Rs 2,500 per hour. A return journey from New Delhi to Calcutta by this plane will cost well over Rs 10,000. I notice, according to the figures supplied by the Prime Minister's own A.I.C.C. office, that she was billed Rs 265 from New Delhi to Calcutta and another Rs 265 from Calcutta to New Delhi. This adds up to Rs 530 for a return journey from New Delhi to Calcutta for the Prime Minister. I do not know if the payment covered her party.

It was election eve. The destiny of the nation hung in the electoral balance. The most exciting chapter in the country's political history was drawing to a close. Political morality had touched the nadir. The ruling party, the chief custodian of the democratic values enshrined in the Constitution, had reduced democracy to a mockery. It had displayed a total disregard for the most elementary decencies of democratic life. Could it be trusted with the reigns of power. Was democracy safe with Mrs Gandhi, considering with what casualness and contempt she had treated its twin pillars—the Legislature and the Judiciary? Would the electorate be taken in by the slogans or would it pause to study the vital issues involved? What was at stake was not the mere election of a political party, but the very survival of the country's democratic system of government.

VOTE FOR INDIA 28 February 1971

India goes to polls on Monday for the first mid-term general election in her history. The election is spread out over more than a week. It is the most crucial election since independence. Many basic, vital issues hang on the outcome. These issues relate to the survival of democracy in our country ; to its administrative stability; with the restoration of law and order which for all practical purposes have ceased to exist over the past two years ; to our economic growth and progress which means more productivity and with it more equitable distribution of the wealth thereby created ; ensurement of employment to able-bodied and qualified persons ; control of the rising price spiral which has hit hardest the so-called middle-classes with regulated incomes, and the far less privileged lower income group of workers. The spectrum is wider. It is not a mere question of ensuring democracy, socialism and secularism as one or the other party might claim. It is what the Indian people, not their political leaders (irrespective of all parties) understand by these large, generic terms. What is democracy?

What is socialism? What is secularism?

One always examines carefully the credentials of anybody who pretends to be somebody. Why not examine closely the credentials of a political party trying to patronise the people or even of a political individual? Democracy, socialism and secularism are not enshrined or embodied in one single party or one single person posing as the godhead or trinity of three divinities. These attributes are those which the Indian people have cherished since independence. Democracy, socialism and secularism belonged to all of us, though every individual Indian might attach his special meaning and significance to each of them.

Socialism : The ruling party claims to be dedicated to socialism and rightly points to the increasing disparity and gap between the incomes of the industrial and business barons and the peasants, workers and white collared clerks under their economic grip whom they mercilessly exploit. It might be true. But example, like charity, begins at home. The disparity between the incomes of India's poor Ministers, Central and State and those of the poor, groaning masses has increased, is increasing and is unlikely to diminish. The average income of the average Indian is a little over Rs 546 as estimated in 1968-69 at current prices. The salary and adjuncts of a Minister of the Government of India add up to over Rs 70,000 a year. But his gross income which means a taxable income is Rs 4,48,000 per year. These figures have not yet been officially contradicted or challenged.

I know some top industrialists. One of them recently told me that his gross taxable salary and adjuncts added to a little over Rs 2,00,000 a year, which means half of the taxable salary of a Minister of the Government of India. Yet Mrs Gandhi's heart and the hearts of her colleagues bleed over the starving masses, exploited by industrial tycoons and bucanears. Who is exploiting whom? What is socialism and who is a genuine socialist?

Democracy : The pillars of democracy are the judiciary which enshrines the rule of law, and the Constitution which enshrines Parliament. There are also minor adjuncts outside the judiciary and Parliament. They are the so-called common people who constitute over 80 per cent of India. The ruling Party's concern for an independent judiciary is by now notorious. They want a committed judiciary. Their respect for Parliament is shown by the number of ordinances passed behind Parliament's back, at least two of which the Supreme Court has overruled. I was reading what "Cho", the young bright spark from Tamil Nadu had to say about the ruling party vis-a-vis democracy. The ruling party's performance constituted three devaluations—devaluation of the currency, devaluation of the judiciary, and devaluation of the people. Nobody can describe himself as a democrat who does not respect the constitution, Parliament, the judiciary and the people.

Secularism : The Prime Minister surely is a secularist. She herself proclaims it every day. She is India's sole protector of democracy, socialism, and secularism, which according to her means protection of the minorities.

No single term has been so distorted as secularism in the private interests of public parties. The desecration of Hindu images and gods in Tamil Nadu by the redoubtable "Periyar" E.V. Ramaswamy Naicker has not produced so much as a whimper of protest by the ruling party or the Prime Minister. I happen to belong to a minority community. But secularism surely means respect for all religions, minority or majority. You don't secularly shout for one side in order merely to get their votes. Not if you believe in true secularism.

In this election, therefore, vote for India. Vote for what you feel is really democratic, socialist and secular. Each Indian stands for India, not for a political person, a party or a clan. Vote for India, voting for the candidate you think most deserving and best irrespective of the party to which he belongs.

The outcome of the election took everyone by surprise. Mrs Gandhi romped home with a thumping majority. All of Frank Moraes's eloquence was in vain. He had done his utmost to prevent what he sincerely believed would be a calamity. But he accepted the electorate's verdict gracefully. Unlike lesser men he did not question the legitimacy of the verdict or raise fantastic cries of rigged elections and chemically treated ballot papers. He was a democrat to the core. In the democratic form of life the people were supreme. It was not for him to question why they had voted the way they did. They had chosen and he would abide by their decision.

THE PEOPLE'S VERDICT 12 March 1972

In a democracy the people's verdict at the polls, however unpalatable it might be to some sections of the country, must be accepted—and accepted with good grace. Mrs Gandhi's was a runaway victory. It was also a personal triumph. Howsoever one looks at it, her landslide success was a mandate from the people. It can be interpreted in no other way. It must, therefore, be accepted as such. Politics is like bridge. It is followed by postmortems with irate partners accusing each other of leading from the wrong hand or trumping their ace. Mrs Gandhi has succeeded in trumping almost everybody else's ace. Her opponents obviously led from the wrong hand.

Yet when the din and dust of victory have settled and the captains and kings have departed the time comes for rational, cool, cold-blooded assessment. Power, they say, inevitably finds and enters a vacuum. In the mind of India's people the opposition to Mrs Gandhi represented a vacuum which she has triumphantly entered. The big question now is how satisfactorily she will fill that vacuum.

Like her political rivals Mrs Gandhi has offered the people paradise on a platter. Her platter overflows with an embarrassment of other riches, the rich appetites of ambitious colleagues

—too many ambitious colleagues. The loaves and fishes of office are not sufficient to get around, and Mrs Gandhi, though not absolutely committed to prohibition, has as of date not been able to convert water into wine. However, one never knows.

A runaway victory such as the Prime Minister has achieved brings with it certain responsibilities. A victory like this might chill the spines of the tweedledums and tweedledees who abound in her party and who know not who is next labelled for the high jump. But Mrs Gandhi equally would do well to bring down the soaring temperature of triumph. She has presided over the scaffold long enough. At this moment restraint is needed. It is needed on the part of both the victors and the vanquished. There is no point in abuse or recrimination on either side. The first democratic duty on the part of the country and its politicians is to abide by and respect the verdict of the people. This is the first imperative.

One of the prime reasons why the people have invested Mrs Gandhi with such overwhelming authority is to ensure her political independence and to guarantee that henceforth she leans on nobody but India and its people. So far the Prime Minister's alibi for leaning on Moscow and on Moscow's friends inside India was her exposure to the slings and arrows of the reactionaries on the right. These forces have disappeared. There can be no excuse any longer for India to be tied to the coat-tails of Messrs Kosygin and Brezhnev. Much as we might love the Moscovites we would be the better for seeing a little less of their obtrusive presence in our midst. The External Affairs Ministry might take special note of this.

Unchallenged authority tempts one to be authoritarian. Mrs Gandhi today lives in a political paradise of her own, but like the chant in Gilbert and Sullivan, she should avoid the temptation to belong to any other nation. If socialism is to reign in this country it should be socialism of a *desi*, modern type, not the outmoded socialism which has been preached in this country over the past twenty years and more. Mrs Gandhi

should pursue the centrist path she indicated more than once in her election speeches. The major priority in our country is the restoration of law and order irrespective of whether disorder threatens and comes from the right or the left. Tied up with this is the problem of political corruption which corrodes the country. Authority should not make the Prime Minister authoritarian.

Frank Moraes's fear that Mrs Gandhi's re-election boded ill for the future of democracy was more than justified by subsequent happenings. Even before her phenomenal victory, Mrs Gandhi had not displayed much regard for parliamentary institutions. But Things became infinitely worse after her re-election. She and her Cabinet colleagues absented themselves from Parliament frequently. Even when important policy issues were being discussed the occupants of the treasury benches would not bother to put in an appearance. What was worse, whenever the Opposition tried to initiate a debate, their attempts were frustrated by a deliberately engineered lack of quorum. The situation reached such a pass that Opposition members resorted to a dharna (sit down strike) in the main hall of Parliament.

WHAT PRICE DEMOCRACY?

4 September 1972

The brash manner in which the ruling Congress party with its overwhelming majority is attempting to ride roughshod over the small minority Opposition matters to every Indian concerned with the elementary decencies of public life and with the preservation of democracy in our country. Unlike her two predecessors, Mrs Gandhi, since her runaway victory at the polls, does not seem greatly concerned with what happens in Parliament. Her brief, casual, infrequent appearances in this forum do not flatter that body. Nor do they flatter her.

Jawaharlal Nehru and Lal Bahadur Shastri, despite the majority they also commanded in the House, were scrupulous in respecting it as the core and symbol of what democracy meant to the people of India. Last Friday the minority Opposition was finally driven to stage an unprecedented *dharna* in the Lok Sabha. Never in twenty years of its history has Parliament been reduced to such straits. Never has it witnessed such a spectacle. The ham-handed tactics resorted to by some of the clowns who masquerade as the government's

spokesmen in the Lok Sabha strains one's credibility in the capacity of small men to exercise their small minds.

It was the government's responsibility, as an Opposition member pointed out to the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs, to keep the House going and not to slam the doors shut in its face. This seems to be precisely the game in which the government was engaged, unsuccessfully as it turned out. According to the Opposition parties' letter, drafted by Piloo Mody, the lack of quorum was deliberately engineered by the ruling party through the efforts of the deputy whip who started taking the government party members out from the House by 4.45 p.m. The Lok Sabha was carefully emptied, again according to the Opposition, and members in the Central Hall were informed not to come in. The quorum bell which normally rings thrice was only rung twice reminding one of the cock which failed to crow before Judas denied Christ thrice.

After a conference with the Speaker of the Lok Sabha the demand of the Opposition parties for the extension of Parliament's session to Monday was conceded. This itself is revealingly significant for it suggests that the government, along with Raj Bahadur, was caught with its pants down. The government had obviously tried to scuttle the Food Corporation debate which involved discussion of the conduct of that body's chairman. The ruling party was additionally open to the charge of attempting to bypass a debate on the Wanchoo Committee Report on tax evasion as also a discussion on the proposal to lower the voting age to eighteen. Moreover, the government is accused of deliberately flouting an agreement with the Opposition. This related to the quorum which would not be challenged when the House was engaged in taking up private members' business or any special discussion.

All this adds up to a degrading situation. Democracy can only flourish when an overwhelming majority in power respects the minority in Opposition. Democracy is endangered when

the majority deploys democracy as despotism. This process is counter-productive. A country does not belong to any one individual to be run like a pocket borough. A country belongs to its people.

Nearly two years had passed since the historic split of the Congress party. Mrs Gandhi had held the reigns of power for eighteen long months. And the people still waited, perhaps with bated breath, for a vision of the promised land. Pakistan's brutal crackdown on Bangladesh and the war of liberation had diverted the nation's attention for some time. But when the euphoria of the war had evaporated, the electorate, which was becoming impatient to cash the "Garibi Hatao" (quit poverty) cheque, found that the Bank was bankrupt. Not that there was any paucity of empty gestures, There were nationalisationsgalore. But these unfortunately cannot feed the millions. The promises made to the electorate remained unhonoured. All this despite the fact that the party had been cleansed of all the alleged reactionary elements and Mrs Gandhi was the undisputed arbiter of the country's destiny and her own.

BREAD, NOT CAKE 11 September 1972

The euphoria of the war with Pakistan is beginning to evaporate. So gradually is the euphoria engendered among the masses by the mantra of *Garibi Hatao* which largely enabled Mrs Gandhi to score her runaway victory in last year's mid-term election. Up to a point, any electorate, more especially an illiterate electorate, can be hooked by the bait of a compelling slogan. In Britain's Khaki election after the First World War, Lloyd George was resoundingly confirmed as Prime Minister on the slogan "Hang the Kaiser". Four years later Lloyd George was out of office and never staged a comeback. Ironically, the Kaiser, Wilhelm II, survived until after the outbreak of the Second World War.

