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GEETA DOCTOR

THE PITY OF IT ALL

Yet another opportunity has been missed. The dismal story of one Finance Minister after another tightening the tax screws to pay for wasteful plans, projects and an ever burgeoning bureaucracy has been repeated. The sad thing is that the Finance Minister this time is a man who has gone on record as having said : "The best government is that which governs the least. To preserve democracy in any country it is essential that the people's life and living is least controlled by the State. All authoritarian states try to get control of the economic life of the people to make them subservient and destroy their freedom. Total planning leads to totalitarianism and can have no place in a democracy."

When Choudhury Charan Singh took over the Finance portfolio, there were many who had misgivings, particularly those in the ranks of industry. But others who were familiar with his thinking on fundamental issues were more sanguine and actually looked forward to the Choudhury Saheb giving a new direction radically different from the State Socialism of his predecessors. His Budget was therefore a ruder shock to his supporters than to his detractors.

The Union Budget for 1979-80 is a reflection not of the man but his current political alliance with socialists of a particular hue on the one hand and of the advice of bureaucrats on the other. What has led to the Budget being described as the worst since Independence is the effort of the Finance Minister to give a fair deal to the farmer without jettisoning the socialist baggage of money-devouring industries in the public sector. In fact what the Finance Minister has really done is to underwrite the Sixth Plan with its emphasis on Heavy Industry !

The pity of it is that of all the Ministers in the Union Cabinet, Choudhury Charan Singh alone had the stature and the power base to ignore the past, cut through bureaucratic advice and give the country, if not a full 'U' turn which Mr. N. A. Palkhivala advocated, at least a partial one which would have meant asking units in the public sector to

justify themselves as economically viable units before asking for funds from the public exchequer; reducing both direct and indirect taxes; refusing to sanction even one additional rupee for further recruitment to the already bloated civil services and finally providing enough incentives for the people to save.

But in attempting to placate his socialist allies on the one hand and his supporters in rural India on the other, he has only succeeded in falling between two stools. He is now accused of helping the rural rich, the 'kulaks', as the media describe them and of mulcting the urbanites rich, poor and the middle class. He has created a needless division of rural *versus* urban, forgetting that it is only a coalition of the two that can extricate this country from the result of 30 years of misguided policies.

One cannot help observing that Choudhury Charan Singh who, when Pandit Nehru was alive, was a vociferous critic of the latter's economic policies, has, when he got the opportunity, done Nehru proud. For the Budget of Mr. Charan Singh is yet another effort to prop the apparatus of State Capitalism. When he could have been a national leader Mr. Charan Singh has chosen to be a sectional spokesman.

SVR

IN THIS ISSUE

We focus on the Union Budget with comments by leading Economist B. P. Adarkar (who wrote this article well before the Budget debate in Parliament), Finance Consultant S. A. A. Pinto and Businessman K. H. Subramaniam. Following the China Vietnam conflict, Major General E. D'Souza (Retd.) takes an expert look at the Chinese People's Liberation Army. And to relieve the 'heavy stuff' we have a light one from Nargesh Hateria which is intended for us city folks.

"the time has come," the
walrus said,
"to talk of many things:
of shoes-and ships-
and sealing wax-
of cabbages -
and kings-"

-Lewis Carroll



OF CABBAGES & KINGS

Women in Veils

Italians prefer the arms, the Chinese traditionally take to the feet, Russians like, if Tolstoy is to be believed, the upper lip with "a faint line of down" over it, while Americans, infants ever, tend to fantasize over ever larger bosoms, but the area of the female anatomy that most excites the middle eastern man seems, most appropriately, to be the midriff. It turns them on to the extent that they only feel safe when the entire female body, head, face, arms, midriff and all, is blotted out of sight but when they want to entertain their male guests they bring in a belly dancer. The only thing they do not seem to mind are those appendages of the female body that form part of the feeding apparatus for the very young. This was made obvious by the casual manner in which a young Arab woman sitting in the foyer of a five star hotel, absent minded-ly fiddled with the neckline of her expensive French gown and scooped out her breasts to feed the small child in her arms. The Arab men around did not notice anything amiss as she was covered from head to toe, complete with a hideous black cardboard visor over her face. The Indian men on the other hand all but fainted from shock at the idea of such exposure.

All through history men have shown a perverse tendency to hide that part of a woman's body that most captures their imagination. Of all the steps dreamed up by men to subjugate women however, there is none perhaps more odious than the veil. It restricts women during varying lengths of time from receiving light and air, the very substances necessary for any creature to grow and thrive and the worst is that the reason most often trotted out is that the veil is advocated out of a concern to protect women. Whereas in fact, as the following quotation reveals, the effect is just the opposite, sharpening the curiosity of the beholders to a pitch of unresolved expectation rather than satisfying it: "Hidden behind their veils, like watchers behind the battlements of a stronghold, they transmit erotic messages to men. Every fold of a robe, every flutter of a veil is a sign, a gesture, a murmur. There is a whole code of coquetry far more subtle than that of the women of the West who have nothing to hide behind but their dark glasses (Assia Djebar-Women of Islam). How absurd the situation is can be judged by imagining how a man would react if he were expected to spend his life going around like a mobile circus tent just to provide some excitement to the women around him.

