

Congress in Crisis

Adam Adil

NEVER before in its long history of 84 years, did the Indian National Congress face a crisis like the one it is facing now. The crisis is, indeed, unprecedented. Never in the history of parliamentary democracy a Prime Minister, representing a ruling party, act in contravention of the party mandate, and after proposing the name of the party nominee for the highest office like that of the President, back out later. Again, while all over the world there are "angry young men" yelling against the established order of things, there are in this country "angry old men" bemoaning what has happened, and strangely these "angry old men" spell out logic and common sense! Never socialist theory or radicalism in any part of the world has led to so much mental confusion and political opportunism as it has done in India.

Therefore, in its background and content the present crisis in the country has a peculiarity of its own.

The Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, might have had some justification in being annoyed with the Congress Parliamentary Board, for having selected, by what she considered a snap vote, Mr. Sanjiva Reddy as their nominee for the Presidential office. She made no secret of her disapproval of Mr. Reddy. Yet, in the beginning she appeared reconciled to the Party choice, and proposed Mr. Reddy's name. But suddenly after a few days the revolt came. Her trusted colleagues, Mr. Jagjivan Ram and Mr. Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed, wrote to Congress President protesting against the "negotiation" he had with the leaders of the Swatantra Party and Jan Sangh. The Congress President denied that he had any negotiations, secret or otherwise. He explained that he had only talks with the leaders of these parties with a view to seeking their support for the Congress candidate in the Presidential election; he said he had acted on the advice of the Congress Parliamentary Board. But the Congress President's explanation left Prime Minister's followers unconvinced. They repeated the charges against the Congress President. They demanded free vote in the Presidential election. The Prime Minister, while refusing to issue a whip to Congress members of Parliament to vote for the Congress nominee, as asked by

Congress President, supported the demand for free vote. It was obvious that Mrs. Indira Gandhi was in favour of the independent candidate, Mr. V. V. Giri and the demand for free vote was a demand for freedom to vote for Mr. Giri. The Prime Minister's attitude led to large-scale defections on the part of Congress members of Parliament and Legislative Assemblies. The inevitable result was that, with the support of the Leftists and the defecting members of the Congress, Mr. Giri was elected President of India with a margin of a little over 14,000 votes. The very fact that the margin was so small indicates that the majority of Congressmen who voted were loyal to the party, and Mr. Giri's victory was not as thumping or resounding as some of the Leftist parties, particularly Communists, sought to make it out. The Prime Minister could legitimately claim major credit for Mr. Giri's victory; but her action had already done great damage to the discipline in the party. The old guard in the Congress, popularly known as "Syndicate" demanded expulsion of the Prime Minister for breach of discipline.

It is needless to stress that the present crisis in the Congress has brought about a serious confrontation between the Prime Minister and her followers on one side and the members of the Syndicate and loyal Congressmen on the other. If each side tries to overplay its role, without a spirit of accommodation, the Congress is bound to face a split, which will render Congress governments in the Centre and the States unstable. Under the circumstances, each side must move with caution and not underrate the strength of the other side.

Considered objectively, both sides have committed mistakes. Initially, the Syndicate sought to by-pass the Prime Minister in the selection of the Congress candidate in the Presidential election. They gave up the tried method of consensus in this respect. Naturally, the Prime Minister felt hurt and slighted. On her own part, she also reacted rather hastily. The first thing she did was to strike at the strong man in the Cabinet, Mr. Morarji Desai; unceremoniously she relieved him of the Finance Portfolio, which led to his resignation. Secondly, with a view to justify her action, she nationalised fourteen major banks, although social control over the banks which Mr. Desai had initiated was working successfully. Thirdly, after having apparently accepted the choice of the party for the office of the President and proposed his name, she retraced her steps, backed the demand for free vote and

ultimately worked for Mr. Giri. One cannot help feeling that all these actions of the Prime Minister were hasty, and particularly her support to Mr. Giri was against the discipline of the party.

Since both the sides have made mistakes, both must make amends.

The Syndicate must realise that times have changed and their resistance to radical social and economic reforms must be given up. They must cease to regard socialist measures as a drift towards totalitarian Communism. Socialism has come to stay and no amount of denunciation of it is going to convince the people. Any effort to isolate the Prime Minister for her radical views will only drive her into a situation which will be exploited by Communists with dangerous results.

Likewise, the Prime Minister too should be conscious of the fact that the Syndicate is not a spent force, and being the old guard, each one of its members is respected by a sizeable section of Congressmen. They are tried, trusted and full of experience, capable of handling any situation with tact and foresight. To rub them on the wrong side will only harm the interests of the Congress organisation.

Therefore the paramount need of the hour is for both factions in Congress to work together and maintain the unity of the organisation. The Congress has yet to play a major role in the country. Being the largest political party having its branches all over the country, Congress can provide the basis for the country's political and economic stability. With its background and tradition, Congress can be a vital agency for the continuance and furtherance of the democratic way of life. If the Congress is split, the larger interests of the country will be seriously affected. And it is this possibility that the Prime Minister and her followers as

well as the Congress President and his colleagues must safeguard against.

The Working Committee by taking a considerate view of the Prime Minister's action has saved the Congress from being split up. Any precipitate action would have led to the disintegration of the Congress. Now that the mistakes committed by both factions have been overlooked at the highest level, it is legitimate to hope that the Congress will pull on together in the interests of the country's stability and the democratic way of life.