At some time or another, promissory notes must be redeemed in hard cash. Poor Marie Antoinette of France did not quite grasp these commercial nuances. Faced with the upsurge of the masses in the French Revolution she is reported to have said : "If they have no bread to eat, let them eat cake." Not long after, her head fell under the guillotine. Despite the

tragedy of her life and death, Marie Antoinette was essentially a stupid woman. Mrs Gandhi is anything but stupid. Yet her approach to national problems is disquietingly like that of the pathetic French queen. The Indian masses have no bread to eat. Well, let them have cake in a spate of slogans spread, if not like pie, then like a rainbow in the sky.

So far as slogans go in India, the sky is the limit. If you cannot feed the poor, soak the rich. This, is essence, is the economic philosophy and planning of our mentors and masters. The only way to distract the masses' attention from bread is to dangle before them the multi-coloured cake of nationalised banks, nationalised insurances, nationalised industries and nationalised princes. In some vague inchoate way the hungry masses have been led to believe that other people's nationalisation means their salvation. They overlook one factor. The cake is there. The bread has still to arrive. Sooner or later, and sooner rather than later, the patient millions of India will wake up to this reality. Perhaps they will argue it was right that the princes should have been deprived of the cream in the coffee and the I.C.S. of the sugar. But where has the coffee, leave alone the cream and the sugar, disappeared? It has certainly not disappeared into the jaws of the masses.

The historian of the future will note a curious fact in the India of our day. While over the past two decades the economic level of the classes and the masses has depreciated, though in differing degrees, the level of ministerial living and salaries, Union and States, has increased, is increasing and ought to be diminished. This exclusive coterie seems to be wolfing both the bread and the cake. Ceilings—land, urban and income—are reserved for lesser mortals. In the socialist nirvana which Mrs Gandhi is pledged to precipitate one day, all men are equal; meanwhile some are more equal than others. Example, like charity, should begin at home. The masses starting to see through the government's synthetic cake will

soon be demanding genuine bread. Gimmicks like removing second class compartments on railways in an effort to usher in a golden era of classless travel impress nobody, least of all the old third class traveller. He would prefer to arrive intact at his destination. Rail travel today has become one of the major hazards of life in India.

First things first. This is where Mrs Gandhi's government rides a haywire track. Not classless travel but safe travel is the first railway priority in India. Unemployment continues to increase despite the nationalisation of the banks. Life has become irksome for widows and dependents with the nationalisation of insurance. The monumental inefficiency of our public enterprises which sees most of them in the red has received no further stimulus by the nationalisation of industries. Pauperisation of the princes has brought no windfall to the people. The only beneficiaries of socialism seem to be the government, which today is the country's biggest monopolist. But where is the country?

THE TERMITES WERE BUSY DECIMATING THE PILLARS OF DEMOCRACY. THE JUDICIARY, THE EXECUTIVE, THE LEGISLATURE AND LAST BUT NOT LEAST, THE PRESS, WERE ALL SACRIFICED TO MRS GANDHI'S LUST FOR POWER. THE PRESIDENCY HAD BEEN REDUCED TO A RUBBER STAMP. THE BUREAUCRACY WAS UNDER CONSTANT ATTACK FOR NOT IDENTIFYING ITSELF UNEQUIVOCALLY WITH THE RULING CONGRESS POLICY. THE JUDGES FELL OUT OF FAVOUR FOR SEEKING TO PRESERVE THE SANCTITY OF THE CONSTITUTION. THE PRESS REMAINED UNSUBDUED—OR AT LEAST A SMALL BUT NONE THE LESS FORMIDABLE PART OF IT, IN THE IMAGE OF THE INDOMITABLE FRANK MORAES. LIKE A LATTER DAY HORATIUS, HE DEFENDED THE BELEAGUERED GARRISONS, UNDAUNTED BY MR GUJRAL, THE INFORMATION MINISTER'S NOT-SO-VEILED-THREATS AND UNMINDFUL OF A WORRIED EMPLOYER'S PLEA FOR MODERATION. "DEMOCRACY IS FADING AND SHALL I BE ACCUSED OF MERRILY FIDDLING AWAY WHILE THE FIRES RAGE ALL AROUND?" HE SEEMED TO SAY. SO HE PERSISTED IN HIS FIGHT TO UPHOLD THE DECENCIES OF DEMOCRATIC LIFE AGAINST ALL ODDS AND KEPT THE FLAME OF FREEDOM BURNING.

Even as the gap between the promises and performance of the Congress widened, public disenchantment grew. But the party would not recon- cism itself to the situation. It became more and more intolerant of criti- cism, particularly in the English language press. When the press ignored the threats of the Information Minister, Mr Gujral, the Gov- ernment changed its strategy and sought to discredit the press. The top leaders of the party, not excepting the Prime Minister herself, lost no opportunity to paint the Press in the blackest hues. It was insinuated that the mass-circulated English papers were the tools of the monopo- lists, that they were wholly partisan and lacked a sense of commitment to the national aspirations.

THE MONOPOLY PRESS 10 September 1969

Not a day passes but the Prime Minister or Inder Gujral launches a tirade on the monopoly newspapers for daring to intrude on their monopoly of power. The current fashion in Indian politics is to give a dog a bad name and hang him. So, the Syndicate. So, the monopoly press. But every dog has his day, and Gujral, with the monopoly he temporarily exer- cises over All India Radio, is not unaware that this supposedly objective organisation is known today by another name. In the mass communication field All India Radio, by the Govern- ment's own statistics, is the biggest monopolist in the country.

As against an overall daily newspaper circulation (English and Indian language) of about seven million, All India Radio reaches out to around 70 per cent of India's population over medium wave, while over its short-wave service it covers practically the whole country. India has a literacy rate of 30 per cent. In a country, the vast bulk of whose population is illiterate, audio-visual media of communication such as radio and television have an obvious advantage over the written word. The 70 per cent of Indian men and women who can neither read nor write can listen and understand.

There are around 10 million radio receiver licences in the country plus at least another 500,000 unlicensed sets. Aside from these, the government-sponsored community listening scheme caters for the rural areas through nearly 140,000 sets. The average rural forum consists of fifteen to twenty individuals, and about 16,700 forums function all over the country. These figures do not include casual or unorganised listeners in the countryside or listeners in clubs, hotels, restaurants, pavement shops and public places in cities and towns.

Vast is the monopolist empire of our mini-Goebbels. Instead of playing the grand inquisitor over the monopoly press, Gujral might sit down and study calmly the facts and figures put out by his own Ministry. He will then at least give the appearance of speaking from some basis of knowledge. Despite the horrendous nightmares raised by him and the Prime Minister, the so-called monopoly press has barely scratched the surface of readership potential in the country. India's literate population, in the sense of individuals able to read and write, is about 160 million, and the daily countrywide newspaper sales of under seventy million thus leave at least 90 million of this susceptible sector untainted and untouched on the generous calculation that one newspaper is read on the average by ten persons. Add to the 90 million immunised from the monopoly press the 360 million illiterates who willy-nilly can neither read nor write, and a grand total of 450 million emerges who are way beyond the clutches of the monopoly press. But they are well within the reach of Mr Gujral.

Regrettably, the Government Press Registrar in his annual reports lumps newspapers and periodicals under the overall label of newspapers, thereby blurring the distinction between them. The total number of daily newspapers in 1968 were 636, of which 68 were English language dailies. The periodicals numbering over 9,300 included weeklies, monthlies, quarterlies, bi-monthlies, bi-weeklies, tri-weeklies, half-yearlies and annuals. Their collective circulation was around sixteen

million. But on the calculation that the core of subscribers to these periodicals, particularly the weeklies, are the same seven million subscribers to daily newspapers who may buy one or more periodicals, the numerical fall-out is negligible. It could even out at an additional five million which should not unduly disturb the Minister of State for Information considering his stranglehold on broadcasting.

What is meant by monopoly? Monopoly means the exclusive possession or control of a trade in some commodity or service in a given market. Any such control in a given market as enables the individual or group having this control to raise the price of a commodity or service materially above the price fixed by free competition is monopoly. Governmentally it means exclusive operation in certain areas. In other words, monopoly represents a system opposed to free competition.

Many in India equate monopolistic practices with the United States whereas America is one of the few countries where monopoly is legally inhibited and free competition encouraged to the point of incitement. The commercial and business take-overs occurring in Britain today represents a strong trend towards monopoly. Indeed, at the turn of this century Britain and German capitalism had already become monopolistic, thereby preparing the ground for neo-mercantalism and corporatism, both ugly words indicative of ugly trends. The two World Wars altered the picture somewhat, but in Britain and West Germany the old ghosts are being resurrected.

So are they now in India, the monopolists here comprising not private enterprise but the public sector and the government, Mr Gujral, controlling the biggest mass medium of communication in India which he perverts to the use not even of a party but of a faction, is the classic monopolist in the near-totalitarian society we are on the way to developing in India. Fortunately the Indian press has not degraded itself to the status of a kept press though it will if the nationalisation-

wallahs have their way. It will then in fact and reality be the monopoly press.

According to the government Press Registrar's latest statistics, the circulation of multi-edition dailies, such as Indian Express and others in the same category, constituted less than 40 per cent of the total circulation of all dailies. Where does monopoly come in ? The so-called chain newspapers, that is different newspapers and periodicals owned by common ownership units, did not fare so spectacularly either. In the overall total circulation of some 23 million for newspapers and periodicals their share was around seven and a half million. The *Indian Express*, with over 400,000, had the highest circulation for a daily multi-edition newspaper.

Outside India the name of Lord Thomson is associated with chain newspapers, periodicals and radio and television stations. Not all his publications voice the same views. There have been instances when they have been at variance with one another, and at least one of his newspapers was closed down by the Rhodesian government in Salisbury for its pro-African views. "I never talk to my editors," Lord Thomson once jocularly remarked to the writer. "I only see my chief accountants."

If Mr Gujral reads the Indian newspapers carefully he will have noticed that the editorial views on some issues expressed by different publications in the same group vary at times. Contrary to the view he and the Prime Minister seem to hold, newspaper proprietors, particularly of the larger newspapers, are no albatrosses round the necks of their editors. This is because no self-respecting editor assumes the editorship of a newspaper unless he is in general agreement with the views and policies of the owner. A newspaper like *The Times*, London, which is supervised by a trust of eminent personages, specifies in its trust deed that the editor who is responsible for the day-to-day running of the paper shall conform to the views and policies he has accepted as those of the trustees and himself.

Before pointing to the monopoly mote in other people's eyes Mr Gujral should take a good hard look at the beam in his own. He might in the process discover some deep truths. He might discover that it is not newspaper proprietors but over-officious government functionaries who would like to be albatrosses round the necks of editors.

The irony of it all was that it was the Government which enjoyed an undisputed monopoly over the country's most important medium, the radio. The reach of the radio is much wider than all the newspapers put to gether. Nor has the government been above abusing the All India Radio to further the interests of the party. In fact, Opposition members of Parliament and others have repeatedly accused the All India Radio of blatant partisanship. Despite the charge of monopoly levelled against the press, the government itself has been disinclined to even bestow an element of autonomy on the broadcasting machinery, leave alone encouraged competition. Even allowing for a moment that the charge against the Press may have some little validity, one fails to understand how a government monopoly is any less objectionable to a private one.

BLOWING THEIR TRUMPET 1 December 1969

To be saved from one's friends is the recurring wish of many politicians. Mrs Gandhi must sometimes nourish this thought. Apart from the familiar spectacle of the same frightened, shivering men huddled around the lady to which press photographs have accustomed the public, there are less conspicuous outriders charging windmills and breaking lances on the Prime Minister's behalf. The most volatile among these is Inder Gujral. He has many gifts. But he lacks the golden gift of silence. His encyclicals on what constitutes the freedom of the press must now be more numerous than the Papal encyclicals which have emanated from the Vatican over the past ten years. Understandably he is more reticent on his own exclusive domain, All India Radio. A man who day in and day out denounces the monopoly press cannot be expected to expose himself as a monopolist in the leading media of mass communication in this country. These are radio and television.

Television is in its infancy. But at the government's own figures All India Radio has a network covering the entire country. No single mass circulation newspaper or, for that

matter, the entire press of India, English language, and Indian languages, can reach out to anything like the entire population. All India Radio can and does. You need to be literate to read a newspaper. You may be illiterate but that does not prevent you from hearing and following a broadcast.

About 30 per cent, roughly 160 million, of India's population are literate in the sense that they can read and write. Not all of them can afford newspapers. The government Press Registrar's report for 1968 gives the overall circulation of Indian daily newspapers as seven million. It puts total circulation of periodicals at about sixteen million. On the legitimate assumption that at least 50 per cent of newspaper subscribers take in one or more periodicals, the overall number of subscribers to newspapers and periodicals in all languages cannot exceed 20 million. On the basis of five readers for every subscription taken, we have a total of 100 million readers for the country's dailies and periodicals. This comprises 20 per cent of India's total population.