On the face of this, it is hard to understand how the women of Iran, among some of the more emancipated and better educated women in Asia, could have voluntarily taken to wearing the "chador" as the mini-veil of Iran is called. Did they feel that by adopting this symbol of oppression they were demonstrating against what they believed to be the oppressive regime of the Shah? The reason that was given at that time was that they were using the traditional chador as a sign of protest against the westernizing influence of the Shah. Yet but for those very same westernizing influences those women would never have been in the streets demonstrating for their rights as citizens.

These are some of the ironies that must strike Iranian women as they find that the Ayatollah Khomeini has taken them at their word and now insists that they should wear their chadors permanently. In doing this the Ayatollah has gone the full circle back to the point when Reza Shah, the founder of the Pahlavi dynasty, decreed that veils were no longer to be worn by women, thereby striking a dual blow, liberating Iranian women on the one hand and curbing the authority of the clergy on the other. Reza Shah's wife, the mother of the present Shah, who is still alive, and the two sisters of the Shah, were the first women to appear in public, unveiled, as early as January 1936. Iran was the second Muslim country after Turkey to make this significant step towards the emancipation of its women. At the same time Reza Shah threw open the University of Tehran to women students who were given similar co-educational facilities throughout the country. This made it possible for the next generation of women to become more actively involved in the mainstream of national life, bringing with such a change, all the attendant disruptions in the traditional roles and duties expected of them. Tehran had at one time a woman taxi driver and lady petrol service attendants, unusual enough in an Asian country, but unthinkable it now seems in retrospect in a country used to seeing its women behind veils.

This new freedom for women, along with the affluence brought by petrodollars, became symbols of what has been called the corrupting influence of the West, which is being vigorously stamped out in the wake of the recent revolution. Amongst other measures, which will once again put women in a position when they are no longer able to control their lives, is the one banning abortion. There have already been stray cases of women who have been

(Continued on Page 3)

CHARAN SINGH'S BUDGETARY BUNGLE

Prof. B. P. Adarkar

There is a famous passage in Lord Keynes's *General Theory* in which he speaks of "madmen in authority", who "hear voices in the air and distil their frenzy from some academic scribbler of a few years back." This would be an apt description of Mr. Charan Singh's debut as a Finance Minister. The only difference is that he has distilled his frenzy from his own book on the Indian economy, in which he expounds his doctrine of rural development with a strong bias against the urban and industrial sections of the economy. He is, however, not the only one in the Government with a flair for iconoclasm; for, his colleague, Mr. George Fernandes, also has been in the same mood. In their hurry to revolutionise the national economy, they do not mind destroying something even before something else is created. No one can take any exception to the development of either small industries or agricultural occupations *per se*, but it must be realised that the time factor is an important component in such an exercise. You cannot wave a magic wand and raise cottage industries overnight. It is indeed a grand idea, but those who think of any instant growth of cottage industries and the creation of vast employment for the rural masses will be in for serious disappointment. Mahatma Gandhi was right up to a point, but even he could not have imagined such growth of cottage industries in less than a generation.

Meanwhile, there is no rhyme or reason why the existing structure of the major industries should be disturbed or prevented from growing. In this context, it is interesting to hear what a distinguished social sciences teacher, Prof. Peter Drucker Clarke of Claremont, has to say about the delusions of Indian planners: "While Prime Minister Desai and his advisers don't seem to understand the right mix

of economic policies for India, the people are honest...hard-working and interested in the right things—the bicycle, the motor-scooter, the transistor radio and the gasoline pumps....Mr. Nehru had one delusion, 'the bigger the better,' while Mr. Desai has another delusion, 'small is beautiful.'.... What powers the green revolution is not the digging stick or the wooden plough but the gasoline pump and irrigation ditch. Bicycle manufacture, the big demand for transistor radios and industries like the pharmaceutical industry create employment. There can be no going back to the distaff....A country needs both small industries and large industries. What is appropriate technology is quite simply what makes the country's economic resources most productive."

I am in complete agreement with Professor Clarke's above statement and feel we should not adopt the Gandhian technique blindly to the detriment of the industrial structure which has been erected at great cost in terms of money and human effort. When Mahatma Gandhi wrote and preached, unemployment was far less serious and the spectre of population growth was far less frightful. There is at present a vast amount of human resources going to waste in terms of man-days, and on top of that the nation has to feed and clothe and shelter the explosive population. At best, the village industry system is slow, as can be seen from the tardy progress of the Khadi Commission and allied bodies, on which crores have been spent by the Government. Actually vast sums are being allocated to village reconstruction, but without any real programmes capable of galvanising the employment factor. I have a lurking fear that the Gandhian approach has now become rather *out-of-date*, owing to the gargantuan proportions of unemployment and the population explosion.

