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WDF-7

The Election: Tramways and Tigers

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Dear Mr. Rogers,

In Calcutta last week, I walked into a campaign headquarters of the Congress party and was nearly smacked into by a party worker hustling to put a shoulder-load of election posters into a truck. Four days later, 250 miles down the coast of the Bay of Bengal in Bhubaneswar, the capital of Orissa province, I walked into a Congress campaign headquarters and had to shake the man on the shoulder to get him out of his doze so I could talk to him.

I'm claiming nothing conclusive about these two incidents, but they do indicate the relative levels of interest in the forthcoming elections in these two widely different areas. Calcutta, as the former capital of British India and long a center of revolutionary anti-British activity in pre-independence days, is one of the most politically-aware communities in India. Orissa, by general admission "one of the relatively less advanced provinces," gives the impression that rule-by-*raja*, although no longer legally existent, is taking a long time to die.

A theme which the Congress is insisting upon is that voters should get over their "parochial prejudices." As Nehru told a group of villagers the other day, "I want you to realise that you are not citizens of your village or your district or your state. You are citizens of India." In Calcutta, the Congress is confronted by an uneasy alliance of "Leftists" who are appealing to the "class" interests of the voters, while in Orissa the Congress is opposed by a "Rightist" party which is appealing to the regional loyalty of the voters. What this is going to mean in the balloting is still to be seen. What it looks like now is something like this:

In Bengal, or even Northeast India, all roads lead to Calcutta. As you drive toward the city, it comes out toward you from 20 or 30 miles away. The clusters of mud huts roofed with palm fronds gradually turn into stuccoed dwellings topped with tile, the palm trees give way to telephone poles, and the green ponds disappear in favor of crowded backyards. The docks are noisy with men and machines and smoke from the factories across the river blows off and away and into nothing.

Only 250 years old, a youngster in India, Calcutta looks modern: five-story apartment houses line the thoroughfares, and the tramcars whiz and clang along, plastered with advertisements and loaded with businessmen, secretaries and clerks. But these things have their Indian flavor: the apartment houses are wrapped around by richly decorated balconies from which saris and other laundry dry in the sun, a tramcar sign will lift a Western eyebrow ("Use Brahmi Amla Hair Oil---Surest Remedy For Premature Graying, Cools the Brain and Enhances Memory"), and you

know that the businessmen and secretaries and clerks go home at night and change into Indian clothes.

Along the main avenues, where there is money and sunshine, and in the maze of bustee-towns and back alleys where there is poverty and disease, there are signs of the coming election.

In daytime you can see the posters, hanging overhead or glued or painted on walls and houses. In Hindi, Bengali, Urdu, English and, in a couple of constituencies, Chinese, the voter is urged to "Vote for---" somebody. With no trouble at all you can tell the Congress signs:

Who Has Given You Civil Liberty, Freedom of Speech, Freedom of Press, Freedom to Criticise the Government, Freedom to Start a Movement? Your Own Fearless and Idealistic Congress! Don't Forget! There Are No Such Things in Communist Countries!

And you can tell the Leftists' signs:

The Face of Congress---Sham Socialism, Retrenchment of Workers Despite the Increase in Profit of Industrialists---Every Two of Three Young Men Unemployed---The Burden of Taxation is On the Increase, Rs 43 Per Head and It Will Increase More!

The posters also carry the symbols of the parties---the ballot boxes will be marked with the symbols, so that illiterate voters can register their choice. There is the pair of yoked bullocks of the Congress, the sickle and ears of grain of the Communist Party of India (CPI), the hut of the Praja (People's) Socialist Party (PSP), and others, including the rat at a bowl---no, let's see, the makers of "Ratolin," a rodent-killer, are advertising their product.

The only photographs on posters are those of Nehru and Dr. B.C. Roy, the Congress leader and Chief Minister of West Bengal---there are no other political leaders of their stature. Many of the CPI and PSP and Independents' posters are painted-over newspapers. Congress has them all outnumbered, and only Congress can boast several neon signs, mounted at busy intersections.

At night, the election tempo picks up. In parks, squares and at street-corners, loudspeakers blare forth from campaign rallies into the nooks and crannies of the neighborhood, thus capturing a wider audience, willy-nilly. The marching and shouting goes on until midnight.

