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MOONSTRUCK

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

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

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

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

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Apathy And Consent

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

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

Chavan, not a friend of the Naxalbari, but the Home Minister has been threatening and goading the State Government to sterner action; he has picked up the campaign in Parliament a proposal to assume fresh legislative powers to curb the Naxalites. He has not questioned the political character of the movement in Naxalbari, or, for that matter, any movement of that kind. He has said, on the contrary, that the activities of the "Naxalists" would have to be dealt with "politically" and the challenge by them would have to be met "as possible". There would have been no stir over Naxalbari had it not been the symbol of an emerging volatile Governor is, however, unable of distinguishing between Naxalbari and Chambal Valley and to justify the denial of political classification to Kanu Sanyal and others, maligning them even before they have been held guilty by the courts. The police may arrest a person—on fantastic charges, but does not make him a criminal. That event the courts would have to decide. The miniature jury very that the Supreme Court is in the interest of "public order" the Preventive Detention Act, how frivolous the police can be. Naxalbari prisoners do not become criminals at the pleasure of the Governor.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Birla House

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

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

There can be no earthly good for anybody—and not even to the departed soul—by arranging the transfer of Birla House to the public sector. Any such transfer would mean the leakage of some funds from the public exchequer to the Birla family. The loss to the Birla family is nothing, for they can use the money to build an equally imposing mansion somewhere else in New Delhi. The obsolescence of the old Birla House may in fact be a happy thing for the Birlas and to move on to newer structures. A cynical view could be that perhaps some of the Birlas have instigated the demand for the acquisition of the building. It is worth to ponder over that not only the clamouring politicians but also the Birlas all want the Birlas to be paid presumably handsomely.

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

Canton Fair

A correspondent writes:

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

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

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

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

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

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The Lost Image

FROM A POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

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

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

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

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

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

"Subversive Activities"

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

at legislation to curb "subversive activities."

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

Now that the Essential Supplies (Maintenance) Act will take care of subversive activities by Central Government employees like going on token strike, Mr Chavan's attention is on the Communist extremists. The streamlining of efficiency and clock-like precision in the Government which agents provocateurs had set putting up Maoist posters in the most remote areas as far removed as Bombay and Madras could only mean that the Government's immaculate White Paper of the Nanda type is coming in the form of a nationwide crackdown on extremists. Acts of crime which do not come a million miles away from the political activity of any group are being credited to Naxalites and in some cases officials admit that it is so.


What would indeed make any attempt to bring political parties within the purview of the Unlawful Activities Act would be the party consensus that Mr Chavan would seek shortly. For purposes of the proposed law, the Communist Party may not be regarded as a political party and curbs on its political activity would not amount to restriction of political activity. More and more people are joining the chorus for such action. No party in Parliament can oppose the move if the Home Minister rationalises it with his usual care.

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

For FRONTIER contact
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AMR-10

The Medium Is The Message

ROBI CHAKRAVORTI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

...subversive ... of the like against the black ... like the Birla House take-over ...

... demand for Birla House take-over came at the Goa session of the ... early in November and the ... parties never thought of it ... Mr Sashi Bhusan belongs to ... hand of Congress MPs who think ... acts like a fast to demand the ... Birla House take-over is being angry ... young. Political leaders and ... who have no political locus ... converged on Birla House to ... their names on to the agitation for ... as though there was no other ... left to fight in the country. The ... of Mahatma Gandhi came in ... and attention was diverted from ... Bill. The leftist parties ... control the trade unions might ... the Bill denounced in Parliam- ... through their spokesmen but ... no move to organise any ... to it outside. After the ... staff, it might be the State ... staff, the public sector ... and then private industry, ... the name of maintaining essen- ... services. The new-look Unlawful ... Act will be there soon to ... other laws.

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

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

December 22, 1968

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

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

Sweetness and Light?

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

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

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

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

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

The interesting item of expenditure that Nixon people thinking about is "non-Vietnam spending. This item possibly indicates a shift in the tactic of American foreign policy. The only lesson Washington seems to have learned from Vietnam is that direct American commitments should be kept at a low level in future trouble spots in the world. This can be done only through massive arming of troops in countries like the vast rim of China. American commitments would henceforth be limited to the level of planned arms and training only, and it is not surprising that the Nixon Administration would like to revive "regional arrangements" among Asian countries. In a series of answers to questions put to him by the *New Republic* magazine during the campaign, Nixon said that through "regionalism" and "regional approaches", the U.S. will be in a better position to meet its commitments. Professor Kissinger, White House aide on national security affairs, is also interested in regional arrangements. The motive of this shift—if you can call it a shift—is simple: to guard against direct American commitments and consequent American lives in future encounters and when they arise.

Domestic Politics

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

the policy of enterprise will frequently give us a great or dies."