Therefore, the entire basis of Mr. Charan Singh's economic philosophy falls to the ground. Before the cottage industries are developed, it is necessary to build the *infra-structure*, which includes expansion of road and rail transport into the heart of rural India, of the supply of electricity, of irrigation and water resources, of technical education, of housing and of banking facilities. Instead of forcing the pace of rural industrialisation by opening district centres and extending loans to ignorant and untrained villagers—loans, incidentally, which will be wasted on their daily needs and will never be repaid—or reserving various industrial fields for rural industries at the expense of the bigger, urban industries, the Government will do well to concentrate on building up the *infra-structure*, which will in due course automatically lead to the growth of rural industries. If the Government gives priority to these country-wide structural plans and projects, it will be able to make a *direct* attack on the problem of unemployment by providing jobs straightway to millions of workers, most of whom are landless labourers, illiterate and un-

Women in Veils (Contd. from Page 2)

punished for committing adultery by hundred lashes of the whip. Even this could be over looked if it were not for the fact that while the men receive twenty five lashes, the women have to pay for the same crime at four times the price.

Under these circumstances the recent display of solidarity by 50,000 Iranian women demonstrating in the Iranian capital against the wearing of the chador is truly commendable. They braved snow, stabbing attacks, and the increasing hardening of traditional male opinion, to wrest from the Ayatollah Khomeini a compromise that it would be enough if they wore the "veil of modesty" if not the chador.

This is but a small victory but one which we hope will encourage the Iranian women to continue the fight for their rights. For the fight that they make against traditional injustices is one that affects women everywhere, particularly in Asia. If women in Iran go back to the dark safety of their veils, women everywhere would have retreated a little into the shadow of the past.

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skilled men. Their poverty is due entirely to unemployment; what they need is an immediate spot of work to enable them to earn their daily bread. The distant prospect of getting jobs in long-term schemes of rural industrialisation will be of as much use to them as a post-dated cheque.

Mr. Charan Singh's budget is wrong in theory and therefore even more wrong in its practical details. Take, for instance, his shabby treatment of the urban middle class clearly shown in the new levies on kerosene, matches, bidis, tooth-paste, various kinds of toilet preparations, including soap, scooters, and motor cycles, refrigerators; higher postal rates for letters and telegrams; higher duties on petrol, etc. Almost nothing has been left untouched. The result will be a general rise in the cost of living of the middle classes, upper as well as lower. And Mr. Charan Singh forgets that it was the politically vocal middle class which has installed the Janata party in power and neither the richer strata nor the lower classes can take much credit for it. Mr. Charan Singh's advisers have been telling the world that the budget proposals will not cause any rise in the consumer prices of more than 1 per cent. How they have arrived at this figure is indeed a mystery, because apart from the increased taxes and rates, the general consequence of the enormous budgetary deficit must surely be to aggravate the existing stagflation. Also, the cumulative effects of the rise in prices will surely be felt in a price-wage spiral, brought about by industrial unrest and demand for higher wages. Combined with the reckless hikes in railway fares introduced by Mr. Dandavate in his Railway budget, the Janata Government has succeeded in alienating the sympathies of large sections of the urban public. All these things could have been avoided if the Ministers had given proper thought to the question of incidence of taxes and rates.

It is clear that the Union budget is a hotch-potch dish hastily cooked by the Ministry of Finance, aided by the Planning Commission, to suit the special mood of Mr. Charan Singh, who was installed in his Finance post at short notice by the Prime Minister to suit his own political convenience. Mr. Charan Singh has not had enough time to digest his own proposals; nor has he had much prior training in presenting a national budget. In the circumstances, the best that he could have done was to lie low and, more or less, continue the existing level of taxation and the existing allocation of resources. Even if Mr. Charan Singh wished to do some good to the Kisans and his own supporters, he should not have undertaken a general slaughter of urban tax-payers and consumers, which was quite unnecessary for his purpose.

Turning from Part A of the Budget dealing with the taxes to Part B dealing with the financial disbursements, the main fact that stares one in the face is the record deficit of Rs. 1,975 crores, only a part of which (Rs. 620 crores) is to be covered with enhanced taxes and other receipts. The expenditure side is still hopelessly uncontrolled, being in the neighbourhood of Rs. 18,526 crores. There is no visible effort to check the wastage of national resources in various sectors of the Government organisation, caused by official neglect and corrup-

tion. Mr. Charan Singh admits that "it is important to contain the growth of expenditure," but there is no immediate action on this major problem, but Micawber-like he hopes to take some action at a later stage, and for this he has resorted to the classical gimmick of appointing a Commission "to conduct a comprehensive enquiry in government expenditure." It must be mentioned that the States also share the Centre's easygoing approach to budgetary deficits, which they cover with Reserve Bank loans and overdrafts, the ultimate burden of which falls upon the Central budget. To cap it all, the Seventh Finance Commission has recommended statutory grants to the States and, as such grants are not based upon any study of the financial management of the States but only on their respective shares of the Central doles, this becomes one more item in the reckless disposal of available funds. Moreover, neither in the Plan nor in the non-Plan expenditure by the Centre and the States, is there any systematic financial or performance audit, with the result that there is always a tremendous leakage of funds through mismanagement and corruption. Finance Ministers have come and gone, but this situation continues unabated.