Czechoslovakia — Sullen Resistance

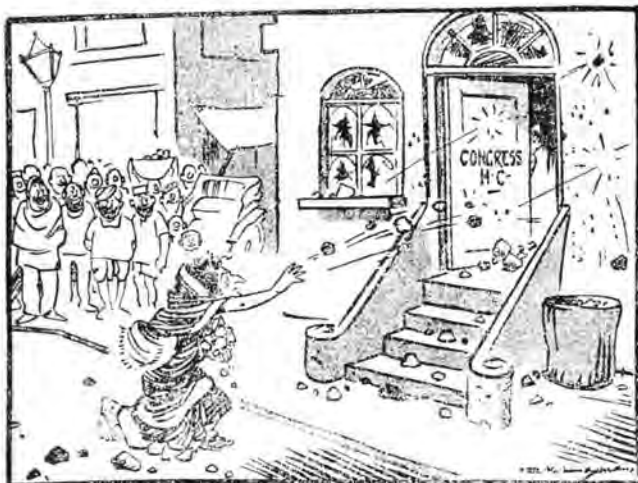
A YEAR has just passed by since Russia and four of her allies committed the rape of Czechoslovakia—a year of silent and sullen resistance. During the year Russia tried several persuasive and strong-arm methods to win over the people of Czechoslovakia. But all those methods failed and the Czechoslovaks continue to be as opposed and resentful as they were on the first day of the invasion. During the year they gave many demonstrations of their silent and sullen resistance, the most notable amongst which was the martyrdom of Jan Pallach who burnt himself to death as a protest against the action of Russia and her allies.

The Russians pushed out of office during the year Alexander Dubcek who, as the leader of the Communist Party and the country, spearheaded the revolt for "a communism with human face". He was replaced by Gustav Husak who was expected to be much more amenable. But this replacement has not helped the Russian rulers. The people of Czechoslovakia regard him and his collaborators as Russian agents and make no secret of their contempt for them. Owing to the might of the Russian arms poised against them, the people cannot think of armed resistance. They have chosen other ways of resistance such as non-cooperation and slowing down of production and denigration of Russia, and they are having some telling effect.

Czechoslovakia has many lessons for countries which are consciously or unconsciously gravitating towards Russia. The most important lesson is that Russia does not tolerate dissent, dissent in thought or action, and for suppressing dissent she will resort to any means including aggression across national frontiers. Failure to keep in mind that lesson may cost a country its sovereignty and independence.

During the year of the aggression and the imposition of the Russian rule world public opinion has not forgotten Czechoslovakia. It is solidly behind her and is watching with anxiety and hope the brave struggle that the people are putting up against the aggressors and the collaborators.

OPEN CHALLENGE



—Courtesy: Times of India

The Press and the Present Crisis

A. B. Shah

WRITING more than a century ago, Alexis Tocqueville observed that there was no half-way house between a free press and a regimented one. In the first volume of his classic work, *Democracy in America* published in 1835 he narrates an interesting experience that he had on landing in the US in the following words: "The first newspaper over which I cast my eyes, upon my arrival in America, contained the following article:

"In all this affair, the language of Jackson [the President] has been that of a heartless despot, solely occupied with the preservation of his own authority. Ambition is his crime, and it will be his punishment too; intrigue is his native element, and intrigue will confound his tricks, and deprive him of his power. He governs by means of corruption, and his immoral practices will redound to his shame and confusion. His conduct in the political arena has been that of a shameless and lawless gamester. He succeeded at the time; but the hour of retribution approaches....

(*Vincennes Gazette*)

After examining the pros and cons of controlling the press Tocqueville comes to the conclusion that "in this matter, therefore, there is no medium between servitude and license; in order to enjoy the inestimable benefits that liberty of the press ensures, it is necessary to submit to the inevitable evils that it creates." Tocqueville's observation is particularly relevant to India today.

What has been happening in the world of Indian newspapers since the Bangalore session of the All-India Congress Committee should cause anxiety to all who are interested in the freedom of the press, particularly to those who believe in the values of *democratic* socialism. For regardless of their differences, among themselves as well as with others who stand to the right of the centre, on specific issues of public policy, all social democrats would agree that socialism without a free press would merely be a euphemism for communist totalitarianism. If the press is free such differences can be settled by rational discussion and public debate, and decisions once taken may be rectified in the light of facts and experience. But the possibility itself of such discussion would be ruled out if the press were required to toe the official line. In that case free debate, the self-correcting mechanism of democracy, is rendered impossible and mistakes tend to perpetuate themselves.

It is from this point of view that the pressures brought to bear on the Editors and Managements of some major newspapers in English during the last six weeks have to be assessed. It is true that even earlier, in the halcyon days of the Nehru age, Government sought to coerce the press on certain occasions. The

experience of Mr A. D. Gorwala, who ultimately had to start a weekly of his own, is a standing condemnation of Mr Nehru's self-righteous intolerance when some of his pet dogmas were subjected to sustained criticism. However, by and large Mr Nehru's regime as also that of his successor was characterised by a fairly liberal attitude to the press. If the press did not exercise the freedom it had, not Government but the Managements and Editors of our newspapers were to blame.

What has been happening since the Bangalore session of the AICC is different in quality. As early as the middle of July Mrs Gandhi's supporters in the cabinet had started bringing pressure on the Editors of some of the major newspapers to make them fall in line with the Prime Minister's stand. I know of at least one instance, wherein two Ministers put in four telephone calls to the Management, and one to the Editor, of an important newspaper, trying first to cajole, then to persuade and finally to threaten them for their criticism of the Prime Minister's behaviour. Threats and appeals were also used in relation to the Editor of another newspaper, and the Editor of a third was summoned for a 'personal chat' with one of the Ministers in Mrs Gandhi's entourage.