On March 14 an expected one million of the 2.5 million residents of Calcutta proper will elect four members of the national parliament (MPs) and 26 members of the provincial legislative assembly (MLAs). The Congress alone is presenting a full slate of candidates. In an election in which the forces can be grouped conveniently as "Congress" and "anti-Congress," the opposition in Calcutta is divided into three irreconcilable groups.

The strongest of the three is the United Leftist Election Committee, organized by the CPI in alliance with the PSP, with the Revolutionary Socialist Party, the Forward Bloc and the Forward Bloc-Marxist tagging along. The second group is the United Leftist Front, composed of the Socialist Unity Centre, the Bolshevik Party, the Democratic Vanguard, the Bengal Provincial Forward Bloc (not to be confused with the Forward Bloc or the Forward Bloc-Marxist), the Sadharantantri Dal---this will take just a little longer---the part of the Revolutionary Communist Party led by

Pannalal Das Gupta, the Communist League, and the Workers and Peasants League. The third group, the United Democratic People's Front, is composed of the part of the Revolutionary Communist Party led by Soumyendranath Tagore, a group of dissident Congressmen, and two communalist parties, the Hindu Mahasabha ("Hindu General Association") and the Jana Sangh (or "People's Party"). In addition, there are more than 30 independent candidates for the 26 MLA seats for a grand total of nearly 100.

I was brought up thinking a political party was a "side." In Calcutta, it is apt to be a person, with satellite neighbors, friends, ex-cellmates, admirers and flunkies, or, a coterie met and bound together by harmony on ideological matters down to the last iota (the dissidents having split to form their own party). The campaign centers around the Congress, with the CPI and the PSP the leading challengers.

The headquarters of the West Bengal Pradesh Congress Committee is a freshly whitewashed double-story building. When I first visited it, there were several jeeps, cars and a truck parked in the driveway. Posters and pamphlets were stacked knee-deep in a groundfloor storeroom. Upstairs, the office was crowded with young men, busy counting posters, answering telephones, addressing envelopes. Photographs of Gandhi and Nehru abounded.

The general secretary talked names and numbers. Mr. Nehru had begun the campaign on Jan. 16 with a speech, a Cabinet Minister was in town and more were coming, and Dr. Roy was out campaigning in the countryside. There were 500 to 700 Congress workers busy in each MLA constituency. Each candidate received 1000 of this kind of poster and 500 of that kind of pamphlet. There were so-many jeeps, slide-projectors and microphones.

The organization, I was told, was clicking. The four District Congress Committees (DCCs) were headquarters for the four Calcutta MP constituencies and for six or seven MLA constituencies as well. They were responsible for local rallies and house-to-house canvassing; the PCC ran the big rallies. "We are campaigning," said the secretary, "on our record. We are not appealing only to the 'high class,' 'the middle class,' 'the low class'---we are for everybody!"

The Communist headquarters occupies the second floor of a lawyer's house in a side alley. A faded red flag hung limp from a pole. Huge, dusty photographs of Lenin and Stalin hung in a corridor. There was a sullen greeting from a secretary, but I sat down and a small crowd drew around. I think it was Fred Allen who said, "Republicans are blonder than Democrats." Well, "Congressmen are cleaner-shaven than Communists."

The talk was mostly about Congress. "The present government has failed to rebuild the nation," I was told. "Congress talks about socialism while it appeases the monopolists." Someone offered the "facts": "In the past four years 21 British firms have shipped out 32 crores of rupees (\$67.2 million: a crore is 10 million and a rupee equals \$.21) to England. The money should have been confiscated for reconstruction."

Confiscation of foreign capital, though part of the CPI "final program," is not being demanded publicly, however. For purposes of the "election agreement" with "other socialists," a "common minimum program"

has been accepted. The 36 points of the common program have been reduced for campaign purposes to 14 slogans ("Fight corruption, Lower the cost of living, Reduce taxes on the common people..."). The campaign was being handled by "citizens' committees, volunteers from the poor, the middle class, the intellectuals, teachers," who were "offering their services in vast numbers."