According to the facts and figures supplied by the Indian institute of Mass Communication, All India Radio on its medium wave covers 70 per cent or 350 million of the country's population. Its short wave stations cover practically the whole country. Aside from around ten million radio receiver licences plus another 5,00,000 unlicensed sets, the government sponsored community listening scheme caters for the rural areas through nearly 140,000 radio sets. The average rural forum per set according to official statistics consists of fifteen to twenty listeners. These are captive audiences. They do not include casual or unorganised listeners in the countryside, or listeners in clubs, hotels, restaurants and other eating places, pavement shops and public centres in cities and towns. The Indian Institute of Mass Communication expects that by the end of 1970-71, about 84 per cent of the population will be provided with medium-wave service excluding the short-wave service "which is available practically all over the country".

At the time of partition in August 1947, A.I.R. had six stations and ten transmitters. Today, it has a network of sixty-two principal and auxiliary stations and thirty-two *Vivid Bharati* (variety programme) centres. The tentacles of radio spread far and wide. Besides national programmes consisting of features, commentaries, discussions, talks and news, special programmes are directed to universities, schools, adult education centres and tribal populations. "The radio," notes the Indian Institute's report, "has undoubtedly been a powerful factor in such of the changes in the political and economic and social outlook and attitudes as have come over rural India in recent years."

Thus the radio represents the most powerful single medium of publicity and propaganda in India. In a largely illiterate country where the spoken word makes far greater impact than the written, the radio's potency and potentiality for mischief or good is virtually unlimited. Handled responsibly with the national good as its primary end, broadcasting service, even when it operates under government control, could serve a useful national purpose. But not when it is perverted to party or government ends. The Prime Minister unwittingly exposed the narrow, exclusive purpose to which she and her government think All India Radio should be fettered when she observed in Parliament the other day that "it is not used for party ends. It is used for government ends."

Indeed it is, and very much so. When the government is identified closely and exclusively with a party, the monopolistic abuse of radio for government ends is bad enough. When the government does not even represent a party but a faction within a divided party, this abuse of a national service is vicious, which is what is happening. Instead of All India Radio, a national service, being directed to national ends, it is being perverted to government uses, which in the present situation means factional uses, and into this vicious party melee the nation willy-nilly is being dragged and smeared by

a bunch of squabbling politicians.

Morarji Desai in his dignified reply to the Union Minister for Information and Broadcasting Satyanarayana Sinha, rightly concedes that the Government can legitimately use the radio to explain its policies to the people. Nobody questions that right. But simultaneously the government cannot, in fairness, shut the door on critics of its policies. Anybody who cares to listen in to the indifferent, heavily slanted broadcasts of All India Radio today cannot but be sickened by the grovelling sycophants and compliant yes-men who pour out paeans of praise for the mystic performances of a factional government and for the heaven-born personality of its leader. While the drums beat for the personality cult, this factional government, as Chagla points out, will not allow the ordinary Indian citizen even the right of dissent on radio.

The writer is not unacquainted with broadcasting nor with its techniques. Since the Bangalore session of the Congress no known critic of the government's policies has to the writer's knowledge been invited to take part in a single controversial feature, commentary, talk or discussion. He might have been invited for two to three talks or discussions on innocuous or academic themes. We live in an India today where the personality cult is being projected from on high while below a brood of servitors from the bargain basement carve out their private fiefs or empires. It seems time to remind them that All India Radio is nobody's private property. Nor, for that, matter, is India.

Complaints of All India Radio being debased to partisan ends to serve the political interests of the Prime Minister's faction are by no means confined to the Congress Opposition. Sinha himself admits this in his letter to Morarji Desai. It cannot be that only Jack, in the shape of Satyanarayana Sinha, is in step and all others out. Multitudinous are All India Radio's sins of commission and omission. It is no coincidence that Morarji Desai is its chief victim, his utterances being either

summarily dropped or chopped. Another prominent victim is wasp-tongued Acharya Kripalani. For every twelve minutes devoted to Mrs Gandhi and her government, the Opposition leaders are lucky if they get two. Like Britannia of old, the Prime Minister rules and rides the waves—radio waves.

The now widely voiced demand by a long suffering public that the government of India should loosen its stranglehold on All India Radio, which should be converted under Parliament's overall eye into an autonomous corporation on the lines of the B.B.C. is a step in the right direction. Inder Gujral has done not a little to accelerate the demand. The B.B.C. has a Chairman and eight Governors appointed by the Crown who indicate the broad policy lines.

Responsibility for working and administration vests in the B.B.C.'s Chief Executive Officer who is the Director General. Its finance comes mainly from wireless and television licence fees and from its publications. The B.B.C. has the monopoly of sound broadcasting but shares television broadcasting with the independent television authority which supports itself by selling time to advertisers.

Morarji Desai has suggested that a parliamentary committee consisting of representatives of all parties should investigate the workings of All India Radio and see how they can be overhauled or improved. Sufficient damage has been done to this institution to warrant a drastic overhaul on the lines of the Chanda Committee's recommendations.

The bureaucracy was one of the many scapegoats selected by the Congress for the failure of its grand designs and the ineptitude of its leaders. The bureaucracy was accused of obstructing the smooth implementation of the Plans. Senior leaders of the Government Deplored the lack of commitment on the part of the bureaucracy to the nation's developmental aspirations. What in effect being demanded was that the bureaucracy should be wholly subservient to the dictates of the party in power. Such irresponsible talk had a very bad effect on the morale of the bureaucracy. It was slowly but surely being dragged into the political cesspool. This was a very disturbing development, for though the politician may reign it was the bureaucrat's responsibility to rule and he cannot do so conscientiously if his independence is not assured.

THE IMPERMANENT SERVICES 23 March 1970

Is there one standard for the permanent services controlled by the Centre and another for their counterparts under the administrative directive of the States? Not long ago in a speech in Bombay Jagjivan Ram called for "a committed civil service" and went on to spell out what he meant by this. He condemned "the so-called neutral administrative machinery" as a hindrance not a help. "We need," he emphasised, "a service committed to the ideals of democracy, socialism and secularism." This was at the New Congress session in Bombay.

Last Friday, V.C. Shukla, Minister of State for Home, struck another note. Replying to demands in the Rajya Sabha for cleaning up the West Bengal administration, the Minister emphatically declared, "We don't want politically motivated people to function in the permanent civil service. We want the permanent civil service to be completely non-political or politically neutral." Which of the two Ministers expresses the mind of the ruling party? You pay your paise and take your choice. The varied, often contradictory views which Union

Ministers express on the same subject reflect the confused mind of the ruling party. They forget that the public has a memory longer than their own. A shout for the abolition of privileges sees the pledges to the princes jettisoned. Another shout, and the guarantees given to the Indian civil servant are sought to be thrown overboard. The only privileged castes left in the country are our Ministers and politicians who take good care that nobody touches their preserves.

While everybody else's income goes down, the monetary value of the privileges and perquisites guaranteed to themselves by our Union Ministers goes up. All in all they are rated today at around Rs. 12,000 per head per month, a shining example of their leaders social commitment and consciousness. Not to be outdone in their own commitments to the same high causes, our M.P.s have recently upped their allowances, privileges and perquisites. Nobody could accuse either Ministers or M.P.s of belonging to an unprivileged society.

Thinking of the threatened lot of the Indian Civil Service the writer spent a few hours during the past few days mulling over some books and records relating to the service. Indians were allowed to enter the then covenanted civil service as far back as 1858 following Queen Victoria's proclamation after the mutiny. However, the first Indian to join the service did so only in 1863. He was Satyendranath Tagore, a brother of Rabindranath. Thereafter, until the end of the First World War, there was a thin trickle. In 1915, only five per cent of the services were Indian.

According to Kewal L. Panjabi, a member of the I.C.S who edited a book entitled *The Civil Servant in India* published five years ago by Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay, the number of British officers formed nearly 50 per cent of the cadre at the time of independence in August 1947. Almost all of them resigned. Additionally a large number of Muslim officers opted for Pakistan. As a result the strength of the I.C.S. in India was reduced from 922 to 422 in August 1947. Today, it stands at

83 and should evaporate by 1979. Of the 83 there are eleven seconded to the Indian Foreign Service while 28 are serving in the States. The problems which face our country today are obviously far different from those we were left with on the eve of independence.

It has become the habit of certain leftist politicians anxious to distract public attention from their own ineptitude and inefficiency to question the patriotism and efficiency of members of the I.C.S. These patriots, tethered to Peking or Moscow, cannot accuse the I.C.S. of owing loyalty to any country but their own.

Nor is the outlook of the average Indian civil servant so blinkered and fossilised as his critics would like the country to believe today. Mrs Gandhi's government, which claims to be suddenly aware of the responsibilities which face a Welfare State, might be interested in the views expressed at least five years ago by a respected doyen of the I.C.S., Raghavan Pillai, who retired in 1960 as Secretary-General to the Ministry of External Affairs. His opinions on the Welfare State and the responsibilities of the I.C.S. were declared some time before the present ruling party at the Centre and its minions attempted to stir public opinion against the bureaucrats. They portray the bureaucrats as men who dragged their feet to neutralise or immobilise the efforts of our patriotic politicians. This is what Raghavan Pillai wrote some time before 1965. "Our goal is the modern Welfare State," he said. "Realisation of this goal involves the rapid development of the human and material resources of the country, the elimination of poverty and want, provision of employment and the creation of a just social order. It is to this gigantic and stimulating task that the modern civil servant has to address himself."

Who then can justifiably accuse the Indian Civil Service of not being aware of its new responsibilities in a new India? Ironically it has been left to the New Congress. The ruling party in New Delhi has shorn neither Ministers nor M.P.s of

their privileges and perquisites, but they accuse the princes and the I.C.S. of unconscionably clinging to both.

Raghavan Pillai, while stressing the need for a new economic and social awareness of the problems which lie before India, emphasised that the I.C.S. should not be politically committed or involved even while its members were free to hold their own political opinions. This did not mean that they should be neutral. "Every citizen," wrote Pillai, "whatever his calling, has the right to develop and hold his own political opinions. With this right there can be no interference. But it is the duty of all public servants, as it is of students, not to become political partisans or to engage in political activities."

Pillai also makes the interesting point that with the enlargement of the field of public administration, more technocrats, technologists and scientists should be recruited into the services. The French realised that some time ago. Instead of persecuting the I.C.S. in so graceless a fashion at the tapering end of its long years of service, our Ministers and M.P.s, ensconced in comfort, might exert themselves into thinking again. Else our permanent service, like our politicians, might become impermanent.

Mrs Gandhi hastily nationalised the major commercial banks in June 1969, as part of her campaign against the old guard. The Supreme Court, however, struck down the Act on the ground that the compensation proposed was not equitable. But the Supreme Court's strictures did not have any effect on the government and soon a way to circumvent this obstacle was found and the banks were nationalised again. It was bad enough that the government should treat the judiciary so casually. But unfortunately it did not stop there. The top leaders of the ruling party unleashed a barrage of criticism at the judiciary suggesting that it was an impediment to the enactment of progressive measures. Perhaps the expectation was that the judiciary, like the bureaucracy, should be committed to the ruling party's policies. It was more than an interesting coincidence that the ruling party discovered new merits in the late Nathpai's Constitutional Amendment Bill, which sought to vest Parliament with complete authority to amend fundamental rights.

THE RULE OF LAW 6 April 1970

One of the most disquieting and dangerous developments in recent days is the increasing tendency among certain politicians to erode the authority of the judiciary, particularly of the Supreme Court. Standing as it does at the apex of the judiciary, the Supreme Court is as much the guardian of individual rights as it is the custodian of social needs. Both these objectives were very much in the minds of the founding fathers of the Constitution. The framers of India's Constitution were particularly concerned to keep the Supreme Court and the judicial system pure and independent. They regarded the judiciary as the guardian of the Constitution, a symbol of the new independence of India and a tangible expression of the new law created by Indians for Indians.

In this complex the Supreme Court, as the highest judicial tribunal of the land, became the final authority on the interpretation of the Constitution. It had also a special responsibility for safe-

guarding the fundamental rights enshrined in the Constitution. From these duties and responsibilities flowed its power of judicial review. This power is by no means absolute. Principally in cases concerning property and personal liberty the Constituent Assembly placed some restraints on the review power of the courts. Its aim was to strike a balance between the rights of the individual and the needs of society. In democratic law, best expressed in the Fifth Amendment of the American Constitution, no person may be deprived of life, liberty or property without the due process of law, nor shall private property be taken for public use without just compensation.