But the danger to the press does not end here. Government is reported to be considering measures for the conversion of newspaper combines into Trusts and for associating employees with the management of newspapers. It is also reported that the two major news agencies—namely, the Press Trust of India and the United News of India—may be converted into public corporations and the price-page schedule, which was struck down by the Supreme Court as *ultra vires* of the Constitution, may be reintroduced. It is true that Mr I. K. Gujral, Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting, has assured the Lok Sabha (August 21) that 'Government do not think that nationalisation of the major newspapers is compatible with the freedom of the press, nor is it the proper remedy for correcting monopolistic (*sic*) trends in the press'. However, he has not said anything to indicate the thinking of the Government on the four demands of the Indian Federation of Working Journalists mentioned above. He has only said that these measures were 'under consideration of the Government'. In the absence of a categorical assurance that the Government does not find these demands acceptable, the possibility remains of its accepting them with some modifications so as to by-pass the Constitutional provisions in favour of a free press. In any case, the Government can always use these demands as a sort of Damocles' sword to keep the press 'within limits of fair criticism'. The sudden change in the tone of a number of news-

papers which were originally sharply critical of the Prime Minister would suggest that the threat has already started yielding results.

Another serious threat to the freedom of the press comes from officially inspired mass demonstrations against erring newspapers. Not only communists, whose contempt for democracy and the free press is well-known, but also the so-called progressive supporters of the Prime Minister have been resorting to this method. A student mob led by the CPI(M) attacked and ransacked the offices of *The Hindustan Standard* and *Anand Bazar Patrika* in Calcutta in the second week of July. It also attacked *The Statesman* office and but for a lucky chance, the Managing Director of *The Statesman* would probably have been seriously injured, if not killed, by a large piece of mortar that was aimed at him with a remarkable degree of precision. Mrs Gandhi's supporters have not yet gone to this extent. However, a group of Mrs Gandhi's supporters led by Mr Menon did go to the New Delhi office of *The Statesman*, where inflammatory speeches were made against its editorial policies and copies of its issues were burnt. Addressing the demonstrators, Mr Menon is reported to have said that next time it would not be only the copies of *The Statesman* that would be burnt. As the Indian and Eastern Newspaper Society observes in its statement on this incident, 'such demonstrations reflect a growing intolerance on the part of certain political parties and groups which is the total negation of the democratic principles of free expression embodied in our Constitution'. What is particularly significant about these incidents is the fact that neither Mr Jyoti Basu in Calcutta nor Mrs Indira Gandhi in New Delhi has apparently seen anything wrong in them. At least, I have not come across any statement from them condemning these attacks.

There is a different type of threat to the freedom of the press which is equally grave. It stems not from Government nor even from any of the major parties or political groups but from the cultural backwardness and religious obscurantism of certain sections of Indian society. I have in mind the demonstration before the Calcutta office of *The Statesman* in protest against the publication of Toynbee's article in January last. The Editor had to publish an apology, expressing regret over having hurt the religious susceptibilities of the Muslims!

Another incident of the same type would have occurred at Poona in July last but for the fact that the Editor in this case is committed to fighting the illiberal manifestations of religion in public life. *Sadhana*, the Marathi weekly in question, published on the front cover of its issue of July 12 a picture of the Prophet Muhammad receiving the Divine Word from the Angel Gabriel. Contrary to orthodox Muslim opinion, the picture shows the Prophet without the traditional veil over his face and is reproduced from *Painting in Islam*, a scholarly work by the late T. W.

Arnold, originally published by Oxford University Press and reprinted in paperback edition by Dover Publications. On the appearance of the issue under reference, branches of the Jamaat-e-Islami and the Muslim Majlis-e-Mushawarat at Nanded, Poona and a few other places in Maharashtra called protest meetings and passed resolutions calling upon the Chief Minister of Maharashtra to confiscate copies of the issues in question and to punish its Editor. Neither the fact that the painting was originally done by a Muslim artist under the patronage of a Muslim king nor the consideration that one's own religious dogmas cannot be imposed on others in a democratic state had any weight with the obscurantist leaders of the Muslim community. It is understood that their demand is still 'under consideration' by the Government of Maharashtra. One can only hope that it would take its decision in the light of the Constitutional provisions regarding the freedom of the press and not succumb to the tyranny of fanaticism on grounds of expediency.

For those who believe in the importance of a free press, analysis obviously is not enough. They have to think of ways and means by which their concern may be shared by those who mistakenly believe that a free press is incompatible with popular welfare. It is also sometimes said that the Indian press is 'free but not independent', meaning thereby that while the Government does not try to restrict its freedom, Editors of Indian newspapers cannot take an independent line because their employers do not allow them to do so.

(Continued on page 8)



"But Madam, the Press is still national—not nationalised"

—Courtesy: Hindu

Kuznetsov Chose Freedom

ANATOLY KUZNETSOV, a prominent Russian writer, chose freedom a couple of weeks back when he asked for political asylum from the British Government. He was on a visit to London to collect materials for a book on Lenin. It seems he had already planned not to go back to Russia and he brought along with him copies of his books and other manuscripts in microfilm sewn into the lining of his coat. He asked for political asylum on the fourth day of his stay in London. It was granted to him in spite of the protests of the Russian authorities.

Kuznetsov has written numerous short stories and four novels. More wellknown amongst his novels are *Babi Yar*, published in 1966, which recounts the Nazi massacre of thousands of Russian Jews outside Kiev, and *The Fire*, published very recently which tells of suicide and despair among young engineers in a large industrial city.

Kuznetsov was at the early age of 39 an established member of an admired social group, The Writers. He was living comfortably in Moscow and had the prospects of a bright career. He was recently appointed to the Editorial Board of *Yunost* (Youth) an influential magazine with a circulation of more than two million.