Without the "capitalists' money, like the Congress is getting" the CPI is financing its campaign with "mites from all the people." But this seems to have its advantage: lack of funds has turned the CPI from big election rallies to "baithaks," living-room meetings attended by 20 to 50 people, in which "the voters can ask questions and get true answers."

The comrades steered the conversations around to American foreign policy. I always knew Dulles was a scoundrel, but I didn't think he was that bad.

I moved on to the PSP headquarters, in the office of the PSP newspaper and printing plant. A display board advertised several pamphlets from the People's Press: "Forced Labour in Soviet Russia," "Mind-Murder in Mao-land," "China is Red with Peasants' Blood." I wandered back to the printing press. Posters were coming off the flat-bed one at a time: big red letters saying "Vote For United Leftist Election Candidate..." and the symbols of the CPI and the PSP running side by side.

In the office, a party candidate told me that the CPI-PSP joint campaign might look like an "unholy alliance, but didn't American and Britain join with Stalin in the Second World War?" The Congress, he said, with its "trend toward authoritarianism," is "a greater danger to India now than the Communists." In the long run, the Communists may be the greater danger, he said, "but that's the future---now we have an election!"

Anyway, it's not an "alliance," it's an "adjustment," the candidate explained. "There are no contradictions involved. All true socialists are opposed to this so-called, slow-motion 'socialism' of the Congress. We have worked with the Communists before in many movements, and now we are united in working for an effective opposition. What is so bad?"

Of all the election contests in Calcutta, the one in Vidyasagar, on the northeast side of the city, is the hottest. "Baghi-baghi!" an old man wagged his head. "A tiger against a tiger!" The "tigers" are the Congress candidate, Sankar Prasad Mitra, 43-year-old barrister, sitting MLA (from another constituency) and provincial Judicial Minister, and the Communist candidate, Dr. Narendra Chandra Roy, fifty-odd, Vidyasagar's sitting MLA.

"Sankar" is talked about as one of the bright, energetic young men whom the Chief Minister, Dr. Roy, has invited into Congress politics to take the place of the old breed of revolutionaries and party workers who are dying out or losing their appeal. "Doctor Narendra" is a mild-looking man, noted for his generosity to poor people who need medical care but can't afford it. Surprisingly, in his youth he tossed a bomb at a British official, spent five years in jail, where, he says, "I read and read and became a communist."

More than 100,000 people live in Vidyasagar. They are mostly "lower middle class" (the Congress people say) or "poor" (the Communist version). At any rate, the shops and houses are generally modest, and there are five slummy bustees. The parties are working on the 55,000 voters. Walls are papered with posters. Squads of propagandists canvass voters from 7:30 to 9 AM, before they go to work, and again from 6 to 9 PM, after they're home. At night there are as many as a half-dozen rallies going on around the constituency.

I attended a Communist rally one night in one of the bustees, in a slum reeking with fresh urine and old slime where a thousand families live in ramshackle huts of bamboo and mud and try to do a little book-binding or construction work or begging. Three young men, all students, quickly set up a microphone, loudspeakers, a couple of red flags on a street corner. One of them began to play the accordion. Children gathered, and then the men came. When the group counted to about 50, one of the young Communists began the rally with a string of slogans. "Vote for the Communist Party!" he shouted. "Vote in box marked sickle and grain! Vote against retrenchment and tax increase! Victory for the red flag!"

Dr. Narendra was introduced. He began quietly, as the doctor, and soon whipped up a fervor, like the revolutionary. The ruling party, he argued, claims the Five-Year Plan has been a success. But where has the money come from? The poor. Taxes, direct and indirect, have risen, and the price of mustard oil and cloth, the daily necessities, are rising too. The Congress is the party for the rich, who cannot understand the plight of the poor.

What the united leftist parties stand for, he continued, is land for the tillers, free education, a 25% rise in wages, and more taxes on land-owners and the bosses. The profits of Birla and Tata (the big commercial and manufacturing corporations) have gone up, while your wages have gone down. What kind of government do we have! The officials in the Writers' Building (the provincial government secretariat) are your servants, but tell me, how are they serving you?

The audience was telling nothing. The children were getting restless. The men looked weary, numb.