Harrington Johnson had a great poverty but about it. The plans and the public housing system by Congress reduced only 10 years will proposed the rate income 1969 alone next five years.

There is has even understand Harrington have in the —Nixon is heated reaction blame Nixon worst feature shared also liberal and The Negro ing for more Montgomery back in his the date of stirrings.

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

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

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

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

countries.

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

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

The Middle Of A Play

T. DATTA

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

concept in a different language that is the inner core of Marxism. Cultural Revolution in China is held as a great device for preventing bureaucratism of the revolution, creation of a privileged class who up the revolution. Djilas wrote the same thing and he became a traitor and liar. The USA is corrupt, evil, hooked on power and L.S.D. war on Vietnam has loosed a storm of protest in that country, the one autocratic President has been removed from politics and the youth of the nation is sundered; many a young man heard from the Soviet people that the invasion of Czechoslovakia was a matter the rich-uncle trusts that Moscow is handing out to them. The inability to digest any of these questions is what has made contemporary Marxism such a somber, stench. It is a great thing, Groucho Marx might have said, great revolutions, from that of Calcutta and Castro, have been built on faith than on a devastating lack of it. All this leads to an eerie thought probably not all of us turn a thought of a political and social revolution from an active moral sense, probably the great motivating factor. Most of us is simple jealousy, pathological, almost sexual, power. That is why probably revolutions to end up by replacing the capitalist with that of the grey-eyed clerk in a cold room of a building. That at least is why leftists in this country are such cheerful example of high thinking, high living.

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Calcutta Diary

GYAN KAPUR

DROPSY and blindness due to adulterated mustard oil are undeniably a sad thing. But all this activity on the part of Calcutta Corporation somehow rings hollow, particularly when all shades of countenance, the Mayor, the now out Commission and the Police Chief are so bent to root out adulteration. It can be ruled out that all this sudden activity is due to the entirely natural desire of all and sundry to 'improve the image' before the people now at elections are coming.

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

Paradoxically, nobody believes the Corporation or any of the official busybodies will be able to do anything. The advice to give up mustard oil for adulterated seems to have fallen on flat ears. In fact one cynical comment by a Calcutta citizen was that all this activity against mustard oil was inspired by nothing more but the desire to jack up prices of vanaspathi and groundnut oil, the only two substitutes which can be used by the Bengali household in place of mustard oil. There could be no truth in it than one cares to like. In any case one thing is sure. In ten

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

will respect the "independence, sovereignty, neutrality, and territorial integrity" of Cambodia, the other Asian countries cannot be taken off guard by Peking's overture to Washington in signing an agreement on the five principles of peaceful co-existence. The working of the Panch Sheel formula is a warning in this respect.

The *sanitaire* against China is without Japan taking a lead in the matter, and Japan which has regarded Russia as the first among the leading partners is in no mood to give this position away. But its behaviour will determine whether the nascent Japanese desire to work up to a national consensus. The present Japanese policy is centred on providing aid to South and East Asia. The Delhi conference has taken the only practical and realistic view that the political stability of the countries of this region is best secured by building up their own defence potential and that economic cooperation towards this end should be the keynote of Indian policy.

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

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

Chavan's Scare

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

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

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

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

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

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Damning the Ultras

RATHINDRANATH CHATTAPADHYAY

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

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

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

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

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

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

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There is no doubt that intel-
 lectuals will call it a great existenti-
 alist work. They will never realize that
 it is an attempt to ridicule existen-
 tialist philosophy. It is hard to believe
 that Sumresh Basu, who started his
 career as a Marxist, should be so dia-
 bolic as to ridicule students with a
 comic flair, but that is what precise-
 ly he does. There can be no doubt
 that militant students—whom we
 call Naxalites—are his targets. But
 he is not the only man to have
 ridiculed the Naxalites. We also have
 seen them. They are, as
 Sumresh Gupta said in his *Calcutta*
 (September 28), nice young
 men and women, far more sensible
 than the beer-drinking, twist-dancing,
 frequenting ba-lambs of busin-
 ess. They are basically different
 from the upper middle class teddies—
 they are healthy in their thoughts and
 ideal in their behaviour. It is diffi-
 cult to imagine a Naxalite going
 to a brothel after having a
 battle with the police. Thus the
 question is—why does Basu try to
 depict them as immoral young men?
 The answer is obvious. If a bad man
 can prove that he is good, he will
 only try to shout at the top of his
 lungs—"that man is bad, therefore, I
 am good." The failure of *Patak* lies
 in the fact that Basu tried to vilify a
 class of students who do not deserve
 to be vilified. Moreover, there is
 nothing of existentialism in
 it. Ralph Fox criticized Dickens
 for penetrating deep into the heart
 of man. He called Dickens unrea-
 list because Dickens failed to move
 beyond the surface, thanks to his belief
 that officiality is reality. Dickens
 knew that reality is but always avoid-
 ed realism at crucial moments because
 the strong Victorian make-believe
 had to evade realism. Basu, we fear,
 has forgotten what realism is. His
 work is actually the creation of green
 images. The more he tries to pene-
 trate into the hearts of frustrated
 young men, the more he removes him-
 self from the things he wants. His
 work is really "anti-life", his "existen-
 tialism" is the synonym of "anti-exis-
 tentialism". His young man is having