However, Kuznetsov was desperately unhappy. For him the final blow was the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia. He found the Government turning more and more against independent-minded writers. He was deeply hurt and disturbed by the trial and imprisonment of Sinyavsky and Daniel and by the treatment meted out to poets, Evtushenko, Voznessensky and others. After securing political asylum, Kuznetsov wrote a statement explaining his reasons for leaving Russia. The following are a few extracts from that statement:

"Why should a writer whose books have sold millions of copies, and who is extremely popular and well-off in his own country, suddenly decide not to return to that country, which, moreover, he loves?

The loss of hope: I simply cannot live there any longer. This feeling is something stronger than me. I just can't go on living there. I have been writing as long as I can remember. My first work was published 25 years ago.

In those 25 years, not a single one of my works has been printed in the Soviet Union as I wrote it. For political reasons, the Soviet censorship and the editors shorten, distort and violate my works to the point of making them completely unrecognizable. Or they do not permit them to be published at all.

I came to the point where I could no longer write, no longer sleep, no longer breathe.

A writer is above all an artist who is trying to penetrate into the unknown. He must be honest and objective, and be able to do his creative work in freedom. These are all obvious truths. These are the very things that writers are forbidden in the Soviet Union.

Artistic freedom in the Soviet Union has been reduced to the "freedom" to praise the Soviet system and the Communist Party and to urge people to fight for Communism.

Literature in the Soviet Union is controlled by people who are ignorant, cynical, and themselves very remote from literature. But they are people with excellent knowledge of the latest instructions from the men at the top of the prevailing Party dogmas.

So for a quarter of a century I went on dreaming about a happy state of affairs, which is unthinkable for a Soviet writer — to be able to write and publish his writings without restrictions and without fear. Not to choke off his own song. To have no thought for party instructions, government-appointed editors and political censors. Not to start trembling at every knock on the door. Not to be hiding his manuscripts away in a hole in the ground almost before the ink on them is dry.

But now I have hope, at least. In any case, these are not the words of Kuznetsov but of a quite different author. Not a Soviet author and not a Western author, not a Red one and not a White one, but just an author living in this 20th century on this earth. And what is more, a writer who has made a desperate effort to be in this century, an honest writer who wants to associate himself with those who strive for humanity in the present wild, wild, wild life of this mad, mad world."

Moscow has condemned Anatoly Kuznetsov as "a Judas who will be hated for ever by his fellow countrymen".

Independent-minded writers are at the moment under heavy fire in Russia. The person most under fire is Tvardovsky, the Editor of *Novy Mir*. The monthly journal, *Novy Mir* has under Tvardovsky courageously maintained a high standard of literary style and ideological independence. It has patronised and built up a dedicated group of writers and brilliant critics. It may not be, however, long before it loses that distinction.

Reflection on a Student Seminar (A Student)

A STUDENT seminar to discuss "Student Unrest" was held at S.N.D.T. Women's University between 3 and 6 p.m. on Saturday, the 26th of July, 1969. This was done under the joint auspices of the Democratic Research Service and the Leslie Sawhny Programme of Training for Democracy. About thirty students of both sexes participated in the seminar. Prof. M. P. Rege, Principal, Kirti College, Prof. (Mrs) Pandit, S.N.D.T. Women's University, Mr. V. K. Sinha, Secretary, Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom and Mr. A. A. Deshpande, Executive Secretary, Leslie Sawhny Programme of Training for Democracy, were present as observers. Mr. M. J. Patrawala, a Senior B.A. student of Wilson College, was in the Chair.

The seminar had on hand a rather ambitious agenda. Five main themes including several sub-themes were discussed, viz.,

1. The nature of unrest — in India and abroad.
2. The causes of unrest: (a) frustration (b) educational reforms (c) social problems (d) lack of ideal or leadership (e) others.
3. Responsibility for unrest: (a) parents (b) teachers (c) politicians (d) students themselves. Possible cures and remedies including the role of democratic way of life.
4. Students and national and party politics. Should students participate? Why? To what extent?
5. Active and constructive role of students in (a) educational reforms (b) social reforms (c) national politics.

The participants were not enthusiastic about the first point since it had only academic value. Also, majority of the participants did not seem to have much interest in the details of the unrest abroad.

Surprisingly, educational reform does not seem to generate any unrest in India! It was heartening to see that strikes on grounds of tough examination papers and the like were unanimously assailed. It was felt by the participants that students cared more about a degree than real knowledge. Frustration generated by economic instability and the problem of employment was considered important.

The participants vehemently criticised unscrupulous working for power, methods of the politician. While accepting that the blame for unrest was on parent, teacher and student, the participants were in a mood to pass heavy strictures on the politician.

Student participation in politics was discussed at length. Although it was admitted that participation had to have some limit and was agreed that the student's principal duty is to study, no formula of any practical significance could be evolved as to where and when to stop student involvement in politics.

It was felt generally that students should work actively for removal of casteism, parochialism, untouchability and other social evils.



**THE SUPERIOR
TYPEWRITER WITH A
2-YEAR
GUARANTEE**



New Tactic With Police

Analyst

LAST month we highlighted the conflict between the police and the Government and indicated that a cold war was developing between the UF parties and the police. Our anticipation turned out to be correct. The most important development during the period under review (mid-July to mid-August) is again relating to the police. Due to great political and administrative pressure brought on them the police decided to drop their protest plans of July 15. But the awkward situation in which the police personnel was placed in the midst of clashes between UF partners persisted. The police had to open fire at village Haroa in Bashirhat Subdivision when 300-400 men of the CPM's peasants' organisation resisted the police party and did not allow it to take 18 persons to Court by brandishing swords, lathis and other lethal weapons. Three police officers and several policemen were injured and as a consequence they had to fire, killing one and injuring five. The CPM leaders said that the police fired on a peaceful crowd. Again at village Bharatgarh under Basanti P.S. a 5-member police party was attacked by SUC followers and one of them was shot dead and 2 muskets and 55 rounds of bullets were taken away.