The Finance Minister is almost silent on the Public Sector and its achievements and failures, and yet this sector undoubtedly sets the pace of economic development in the country. Without becoming a regular, communist state, India has already taken over a major part of the large-scale industries, including mining, electricity, gas, water, construction, coal, airlines, ship-building, banking, and nearly the whole of the steel industry. Statism is rampant in the country and some of the Janata leaders like Mr. George Fernandes have been casting greedy eyes on whatever is left still in the private sector, e.g., the automobile industry, and a few private giants like TISCO. However, the public sector enterprises are notoriously ill-managed and reeking with corruption, and nobody in Government gives much thought to reforming them. For instance, Mr. Fernandes, instead of wasting his energies in reforming the private sector, could pay some attention to what is happening right under his chair. And does Mr. Charan Singh realise that the real cause of the nation's bankruptcy in terms of unemployment, stagflation, international indebtedness and wide-spread corruption, is the monster of the Public Sector, which is dominated by a battalion of babus, not genuinely interested in the nation's prosperity but in their own economic promotion, and which has been piling up huge deficits and losses from year to year. Indiscriminate nationalisation has been the outcome of the Mixed Economy principle enunciated by Pandit Nehru, who could not see his way through the conflict between communism and capitalism. No one after him has taken the trouble to examine afresh the entire question of Mixed Economy and statism. Half-educated politicians have been just repeating the dogmas of vesteryear and misleading themselves and the public. One wishes Mr. Charan Singh had done something about this and tried to establish the Government's own credibility, proving that it can also make profits and not depend upon the taxpayers to help it out of its financial quagmire.

THE PEOPLE'S LIBERATION ARMY

Maj. Gen. E. D'Souza PVSM (Retd)

Recently, in news reports from Vietnam, names like Lai Chan, Lao Cai, Ha Giang, Cao Bang and Lang Son have come into prominence together with descriptions of the fighting between the armed forces of China (the aggressor) and Vietnam, like "Chinese attack in waves", "Artillery duels" and "the two antagonists chewed methodically at each others armies". Other reports speak of waves of Chinese infantrymen pouring into Vietnam's five northern provinces at 26 different points, of assaults spearheaded by tanks and others along narrow mountain trails led by mounted cavalymen. The sweeping nature of these attacks over such a wide front was obviously designed to keep Hanoi's top army brass guessing. This offensive, mounted by the People's Liberation Army of China, has stimulated renewed interest in the Chinese Army. The aim of this article, by one who faced a PLA regiment at the high passes of Cho La (16,000 ft.), Yak La (15,000 ft.), Sebu La (15,000 ft.) and Natu La (14,400 ft.) in the Sikkim Watershed in 1965 when China attempted to make noises in the East in an attempt to help Pakistan in the 1965 Conflict, is designed to throw some light on the subject.

In describing the People's Liberation Army of China, a discriminating reader has to bear in mind the following considerations:

- (a) The present PLA developed after the Long March and the ousting of the Japanese and Chiang Kai Shek. The type of warfare resorted to, and later advocated by Mao, was the guerilla type.
- (b) The Russian influence in the heyday of Russo-Chinese relations during Stalin's regime, both in organization and equipment.
- (c) The vast resources of manpower.
- (d) The rugged and generally mountainous terrain.
- (e) The initial lack of a defence-based industrial infrastructure and a research and development organization.
- (f) Dependence on Russian equipment,
- (g) Political motivation.

China today is the world's most populous nation, nearing 900 million. The Armed Forces, Army, Navy and Air Force has 6½ million men in uniform. The Army share is nearly 4 million, making it, in terms of sheer manpower, the largest Army in the world, comparable only with the USSR and USA. The manpower reserves are endless. The Chinese, with their penchant for motivation and psychology have, unlike other world powers, named its Land Forces as the People's Liberation Army to constantly remind the people that this force is designed primarily to rid the nation of foreign aggressors (initially the Japanese).