Following Dr. Narendra was Mohammed Ismail, a CPI candidate in another constituency, a Muslim come to address this predominantly Muslim audience. In the past five years, he said, in West Bengal 63,000 workers have been dismissed from their jobs. Unemployment was rife, and yet the government had tried to abolish this bustee and move you 56 miles out into the countryside, away from your livelihood. Only our efforts, our movement prevented that.

The government talks of the "secular state," he went on, in which all have freedom of religion, but why is it that Urdu is not taught in the schools? Why is their language, the language of Muslims, discriminated against?

He went on, on to free education and minimum income and civil liberties and eventually the Writers' Building: They spend Rs 10,000 for carpets alone over there, while more than a million men sleep at night on the sidewalks.

The audience began drifting off, and the Communists struck camp---they had four more meetings to hold that same night.

The following night I went to a Congress campaign rally in another section of Vidyasagar, a tidier, more prosperous neighborhood. The speakers' stand was the porch of a Hindu temple facing a little square. The air was filled with posters hung from ropes. A young man was singing the glories of the First Plan. Flanked by a retired college president and a retired newspaper editor, Sankar, Dr. Narendra's opponent, took a last-minute glance through his notebook and began speaking.

For 70 years now, he said, Congress has labored for the Indian people. As great as was the gaining of independence, even it has been surpassed by the triumphs since 1947. Distinguished foreign visitors, including Bulganin and Chou, have praised our accomplishments---although the Indian Communists tell us nothing has been achieved.

The audience enjoyed the sarcasm. This crowd was out for an evening's entertainment.

Not only has the Congress led the way to gains at home, Sankar continued, but Nehru has raised the status of India throughout the world. All the world acknowledges him as a messenger of peace. Of this we are proud. The CPI, slave to Moscow, has whitewashed the inhumane events in Hungary, where innocent citizens fighting for their freedom have been killed. The PSP, in joining with the CPI, has compromised with its conscience. The opposition cries, "We can solve India's problems!" Where is their solution? They have none. But the Congress has one: the Second Five-Year Plan.

On he went, describing the future blessings.

I attended other political rallies, in parks, lots and back streets, and I visited election headquarters in empty stores, trade-union offices, dingy houses and, in one case, the palace-like home of a wealthy industrialist. I saw quite a range of candidates: party workers, ex-revolutionaries, trade-union organizers, professors, doctors, barristers, journalists, businessmen big and small, scions of old families and social workers. One candidate is a sort of professional intellectual, a brilliant, proud man who lambasted governments the world over with a flip of the tongue ("Nasser is a dullard...if there is peace in the world it's not due to Nehru's baby talk...") and yet had no political program capable of being translated into fact, nor any visible political organization except the dozen or so students ("We adore him") hanging around his home and eating his food. Another was a 33-year-old barrister from a "good" family whom Dr. Roy invited to take a Congress ticket. He was approaching the election philosophically ("Politics has gained a new legitimacy in India..."), scientifically ("The blue pins (on the map) are for my election sub-offices") and confidently ("The fact that I'm a new face may have some appeal...").

All in all, Congress has the edge on its opponents in past accomplishments, present ascendancy and organizational resources. "Come with us," the Congress says. "We are the new India." The Congress' chief foe is the CPI, which they depict as foreign in ideology and loyalty and negative in approach. And the CPI is a formidable opponent; in a city where unemployment and prices are high, their appeal is to the immediate needs and wishes of the great number of people who see themselves on the lowest rung. While the Communist campaigners give the impression of great dissatisfaction with the whole arrangement of society and distrust of any government not their own, their "temporary" allies in the PSP seem to be opposed to the Congress on personal grounds---many PSP members are dissident ex-Congressmen---more than for political reasons.

Well, you pays your money and you takes your choice.

Udayanath Rath, the Chief Election Officer of Orissa, had a problem last week: how to get an election party of 20 persons through 42 miles of jungle-covered, tiger-harassed hills to Belliguda constituency to set up the polling stations for the elections. At first he planned to send two elephants to carry the personnel and equipment, but elephants can carry only five persons each. Next he planned to get the government to lay a jeepable track at least part of the way. That's where the situation stands.

For the government, Udayanath Rath included, running the elections will be difficult. For the people of Orissa, participating in them will be remarkable.