This killing of the policeman was the last straw and the policemen were very much agitated when there was delay in handing over of the dead-body. The crowd of policemen got excited and attacked the S.P.'s office and then went in a violent procession ransacking the Legislative Assembly. Details of the incident are already well-known.

This July 31 incident gave an excellent opportunity to the UF parties to allege the existence of a far-reaching conspiracy involving some senior police officers and Congress leaders. An enquiry is being conducted by a retired ICS officer to find out why the Home Minister could not get earlier intimation of the procession and why preventive steps were not taken.

It appears to a detached observer that policemen in general and officers in particular are very much perturbed by the UF policy which gives little security to ordinary policemen on duty. The Durgapur incidents have not been forgotten. The Durgapur enquiry report has been submitted and it is clear from it that, while a section of the police had certainly gone astray on June 2, the incidents of June 1 of students attacking the police were indeed highly provocative.

The July 31 incident is being utilised to the full by the UF. On the one hand, the SUC which had alleged that the CPM was utilising the police to its advantage and whose men are alleged to have attacked the police in Bharatgarh killing one, is being isolated in

the UF for its aggressiveness. On the other, the police organisation and officers are being cornered and cajoled into total submission. Several constables have already been dismissed. The ranks immediately above that of constable are now being taken up for dismissal. But action against still higher officers is delayed so that their morale and solidarity may be undermined. The I.G., the D.G., the Commissioner and even the retired I.G. are under great strain due to all this pressure. The Secretary of the Police Association, Subodh Datta, has been dismissed. Meanwhile, the military has been alerted and the police is no longer relied on to guard the armouries in district headquarters. This work is handed over to the Eastern Frontier Rifles.

It is obvious that large sections of the police of various ranks are disaffected and mere repressive and disciplinary steps would not do. The CPM has therefore recently attempted a new tactic of far-reaching importance. This consists of winning over the policemen. An appeal has been issued to the people asking them to help policemen to change their old habits. Jyoti Basu has begun saying that the majority of policemen support the UF. The people and the police are asked to work together in the interest of the struggle against vested interests. The statement criticized those "enemies of the UF" who allege that the police are inactive—this is directed mainly against the SUC and FB elements—and condemned the attack on the police at Durgapur as an action of anti-social elements. This is a major shift by the CPM. It is an attempt to win over policemen and officers. If this line is followed up, it is likely that a bargain between the CPM and the police administration may be struck, sacrificing some policemen for public and UF satisfaction.

Another notable event during the period was the successful strike in all jute mills from August 4 to August 11. The UF Government fully backed the trade unions which included those of the AITUC, INTUC, UTUC and the HMS. The IJMA, the employers' organisation, was weakened in the process as some mills withdrew themselves from it. Although workers had demanded an increase of at least Rs. 50/- the matter was settled at Rs. 30/-. This quick victory built up a bridge of unity in labour ranks on the one hand, and it encouraged workers of other industries to carry forward their struggle on the other. The tea industry was immediately thereafter involved in a general strike. The engineering industry may follow. Delhi played a significant role in bringing the Jute strike to a successful conclusion.

August 18, 1969

TWO INCIDENTS

A Correspondent

IN village Madhusudanpur within Patharpratim Police Station of 24 Parganas five jotedars and one peasant were killed on July 28 in clashes between jotedars and peasant cultivators.

On July 27 discussions were held amongst jotedars and peasants. The talks were mainly on wages. The jotedars said, after the talks, that they would declare their decisions the next day. But the peasants insisted on announcing the decisions just then and there. Most of the peasants and workers of the area are members or sympathisers of the S.U.C. Thereafter the jotedars announced their decisions which did not satisfy the peasants who then forcibly detained three jotedars. Another jotedar rescued them from detention. Thereafter, the peasants forcibly took possession of the lands of the jotedars. When marching in a procession they tried to attack the jotedars. The latter fired and one peasant died. Thereafter the peasants beat one jotedar to death.

On the next day over ten thousand peasants assembled at Madhusudanpur from Joynagar, Mathurapur, Mandirbazar, Bishnupur and other adjoining villages under the leadership of the local Leftist M.L.A. The peasants attacked the jotedars and their houses, set them on fire. They cruelly beat three jotedars to death.

On July 26, at Bharatpur within Basanti Police Station of 24 Parganas serious clashes took place between workers of the S.U.C. and of the R.S.P. resulting in the death of one R.S.P. worker, Mohan Sardar. On receipt of information the Second Officer of Basanti Police Station, Sri Santosh Mittra, S.I. along with five constables (3 with rifles and 2 with lathis) reached the place (Bharatpur) in the morning of July 29. At that time a crowd of well armed gang of peasants (of the S.U.C. and the R.S.P. parties) about 1600 in all came there and gheraoed the police party, fired on them and assaulted them with lathis, ballams etc. The police then fired five rounds. Police Constable Sri Sankar Das Sarma was killed by bullets fired by the peasants. The S.I. (Santosh Mittra) and one constable were forcibly captured and detained in a closed room after taking away all their clothings, guns, lathis, etc. The S.I. and the constable were severely assaulted. The Officer-in-charge of Basanti Police Station with an A.S.I. and a number of constables (armed) as also the Circle Inspector of Canning Police Station with another group of armed constables later went to the place and rescued the detained S.I. and the constable and sent them to hospital. Two guns and fifty-five bullets were snatched away from the police by the peasants.