Since its birth in 1948 after the downfall of Chiang Kai Shek, the PLA has been called to fulfil its role on three major occasions only. Firstly,

in the Korean War when MacArthur threatened to cross the Yalu River and so endanger the security of China. In 1962, in a dispute over the MacMahon Line, Chinese troops crossed into India in NEFA and Ladakh and abruptly withdrew after retaining for itself tracts of Indian territory. And now the "punitive" action against Vietnam. In all three cases, the Chinese were able to justify their actions. In addition, the PLA has had skirmishes with Red Army Troops on the Usuri River and has been involved in an "advisory" and a "logistical" capacity in the earlier Vietnam war. The deduction one can, therefore, legitimately make is that this huge Army has never really been committed in a major conflict against modern arms since Korea.

The aim of this article is certainly not to determine the rationale behind their offensive actions, culminating in the war currently raging in Vietnam, but to get some idea of the Chinese Army, its doctrine, organization, equipment and effectiveness, in the context of the Armed Forces of major world powers and to understand better the tactics employed in Vietnam.

The PLA's strategic concepts are best described thus:

- (a) Against a highly industrialized enemy like the USA/USSR, retreat strategically.
- (b) Thereafter, adopt a strategic defence until the balance of power is altered.
- (c) Wear out the enemy by resorting to a strategic stalemate to lull him into a sense of complacency.
- (d) Finally, when this has been achieved, adopt the strategic offensive and counter-offensive; in other words, attack the enemy when he is demoralized and is in a state of confusion after sufficient strength has been gained.

In Mao's Red Book, these strategic concepts have been described in the Confucian manner thus:

Enemy advances, we retreat.
Enemy entrenched, we harass.
Enemy exhausted, we attack.
Enemy retreating, we advance.

The military concepts are based on total political mobilization with the ability of a large body of troops to infiltrate using the traditional guerilla tactics. One must remember, however, that infiltration and guerilla-type warfare envisages a thorough knowledge of the terrain which, in addition, should be suitable for such tactics as in North Korea, NEFA and now in Vietnam. Let us not forget that the PLA succeeded in outflanking our formations deployed astride the Bomdila-Tezpur axis by using little known jungle tracks with the assistance of local tribal guides.

Our army in India is deployed in five Commands — Southern, Eastern, Western, Central and Northern, each discharged with the responsibility of ensuring the sanctity of our borders in Rajasthan,

Punjab, J & K, HP/UP, NEFA, Arunachal and West Bengal. China, on the other hand, is divided into thirteen military regions based on Provinces (and threat), e.g. the Sinkiang, Tibet and Canton military regions. Each military region has, deployed within its area of responsibility, one or more field Armies; there are thirty five such Armies. In the Kuming military region, responsible for conducting the current operations against Vietnam, there are approximately five PLA Armies of a total of 250,000 troops under the overall command of 69 year old Deputy Regional Commander, General Yang Teh Chuh, whose forte is infiltration followed by envelopment.

A field Army is the largest field formation in the PLA capable of conducting operations. It has an overall strength of approximately 43,000 of which the officer cadre constitutes 8% of this strength. It has about 160 pieces of field, medium, heavy and anti-aircraft artillery and nearly 400 light (60mm), medium (82mm) and heavy (120mm) mortars ideal for use in mountainous terrain. The artillery pieces are either field guns with a flatter trajectory or howitzers with a higher trajectory capable of surmounting crests. The range of a field gun is about 10,000 metres and that of medium gun firing a heavier shell, 20,000 metres. Each field Army may consist of three infantry divisions or a mix of infantry and armoured/cavalry divisions dependent on the threat and terrain, a field artillery division, an anti-aircraft division and elements of engineers/railway engineers and logistic support troops (transport, ordnance, supplies, medical etc.). It is of interest to note that the strength of a Chinese Field Army may be equated to our Corps two or more of which may form part of our Army. The decision to designate their top field formation as an Army may well be psychological. Again unlike in our own Army, the PLA has Artillery and Anti-Aircraft Divisions integral to it as in the Red Army,

Well informed China watchers as well as the Institute of Strategic Studies in UK assess the total number of formations in the PLA, and this is as accurate an assessment as one can hope for, as under:—

Field Armies	35 to 40
Infantry Divisions	About 110
Armoured Divisions	About 6 (likely to be increased)
Cavalry Divisions	5 (horsed)
Airborne Divisions	6 (Paratroopers)
Artillery Divisions	About 25
Railway Engineers	About 20

The PLA is politically thoroughly indoctrinated and motivated and this explains why ideological training takes precedence over military training (this attitude may now well change). The Chinese appear to be convinced that an ideologically motivated soldier can be relied upon to make the maximum sacrifice and hence the reliance on human wave attacks. Political and Military Commanders have equal status in all formations and units though the Political branch is considered to be more power-

ful. This may well explain the Chinese Army's involvement in Mao's Great Leap Forward. The Political Department in a formation/unit covers such areas as civil affairs, security, propaganda and youth. In an infantry battalion for instance, the Political Department of about 75 personnel oversees Athletics, Movies, the Library, Dramas, Photography and Clubs. There is no rank structure as we know it; personnel are referred to by their appointments. This was evident to the author in his eyeball to eyeball confrontation with the Chinese at Natu La. The only way possible to distinguish an officer was the weapon carried, age and the deference paid — there were no badges of rank. And throughout, it was the Political Commissar who was prominent in his dark blue Mao Uniform. Military Service begins at 18 and the conscript element serve for four years at a stretch.

