

change could be a criterion is difficult to understand, especially in view of the fact that no suggestion has been made that the indirect effects due to

inter-industrial linkage are also to be studied. It would be indeed a great achievement if the move for defence orientation somehow or other leads to

increased exports and import substitution—however, to kill sheep, we need not only magic words and ceremonies but also a sufficient quantity of arsenic.

## CAPITAL VIEW

# The Stalemate Must End

Romesh Thapar

IT is one thing to make bold declarations in public about what India will do to secure her frontiers and national interests. It is quite another to hammer out a political and economic plan of action which will give India the strength to implement the public declarations. Already the peddlars of plan 'holidays', of 'reciprocity' and 'equidistance' in foreign relations, of the opium that is free food and free military hardware, are busy breaking the urge towards self-reliance within the ruling party. The situation changes from day to day and, in the absence of a political-diplomatic lead, these elements are on the rampage.

Over a week ago, the position was that Pakistan had accepted Soviet mediation while our acceptance had been inexplicably held up somewhere in the Secretariat. When the position was corrected, and Soviet mediation apparently accepted, the friends of the USA within the Congress Party expressed their anxiety to assure President Johnson that India appreciated his helpful attitude — an exercise in equidistance, no doubt! Even as the emissaries to Washington were being selected, news reached the Capital that the USA had persuaded Ayub Khan to wriggle out of Soviet mediation on the understanding that the gaps in his armoured divisions and air force would be filled. A full circle, but the GOI hasn't moved, diplomatically—unless, of course, going round in circles is understood as movement!

If the first reports about a fresh US military commitment to Pakistan are even broadly indicative of thinking in Washington, we might as well prepare ourselves to face even graver challenges in the future. I say this because now the assessment is fairly general that although the Pakistani army was punished the actual result, of the campaign is a military stalemate. What's more, they sit on our territory and we on their's. Such a result finds reflection in the political stalemate. The USA, however, views the stalemate as a threat to the stability of the Ayub Khan regime; apparently, Pakistani

politicians and army men are active exploiting the embarrassment of those who lalked of "strolling to Delhi".

A fresh commitment to Pakistan by the USA would of course be dictated by the psychopathic desire of the Pentagon to possess a reliable base against the communist world on the sub-continent and also by the political objective of preventing a link-up of Pakistan with China. There could be a division of opinion on the matter of a commitment, whether it should be predominantly military or economic. But it looks as if the military commitment is inevitable, if only to repair the damage done to the Pakistani army and to Ayub Khan's prestige. And here is the rub. Any such 'repairs' will be viewed as a hostile act by India— unless, of course, the Johnson Administration still believes that it can produce the medicine to take the sting out of the hostility.

If western experts on India and Pakistan have gained new knowledge of the sub-continent during this last month, they do not seem to be making much use of it. The diplomatic grape-vine is again quivering with news that the West is putting finishing touches to a new formula on Kashmir which will make its independent status palatable to both India and Pakistan. Obviously, the unsuspecting Swaran Singh is going to get the formula thrown at him in the course of the U N General Assembly session. The political tacticians in London and Washington are probably living in the fond hope that the present circumambulation of the GOI will remind the Soviet Union that there is solid sense in watching from a distance.

If the talk we hear these days about self-reliance is seriously intended as the anchor of future policies, then the GOI will have to take the plunge very soon. The armed forces, who have had to pitch their courage against massive Pakistani superiority in armour and fire power, know at last that there is only one source which will give us the sort of help we need to make our military capacity effective in the immediate future. That source is the Soviet Union. The USSR can also provide the basic

material for building self-sufficiency in military hardware. Moscow's generous response to our demands, made always after our failure to obtain such hardware from the West, has convinced all but a tiny minority of dichards—and they no longer matter. The fear that such a step will upset our economic links with the USA and Britain is ill-founded as the experience of other countries shows. Anyhow, the fear must be fought energetically if the call for self-reliance has to be enforced.

This is the only way to end the present stalemate, to recognise the need to establish a balance of power which guarantees existing national frontiers, to establish relevant perspectives for both South Asia and South-East Asia in the context of China's traditional ambitions, and to discipline those who attempt to divide and rule this region on the pretext of fighting communism. This clarity in objectives is lacking in the GOI. The ruling party can become a leaderless mob unless this clarity is achieved. The danger signals are out: a hundred MPs demanding nuclear weapons; ministers talking loose about internal and foreign policy; and the continuing incapacity of the Cabinet to get the full military information on the recent conflict with Pakistan in order to draw the appropriate lessons.

Political and diplomatic fumbling at this juncture will delay and splinter the drive for economic self-reliance. The remarkable patriotic spirit kindled by recent events could also be suffocated by a haphazard tackling of the problems spawned by the war which will surely come to the surface in the coming months. We will continue to spend some Rs 3 crores per day on our defence and will also have to meet the cost of the war—any thing between Rs 50 to Rs 100 crores. This burden of defence can become crippling if we postpone the intensive search for the answers to our problems.

Meanwhile, we must be prepaid for all eventualities, even the possibility that we may have to guard a cease-fire line (hotted up every now and then) all along our western borders, from Kashmir to Kutch. But the stalemate economic, political and diplomatic—must end.