THE PRESS AND THE PRESENT CRISIS—from page 4

This is a clever piece of sophistry and Mr Inder Gujral who recently used it should have known better. Even if one were to overlook the attempts of Ministers to dragoon the press as not constituting an encroachment on editorial freedom, it is clear that newspapers which have been critical of the Prime Minister have given generous coverage to her speeches and to the street demonstrations organised in her favour by the '95 per cent' of the poor and the oppressed. If newspaper proprietors were compelling their Editors to take up a line against the latter's own independent judgment, one would have to conclude that the Jains and the Birlas were ardent supporters of Mrs Gandhi's search for socialism! The only other inference would be that they have been constrained to compel their Editors to give full publicity to the Prime Minister's actions and to soft-pedal their criticism of her policies.

It is also useful to realise in this connection that all talk of press monopoly is nothing but so much rhetoric. Anyone who knows the meaning of the term 'monopoly' would think that there is an increasing concentration of power in the hands of the Government in regard to the media of mass communication. Consider the means that the Government has at its disposal to coerce the press—newsprint quotas, advertisements, appointment of Boards of Directors (*The Times of India* group), approval of managerial appointments (*The Statesman*), threat of instituting 'probes' (*The Birla group*) and the launching of character assassination campaigns through the fellow-travelling press. One would think that what is necessary is to develop countervailing agencies for curbing Government monopoly in the area of mass communication. As to private 'monopoly' in the 'bourgeois' press it may be noted that not one of the major newspapers in India accounts for even 10 per cent of the total daily circulation. On the other hand, leaving aside the 50 odd newspapers and periodicals owned by the communists, those brought out by the Soviet Embassy alone account for 10 per cent of the total circulation in India. Where then is concentration of power, and what is the colour of press monopoly in India?

The tragedy of the Indian press, as of Indian democracy, lies in the complacency and opportunism of its own leaders. Till the burglars are inside the house they show no interest in devising methods of preventing burglary. And once the burglars are in, they are prompt in joining them in order to save their skin. The anonymous 'group of young business executives', who recently announced their desire to 'Rally round the Leader' provides only one illustration of the lack of spine that characterizes the business community in India. If freedom of the press is eclipsed in this country it would not be because of private 'monopoly' but because of the cowardice of the so-called monopolists before the whip of the Government.

Himalayan Blunder

V. B. Karnik

A FOREST of books has already developed around "the Indian humiliation of 1962". The author has modestly claimed that his book^{*} is one more tree in that forest. Those who read it will, however, find that, far from being just one more tree, it is the most significant and yields the best fruit in the form of an objective and authentic account of the happenings during the crucial period 8th September to 20th October and a frank and courageous diagnosis of the causes of the disaster.

The author, Brigadier J. P. Dalvi, is the most competent person to tell the story and to analyse the circumstances which gradually but inevitably led to the ignominious defeat of the Indian Army in the battle of the Thagla Ridge. Brigadier Dalvi was the Commander of the 7th Brigade which had to bear the brunt of the first assault of the Chinese Army. He was the person upon whom impracticable orders of the "highest level" were being imposed from time to time. He was the person who watched from day to day the growth of a perilous situation and was unable to avoid it, in spite of his correct and convincing reports about the local situation, owing to the unrealistic political commitments of the Prime Minister and the Defence Minister. He remained with his Brigade until the last during its short but heroic battle against the Chinese aggressors. Later, he was captured and was for seven months a war prisoner. It was during his captivity that he decided to write the story of the most unequal fight that was imposed upon the Indian Army and of the circumstances which led to it as a tribute to the brave fighters and as an effort to discover the guilty men and expose them to the public eye.

The fight on the Thagla ridge along the river Namka Chu was in all respects an unequal fight. It was fought on a terrain which was most disadvantageous to the Indian Army which, according to all accounts, was both "outnumbered and outweaponed". It was a fight which was not expected and for which the Army was never prepared. The 7th Brigade which fought it was outnumbered by at least 20 to 1. In spite of these handicaps, the Brigade fought heroically as can be clearly seen from the casualties that it had to suffer. As Brigadier Dalvi has put it, "Under-supplied and ill-prepared, these men fought a lonely mountain battle and few in the rest of the country, or indeed the Army, knew of their ordeal and their squandered heroism, unredeemed by the faintest trace of success." Giving an idea of lack of supplies, the author has

written: "Army remained short of everything including bare necessities like boots and clothing, not to mention parachutes, tinned-food and many others which could have been produced in the country. Battle formations were short of snow clothing, grenades, ammunitions, general stores, woollen underwear and even studs for boots!" The book gives a graphic account of the battle that was fought under those adverse circumstances and of the preceding weeks when men on the spot were sending frantic appeals for realistic policies and they were being contemptuously and summarily rejected by the higher authorities in Delhi. The account is given without any malice or rancour though the author has plenty of reasons to feel very bitter as he and his men were practically left at the mercy of the Chinese in an indefensible area without supplies, without weapons and without any definite orders.

The more important part of the book is, however, the discussion of the causes of the tragedy. The discussion is frank as well as forthright. In the Preface the author has stated in general terms: "1962 was a National Failure of which every Indian is guilty. It was a failure in the Higher Direction of War, a failure of the Opposition, a failure of the General Staff (myself included); it was a failure of Responsible Public Opinion and the Press. For the Government of India, it was a Himalayan Blunder at all levels."

