

Assam: govt. aim doubted

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, November 9.

THE opposition viewpoint on the "foreigners" problem in Assam was only partially represented at the talks with the government today, the three major opposition parties—the Bharatiya Janata party, the Janata party and the Lok Dal—having boycotted it.

The three parties gave more or less the same reasons for keeping away from the meeting convened by the parliamentary affairs minister, Mr. Bhisma Narain Singh, to enlighten the opposition about the progress of talks with the Assam agitation leaders on the "foreigner" problem.

The BJP, which was the first to decline the invitation for the talks, took umbrage at the government not taking the party into confidence at different stages of the negotiations "until a deadlock was reached". It did not also consider the meeting worthwhile in the absence of the Prime Minister. The two other parties followed suit.

But, even with only one side of opinions represented, there was no complete endorsement at the meeting of the manner in which the government had been trying to tackle the Assam situation. At least one participant, Mr. Neelalohitadasan Nadar, representing the Democratic Socialist Party, gave a demonstration of his differences with the government by staging a walk-out from the meeting.

Though the parties represented at the talks — the CPI, the CPM, the RSP, the Muslim League and the Forward Block — are known to appreciate broadly the stand taken by the government on the "foreigners" problem, their representatives raised doubts about the government's sincerity in implementing the policy enunciated by it.

These representatives are understood to have stated that the manner in which the negotiations with the agitation leaders were being conducted created the suspicion that the government might not stick to its "commitment" of treating 1971 as the cut-off year.

In fact, the formulations being made by the government delegation at the Assam talks showed that in reality, 1961 was being taken as the cut-off year. Even if the government agreed to starting detection of "foreigners" from that year, it would affect the interests of about one million linguistic minorities in Assam, the bulk of whom had come to the state owing to persecution in erstwhile East Pakistan.

UNI adds: Leaders of the Congress (I) and several other parties today appealed to the Assam agitationists to give up their "extreme position" and

continue discussions with the government in a "constructive spirit."

At a meeting convened by the minister for parliamentary affairs, Mr. Bhisma Narain Singh, the leaders felt that in their latest proposals, the All-Assam Students' Union (AASU) and All-Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AAGSP) "have taken an extreme position."

Gauhati (UNI): The Assam government today took firm steps to thwart the mass rally the foreigners issue agitators propose to hold tomorrow in the Judges' Field here.

While troops were alerted to be on hand to assist the civil authorities, security forces cordoned off the entire Judges' Field to prevent any public gathering there in defiance of prohibitory orders in force.

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