The issue of due process, as the Constituent Assembly soon discovered, is closely tied up with these two important problems—with the expropriation of property and compensation for it, and with preventive detention. In its attempt to reconcile the concepts of individual rights and social needs the Assembly was compelled to qualify the exercise of the basic freedoms of speech, assembly, etc., with certain provisos. The protection of due process was removed from the right of property. The power of judicial review was thereby qualified. The emergency provisions have made further inroads into the judiciary's power of review.

It was never intended that the judges would replace the legislature. Within their defined ambit the judiciary remains independent. But the judiciary cannot function properly without the co-operation of the legislature and the executive. A clash with either strikes at the roots of democracy and democratic institutions. Though constitutional amendments since 1950 have further circumscribed the authority of the courts in property matters their power to scrutinise executive action in preventive detention cases has to a degree been enlarged. The judges are there to interpret the laws made under the provisions of the Constitution.

Alladi Krishnaswamy Ayyar put it succinctly. "While there can be two opinions," he said, "on the need for the maintenance

of judicial independence, both for the safeguarding of individual liberty and the proper working of the Constitution, it is also necessary to keep in view one important principle. The doctrine of independence is not to be raised to the level of dogma so as to enable the judiciary to function as a kind of super-legislature or super executive.”

This the judiciary cannot be accused of doing or wanting to do. The boot is on the other leg. The Constituent Assembly was careful to keep the judiciary out of politics. The question today is, how are politics and politicians to be kept out of the courts? The Assembly seems to have been conscious of this danger for it spent considerable time over the mechanism of choosing judges, their tenure, retirement and impeachment. As a result, the Constitution provides that the Justices of both the Supreme Court and the High Courts should be appointed by the President, the former in consultation with Justices of the Supreme Court and the High Courts, and the latter in consultation with the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, of the High Court and the Governor of the State. Judges hold office during good behaviour until reaching the retirement age laid down in the Constitution, but they can be removed by Parliament. The grounds for doing this are incapacity or proved misbehaviour. Judges are removable by the President on receipt of an address by both the Houses of Parliament.

Interestingly, the judges were the first to react to the judicial provisions of the Draft Constitution. In a letter to Nehru, the Chief Justice of the then Federal Court, H.J.Kania, focused his observations on the independence of the judiciary. Kania urged that the provisional Home Ministry should at no stage be allowed to intervene in the appointment of a High Court judge. When recommending to the President the appointment of a judge to the High Court, the Governor and the High Court Chief Justice should be in direct contact. There should be no political intermediary or interference. Later, a meeting of the Justice of the Federal Court along with the Chief Justice of the

High Courts endorsed Kania's stand. They deplored "the growing tendency to treat the High Court as a part of the Home Department of the Province".

India's Constitution, though federal, has been described as having some strong unitary features. The framers of the Constitution were unanimous in the sense of a uniform interpretation of the laws by the Supreme Court and with no separate chain or courts to administer Union laws. The voice of the Supreme Court should be paramount. K.M. Munshi believed that "the unconscious process of consolidation which a uniformity of laws and interpretation involves makes the unifying unconscious and therefore more stable". Ambedkar was even more emphatic. He visualised "one single integrated judiciary having jurisdiction and providing remedies in all cases arising under the constitutional law, the civil law or the criminal law". He felt such a judicial system plus uniformity of law "were essential to maintain the unity of the country".

Today, the tugs and pulls are the other way. Those judges who conform to the views of certain politicians should be elevated above the rest of their kind. The judicial sheep are separated from the wayward goats. Not unity but calculated disunity is the objective. A calm, dispassionate assessment and dispensation of the law is anachronistic and out of date. What some politicians now demand is heresy to be condemned and published. Impeachment is the latest political blunderbuss.

Mrs Gandhi was anxious to refurbish her image as a champion of socialism. The princes offered a ready target for they were a symbol of feudalism. Abolition of privy purses, therefore, would be looked upon as further testimony to the depth of the ruling party's commitment to socialism. It did not matter to Mrs Gandhi that the princes had been guaranteed their privy purses, which assurance was explicitly enshrined in the Constitution. It was not as though the privy purses were particularly princely. In fact, the total amount involved did not exceed Rs 5 crores a year. The misfortune of the princes was that they were so eminently suited for the role of sacrificial lambs at the altar of socialism.

PURSES AND PRIVILEGES 24 August 1970

Like India's poor the princes are always with us. Batting against great odds they have been able to carry their innings into another parliamentary session. Privilege is on its way out the world over. It is not that the princes have not seen the light but that the Parliament of India has yet to see the day more clearly.

The situation has its built-in contradictions. Who are the privileged classes today—the politicians or the princes? According to N. Dandeker, a member of Parliament and a former member of the I.C.S. who is a Chartered Accountant and was once Income Tax Commissioner, a Union Cabinet Minister earns the equivalent of Rs 4,48,000 a year. This figure takes into account not only salary but the privileges and perquisites of a Union Minister, which include subsidised house rent, a generous quota of servants and staff, free furniture, water, electricity and telephone, and free travelling for all practical purposes.

According to Dandeker this is two-and-a-half times as much as a senior company executive gets in India and 848 times the earnings of an average Indian. His figures have still to be

officially controverted.

It is true that in the higher princely brackets the privileges and perquisites add up to much more. What our politicians fail to take into account is that these princes, in return for their graded privileges, surrendered a great deal of their properties, private and State, ranging from motor cars to palaces, jewelery, art treasures, museums and railroads to the government of India. Their privileges and perquisites were only then solemnly safeguarded not only in the Constitution but through individual contracts entered into between the Government of India and each prince. It is on observing the sanctity of these contractual obligations that the princes now insist.

Of the princes in the highest bracket, who comprised the Nizam and the rulers of Baroda, Gwalier and Mysore, only one of the original rulers dating back to independence survives. He is the Maharaja of Mysore. Over the past two years more than a dozen princes have died including the Maharajas of Jaipur and Cooch Behar and the former ruler of Baroda. Since privy purses are graded down with the death of a ruler the amount expended on them today is a fraction of what it was in 1947. At the most it would be under five crore rupees which again is a microscopic fraction of what the yearly losses of the public sector projects cost the country. Actually the majority of princes draw privy purses far below our Union Ministers' earnings on the basis of Dandeker's figures. Around twenty of the princely order in Vindhya Pradesh are allowed under Rs 700 a month while another fifty wallow in a little over Rs 1,000 a month. This is way down what an M.P. gets in salary and allowances. The ruler of Katodia in Saurashtra has a privy purse of Rs 192 a year which works out to Rs 16 a month. Compared with this princely emolument an M.P. draws Rs 51 a day while Parliament is in session plus Rs 500 a month as salary plus free residential telephones in Delhi and his home State plus free first class train travel in India plus free bus transport in his State. As additional bonus, M.P.s are

allowed four free air passages in a parliamentary session exceeding seventy-five days, Rs 9,000 per year as foreign exchange for travel abroad, free postage up to Rs 1,200 a year and free medical care at Central and State government hospitals.

While in accordance with their strong socialist principles and keen desire to serve the nation, a large number of M.P.s have been demanding an end to the princes' privy purses and privileges, some of them are working hard to up their own privileges. A proposal for a monthly pension of Rs 300 for M.P.s has recently been canvassed. Another proposal is to allot plots of land to a certain category of M.P.s which led the Speaker of the Lok Sabha, Dhillon, to inquire what it was all about.

So much for our parliamentarians who wish to broaden their privileges from precedent to precedent while restricting those of certain sections of their fellow citizens. The position of princes has been explained with dignity in some recent letters to the Prime Minister from some members of the princely order. Of them, I thought the letter of the Maharana of Mewar one of the most enlightening and illuminating. It is obvious that what the princes desire is a recognition of the contractual obligations entered into with them collectively and individually by the government of India. This entails an honourable settlement by mutual negotiation and agreement between the two parties and not something in the nature of an imposed settlement by the government. An agreement can only be reached and honoured on the basis that the plighted word of a government is the plighted word of Parliament and the Indian people. The Prime Minister cannot wriggle out of her commitment on the plea that what she agreed to was not subsequently ratified by Parliament.

Once bitten, the princes are twice shy. Whatever the financial basis on which agreement is reached, they are naturally anxious that the agreement should be honoured in fact rather

than in the mere letter. Echoing Omar Khayyam they say, "Ah, take the cash, and let the promise go." What they want is the cash, not credit in bonds or in any other form.

Who can blame them? The Maharana of Mewar, scion of a 1,400-year-old-house, has a positive suggestion to make here which he himself has implemented. It is that as a trustee of his people, a prince should recognise it by setting up funds or trusts for social service and public benefit. The gradual utilisation of private wealth and income for public benefit and for the ultimate realisation of the ideal of trusteeship would justify some part of the heritage of the princes being left voluntarily as a trust for their people. The Maharana of Mewar has blazed the trail by creating a charitable foundation to which he has gifted the main palace in Udaipur with its historical treasures going back to fourteen centuries and Rs 11 lakhs in cash. The object of the trust is to assist activities and institutions which will promote self-reliance and self-respect. In the Maharana's view the greatest casualty since independence has been that of our character. One wishes that others of the princely order would follow the Maharana's example and lead.

V.V. Giri was elected President primarily due to Mrs Gandhi's support, who, resentful of her party's choice of a candidate whom she disapproved of, disowned him and ensured the victory of Giri, the rival candidate. This greatly endeared her to the President. In many of the States, the position of the Congress party at this time was very precarious. In fact, in many States coalitions of Opposition parties ruled the roast. With a view to strengthening her hold on the States, Mrs Gandhi started "Operation Toppling". President's rule was clamped down on State after State on the slightest provocation. The President acquiesced in this exercise. All of which raised the question of what the President's responsibilities were, and if the incumbent had respected his obligations in this regard.

THE PRESIDENT'S ROLE 12 October 1970

Re-reading the debates of the Constituent Assembly on the Indian Constitution one notices the recurrence of a remarkable and unusual fact. It is that the Assembly, obsessed with the fear that the executive would attempt to override the legislature at critical junctures, concentrated its efforts on curbing the powers of the President. Its fear was a hang-over from British days when the executive in the persons of the Viceroy and provincial Governors tended to ride roughshod over their so-called Executive Councillors or Ministers.

But in concentrating on the President as the potential centre of extraordinary power the Constituent Assembly forgot one important personage. It forgot the Prime Minister. Never for a moment, as the debates reveal, did it occur to members of the Assembly that a Prime Minister could gather to himself a sufficiency of powers to enable him to act as a virtual dictator within the four corners of the Constitution. As the Constitution now stands there is nothing to prevent a Prime Minister embarking on a constitutional take-over of power.

Again and again the point is stressed that the Union Govern-

ment is of a ministerial character where power really resides in the Ministry headed by the Prime Minister and in the legislature to which the Ministry is collectively responsible and not in the President as such. Repeatedly the President's constitutional status is compared to that of the British monarch. The bulwark of constitutional, parliamentary rule which means democracy would be the Prime Minister. Its shield would be the President. So the Constitution envisaged. There are sufficient safeguards to ensure that the President does not exceed his authority. But so long as Parliament supports the Prime Minister his powers are seemingly limitless.

Some well-known foreign observers believe that a constitutional take-over is also within the capacity of the President. In his book, *The Republic of India*, Professor Alan Gledhill, a distinguished foreign authority, argues that the President could use the powers apparently granted him by the Constitution to make himself a dictator. The example he gives is relevant and the method intriguing. Gledhill envisages a situation where a President who has been aggrandising or perverting his powers learns that Parliament intends impeaching him. What does he do during the stipulated lapse of two weeks between the notice of and the movement of impeachment? The President dissolves Parliament. On a new Parliament being elected, the President, according to Gledhill, need not summon it for six months. In the interval the President may dismiss his Ministers and appoint others of his choice while governing the country by ordinance in this period. Such a situation could justify a proclamation of emergency and Gledhill believes that in this manner the President could take over control of the nation step by step.

With all respect to his constitutional eminence, Gledhill seems to be stretching the point. In the first place the President could not dissolve Parliament without the consent of the Prime Minister. On a personal plane, a President who runs away in this manner from a motion of impeachment is hardly likely to retain

the respect of his countrymen or enhance the prestige of his office. A President is in no constitutional position to be a dictator. But a Prime Minister is. Power resides with the council of Ministers of which the Prime Minister is the head, not with the President.

This does not mean that the President is a constitutional cypher as some quarters are trying to make out. Though his constitutional status might be comparable to that of the British monarch, the Indian President differs from the British monarch in three important respects. His is an elected, not a hereditary office. His term is defined. He is liable to impeachment unlike the British monarch. Among the principal functions of the President, as of the monarch, is to caution, to counsel and to warn his Ministers, functions which place a measure of discretionary influence though not necessarily of power in the hands of the President.

In this context it is illuminating to contrast the manner in which President Giri attached his signature to the U.P. ordinance in what seemed unseemly, almost indecent, haste with the late Dr Rajendra Prasad's attitude to the Hindu Code Bill. Both were within their rights in their respective attitudes but Dr Prasad's action did not lack in dignity.