The PLA is now nearly four decades old. During this period it has depended mainly on its vast and limitless reserves of manpower rather than on conventional weaponry. As a result it has lagged far behind in weapons technology and is generally outgunned. Though the Chinese Airforce is the third largest in the world, its aircraft are indigenous versions of MIG-19s now considered to be outdated. PLA armour likewise is the locally produced versions of the Russian T34/54 tank which is no match for the latest Russian T72 or the British Chieftain (on which our Vijayanta is designed) or the German Leopard. Except for the Infantry armed with modern Russian type AK47 small arms, today's PLA can best be described as outgunned and outdated in matters of weapons, aircraft, tanks and mechanical transport. Admittedly, the Chinese have developed nuclear warheads but of these 80 or so, hardly 1% can be described as Intermediate Range Missiles. What is more, not much is known of the delivery systems developed.

Thus, the old Mao concept of relying more on the man (guerilla tactics) than on modern weapons systems is being subjected to an agonising reappraisal. This is evident from the number of articles appearing in PLA service journals and Chinese newspapers, on hitherto unknown topics, on such subjects as tank theory, artillery and airborne forces. Only recently there appeared in the *Liberation Army Daily* an article which succinctly describes the PLA's equipment problem: "Material strength can only be destroyed by material strength and one cannot smash the enemy's iron tank with one's 'red brain'." these cryptic words lies the explanation for China's frantic world wide search for sophisticated and modern hardware available in the arsenals of the Western World and Japan. The vastness of the list is impressive; Harrier jump jets, Jaguar bombers and Chieftain tanks from UK; Mirage Jets and helicopters from France plus the latest SS wire guided anti tank missiles; The Swedish "Viggen" all purpose jet fighter; the West German Leopard Tank (not yet available for sale to China); plus lasers and radars. As if this is not enough, the Chinese are also shopping for Western technology. But modernisation is not an overnight affair. It

needs educated manpower and a technological base to absorb, handle, maintain and manufacture modern sophisticated weapons systems. Equally important is the fact that the extent of modernisation will depend on China's foreign policy objectives.

The myth of invincibility attributed to the PLA soldier has been exploded by the Vietnamese. The initial Chinese thrust was held by Vietnamese Frontier or Militia Troops and not the regular Army. One also recalls the attempts made by the PLA at Natu La in the winter of 1965 when "human wave" tactics of subunits of 200 Chinese Soldiers at a time advancing a few hundreds yards, then stopping then advancing again which failed to make the slightest impression on a small sub unit of Maratha troops of the Maratha Light Infantry who stood fast and called the bluff, unlike in 1962. One also recalls another incident at the same pass on one of those ghostly winter nights with the mist swirling about. During a routine patrol, one of the jawans slipped on the icy ground causing his mess tin to rattle. The stillness of the night was suddenly broken as the Chinese opened up small arms fire for a good 15 minutes but without effect; our jawans had the last laugh. The Chinese penchant for saving "face" is all important and must never be forgotten. At times it leads to ridiculously funny situations as at Natu La. In the eyeball to eyeball confrontation, we noted that the Chinese troops diet did not seem to amount to much and that they were required to grow their own vegetables in the Chumbi Valley lower down. Our men on the other hand were entitled to meat-on-hoof thrice a week. It was therefore decided that whenever fresh mutton had to be sent forward, these live goats would be paraded on the home side of the pass in full view of the Chinese soldiery. This must have exasperated the Chinese. One fine morning we heard a lot of squealing on their side and four pigs came into view. This Chinese attempt to gain "face" proved a dismal failure as our Maratha boys do not eat domesticated pork!

The Chinese soldier is tough being of sturdy peasant stock. He is disciplined and thoroughly politically motivated. He is used to hardships and can subsist on meagre rations. There is little doubt that the material is good but how quickly this basically rural product will take to overnight modernisation only time will tell.

In conclusion let us not underestimate the PLA. In conventional warfare conducted in rugged mountainous terrain along the borders of the Indian subcontinent and South East Asia it may be expected to give a good account of itself with its vast resources of manpower and its tactics of guerilla warfare and infiltration, though its logistic support problems continue to exist. It has an industrial base capable of producing conventional weapons of the second generation. However, in a war with a super power like Russia, China will need to buy time to re-equip herself with modern weapons systems. She is making a determined attempt to do so but modernisation requires time.