Orissa is backward. One can see that in the rickety mud-hut villages, the naked children, the tattered clothing of their parents, the swollen legs of elephantiasis. Along the coastal plain and along the Mahanadi River, peasants crowd together on the land and grow rice, subject to the alternate whim of flood and drought. In the upland hills, life is reputed to be tougher. Many tribesmen carry bow and arrow for protection as much as for killing their food; man-eating tigers kill an estimated 200 to 300 persons each year.

Out of a population of 14.6 million, 9.7 million belong to what the Government of India calls "scheduled" castes and tribes and "other backward classes." i.e., backward socially, educationally and economically and therefore due special assistance and protection from the Government. Thirty per cent of Orissa's 20 MP and 140 MLA seats are reserved for them.

Although the Oriyas are bound together by a language of their own (Oriya), they are kept apart by a high rate of illiteracy (85%) and by lack of communications: in a province 400 miles long and 200 miles wide, there are only 873 miles of railroad (India has 34,000) and 3000 miles of all-weather roads (India has 118,000).

There is progress, however. The new capital of Bhubaneswar, near the old temple city of the same name, is independent India's first planned town. There, 10,000 people, many of them in the provincial government, live in new concrete quarters in "Unit 2" or "Block IX" subdivision. Sewage pipes still lie in empty lots, but the light-poles are up and the main streets are paved. In Cuttack, the old capital and Orissa's only city, there is a radio station now with one kilowatt power and a range of 70 miles. The biggest thing in Orissa right now is Hirakud Dam, opened last month, which sits across the Mahanadi far upstream and is beginning to provide electricity and irrigation waters for large areas. One of India's three new steel mills will go up at Rourkela and will draw on the province's scarcely touched mineral resources. And if, as the public relations people say, 673,000 children are in school and 5000 young men and a couple hundred women are now in college, good.

A unified province only since 1948, Orissa has had, in recent history, a split personality. Until 1948, Orissa was composed of "British Orissa" along the coast, and the 26 "Native States" or principalities inland. It is generally agreed that the British area was more progressive

than the states area. While the states were loosely allied by inter-marriage of the ruling families, each was independent, and internal affairs depended pretty much on the raja, who enjoyed the broadest administrative, judicial and police powers.

There were good rajas and bad rajas, apparently, but the idea of rajas itself was beginning to pale by the 1930's. In 1938 a popular anti-states movement led to bloodshed in Dhenkanal state, where five men and a 12-year-old boy were killed by the raja's troops. The following year a States Enquiry Commission, composed of Indians and protected by the British, protested indignities suffered by Oriyas at the hands of their rulers.

Among the four or five rajas especially cited by the Commission was the young Raja of Dhenkanal, who was accused, among other things, of using most of the state income for himself, of permitting police brutality, and of demanding forced labor capriciously. He was accused also of granting interview for redress of grievances only on payment of ₹ 2 to 5 (four to seven days' earnings for most of his subjects). And he was accused of taking as many as 15,000 men away from their homes for as much as 30 days a year to serve as beaters for his elephant hunts.

During the 1940's, while the anti-British movement gathered momentum around India, the anti-states movement continued in Orissa. The Congress identified itself with this anti-states movement, and when independence came, the merger of the states with the province followed swiftly. The rajas were shorn of their legal powers and put on drastically reduced incomes.

With the first general elections coming up, a group of ex-rajas, led by the Maharajas of Patna and Kalahandi, founded in 1950 the Ganatantra Parishad ("Democratic Association") in order "to promote self-government in Orissa." In those elections, the GP contested 57 MLA seats and won 31 of them, thus preventing the Congress from gaining a majority. Only the cooperation of several independent MLAs enabled the Congress to form a government.

During the past five years the GP, as the leading opposition party in the state legislature, has bucked the Congress consistently. Last fall, when the Indian States Reorganization Commission report failed to satisfy Oriya demands for extension of the provincial borders to include a few Oriya-speaking peoples in adjoining provinces, the GP legislators resigned their seats in protest.

Meanwhile on the Congress side of the fence, all has not been sweetness and light. Four months ago, factionalism within the party grew so bad that the Congress High Command in New Delhi dispatched Dr. Hare Krushna Mahatab, then Governor of Bombay, back to his native province to whip the party organization back into shape in time for the elections.