Was it necessary for President Giri to affix his signature to a document unilaterally ending democratic rule in a State in his country while aboard on a foreign tour? Were the Opposition given a chance to be heard? What was the reason for this unconscionable haste when the Assembly was in the offing? There was in any case no danger of an imminent breakdown of law and order in U.P. The feeling in many quarters that the President's action was motivated by consideration for the political convenience of certain persons, and not done in the interests of the country as a whole, cannot be lightly brushed aside. The high office of President has suffered heavily as a result.

In the situation which confronted him at Kiev, the proper

course for President Giri was to have embarked on delaying tactics by exercising his right to caution, to counsel and to warn. The President has been heard to say that he owes his election to the Presidentship to nobody but himself. If so, his eagerness to be the Prime Minister's rubber stamp even in circumstances where he would be entitled to delay assent becomes inexplicable. Brave words followed by pusillanimous action do not impress. The former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, K. Subba Rao, made some instructive comments in this connection. According to him the relevant provisions of the Constitution clearly lay down that it is the President and not the Central government who should be satisfied, that a situation has arisen when the duly elected government can no longer run the administration. As he pointed out, Articles 352, 360 and 365 were not intended to entrench autocratic power but to ensure democratic freedom.

Despite the U.P. Governor's laboured apologies for his indefensible action, the evidence shows that he has sinned against the light. Gopal Reddi should remember that nothing is convincing which needs to be elaborately explained. It is true, as Subba Rao affirmed, that State Ministers constitutionally hold their office at the pleasure of the Governor. But this pleasure cannot be exercised in an arbitrary or whimsical fashion but can only be properly exercised in relation to the Ministry's position vis-a-vis the legislature. Only when the Ministry has lost the confidence of the legislature is the Governor entitled to dismiss a recalcitrant Chief Minister.

Gopala Reddi, having arbitrarily denied Charan Singh the chance of proving that he enjoyed the confidence of the legislature which was due to meet within a few days, has arbitrarily relieved him of office. The Governor's belated protestation of disinterested action will only convince the gullible or the committed. The people of India have a less infantile mentality than some of those who purport to rule them.

Mrs Gandhi now enjoyed a stranglehold on Parliament. Within the party itself she had managed to stifle all dissent. The result was a devaluation of Parliament itself. The Opposition, totally frustrated in its attempts to restrain the government, also lost interest in the House. Attendance dwindled sharply even as inattentiveness increased. Democracy seemed to have lost all meaning. Frank Moraes' worst fears were realised.

DECLINE OF PARLIAMENT 1 May 1972

Central Hall in Parliament is not the same place it once was. So they say. Even in the days of Nehru's overwhelming pre-eminence Central Hall hardly served as a sounding board for national trends, thought and feeling. It was of course a great whispering gallery of report and rumour where reputations could be made or killed at the drop of a syllable. The more cynical termed it a snake pit.

Neither the parliamentary newspaper corps nor M.P.s themselves are today overly interested in what is heard or said in Central Hall. Parliament is ceasing to be a focus of national interest. This cannot be convincingly explained away by the preponderating majority which Mrs Gandhi's government commands, for her father in his hey-day also had the big battalions behind him. Yet no individual was more scrupulous in his respect for Parliament and for the principles and practice of democracy. With his unchallenged national and personal authority, Nehru, had he chosen, could have ridden roughshod over Parliament and reduced it to a mere rubber stamp. In the process, he must have realised, he would have destroyed democracy at its roots in India. The greatest service he rendered his country was to desist from that temptation. His daughter would be well advised to follow in her father's footsteps.

Nehru never talked of commitment knowing the limitations

ingrained in that word. For if commitment in a bureaucratic context meant commitment to the views of the government in power then the commitments of a bureaucrat would necessarily have to change with the character and composition of the government he served. A bureaucrat would cease to be a bureaucrat. He would become a chameleon changing his colours with every change of government. If, as is now sought to be explained, commitment only means a dedication to certain civilised values, where is the need of talking about it as if it were some sort of golden fleece ? At the very least, an average bureaucrat is no less civilised a person, dedicated to certain social values such as honesty and lack of nepotism, than let us say an average Congress politician.

Nehru's respect for democracy was also shown by his respect for the independence of the judiciary and for the freedom of the press. Today, some of the pronouncements of the Union Law Minister, himself a former High Court Judge, make strange reading for democrats. Respect for Parliament is on the decline. This is largely because its proceedings have degenerated into a steamrolling process.

Democracy loses its character and utility when those who wield the parliamentary leviathan have little time or use for the voice or opinions of the minority. Ironically, within, the ruling party itself a minority has now raised its voice on the controversially drafted land limit Bill. The rebels seem to have realised one basic democratic truth. It is important how one obtains power but equally important is how one uses it.

The judiciary had long since fallen out of favour with the government. Mrs Gandhi did not take kindly to the Supreme Court's efforts to prevent the attrition of the Constitution through arbitrary legislative measures. The government's displeasure with the judiciary manifested itself in its indifferent attitude to the latter's plea for improving the working conditions and emoluments of the judiciary. No one could deny that the judiciary had a good case for the same. The salaries of the higher judiciary had not been revised since they were first fixed a hundred years back, though the value of the rupee had fallen by over sixty per cent in the same period. In fact, the Union Minister for Law was himself among the judges who had resigned, saying he could not afford the high honour any longer. Matters had reached such a sorry pass that the Chief Justice himself was driven to take the issue of a fair deal for the judges to the people directly.

ALL THIS AND HELL TOO 30 October 1972

One was interested to read the observation of the Chief Justice of India, S.M. Sikri, that the pension of retiring Justices should be almost equal to their salary so that they were not driven to seek jobs or start practice. The writer who happens to be a journalist is also a barrister. A few hungry months at the bar forced him to seek fresh fields and pastures new—a decision he has never regretted. Actually he ends up better than the Chief Justice of India. Sikri undoubtedly has a case—possibly the last case he will be called upon to argue. A Field Marshal of the British army dies with his full pay and in his boots, if there is nobody around to remove them. Retired judges in Britain's High Courts allegedly do not die in their wigs and gowns but the same packet is handy around the corner when they breathe their last. Not so with our retired judges.

All good Americans, they say, go to Paris when they die. But not our politicians, for the simple reason that they never

retire. Clemenceau, the cynical French Prime Minister in the 1920's, gazing on the monuments of New Delhi remarked: "What magnificent ruins they will make!" He forgot our politicians after independence. They are magnificent ruins but they still endure.

Many months ago the writer had occasion to contrast the condition of the plebs, represented by our Ministers and M.P.s and the princes. It was an interesting study in contrast. Welfare, like charity, begins at home. It begins with better allowances for M.P.s and Ministers. In the late 1940's members of the Constituent Assembly drew a daily allowance of Rs 21. This was upped for M.P.s to Rs 31 per diem and later edged up to Rs 51 per diem. Why should M.P.s suffer while India starves?

As the writer then observed, this growth rate in salaries for M.P.s outstrips the percentage rise in India's gross national product and per capita income over the last four Five Year Plans. The fourth Plan envisaged a 55 per cent increase in per capita income, which has not come about. But meanwhile, our M.P.s and Ministers have maintained their lead.

In addition to a daily allowance of Rs 55 while Parliament is in session, M.P.s are entitled to Rs 500 a month as salary. They have also their perquisites. These consist of free residential telephones in Delhi and 3,600 telephone calls per year without charge. They are now permitted to have 5,400 free calls per year plus free telephones at their permanent residences in their home States or at suitable places in their constituencies. This makes a grand total of 10,800 free calls per year. Additionally, our M.P.s are entitled to four free air passages in a parliamentary session exceeding seventy-five days. Below that Plimsoll line they are only entitled to two free air passages per session. Where is all this going to end in the grand drive of *garibi hatao*.

This is how India's poor M.P.s and Ministers live. Free postage up to Rs 1,200 a year, free medical care at Central

and State Government hospitals, and free transportation by air, sea or rail "at commercial rates at Government expense" when they are dead. They seem to be equally valuable, dead or alive. It couldn't go further. Or could it ?

COMMUNISM IS THE BIGGEST ENEMY OF THE DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM. THE COMMUNISTS HAVE NO USE FOR DEMOCRACY. BUT THEY ARE NOT ABOVE USING THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS TO ACHIEVE THEIR AIMS, IF OTHER MEANS ARE NOT AVAILABLE. TILL THE 1967 GENERAL ELECTIONS THE UNDIVIDED CONGRESS HAD AN OVERWHELMING MAJORITY. THE COMMUNISTS, THEREFORE, DID NOT STAND ANY CHANCE. THOUGH A SIZEABLE NUMBER OF THEM HAD INFILTRATED THE CONGRESS PARTY, THEY WERE HELD IN CHECK BY AN EQUALLY STRONG, IF NOT STRONGER, RIGHT WING. BUT THE SPLIT IN THE CONGRESS CHANGED ALL THAT AND RENDERED THE COUNTRY UTTERLY VULNERABLE TO THE COMMUNIST ONSLAUGHT. FOR ONE THING, COMMUNISTS WERE IN THE MAJORITY IN THE RULING CONGRESS, FOLLOWING THE SPLIT. INDEED, THIS FACTION CAME TO BE IDENTIFIED SPECIFICALLY AS THE LEFT WING. BY COMING OUT WITH A RADICAL PROGRAMME AND PROJECTING HERSELF AS THE SUPREME CHAMPION OF SOCIALISM, MRS GANDHI FURTHER REINFORCED THIS VIEW. MRS GANDHI HAD RELIED HEAVILY ON LEFTIST SUPPORT IN THE COUP AGAINST THE OLD GUARD. AFTER THE SPLIT SHE NEEDED THEM MORE THAN EVER AS HER PARTY HAD BEEN REDUCED TO A MINORITY IN PARLIAMENT AND COULD NOT SURVIVE WITHOUT THE SUPPORT OF THE COMMUNISTS.

SLOWLY THE COMMUNISTS EXTENDED THEIR TENTACLES OVER THE GOVERNMENT. IT BECAME OBVIOUS THAT MRS GANDHI WAS NOT EVEN TRYING TO RESIST THE PRESSURES, LEAVE ALONE COMBATING THEM. THE ATTACKS ON INDUSTRY, THE PERSISTENT

THREATS OF NATIONALISATION AND EXPROPRIATION, ALL BORE ELOQUENT TESTIMONY TO THE INTENSITY OF THE COMMUNIST INFLUENCE. IN FACT, IT BEGAN TO MANIFEST ITSELF EVEN IN THE SPHERE OF FOREIGN POLICY, AS EVIDENCED BY NEW DELHI'S TOTAL SUBSERVIENCE TO MOSCOW.

THE FOX HAD BEEN INSTALLED AS THE CARETAKER OF THE CHICKEN COOP. FRANK MORAES WAS THE FIRST TO SOUND THE NOTE OF WARNING. AS THE COMMUNIST INFLUENCE GREW, HE BECAME ACUTELY CONCERNED ABOUT THE FUTURE OF DEMOCRACY. HE CAMPAIGNED HARD TO PREVENT MRS GANDHI'S ELECTION. EVEN WHEN HE FAILED DISMALLY TO DO SO, HE CONTINUED TO CAUTION THE GOVERNMENT AGAINST NURTURING THE COMMUNIST VIPER IN THE DEMOCRATIC BREAST. PERHAPS HE HAS NOT MET WITH ANY SIGNAL SUCCESS. PERHAPS ALL HIS EFFORTS MAY PROVE TO BE IN VAIN. BUT HIS EFFORTS, FOR A TIME AT LEAST, RESTRAINED THE COMMUNISTS FROM LAUNCHING A FRONTAL ATTACK OF THE DEMOCRATIC FORTRESS. BY ALERTING THE DEMOCRATIC FORCES ON THE DANGER THEY FACED, HE ALSO HELPED TO STRENGTHEN THEIR HANDS IN THEIR EFFORTS TO STEM THE FLOOD TIDES OF COMMUNISM WHICH ARE THREATENING TO OVERWHELM THE COUNTRY.

West Bengal has always been a communist stronghold. But till the middle of 1967 the communists observed the form, if not always the spirit of democracy. In the 1967 general election, a Marxist dominated united front captured power in the State. Communists of all shades had a field day. The victory of the Marxists emboldened the extremists to resurrect the Telengana type of terrorism. Taking advantage of agrarian unrest in Naxalbari, the extremists, who swore by a bloody revolution, incited the local peasantry to murder and worse. Between 8 and 14 June 1967, there were eighty cases of lawlessness, thirteen dacoities and a score of murders. Under pressure from the Marxists, who in any case controlled the Home Ministry, the police refused to interfere. Marxist leaders in the Government hailed the miscreants as revolutionaries. A new genre of communists were born—the Naxalites, who held West Bengal to ransom for almost four years. The Marxists discovered too late that they had unwittingly admitted a man-eater into their fold. For they discovered that the Naxalites really meant what they said and were not capable of being exploited. The violence grew in frenzy, and ultimately they were caught up in the conflagration. The United Front Ministry collapsed.