INDIRA'S INDIA

A POLITICAL NOTEBOOK
BY **S. NIHAL SINGH**

"Insight into the political scene throughout the rise and fall (and rise?) of Indira Gandhi can be gained from Nihal Singh's book; he is among the soundest and wisest of Indian political journalists and this is a collection of his articles in the *Calcutta Statesman*. Among those who should read it, as well as the categories mentioned earlier, are people who imagine that Indian prose is stilted and pompous or that it mishandles the English language."

NEW STATESMAN (London)

"It is difficult to predict the shape of things to come. But reflection on the tumultuous times India has been through may yield valuable clues and lessons. It is precisely for this reason that Mr S. Nihal Singh's latest book *Indira's India* should be read carefully... What stands out throughout is Mr Singh's scrupulous fairness; he spares neither Mrs Gandhi nor the Janata leaders nor any one else. Nor does he lash out unduly. And the book is eminently readable. Rarely does one come across an awkward sentence or a jarring note."

THE HINDUSTHAN TIMES

"Since the fall of Indira Gandhi in the March 1977 general election, the former Prime Minister's doings during her years of power have been a tempting subject for many authors. All kinds of writers, expert in their craft or novices, have tried to cash in on the Emergency literature boom. S. Nihal Singh's book too is likely to be taken as another volume on the Emergency or its aftermath. It is not exactly so. The book is a collection of the author's signed weekly column in *The Statesman*, of which he is the chief editor. As a keen observer of the political events of the country for about a decade, he writes with ample background knowledge, clarity and imagination..."

THE SUNDAY STANDARD

"Mr Nihal Singh's book is quite distinct from most of the contemporary publications on the Indira regime. It is a dispassionate analysis of the major political events and the behaviour of our prominent personalities during the most fateful years (1969-early 1978) of Independent India..."

Able editing has enabled the book to avoid a disjointed look. It rather impresses the readers as a coherent and fairly complete account of the rise and fall of Indira Gandhi. Moreover, many shrewd observations and intelligent hints for the future shape of events will make one feel that there are journalists who may, at times, excel the practising politicians in the assessment of political situations."

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A SOBERING EXPERIENCE

Nargish Hateria

Nothing like a crisis to shake you out of your complacency, make you overhaul your beliefs and sense of values. The experience I had some years ago with two friends near Deolali is yet fresh in my mind. We vowed then, never to come to pat conclusions about people and never to dismiss our hardy villagers as ignorant rustics. The seemingly superior urbanites can be totally out of their depth, when pitted against the elements, the fury of nature.

The July skies looked ominous, the day of our picnic to Wilson Dam, three hours' ride away from Deolali. Filled with enthusiastic reports about the scenic beauty of the spot, my friends stuck to their decision to brave the 17 hair-pin bends leading to the dam. The hotel proprietor's warnings fell on deaf ears.

We set out around 7.30 a.m. the three of us and our genial, gutsy taxi driver. Little did we realise as the taxi drove through a pool of water on the Bombay-Agra Road, that we were running smack into a three-day-long ordeal.

Soon, we had left the highway and were approaching the mountain path. "If we don't make it to the Wilson Dam at the top, we can still stop off at a smaller dam half way up", the driver assured us. An old man however, halted our progress. Dhobi hitched above his knees, he was gauging the depth of the swirling rain waters with his stick. "Turn right back, or you'll be trapped", he shouted over the roaring winds.

We drove back reluctantly towards the Bombay-Agra Road. It was around 11 a.m. Dismayed, we noticed that the pool of water we'd passed by three hours earlier, had now swollen into a miniature lake. It was hard to believe there was a road underneath. We watched helplessly through the binoculars, as one milestone after another submerged. Across the railway tracks, we could see the town of Ghoti but destiny had decided that we be stranded in Devla, a small village skirting the highway.

The inhabitants, particularly the women, surrounded our taxi parked beyond the danger spot. We couldn't help smiling back, they were as amused as they were curious to see us. They looked most attractive, with their healthy tanned faces and white, glistening teeth and they'd never heard of Binaca or Colgate toothpaste! How could they look so cheerful and unconcerned, when the waters were surging, we marvelled. As we munched the sandwiches and drank the coffee, our spirits revived. "We'll be back in Deolali by evening", the driver kept assuring us. "The water should clear off in a couple of hours".

An immediate problem arose where to go to relieve ourselves! We climbed up a grassy slope and into the most pucca dwelling around. We were told it belonged to Manubai. She heard our tale with a stoic calm. "The river behaves thus every year",

she told us. "It takes its annual toll of lives". Last year, a family had to take refuge in a temple further up.

"No, no, not inside the house", she shouted at us, reading our minds as it were, as we darted inside an adjoining room where some buffaloes were tethered. Shamefacedly, we stepped out and "did our business" on the main Bombay-Agra Road, each one covering up for the other and the wind whipping against us relentlessly all the while. Flush toilets and tiled bathrooms receded from memory, as we washed our hands with the rain water.