The most noticeable fact about the 1957 campaign in Orissa is that the GP is contesting 108 MLA seats, nearly twice as many as last year. In so doing the GP has come out of its mountain lair into the coastal districts generally regarded as Congress territory. The Congress hopes to hold the line and even make a come-back in GP-held constituencies. Although there is no actual "battleline," the elections appear to be a Congress vs. Ganatantra Parishad fight, with the other parties and independents pretty much on the sidelines.

I heard that the ex-Raja of Dhenkanal was contesting an MLA seat in his old state, so I went up there by train, across the broad sandy paths of the Mahanadi delta, through jungle where the tangled green brush is freshly chopped back from the railroad track, up into country where the scattered hills rise from the flatland like great camel humps.

In Dhenkanal town I went first to see the Congress candidate, a 35-year-old lawyer and petty landowner named Surendra Mohan Patnaik. As I walked down the alleyway to his mud-and-bamboo home, my shoulder brushed against the matted-twig roof of his neighbor's hut. Patnaik looked at me with worried eyes and apologised for the "humble dwellings." He apologised again for wearing no shoes. As we sat in the dark cubicle that was his office, he seemed uncomfortable, as if aware of some vast gap between us. As if to fill the gap he talked of many things: his law practice, his family, provincial politics, finally his own candidature.

"I want to beat the Raja," he said, with the tone of a man who didn't know how to go about doing it. "How can a man like that, with all that oppression, stand up and ask the people to vote for him?" he asked. "But you see, in the old days the people could never see him except on rare times. It was a great privilege to see the king. Now he goes to the villages every day and says, 'Look, here I am, your Raja! See how democratic I am! Vote for me!' He doesn't say much himself, but goes out in his big car with the Rani---she is also contesting a seat. She is a good woman, religious and all that, and she does most of the talking for him.

"The only way this sort of people won the last elections was through influence and pressure," he continued. "What I want to do is make these ignorant people see that a vote for the raja is a vote for the old ways. But they say, 'The raja is the raja.' This goes back so many centuries!"

It turned out that Patnaik had got the Congress ticket largely by default. He had received some posters from the party office in Cuttack, and he had been given some advice: "They told us to educate the people about their constitutional rights and to talk about the development programs." He had been holding little discussion meetings, he said, but he was doubtful about the results. "They know about the dam (Hirakud) but what they care about is cheaper rice and cloth." He seemed worried about how to answer the voters' demands, now in the campaigning, and later, should he be elected.

From Patnaik's house I walked down the road and up the hill to the Raja's "palace," which just looked like a big house to me. A turbaned provincial policeman saluted and let me into a courtyard. A dilapidated late '20's roadster, with two flat tires, was parked near the wall. An elephant, in much better shape, was parked nearby. I went through another gate, past another guard, up to the lawn and the porch. After much whispering among the servants, they all scurried off inside.

Presently the Raja---Sankar Pratap Singh Deo Mahindra Bahadur---came out to greet me. He was a short, bald man of 50 or so, wearing dhoti, sandals, a T-shirt that covered an enormous belly, and a smile that made me think he was going to try to sell me that roadster.

The Raja first told me that he had been to the States, in 1937, as the leader of a Boy Scout delegation. He sent a bearer off for the book

of photographs. I said I understood he was interested in politics again. Yes, well, he had filed for the MLA seat in 1951---mailed the application from London---but somehow the letter never arrived. This time he, and his wife, had made sure. He sent a bearer off for the All-India Election Guide, a popular compendium of election information.

How was the campaign going? I asked. "I have just now returned from a procession to 52 villages, all night long, in which the villagers came to throw flowers and rice at me...Without the sovereign powers now, you see, we are closer to the hearts of the people, who show their love and affection." He beamed.

This love and affection will be confirmed by the voting, I presumed. "I am going to get all the votes," the Raja declared. Suddenly a dark thought struck him: "---unless there is some underhanded means by those in power. The power is being misused. My opponents are making personal attacks on me, and this can be very dangerous. In that case the vote is not the true reflection of the voters. Even if I fail, I will know also that I have their love and affection."