IN WEST BENGAL 8 January 1968

“In West Bengal,” a journalist remarked to me in Calcutta last week, “it is either upheaval or the quiet of the graveyard. For years there has been neither progress nor development.” One suspects instinctively a problem or picture posed in terms of absolutes. The remark seemed, on reflection, to be typical of Bengal and the Bengali, a land and race prone largely to see life in terms of sheer black or white, but rarely as a prism of grey. There is no in between world for most Bengalis. They reign in heaven or rot in hell.

Psychology often explains politics, and Bengal's politics has invariably been as febrile as its people are thought to be. Christendom marched to colonial glory with the bayonet

trailing the Bible. In Bengal, they say, one attains nirvana with a book in one hand and a bomb in the other. Communism is next door to anarchism. Bengal's soil is reputedly receptive to both. Against such a background, dimensions are easily magnified and Naxalbari gave the communists an opportunity for a classic exercise in exaggeration. Never was so much decided for so little by so few. That Naxalbari's peasants labour under many legitimate grievances no responsible person would deny, but to represent the Naxalbari stir as another Yenan, with Comrade Sanyal cast for the role of Comrade Mao, was a ludicrous effort in imagery and imagination, which boomeranged on the Communists and covered them with embarrassment and dismay. If anything, Naxalbari cut the communists down to size and exposed them for the paper tigers they are.

This impression, I discovered, is widespread, in Calcutta and, as some leftists ruefully confessed, prevalent throughout West Bengal. Goebbels was not the first to realise how gullible are the overwhelming majority of the human race and how difficult it is to overtake a lie. But he was among the first master-propagandists to cash in on the discovery. The communists of West Bengal tried to emulate their Nazi prototype and failed. Up to a point Hitler was able to deliver the goods. The Reds had no goods to deliver.

It is curious how many people accept a man at his own evaluation. This is part of the secret of individual success and the essence of the technique of political propaganda. For an idea, like an individual, can be purveyed successfully, though usually for a limited time, at its face value. For a time West Bengal, and indeed the whole of India, accepted the Naxalbari Reds at their own evaluation. But it was not long before the people, as also the communists, discovered the truth of Lincoln's dictum that you can fool some people for some time but not all the people all the time.

In a sense Naxalbari and the eight-month tenure of the

United Left Front, both of them masterminded and underwritten by the communists, were a blessing in disguise. They exposed the ineptitude and ineffectualness of the Reds when faced with a situation beyond their capacity and control. "They had a wonderful opportunity," a one-time ULF sympathiser nostalgically observed. "But in their eight months in office they could not put a foot right. They bungled the administration, scared private enterprise by their *gheraos*, dislocated the economy, threw thousands out of employment, brought the services into contempt, demoralised the police and plunged West Bengal into chaos. The irony of it all is that for several reasons they had not only the masses but the people as a whole behind them—at least for some time. Now the masses are disillusioned. They feel they've been led up the garden path. At the end of eight months they are worse off than they were. The people are thoroughly browned off." It is not the people only who are browned off. So are the communists and their U.L.F. colleagues. They realise the bungle they have made. In desperation, the Reds are now attempting to bring the masses into the streets to achieve by violence what they failed to achieve as a government.

In Dr P.C. Ghosh, however, they are confronted with an unexpectedly tough customer. West Bengal's Chief Minister, as I discovered in a talk with him, is not as meek and mild as he looks. He is determined to maintain law and order, and has already demonstrated his ability to do so to the evident discomfiture and chagrin of the communists. His firmness has not only paid political dividends but reinvigorated the sagging morale of the services, notably of the police. Dr Ghosh has so far not called upon the military in a single instance. Ajoy Mukherjee and his communist henchmen had to fall back on the army five times.

Food has always been Bengal's nightmare. Fortunately nature has been kind and the harvest good. None the less the communists are expected to attempt to stir up trouble

when procurement gets under way later this month and early in February. But they will get short shrift.

Eight months of U.L.F. rule have been economically disastrous. They are expected to put West Bengal over Rs 40 crores in the red. A tough administrative task faces the government, but the political coils to be unravelled are no less complicated.

Should the Assembly Speaker continue to prove obstreperous, the President is likely to put Clause B of Article 356 of the Constitution into operation, by declaring that the powers of the Legislature of the State shall be exercisable by or under the authority of Parliament. This will have to be done early in February in order to enable the budget to be presented. As Dr P.C. Ghosh remarked, "A speaker's job is not to obstruct the work of the Assembly. His job is to assist it."

Probably around the middle of this month Dr Ghosh will be reinforced by the Congress joining his government. It must be confessed frankly that if the communists are largely discredited, the Congress prestige has never been lower in the State, and a gallup poll would rate Atulya Ghosh even lower than President Johnson with his Vietnam critics. Atulya Ghosh, however, controls the Congress organisation as its chief muscle man and, though by no means indispensable, is irreplaceable at the moment.

Nobody can pretend that the Congress, over the last twenty years, even in the heyday of Dr B.P. Roy, rendered any great service to the people of Bengal. Agriculture has been sorely neglected and needs vigorous attention. This will probably be the last chance of the State Congress to mend its ways. If it does not do so, the inexorable outcome will be its extinction.

The leftist influence in Delhi had greatly strengthened. The intensity and extent of such influence was most glaringly evident in the country's foreign policy. While the country swore by non-alignment, its bias for the Soviet Union was only obvious. The Congress-led government too glossed over the sins of omission and commission of the Soviet Union, but furiously attacked the United States at the slightest provocation. The Vietnam war was a case in instance. New Delhi repeatedly condemned the U.S. bombing of North Viet Nam but was silent on the atrocities committed by the Viet Cong in the south. And throughout, New Delhi insisted that it was the soul of objectivity and feigned surprise over the U.S. government's reactions to our homilies on what was right and wrong,

WHO RUNS EXTERNAL AFFAIRS ? 8 April 1968

In responding to President Johnson's gesture, Hanoi does not appear to have taken its cue from either Moscow or Peking. The Maoists reacted predictably, denouncing the gesture as soon as it was made. From Teheran, where he happened to be, Kosygin, hearing the blast from Peking, loosed his own thunder. He called on Hanoi to give a "bone-crushing answer to the aggressors". Simultaneously he warned America to mend her ways.

Hanoi's response, however, was swift if guarded. It accepted the President's invitation for talks, though its acceptance was accompanied by the usual communist semantics. But the significant fact emerging from this episode is that, on hearing the voice from Washington, Hanoi did not go into a genuflection act, descending on both knees to hear the master's voice relayed from Peking or Moscow. Our lackeys in the Ministry of External Affairs, whose policies, such as they are, seem tuned in these days to one guiding beam, might profitably learn what they can from such revealing behaviourism.

With some traumatic changes imminent in Vietnam, many Asian countries, particularly those inhabiting the mainland

of South-East Asia, are beginning to reassess their foreign policies. What happens in Viet Nam will have its instant impact on neighbouring countries such as Laos and Cambodia, and will also produce a reaction in adjacent territories like Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore. The reverberations will reach further. They will affect India and Indonesia, Pakistan and Burma, generating in turn a groundswell in the lands along the Pacific seaboard. Japan, the Philippines and Korea will not go untouched.

Already Singapore's Foreign Minister, S. Rajaratnam, envisages the island switching back to non-alignment from its present policy of support for American policies in Vietnam. Is Singapore the first straw denoting a change in the wind blowing across the Indian and Pacific oceans? The switch-back may not meet with everyone's approval, but the reasons Rajaratnam gives for the change are significant and illuminating. Here again our lofty foreign policy experts, perched on their nimbus cloud, might usefully train their ears nearer earth. Briefly, Rajaratnam's plea is that the change in policy has been impelled by a change in circumstances. Since the end of the war the lands of South-East Asia have been subject to many changes, some of them convulsive. The first casualties were Dutch and French colonialism. The British followed, though their presence lingered, largely in the image of naval bases in the Indian Ocean. But, as Rajaratnam points out, the British have given notice that they will quit "some time in 1971". And it is on the cards that about that time the Americans will have pulled out of Vietnam.

In a rapidly changing world nobody can remain static. But while the world marches on, India has kept marking time. She has done so for the last twenty years, preaching since independence the virtue of non-alignment, and in the process seeing her frontiers eroded and new powers filling the vacuums created by the withdrawal of the old. The old permutations and combinations are on their way out.

In itself there is much to commend the adoption of a policy of non-alignment by a country incapable of asserting its power or presence on the rapidly shifting chessboard of international affairs. India lacks the power, but Nehru at least invested it with a presence. The practice of non-alignment, in order to be effective, calls for skill and talent of an exceptionally high order. Nehru was fortunate in possessing these qualities and in deploying them to India's advantage in the first ten years after Independence. But by 1957 new events had overtaken old policies, and the policies needed refurbishing.

By 1957, when Africa was emerging on the international stage, Asia, more particularly India, should have rid itself of the hobgoblin of colonialism, which was the major and continuing obsession of the newly independent African countries. Colonialism was no longer relevant to the major part of Asia, certainly not to India. And what is foreign policy if not enlightened self-interest ?

Nehru seems to have realised this, if later, for at the Belgrade Conference in 1961, he greatly annoyed the pro-communist Afro-Asia group by pointing out that the major imperative was the maintenance and progress of world peace, which he felt should rate higher than preoccupation with the fading ghost of colonialism. Perhaps by then Nehru had sensed the likelihood of an imminent head-on collision between India and China. The clash came in the following year.

Apart from exploding the balloon of *Hindi-Chini bhai, bhai*, it pricked the bubble of non-alignment in its old connotation. India learned with a shock that to the Afro-Asian group non-alignment meant balancing the scales between India and China. This did not necessarily spell the end of non-alignment, but it did stress the need for a new look at an old concept. There is some evidence to suggest that even from 1957 Nehru's foreign policy and pronouncements had taken on a less assertive and more dispassionate form.

With the thaw in the cold war and with China's increasing

belligerence, Nehru seemed to be groping towards a more flexible, more relevant concept of non-alignment. Despite Khrushchev's angry protest against U.N. intervention in the Congo, Nehru responded to Hammarskjöld's appeal for Indian troops to assist the international organisation in that territory. Unlike John Foster Dulles, President Kennedy saw nothing "immoral" in non-alignment. Averell Harriman went further. He described the preservation of non-alignment as a "fundamental American interest". From the Russian side it now seems to be similarly viewed as a fundamental Soviet interest. Else, how do we explain Moscow's non-alignment as between India and Pakistan, demonstrated anew by Kosygin's impending visit to Pakistan?

The Russians have given a new twist to an old concept. Similarly, the Pakistanis remain friendly with the United States, China, and Russia without annoyance to any of the three. There is also a new projection of an old idea. The dichards and no-changers now masterminding our foreign policy or policies alone stand out as clinging to the old concept with the old posture. They have failed to capitalise on the changing developing world situation which Nehru, despite his blinkers, was quick to see and within which he was attempting to give a new mould and meaning to non-alignment when he lived. China's offensive in 1962 stopped him in his stride. And thereafter came death.

Thanks to the blind crassness of those who run this country's foreign affairs, India is back, not to where Nehru left it at the remoulding stage in 1961, but further back in 1957. Like America's Ku Klux Klan hoodlums, our political innocents still gaze at the world through hooded eyes, and see it only in terms of black and white. Their rigid postures leave them no room for manoeuvre. At given moments they are unnecessarily offensive to one side or unnecessarily servile to the other. Alternately, their foot is on somebody's head or their own head under somebody else's foot. As a result they are where India is today, devoid of flexibility and incapable of initiative. It is time a gale

of rethinking, of sanity, vision and common sense swept through the drab corridors of the Ministry of External Affairs, toppling over some tables in the process, and with them some of the occupants.

The myth of the country's commitment to non-alignment was conclusively exploded by New Delhi's reaction to the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. The Czechs were fed up with Soviet tyranny. Under a liberal Prime Minister, Alexander Dubcek, the country began a cautious experiment to dilute the rigours of the Moscow brand of communism. It was not sought to substitute the iron fist by the velvet glove. The effort was limited to loosening the iron grip to permit the people a breath of fresh air. But it was not to be. The big brother would not have it. The Soviet Union became panicky about the implications of the Czech strivings for freedom. It could not allow the bird to discover that it could fly now that it had realised it had wings. The Soviet Union struck swiftly. It invaded the country, deposed Dubcek and snuffed out the incipient flame of liberty. Fascism was restored, and the threat to the Big Brother's overlordship had been averted. While the entire civilised world protested against the outrage, non-aligned India maintained a stony silence.