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Year's Biggest

BY AN ART CRITIC

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

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

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

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

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

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

A New Play

BY A DRAMA CRITIC

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

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

themselves and is branded a thief who fattened himself at the expense. The police arrive late one day to disperse the drunkards disturbing the peace-loving, peace-loving neighbours. The spell is broken as Dhanapati scratches his head and brings himself back to reality.

As a production it leaves much to be desired. The excellent lighting and proper lighting make it more than looking but too many climaxes have the same type detract from the form of the play. The director repeats the same place which also takes away much of the effects. The girl is not exactly a necessary party in the scheme of things. There are some good performances. When after Dhanapati (Rabi Ghosh) has gone away to fetch his money, the others take the floor. The Director, at some time, the audience yawned at his arrival back. Even in his moments of moments he is expressive. Among the Bhola Dutta and Nema Ghosh are on the stage for the longest time and never seem tiring. One hopes that could say the same thing about the body else.

Letters

Kerala

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

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

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

and by now the whole of Kerala would have been turned into a Communist State! The 300 people who joined Narayan were considered to be the backbone of Kerala, then the whole of Kerala was completely divorced from his head to his tail.

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

The Dangeites are calling this a 'people's revolution'. But was it a 'people's revolution'? No. In a 'people's revolution' the masses are involved. It is not a revolution of 300 people, with the masses on or without sympathy. I do not suggest that Mr Narayan is a CIA or CBI agent. But I do say that he is no true Maoist. He is the product of that 'bourgeois communism' which Lenin called 'an infantile disorder'.

Communism has no relation with adventurism and terrorism.

N. K. S.

Foreign Capital

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

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

DECEMBER 28, 1968

DECEMBER 28, 1968

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

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

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

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

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

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

A READER
Calcutta

Corruption!

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

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

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

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

Marriage, Vedic Style

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

ONLOOKER
Hyderabad

Violence For What?

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

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

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

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

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

ASHITAVA GHOSH
Secunderabad

Irregular Appointment

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

couragement they wanted. The of promotion by interview is helping them in their bid to "unwanted elements" in Government colleges. Wide breaches have been seen in the civil list. For example: a lecturer in Howrah ought to have been promoted on basis of seniority has been superseded by a junior who, for a long time not engaged in delivering lectures in class-room. Another example: a few weeks ago, substantive lectures in English literature were advertised and submitted "papers" for two posts. It was stated in the notice that the promotion would be departmental. However, we have heard from the horse's mouth that the interview is going to be a farce. Some people were in Calcutta and elsewhere for "higher studies". They have decided to come back. A few of them have already done so. They will have to be accommodated. Fortunately, two persons have been selected. So, a "departmental interview" is to be staged. Some ten to fifteen are fortunates who have lost even their jobs by shouting at the top of their voices in the class-room and gather together and be asked a lot of odd questions, not really connected with P.U. and B.A. studies. They have, at least, succeeded in letting the world know that they are less powerful than people take them to be.

Socialist State?

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

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

ASIM BHATTACHARYA
Asim

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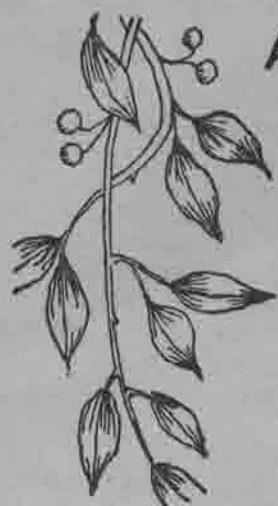
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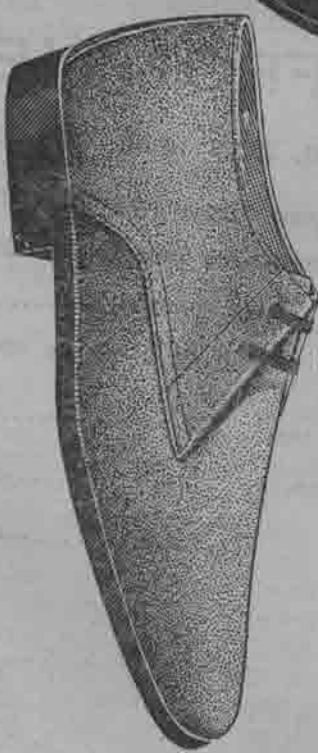
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