I asked the Raja just what the GP stood for. "States reorganization failed the Oriya-speaking people," he answered. "One of the areas denied us was Seraikhal, where my wife is from." Were there any other issues? I asked. Across the table the Raja kept talking while he surreptitiously turned to the All-India Election Guide, fingered the index, found his page, and began to read, without due credit: "...formation of homogeneous administrative units on economic, linguistic and cultural basis; safeguarding the civil, political and cultural rights of minorities and backward areas and classes..." I had to hand it to the Raja for being prepared.

I asked the Raja if I could talk with the Rani. She was worshipping, he said, but would be down after a while. In the meanwhile, I talked to two of the Raja's visitors. One was a scheduled-caste candidate of the GP. He told me about his farm and his family. I asked him what he was telling the voters. "Congress has made high taxations," he smiled. What else? I asked. He thought and thought, like a schoolboy stumped by the teacher. He could not answer. "Corruption?" I prompted. "Yes!" he smiled gratefully.

The second visitor was more fluent. He was the former general secretary of the party and was now editor of the party weekly-turned-temporarily daily during the campaign. "Merger of the old states with the province" he argued, "was a violation of self-government. The Congress government has come upon us---upon the people---of the states as a victorious conqueror. The people resent this." He went on to identify the GP as "exactly like your States' Rights party in South Carolina." This was no regional party, he protested, but a party based on principles transcending regional appeals. "Orissa is simply the birthplace of the movement."

The Rani finally came down. Being interviewed by the American was plainly a big thing. She was a bit tired, she said. She had just been resting. Yesterday she and her husband had visited 18 villages on an election procession.

What sort of speech did you make? I asked. The Rani gave me the speech in capsule form: When independence came, you expected great things,

but the Congress government has let you down. Despite high taxes, they do nothing for you. In Europe, I have seen that there is education and medicine and roads for the people, but not in India. In other provinces much money is spent for the people. But why is that in Orissa, where we are poor, nothing is done? We have been your leaders for many generations and we know what you need. Your blood has nourished us...and so forth.

The Raja cut the Rani off after a while. "She speaks French," he said proudly. "You understand French?" he asked. "Go ahead," he told his wife, "talk to him." The Rani told me that her English school-mistress, who had come out to tutor her when she was a girl, had taught her French. She shot a quick one at me: "Comment aimez-vous ce pays?" I was trying to think of the French for "Swell!" when my audience was interrupted.

Four men wrapped in soiled dhotis came in a cringing crouch up to the porch, ushered by a servant. Their hands were folded in front of their faces. One of them, an old man, began whining away in front of the Rani. She said a few words. All four of them dropped to their knees and bowed their heads on the floor. They arose quickly, bowed, either grimaced or smiled---I couldn't tell which---and backed off and out through the gate.

Before long I left too. Frontwards.

The next day was a big day for the Congress. Nehru, who has been flying about campaigning in trouble-spots, came to Orissa. In great mass meetings in Bhubaneswar and Cuttack he told the thousands of bare-foot peasants that Congress alone could take India forward (Hirakud Dam was just one example) and that the "roots" of the Ganatantra Parishad leaders were wrong and that party could not serve the interests of the people.

I talked also to Dr. Mahatab, the Chief Minister, who saw the election contest as a case of "popular democracy versus feudal loyalty." The fact that many of the Congress candidates were ex-rajas was "irrelevant." "Some ex-rulers are reconciled to the change," he explained. "The intelligent ones have joined the Congress. We're happy to have them. They have some experience in public life."

I got a lift to Cuttack one day in the 1955 Dodge station wagon of one of the Congress ex-rajas who is contesting an MLA seat. He said he had offered to take the Congress ticket in the first elections but he lost out "through some funny work." So, "I contested as an independent all the same," he laughed, "and whipped the loafer the Congress put up." This time the Congress came running after him, he said, and he accepted the ticket. "I am running on my own steam," he insisted. "I go my way and they go theirs."

He changed the topic abruptly. "Have you seen the billiards table in the Club?" he demanded. No, I hadn't. "Take a look at it," he advised. "I gave it. It's beautiful."

I began to wonder. Have I been taking politics too seriously?