SPHERES OF INFLUENCE 20 September 1968

A cynic might say that India was not the only country to react equivocally to Russia's armed intervention in Czechoslovakia. There were Algiers and Pakistan. They also abstained, though without quibbling in an infantile fashion over words. But, more important, there were others who, while condemning Russia's action, are now accused by some of their own people of virtually conniving at Moscow's assault on Czechoslovakia.

An American correspondent writing for the *Washington Post* from Waidhaus on the Czechoslovak-West German border recently suggested that President Johnson—who was informed through the Soviet Ambassador in Washington, Dobrynin, of Moscow's plan shortly before the tanks of the five Warsaw Pact countries rumbled across the Czechoslovak frontiers—did not react as sharply as he might have reacted to the news. Moscow apparently invoked the doctrine of "spheres of influ-

ence" in Europe which, according to it, was sanctified at Yalta and Potsdam. Reportedly the Russians were satisfied that the American government would respect these undertakings.

State Department spokesmen have understandably scoffed at the story. They have described it as "malicious and totally without foundation". But in the light of what one heard from some Czechoslovaks in Prague and from the disquiet it has produced in certain Austrian quarters in Vienna, one is inclined, as I am, to probe deeper into the story. The report is plausible and it might be true.

In the hindsight of history, the Yalta and Potsdam agreements, signed between the so-called Allied and Associated powers—U.S.A, the U.S.S.R, Britain and France—emerge as squalid documents. In effect they divided Europe and large parts of the world into two blocs or spheres of influence. Thus, the Yalta agreement, signed in February 1945 conceded Soviet claims to Japanese territory in the Kurile Islands and the southern half of Sakhalin. Later, the Potsdam agreement of August 1945 approved the transfer of part of East Germany to Soviet occupation, an area which now comprises the German Democratic Republic and which is today a sphere of Soviet influence.

A State Department spokesman, while brushing aside the Waidhaus story, acknowledged that "zonal agreements" were concluded at Yalta delimiting the zones of military occupation in Germany and Austria. This process of delimitation acquired political significance with the descent of the iron curtain and the beginning of the cold war, when the communist states of eastern Europe were for all practical purposes regarded as Russia's fief, while on the other side of the curtain America's dominating role in West Germany was a fact of realpolitik. Europe was divided into Russian and American spheres of influence. Czechoslovakia, as much as East Germany, became a part of Russia's political backyard.

The detente between the U.S.S.R. and the U.S.A, which followed the Cuban missile crisis of October 1962, generated a thaw in the cold war. This led Moscow and Washington, at least tacitly, to recognise each other's spheres of influence. In a sense, the outcome was inevitable with the world mortgaged to the two super powers. Like an ancient Pope who divided the world between the Catholic kingdom of Spain and Portugal, the logic of events leaves the world divided today between the two super powers of America and Soviet Russia.

Neither is anxious that the detente which consolidated the tacit understanding on their respective spheres of influence should be exploded by the Russian bombshell in Czechoslovakia. The detente will be interrupted. It is not likely to be destroyed. Significantly, both the United States and the Soviet Union continue to stress that "State relations" between them should not be disrupted. Apart from protesting and assuming a stronger defence posture, Washington has been noticeably cautious in its comments on Czechoslovakia.

Twenty-four hours after the arrival of Russian tanks in Prague, the White House kept repeating that "the President would go anywhere, even to Moscow, to further the cause of peace". President Johnson was un-Texan in his Congress when he briefed American Congressional leaders of both parties on the crisis. Having recited his piece, he immediately left Washington for his ranch, thereby indicating that the crisis was not serious enough to necessitate his presence in the capital.

Reportedly, the U.S. Secretary of State, Dean Rusk, suggested to his staff that Czechoslovakia did not merit excessive sympathy, since she was supplying arms to North Vietnam. Oddly enough, while in Prague I heard the same remark attributed to the American Ambassador in Czechoslovakia, Bean. Has Russia been doing less than Czechoslovakia in North Vietnam? President Johnson doubtless calculates that Russia, with her bloodstained hands in Czechoslovakia, is in

no position to question the American bombing of North Vietnam. Moscow's international position has been weakened by its offensive in Prague.

In 1938, after Munich, Neville Chamberlain referred to Czechoslovakia as that "faraway country". In 1968 Washington has reduced this tormented country to "a local issue", not worthy of international attention. A White House spokesman asked to assess the situation declined to do so saying that "no substantive judgement" could be made. Presumably, one must await the judgement of history. Meanwhile, certain things are clear. Washington seems determined to avoid the closure of all doors on Moscow, which is understandable, since the policy of the White House is geared to the ideas that the peace of the world hinges on a measure of cooperation continuing to subsist between America and the U.S.S.R. But at whose cost? And what price? Today the sacrificial victim seems to be Czechoslovakia. Tomorrow, it might be somebody else in Asia or Africa. "Professionalism" is again at work on the international plane, with tough, hard-headed realists to the fore, caring for nothing but their country's interests. What are our pundits in External Affairs, soft-headed on the top, with cold feet below, preparing to do in this crisis?

In Vienna, where I stopped a few days, the anxiety of the Austrians for their highly vulnerable country, a democratic island in a communist sea, was evident. Official circles were strictly correct and kept emphasising the neutrality of Austria, which is enjoined by the State treaty of 15 May 1955 for the re-establishment of an independent and neutral Austria. Officially they made no comment on events in neighbouring Czechoslovakia. But it seemed to me the Austrian people's sympathies lay unmistakably with their neighbour. "What are we to do?" asked one of them, an articulate and well-informed Austrian. "Our frontiers are guaranteed so long as we are neutral. But who is to judge whether we are neutral?"

In Vienna one heard whispers of the Soviet-American

spheres of influence; I had heard them made in Prague more assertively. Following the London agreement of 9 July 1945 reached between the Allied and Associated powers, Austria was divided until the declaration of her independence in April 1955 into four zones. These were the Soviet zone, consisting of Lower Austria (excluding Vienna), and all Upper Austria, south of the Danube. Britain occupied Carinthia, East Tyrol), and Styria while French troops were placed in Tyrol (excluding East Tyrol) and Vorarlberg.

Additionally, in the capital of Vienna each of the four occupying powers was assigned a sector of the city, the inner city being placed under quadripartite control. Berlin was occupied on virtually the same lines, but Berlin is separated from West Germany by some 200 kilometers. None the less, the Soviet-occupied area of East Berlin plus the rest of East Germany occupied by Russian troops now forms the German Democratic Republic. The Austrians fear that on the same analogy Moscow may at some suitable time claim the greater part of eastern Austria and portions of Vienna as another Russian sphere of influence.

Whether these fears are justified or not, nobody can say. Much obviously depends on the interpretation of the tacit American-Soviet understanding on spheres of influence and on how much deeper the American involvement in Vietnam grows. If America is thrown further on the defensive in Vietnam, it is not unlikely that the Russian offensive in eastern and Central Europe will grow.

I heard with dismay and some scepticism a number of Czechoslovak writers and journalists in Prague denouncing America for "treachery" over her masked agreement with Russia on their respective spheres of influence in Europe. Having spent the last fortnight in Vienna and in Bucharest, from where I am writing this despatch, I am less sceptical and more depressed.

Both the U.S. and the Soviet Union were growing apprehensive of the Yellow Peril. To contain the threat from Peking they were keen on securing a firm foothold in the Indian subcontinent. India's ambivalent attitude drove the U.S. into Pakistan's willing arms. But Pakistan, unlike India, did not foreclose all its options. While it welcomed the U.S. presence, it continued to woo the Red giants, China and the Soviet Union. It exploited the situation to the hilt, allowing itself to be wooed but coyly refusing to commit itself to any of its suitors. But India on the other hand had surrendered itself to Moscow. The result was that Moscow began taking India for granted to the extent that it flaunted its new love in her face by resuming gifts of military aid to Pindi. India thus found itself outmanoeuvred.

DOWN THE VOLGA 22 June 1970

To leave oneself room for manoeuvre is the first principle of politics. Even the communists, those dealers in the absolute, are coming round to the view that their millennium is capable of achievement with a minimum of arm twisting and head bashing. Kosygin not only distributes his smiles but his favours between India and Pakistan. President Yahya Khan's impending visit to Moscow will again demonstrate this.

India, tied to the apron strings of Russia and in no immediate danger of being embraced by China, offers no problem to the Kremlin, which takes India very much for granted. But Pakistan poses several problems. Not only is Pakistan cordial to Russia, but she is friendly to China. It is in Moscow's interest to woo Islamabad away from Peking, and if a price has to be paid for it Barkis is willing. The price is military hardware and Kashmir.

India is the egg safe in the Russian basket. But Pakistan wisely prefers to distribute her eggs in several baskets. While New Delhi goes out of its way to irk and irritate Washington, Islamabad plays it pianissimo. It plays Peking against Mos-

cow or vice versa and plays both Peking and Moscow against Washington or vice versa. So far the gimmick has paid. It will continue to pay as long as the Indian egg nestles safely in the Russian basket with Kosygin crooning his lullaby, "The Egg and I," over egg and basket.

The success of a country's foreign policy is judged principally by its relations with its neighbours. In that context, India is wise to cultivate the friendship of Soviet Russia, provided simultaneously her relations with China and Pakistan are cordial. New Delhi, however, is content to shake hands with Moscow while intermittently shaking its fist in the other two directions. Mrs Gandhi's government seems to be unaware that hearty handshakes with the Soviet bear are invariably the prelude to heavy handcuffs. New Delhi is now the prisoner of its own inane foreign policy. It is a prisoner of Moscow.

"Never believe a report until it is officially denied," said Bismarck. No amount of official denial can shake this country's conviction that India today is bound hand and foot to the Soviet troika. The evidence is there. Very few decisions seem to be made in South Block without an approving nod from the Kremlin. If they are made out of turn, correction and assent follow swiftly.

New Delhi spoke out of turn when initially it suggested the reactivation of the International Control Commission after the Cambodian crisis. Moscow said no, and with New Delhi, to hear is to obey. It also immediately said no, with South Block's mandarins prostrate on their knees before the ringmaster. Moscow frowned on the Djakarta conference, dismissing it as American-oriented. To hear was again to obey. India abstained from the conference on the ground that it was one-sided. Even after the conference's conclusions were found to be very much up New Delhi's street, the Kremlin's reception to Djakarta's representatives was frosty. Mrs Gandhi's government lost no time in complying and imitating. Their reception to the Djakarta delegates was equally frosty. They played

it cool. And so it goes on.

The net result has been to damage our friendship with Indonesia, Malaysia and Japan with no commensurate recompense from Soviet Russia, which still cracks her whip contemptuously over the shivering inmates of South Block. Watching their orgy of self-inflicted humiliation, Peking and Islamabad must be having one of the best chortles of their lives. How masochist can one be? Nor can any self-respecting Indian have respect for the robots who infest South Block.

It is axiomatic that so long as India leans heavily and helplessly on Russia it cannot hope to even open conversations with China. Moscow knows this, which is why she takes care to bind New Delhi to herself with hoops of synthetic steel by way of outmoded military and industrial junk. For New Delhi's mindless China-watchers to read some deep historical significance in every twitch of Mao Tse-tung's mouth, cheek or chin is one of their characteristic exercises in futility and doing nothingness. They have got to realise that there cannot be even the semblance of talks with Peking so long as New Delhi is selling itself down the Volga.

The tendency to go out on a limb and find oneself in a posture of no return is by now second nature to the dazzling intellects who govern this country. It has happened within the country, as also in our dealings abroad, notoriously in West Asia where we trudge as mere camp-followers of the Russians, also in Indo-China where any possibility of initiative on our part has been hamstrung by our insane commitments to Moscow and Hanoi, and in South-East Asia where our antics over the Djakarta conference have lost us the confidence and friendship of valued Asian friends. India finds herself in a Russian oriented, *Soviet dominated bag* with no return to the Asia which is really Asian.

Consider our relations with Pakistan. It is no use glossing over the fact that Pakistan, which has twice attempted to take the valley of Kashmir by military force has twice failed. In

these two disastrous attempts it has unnecessarily alienated elements in India who could have worked for a settlement across a table but not across a barrage of artillery or machine guns. By these two attempts Pakistan has made the task of men of mutual goodwill on both sides of the border much more difficult. The writer, who has never concealed his opinions, has good and very old friends on both sides of the border, some of whom disagree with him.

Yet the Indo-Pakistan problem must be seen in the wider, larger conspectus of the relations between two separate, independent countries who were once a single colonial-dominated country, than in the artificially inflated madness in which it is projected as Hindu fanatics attempting to exterminate the Muslims. This interpretation is shortly going to boomerang on this country, largely as a result of the women of both sexes who can't hold their tongues.

