

EDITOR'S NOTES:

CUT THE GUARDIAN KNOT

When Mr Husain Ali, the former Deputy High Commissioner of Pakistan in Calcutta transferred his allegiance to the new Government of Bangla Desh, he caused and intended to cause serious embarrassment to the Pakistan Government and to give a new status to Bangla Desh in India. At the same time, he created a difficult situation for the Indian Government also. As could have been expected, the Pakistan Government has now dismissed Mr Husain Ali and appointed a new Deputy High Commissioner to take charge of the Calcutta office and has asked the Indian Government to help him function in Calcutta. For the present, the Government of India has accepted this new appointment but has refused to evict Mr Husain Ali and his staff.

Apart from the legal aspects relating to the occupation of the premises of the Pakistan Deputy High Commission at Calcutta, the new Bengal Ministry is bound to have considerable trouble if the rival representatives of Pakistan and Bangla Desh, are permitted in Calcutta. In the present temper of the people of Bengal, the Pakistan High Commission, even if it functions from new premises, will be harassed by all kinds of demonstrations. The simplest way out of the difficulty is for the Government of India to abolish the Pakistan Deputy High Commission in Calcutta and its own High Commission in Dacca. It is difficult to see how the Indian High Commission in Dacca can function at all in the present circumstances. If it does anything, it will be charged with spying and plotting against Pakistan. Therefore, the abolition of the Pakistan Deputy High Commission in Calcutta and the Indian High Commission in Dacca will remove two possible sources of embarrassment for both the Governments. As Mr Husain Ali and his staff have not been recognized by the Government of India, they will continue to stay in Calcutta

like other refugees from East Bengal.

[Pakistan has since saved the trouble for India by itself cutting the knot.]

Mr MASANI'S EXAMPLE

Mr M. R. Masani has set a fine example by taking responsibility for the defeat of the Swatantra Party in the recent elections and resigning his Presidentship. No one will consider that defeat was due to any particular failure of his but those who hold high offices in public organizations should not hesitate to assume responsibility if things go wrong. I am sure that it would have done the Old Congress a lot of good if Mr Nijalingappa had resigned after the Presidential election and refused to be persuaded by friends to continue in office. It would, no doubt, have embarrassed the other leaders of the Old Congress but an organization is strengthened and purified by the voluntary self-sacrifice of its leaders. This resignation does not mean that Mr Masani's services will be lost to the party. His stature in the party will be greater on account of his resignation and his views will have greater weight.

A.R.C. FOR TAMIL NAD

It is difficult to understand why the Tamil Nad Government has thought it necessary to set up an Administrative Reforms Commission for the State. The Central Administrative Reforms Commission, which functioned for nearly five years, has reported on every aspect of the State Government including the District Administration. All that any State Government needs to do is to set up a small Cabinet committee to decide which of the recommendations should be adopted in the State. I suppose it is due to the desire to emphasize the State's autonomy in administrative matters that this step has been taken. However, there is one field which the Central Administrative Reforms Commission has not dealt with and on which the Tamil Nad Administrative Reforms Commission may concentrate. It is the financial relations between the

State Government, on the one hand and the municipalities and the panchayat raj institutions, on the other. These relations are as unsatisfactory as the financial relations between the Centre and the States. These financial relations should be so organized that every municipality and panchayat raj institution gets at least 75 per cent of its annual requirements from its own sources of taxation or from statutory shares of State taxation. A scientific sharing of the sales tax and the motor vehicles tax can bring about this result. Unfortunately, the State Governments are as anxious to keep these local bodies begging at their doors as the Centre wants to keep the States in its leading strings.

The Commission may also examine with advantage the relation between the State Government and the cooperative movement. Though there is an overwhelming tendency for the party in power to get control of the cooperative movement through nomination and directive, its autonomy and management by an elected non-official board is as important as autonomy of the State itself.

DRUG OFFENCES AMONG U.S. ARMYMEN

It is not possible for the forces of one nation to fight in another country for a long period without being demoralized in many ways. The spread of the drug habit among the American soldiers in Vietnam is described as follows in *Time*, dated April 19, 1971:

"Drugs are rapidly becoming as great a threat to American forces as the enemy. During a sample period last year, military investigators found that confirmed or suspected heroin-connected deaths were occurring at a rate approaching one daily. Marijuana accounts for three-quarters of GI drug offences in Vietnam, but cheap (1/30th US cost), extremely pure Laotian or Thai heroin is a tempting buy for men seeking temporary escape from the boredom and terror of war. It is less easily detected than pot. Moreover, GIs have developed the disturbing myth that if smoked—'snorted'—the drug is non-addictive."