Subsequent pages pinpoint the responsibility in more specific terms. According to Brigadier Dalvi, the factor most responsible for the disaster was the Government's so-called "Forward Policy". In pursuance of that policy the Army was instructed to establish posts in border areas. But no adequate arrangements were made for their defence or even to keep them supplied with the necessities of life. This happened particularly in the case of the Dhola Post in NEFA which in addition was a disputed area. As things turned out later it became a death trap for the 7th Brigade which was rushed for its defence.

The "Forward Policy" was adopted without much thought and without any preparation. Prime Minister Nehru and Defence Minister Menon, who were the authors of that policy, all along believed that China had no intention of attacking India and that the opening of posts would be nothing more than a "game of chess with posts taking the place of pawns." Being convinced of the improbability of a Chinese attack, they took no steps to prepare the Army for that contingency and neglected its training and equipment for mountain warfare. The Army Chief, late General Thimayya and some others had warned them against

^{*}*Himalayan Blunder*, Brigadier J. P. Dalvi, Thacker & Company, Bombay. Rs. 30.

that facile optimism about China's intentions, but their warnings were ignored.

According to Brigadier Dalvi, China had long prepared herself for war against India and was waiting for an opportunity. Nehru's grandiloquent order to the Army "to throw out the Chinese" issued casually on October 12 when he was on his way to Colombo gave the Chinese the opportunity for which they were waiting. The order was issued in a lighthearted manner without considering its consequences and without giving the Army the weapons and other supplies that it would need in order to implement it. It was, Brigadier Dalvi says, "a policy of bluff". He comments: "Bluffing the Indian people was easy; it was not so easy to bluff the Chinese. The Government lost the initiative in the early stages. Without waiting for a senior commander to reach the Namka Chu and assess the Chinese threat, Government took the 'decision' to evict the Chinese. The Defence Minister pushed the Chief; the Chief pushed the Army Commander; and the Army Commander pushed the nearest brigade to the River. The Government was now squarely enmeshed in a web of its own words."

The Government's "Forward Policy" as well as Nehru's order have been described by many as "a plain act of political opportunism" undertaken in order to satisfy the inflamed public opinion. But the Government was itself responsible for the particular state of public opinion. Its spokesmen, more particularly the Prime Minister, had painted such rosy pictures of preparedness that the people cannot be blamed if they demanded immediate action against the Chinese intruders. It is for these reasons that Brigadier Dalvi has reached his conclusion about Nehru's responsibility for the disaster of 1962. He writes: "I fear that posterity will not forgive Mr. Nehru for his credulity and negligence before 8th September 1962 and his inept handling of the politico-military situation thereafter." Conscientious that he is, he is careful to add: "Posterity will not forgive the senior Army Officers, including myself for our ignominious roles, although we may try to still our consciences by putting the

entire blame on the politicians and/or Generals Thapar and Kaul." There can be no doubt about the greater guilt of the then Defence Minister, Mr. Menon. Brigadier Dalvi has proved it to the hilt. He has also shown how Mr. Menon was responsible for starving the Army and for disorganising its chain of command.

According to Brigadier Dalvi, it is the "Higher Direction of war" that is responsible for the reverses of 1962. The failure of Higher Direction is described by him as follows: "The Army was first sent to man the borders in 1959/60 without the basic requirements for mountain warfare. Later we embarked on a 'limited' programme to make up a few of our deficiencies; while our political postures were not enforceable by arms. Again in 1962, the Army was bludgeoned into attempting the impossible task of evicting the Chinese although we did not have the troops, fire power or other minimum resources." General Kumaramangalam who retired a few days back as the Chief of the Army Staff has expressed a similar opinion. After relinquishing the charge of his post, he said in answer to a question about the reverses of 1962: "I think most of the mistakes were made at the higher level and not the lower levels".

Brigadier Dalvi has not only written about the sad episode but has also drawn from what happened then, a number of lessons which will be of invaluable help to the Government and the Army. He has also reproduced as an appendix a letter that Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, the then Home Minister, wrote in 1950 to the then Prime Minister, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, on the danger that China represented to the external defence and the internal security of India. All these have enhanced the value of the book and the reviewer can do no better than join Mr. Frank Moraes, who has written the foreword, in imploring "every Indian capable of arriving at an independent decision" to read it.

BOOKS RECEIVED

On Trial, The case of Sinyavsky and Daniel, Edited by Leopold Labedz and Max Hayward, Published by National Academy, 9 Ansari Market, Delhi 6. Price: Rs. 4/-.

Social and Political Thought of Gandhi, J. Bandyopadhyaya, Allied Publishers, Rs. 32/-.

Political Memoirs, Jamnadas Dwarkadas, United Asia Publications, Bombay, Rs. 30/-.

Between the Lines, Kuldip Nayar, Allied Publishers, Rs. 16/-.

Trade Unions & Politics

BY V. B. KARNIK

Price: Rs 3.50

Published by

UNIVERSITY OF BOMBAY

LABOUR EDUCATION SERVICE

127, Mahatma Gandhi Road,
Bombay 1.

Review

Elite Conflict in a Plural Society: Twentieth-Century Bengal

J. H. Broomfield, Oxford University Press, Bombay, Rs. 50.

BENGAL was the hotbed of the nationalist movement in the early decades of this century. Angered by the Partition imposed in 1905 by the Viceroy, Lord Curzon, Bengal waged a relentless struggle against the British Government. It took many forms, Swadeshi and Boycott and acts of violence against individual officers in order to strike terror in the heart of the Government. Bengal was then acting as the vanguard of India. The partition was annulled in 1912. The struggle did not, however, cease. The elected legislatures which came into existence after the Morley-Minto and Montague-Chelmsford Reforms provided a new and additional forum for the struggle.