The tragic feature of the bigger Indo-Pakistan conflict is that both countries tend to regard it as an extension of the old Congress-Muslim League hostility, which it might be superficially but is not in reality. The problem has gone beyond that. For Mrs Gandhi to project it as the Hindu majority in India persecuting the Muslim minority is to revive the old hostility in old terms and unconsciously to aggravate it. Unknowingly she is setting the communal timber alight, which is going to roar to heaven and hell very soon into an uncontrollable fire. She little knows the communalist blaze she has lit.

Why, instead, under unchallenged secular auspices, can the matter not be settled on the broader plane of Indo-Pakistan understanding, if not friendship? Under the Nehru-Liaquat Pact of April 1950, both sides are committed to certain procedures in the event of communal conflagrations in either country. Both sides should adhere to them. There are matters like agreeing to publish only agreed figures of migrant traffic at checking stations in East Pakistan and West Bengal. The sealing of borders against migrants should also be enforced

on both sides of the frontier. Instead of screeching about the extermination of Muslims by Hindus in India, the Prime Minister might usefully probe the possibilities for a Hindu-Muslim understanding on the basis of an Indo-Pakistan agreement in both countries.

It was bad enough that Mrs Gandhi had inextricably tied the country to Moscow's apron strings. But what was galling to see was her anxiety to ingratiate herself with her communist masters. Even if she was not inclined to cultivate the goodwill of the United States, it was hardly necessary to go out of the way to antagonise that country. Yet this was precisely what she did. Though Mrs Gandhi had repeatedly embarrassed the U.S. by her intemperate attacks, President Nixon invited her for dinner at the White House when she was on a visit to that country to address the U.N. General Assembly. But Mrs Gandhi ungraciously spurned the invitation. This was in sharp contrast to the eagerness with which she accepted Kosygin's invitation to visit Moscow barely a month before.

MORTGAGING OUR FREEDOM 19 October 1972

Not so long ago an American correspondent observed that Nixon does not really exist. Nobody knows what sort of a man he is. As in the Indian Ocean, a vacuum allegedly exists in the White House. Mrs Gandhi, allergic to the vacuum in the Indian Ocean, seemed over the weekend to be equally allergic to the alleged vacuum in the White House. Her elaborate refusal of the President's invitation to dinner almost suggested that Nixon might not exist. On the other hand the Prime Minister's elaborate arrangements to meet Kosygin in Moscow while on her way to the United States confirms that Kosygin is very much alive. He has in fact not only been existing in, but dominating the Indian orbit for some time. A friend remarking on Mrs Gandhi's latest pilgrimage to Moscow, observed that on her journeys abroad over the past few years, the Prime Minister had made an unconscionable number of halts or stop-overs in Moscow. The writer, though he tried, has not been able to check on the figures. His impression is that over this period the Gandhi-Kosygin confabulations far exceed in number the Prime Minister's conversations with any other

ranking foreign dignitary.

Our non-alignment seems heavily aligned in favour of Soviet Russia. A question I was often asked in Britain, which I visited early this year, was why, if Mrs Gandhi's strategy was to contain communism, did she lean so heavily on the Russians? The only answer one could give was that shrinking military aid from the West left New Delhi with no other choice. President Nixon's decision to arm Pakistan further, at this juncture, reinforces the argument.

But my British friends demurred. Why, they persisted, should Mrs Gandhi additionally put India more and more in Moscow's economic orbit? It seemed to them that if India were increasingly dependent for military and economic aid on Moscow, the country would find itself one day politically mortgaged to the Russians. Unwittingly or deliberately the Prime Minister's actions seem to be pointing that way. On the national plane, the New Congress's association with the Moscow-oriented C.P.I. is evident from the voting records. On important issues the New Congress and the C.P.I. are revealed in the same Parliamentary lobby. At the State level, Mrs Gandhi took the process of association a step further, making it a process of identification in Kerala not only with the C.P.I. but with the Muslim League. She explained and justified this step by claiming that through some unexplained alchemy the C.P.I. and Muslim League were transmogrified units in Kerala, distinct from their parent body. This interpretation has been repudiated by the Secretary General of the All-India Muslim League, and though Dange has maintained a discreet silence, he has been sufficiently emboldened by his close association with the New Congress at the Centre to chastise the Young Turks. Like the leopard, the C.P.I. does not change its spots whatever be its habitat.

Behind the C.P.I. stand the faceless men of the Kremlin who also guide New Delhi by remote control, and when occasion offers through close confabulations between the two Prime

Ministers. The strategy and tactics of world communism are well known. The voice of the C.P.I. is Dange's voice, but the hands are the hands of Moscow. Dange and his henchmen are puppets at the end of strings controlled by known but inevitable hands. What Mrs Gandhi apparently does not realise or recognise is that she is the nut in the nutcracker, the marked victim of a double squeeze operated by the C.P.I. in India and their senior collaborators in Russia.

Neither of the latter two have disguised their intentions. S.G. Sardesai, writing in a recent issue of *Peace, Freedom and Socialism*, admits that the C.P.I. strategy is not to forge a united front with the Indira Gandhi Congress or the government in the present situation, but to exert sufficient pressures on them to weed out the conservatives still lurking in their fold, and simultaneously to get the party to lean more on the left than on the right. Here again is the tactic of the double squeeze. This line of action was earlier laid down by a well known Soviet commentator in a Russian journal, in an article entitled "New Prospects for the Seventies : Time of Alliance of Left Forces." The article was republished last month in *Soviet Review*, a publication of the Soviet Embassy in New Delhi.

For all practical military purposes, Russia is now in the driving seat in the U.A.R. and Moscow also controls most of Egypt's economic levers. It is a lesson and a warning for India. The geopolitics of the Soviet world demand a Russian foothold in Asia, West, South and East. Egypt is strategically situated for the expansion of this foothold, east to the Arabian peninsula and west to North Africa. South of the Sahara lies Africa proper.

In the recent Heath-Kaunda after-dinner brawl, the British Prime Minister interestingly enough explained that the main purpose of making arms available to South Africa was not to suppress internal African revolt, but to keep the external sea lanes safe against Soviet attempts to infiltrate into the Indian Ocean. Mrs Gandhi sees no vacuum in the Indian Ocean

with the withdrawal of the British, though she must know that her Soviet masters along with the Americans are attempting to fill it. The accumulation of vast powers in the Prime Minister's hands, however she might have been motivated in doing this, makes it easy for any totalitarian party, right or left, to penetrate the citadels of authority. The dividing line between fascism and communism is thin, for both are totalitarian in structure and outlook. Stalin shook hands with Hitler without a qualm and divided Poland between them.

India is now on the skids. Which way she will go no one can say. Her reputation abroad is nil. At home, she may cover herself in Joseph's many-coloured raiment, but her garments are tattered and her red slip is showing. Mrs Gandhi's policy of mortgaging this country to the Russians abroad and to her esoteric whimsicalities at home have reduced India to a sorry plight. India is neither fish nor flesh nor fowl, though she might survive as a red herring.

With Soviet Russia and the United States moving in on the Indian Ocean new spheres of influence are being created. Mrs Gandhi's loud bawl that no vacuum exists only brings an empty echo. It is as futile a posture as the one the Prime Minister adopted at the U.N. when mounting her high moral pedestal she told the big nations what they should and should not do. They in turn might reply that they have noted with interest Mrs Gandhi's righteous recriminations against the Americans for supplying arms to Pakistan. But there have been no similar recriminations against the Russians for doing the same thing. Swaran Singh dare not lift his voice too loud in protest against Moscow's cartographic transgressions. Are we playing it cool with China lest we offend the godhead which is the Kremlin? Mrs Gandhi's interpretation and implementation of non-alignment leaves India bound hand and foot to the Russians—militarily and economically. The net result of her foreign policy has been to mortgage our freedom to the Kremlin.

Parliament was reconvening after the historic split in the Congress Party. Mrs Gandhi had relied heavily on communist support in her successful coup against the old guard. She had committed the party to a radical programme in projecting herself as the supreme champion of socialism. The dice had been cast. Now there was no going back. She had to persist with her radical programme to carry credibility with the masses. Besides, her party had a precarious majority in Parliament and could not survive without communist support. Would Mrs Gandhi be able to resist the communist drive to subvert democracy even if she cared to? Would the Opposition parties unite to meet the threat to the democratic system. It seemed far more likely that they would, as was usual, be more preoccupied with their bickering.

IS INDIA GOING COMMUNIST ? 21 November 1972

Parliament reassembles in New Delhi today. It might be the most decisive session of Parliament in the post-Nehru period depending on how the government acts and how the Opposition reacts. Much will hinge on the Opposition which emerges in a new incarnation like the gods of the Hindu triad—Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva, Lords respectively of creation, preservation and destruction.

Who is who and who will be what? The Old Congress? The Jana Sangh or the Swatantra? Shiva, if the writer may say so, is the deity most symbolic of the Hindu spirit, for destruction in Hindu belief implied reproduction, and Shiva, Lord of destruction, also signifies reproductive power perpetually restoring that which has been dissolved. Shiva, in fact, embodies the triple powers of the Hindu triad. But who, where and what is he in the Opposition triad in Parliament?

This parliamentary session could mark a watershed in our history. Whether India is going to survive as a democratic State or whether she will move towards communism is the crucial question. It is necessary here to understand the seman-

tics of both democracy and communism for events in eastern Europe after the last war have taught one that a country can be taken over to communism by the communists through constitutional, legal and parliamentary means. Within less than three decades, Czechoslovakia has come under Soviet hegemony twice. It is like Judas betraying Jesus : "Before the cock crew twice you denied me thrice."

I have been re-reading recently an old pamphlet entitled "Communism and India" written by Philip Spratt, one of the two British accused in the well-known Meerut communist conspiracy trial of the late 1920's. It is still relevant and I would recommend every one of our M.P.s to re-read it today for what Spratt, once a communist and now living in India, reveals of the Communist methodology is educative. As he writes, the background of Marxism is Hegel's emphasis on the importance of environment as the determining factor. "For Marx, as for Hegel, the nature of a thing consists in its relations with other things. The thing in itself is a myth." In other words, the individual counts for nothing. As Hegel often stressed, freedom is the consciousness of necessity.

This is something exactly contrary to Indian or Hindu thought for, as Spratt points out, the characteristic Hindu doctrine is that the world of outward relations is secondary. The truth is to be found within, and the thing in itself is the universe. Because of this attitude Hinduism's philosophical concepts are in far better conformity with science than traditional Christian dogma. For instance, it is difficult to imagine that a Hindu Galileo would ever be arraigned before an ecclesiastical court and forced to retract his belief in the Copernican theory that the sun was the centre of the universe.

Marx has been confounded by history, as Spratt and others before and after him have pointed out. In a highly industrialised economy developments are in the main contrary to those which Marx predicted and which he made the basis of his revolutionary theory. It is not the manual workers but the

technologists who today have the firmest grip on the highly complex modern apparatus of production. Western Europe and North America are far beyond the era of the industrial revolution. They are in the age of electronics and computers. Keynes as Spratt suggests, foresaw this way back in the 1930's.

The economically less developed countries are most vulnerable to communism though curiously Marx held the opposite view. What does the communist way of life offer to economically backward countries? Here the communist strategy and tactics are obvious. The stress is on an increase of capital accumulation by an abundance of labour which takes the place of technical skill. Land grabbing is the fashion in India today, and Mrs Gandhi's government turns a kindly eye on the Naxalites. "In agriculture," Spratt notes, "they (the communists) begin with the distribution of land among the existing cultivators, but as soon as it is politically and technically possible they proceed to merge small holdings into large farms cultivated by machinery. They remove the surplus population from the land for employment in industry and public works, and for the cultivation of unoccupied areas.

One wonders if this is the shape of communist things to come in India? Mrs Gandhi denies her communist affiliations, but they are there for all to see. It is one thing to take the country radically forward, another to take it communistically backward bound hand-and-foot to Moscow or Peking. India has not lived for three thousand years to be enchained at some moment of time to ideologies foreign to her.

The Prime Minister's accumulation of vast powers in her own hands, whatever her parliamentary motivation might have been, obviously makes it easier for any totalitarian party, right or left, to infiltrate into the citadels of authority. The list of Ministers and advisers is there for all to see. The taking over of key places in the government and administration, and

outside this periphery by former communists, fellow-travellers and others of that ilk are known to those in the know.

But who is on the side of a democratic India ? Or for that matter of a communist bright red or pale pink India ? Our Parliamentarians, the last citadel of democracy, must decide before there is a take-over from them in the name of constitutional government. History will then remember or mercifully forget them.

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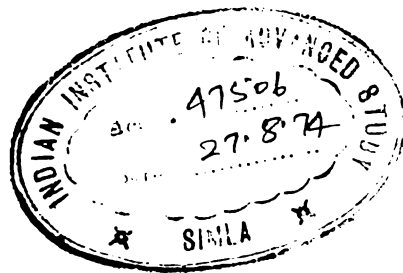
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