GOOD CASE FOR REFORM OF ELECTORAL SYSTEM

R. A. GOPALASWAMI

THE LANDSLIDE VICTORY of the New Congress in the recent Lok Sabha elections can be explained in rational terms. It is unnecessary for this purpose to postulate foul play in polling, or the possession of occult powers by the Prime Minister. Nor does it necessarily follow that the national electorate has given a mandate for further measures of nationalization or the attenuation of fundamental rights.

The existing system of election to the Lok Sabha and the legislative assemblies in the States operates very unfairly on the political minorities. This unfairness has not even the merit, which is sometimes pleaded in defence, that it promotes the unification or merger of the smaller parties and the evolution of a two-party system. So far from this being the case, the latest Lok Sabha election has conclusively proved that our electoral system is the most formidable obstacle which prevents the evolution of a two-party system. There is, therefore, a strong case for statutory reform of the national electoral system.

According to press reports, the New Congress won 350 seats out of the 515 which were filled on the results of the latest elections. By contrast, the Old Congress won only 16 seats and ranked sixth in the order of institutional strength after the New Congress, the Left Communists, the Right Communists, the DMK and the Jan Sangh. A parliament, with such a party composition, is so obviously a gross distortion of the division of political opinion in the national electorate that it is not surprising that the declaration of the election

results caused utter bewilderment.

The first step in the removal of this bewilderment consists in emphasizing the distinction between the institutional strength—measured by the relative proportion of the Lok Sabha seats, and the electoral strength—measured by the relative proportion of the votes polled. The Old Congress ranks second in the order of electoral strength, which is proper. It polled more votes than the two Communist parties jointly. Nevertheless the Old Congress got only one-third as many seats as the two Communist parties.

If we ignore the distortion and limit our attention to the electoral strength, we find the New Congress strength to be 43.6 per cent and the Old Congress only 10.6 per cent. The question arises

This is astonishing; for it is higher than the electoral strength of the undivided Congress at any of the four previous Lok Sabha elections. The actuals were 45.0 per cent in 1952, 47.8 per cent in 1957, 44.7 per cent in 1962, and 40.7 per cent in 1967. There had been a slow but steady decline of the electoral strength since 1957. How was this trend arrested and reversed this year? How, in particular, did the combined poll of both Congress parties exceed the undivided Congress poll of 1967 by as much as 13.5 per cent? If this was the gain, the non-Congress parties and Independents must have lost an equal amount of electoral strength. Which among them lost? How much did each lose? These are the questions which must be satisfactorily answered in order to clear up the mystery of "Indra Jaul".

The answers to these questions can be furnished by a study of the figures set out in the table below:

Parties	Electoral strength		Increase(+) Decrease(-)
	1967	1971	
Jan Sangh	9.4	7.5	-1.9
Swatantra	8.7	3.1	-5.6
S.S.P.	4.9	2.4	-2.5
P.S.P.	3.1	1.0	-2.1
D.M.K.	3.8	3.9	+0.1
C.P.I.	5.2	4.9	-0.3
C.P.I.(M)	4.2	5.0	+0.8
Other non-Congress parties	6.2	9.7	+3.5
Independents	13.8	8.3	-5.5
Total	59.3	45.8	-13.5

whether this gives a correct picture of their true electoral strength. We shall come back to the question later. The point on which attention should be fastened is the fact that the combined strength of both the Congress parties has turned out to be as high as 54.2 per cent.

The foregoing table tells us that the combined Congress gain of 13.5 per cent is accounted for almost completely by the losses sustained by four parties. These are Swatantra (5.6), SSP (2.5), PSP (2.1) and Jan Sangh (1.9), or 12.1 per cent in all. The small remaining gain of 1.4 per cent accrued mainly by the switch of formerly independent votes, partly offset by losses to such splinter parties as the Telangana Praja Samiti. Are there credible reasons which will account for the losses of these four non-Congress parties? There are, as will be explained below.

The Swatantra Party is the heaviest loser. Ironically, it was the moving spirit behind the National Democratic Front and it

1961 - 1971 THE GREAT RACE