Mr. Broomfield's book provides an account of that struggle in the period 1912 to 1927. There is an introductory chapter which gives cursory information about the events after the Partition and before its annulment. There is also an epilogue which gives in a few pages the story of the next two decades. The story ends with the second Partition. The first Partition was violently opposed by the *Bhadralok* around whom the author has woven his story. But, ironically enough, the same elite group welcomed in 1947 the second Partition, the feeling in the mind of the group being, "the partition of Bengal was preferable to its total incorporation in the Muslim state".

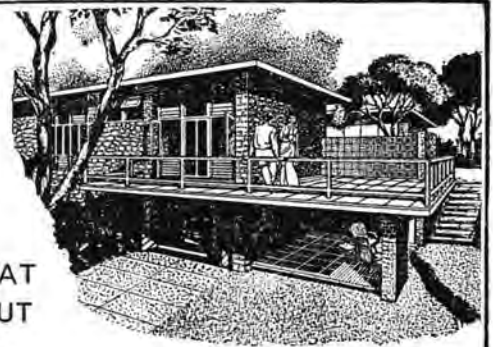
According to Mr. Broomfield, the national struggle which developed in Bengal was a struggle of the Hindu elite group, the *Bhadralok* against the British Government and administrators for a share in governmental power. It demanded the introduction of representative institutions. But when they were progressively introduced it found that they worked against its interests. The social base of the elite group was too narrow. It had no contact either with the Muslims who constituted about 55 per cent of the population or with the untouchables and other lower caste Hindus. In addition its interests conflicted with the interests of the latter. That led to its eventual frustration and defeat.

Mr. Broomfield's study has thrown a flood of light on the relations between the two communities of Hindus and Muslims. The relations were hostile. As stated by the author, "to maintain a distinct political identity was throughout the basic factor in Muslim thinking." Moreover, "the domination of the nationalist organisation in Bengal by Hindu *Bhadralok*, their equivocation over liberal, secularist principles, and, from the time of the partition, their recurrent appeals

to Hindu symbolism, all served to convince the Muslims that Congress rule would mean Hindu rule." Another factor which helped the Muslim leaders is described as follows: "In search of an object of denunciation the communalist politician did not, like the nationalist, have to resort to the remote and relatively unfamiliar figures of the British raj. He had an excellent target for attack in that dominant Hindu minority that supplied the landholders and their agents, the money-lenders, the lawyers, the tax collectors, and other government officials with whom every Bengal Muslim, rural or urban, was forced to have dealings. To charge this group with tyranny and to call for united backing to break its power was a sure way to arouse popular enthusiasm." British rulers naturally exploited this situation and helped the growth of discord between the two communities. The result was that "when they finally yielded power it could only be to the opposing governments of a divided Bengal."

The story told by Mr. Broomfield of that exciting period of the national movement in Bengal makes very interesting reading. It should be read by all students of the movement and more particularly by those who are concerned with the communal problem. The high price of the publication will, however, place it beyond the reach of many.

K. V. B.



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With Many Voices

"The deep
Moans round with many voices. Come, my friends,
'Tis not too late to seek a newer world."
—Tennyson.

Between Mrs. Gandhi and the two Communist Parties, the understanding apparently is: "We use you, you use us."

—Special Correspondent, *March of the Nation*, August 9.

Mrs. Gandhi's instant socialism through bank nationalisation appears rather suspicious.

—Tarakeshwari Sinha, *The Current*, August 9.

The withdrawal of Americans from Vietnam is not only terrorizing leaders of Allied nations, it is sending chills up and down the spines of the non-aligned nations, too.

—A Middle East Ambassador, *U.S. News & World Report*, August 11.

What we see in West Bengal these days is a virtual ordering from the seats of authority of a revolution against authority itself.

—*The Indian Monitor*, August 9

They (Communists) create confusion at all times. Their object is to seize power after creating confusion.

—K. Kamaraj, *Hindustan Times*, August 8.

Smt. Indira Gandhi has become an agent and instrument of the communists and fellow-travellers.

—C. Rajagopalachari, *Swarajya*, August 9.

We will not allow another Indonesia to happen here, the united front of Leftists will form the Government in Delhi.

—Bhupesh Gupta, *The Statesman*, August 11.

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The Prime Minister who should always be cool, sober and thoughtful is using a language of threats and challenges.

—N. G. Goray, PSP Chairman, *The Indian Express*, August 11.

The degradation of the Congress spells the degradation of the country.

—*The Indian Express*, August 13.

The Prime Minister having abdicated her judgment to Moscow and its Indian creatures, her party as a whole seems to have abdicated its composite judgment to her.

—*Opinion*, August 12.

Mrs. Gandhi is a fellow-traveller on the slippery slope of dictatorship in the company of the Communists.

—M. R. Masani, *The Indian Express*, August 14.

Changing private ownership into public is not socialism.

—Jayaprakash Narayan, *Times of India*, August 17.

The Nehru era and all that it represented in grace, in tolerance and, above all, in its power to contain and sustain contradictions, has come to an end.

—Nayantara Sahgal, *The Sunday Standard*, August 17.

What is at stake today is not the content of ideology, but the style of functioning.

—Asoka Mehta, *Times of India*, August 18.

The grand coalition the Congress is can be replaced only by its mirror image.

—Dilip Mukherjee, *Times of India*, August 21.

The Congress has become a politically amorphous power machine in which the idealists of both left and right are outnumbered by opportunists.

—*The Guardian*, August 21.

Mr. Giri's election has pleased Pakistanis. His defeat would have meant the victory for militant anti-Pakistan right wingers still struggling to absorb Pakistan into a united India.

—The Guardian correspondent in Karachi, *Times of India*, August 22.