Manubai happened to hold some position of authority in Devla and was hospitable enough, otherwise. We could take shelter in her home, she told us and she would give us tea and meals on payment. Sugar was hard to come by, but she sent somebody over to fetch it. But the tea brewed over a woodfire, had a peculiar taste and the smoke made our eyes smart. We thanked her and decided to keep the night watch in the taxi parked below her house.

Dusk fell and our spirits drooped. We rolled up the glass panes to shut out the eerie sound of the wind. As darkness descended, we felt a strange unease; the jokes and banter seemed to dry up. Suddenly, the driver sat up with a start. "The taxi is moving forward towards the waters", he yelled. Anxious minutes later, he managed to pull it back. The hour before dawn was the bleakest, but we soon succumbed to the strain.

The voices of the villagers who surrounded our taxi, woke us up the next morning. The womenfolk giggled, pointing to the pants my girlfriend and I were wearing. *"Mardlog jaise lagte hai"*, they teetered, as we got out and clambered up to our temporary home.

One big *lota* of hot water had to stretch between the three of us. We squatted on the threshold and washed our faces. No toothpaste, no piping hot toast or Lata Mangeshkar over the radio! None of the things that go to make the morning in a big city! We were grateful for the sumptuous meal the hotel proprietor had packed for us. We had the remains for breakfast.

Environment largely conditions lifestyles, we mused, Smug cityfolk had no business to laugh at the villagers, who came out to see the big lights. We were as much out of our depth here in the country, as they were, in the metropolis.

The weather hadn't changed much. The highway seemed impossible to traverse. Women were toiling in the waterlogged, paddy fields adjoining the highway. Only a hooded burlap covering protected them from the stinging wind and rain. When would we get back to Deolali? Would we get back at all, we brooded.

* They look like men.

Manubai was getting things organised for lunch. She was resourceful, but not exactly averse to making a neat profit. Earlier we had parted with a bigish amount of money for lunch—good quality rice and river fish curry, matches and cigarettes for my friend's husband, some telegram forms to wire Deolali about our predicament. A couple of hardy young fellows had swum across the waters to Ghoti for the provisions. They could have lost their lives.

The lunch revived us. We even took a brisk walk up and down as the rains let up for a spell, but with evening, our morale plummeted again. The cold seeped through our already damp clothes and when Manubai called out to us to spend the night in her home, we readily agreed. Only the driver, faithful to his taxi, kept his vigil outside, on the highway.

In the glow of the evening fire, the humble dwelling looked cosy and inviting. Our mattress was a bed of straw and we covered ourselves with our woollens. Soon, the flame from the little lamp in the window, ceased to bother us and we fell asleep. Once or twice in the night however, I woke up, to see a shy but handsome young villager looking fascinatedly down at us.

Our luck took a turn for the better on the third morning. My friend, who'd been scanning the landscape through binoculars from early morning spotted a patch of green. Soon another green patch surfaced. The villagers confirmed that the waters were subsiding. "If the weather remains as clear as this for a few hours more, we will be able to ferry you across to the opposite side".

Our elation was shortlived however, for one of Manubai's kinfolk observed that it was *Amvas* day. Would a rescue mission undertaken on a traditionally inauspicious day, succeed? Should we risk it at all? Then, as if it was the most natural thing to do, we began to say our prayers aloud, in front of our curious hosts. The ordeal had cut through the layers of cynicism acquired through sophisticated urban existence, and brought us face to face with ourselves.

By now, more villagers had heard the news of our departure. They swelled the crowd. Manubai emerged, in a bright pink sari. Most of the women wore gay colours, as if they were going to a mela. Our taxi driver had to stay behind as it was impossible to tow the vehicle that day.

Nearly everyone in Devla turned out to see us off at the point where the water flooded the highway. As we took their leave, we realised that we'd been fairly happy here, despite the discomfort and uncertainty about our fate.

A pair of hardy young swimmers walked ahead of us, to test the water's depth. Then they turned towards my friend and I and wordlessly but politely hoisted us on their shoulders, raincoat, handbag and all. They set off at a brisk trot, followed by the husband who plodded through the water, holding on to the arm of another plucky young fellow.

We traversed the flooded area, piggy back-style, our eyes shut tight, our hearts pounding madly. It was over in about 15 minutes. Just for a minute, my friend had panicked, as she turned back to see her husband and saw him slipping in the water. "We told you to take off your shoes, that you were not to touch the water with your footwear", his guide admonished him. "Please respect our beliefs."

At last, we stumbled out, not minding the hard gravel under our cold, bare feet. Soon we were back in the hotel, back amidst 'civilisation' but for days after that we wondered: Who was superior — the humble rustic or the soft-living cityman?

Letter

Must Our Laws be Asinine?

Getting a domicile certificate is a harrowing experience indeed! It is not enough if you produce a service certificate from your office that you have been in their employ for over 10 years. Supporting evidence is essential. One wonders why the hell any supporting evidence is necessary at all when there is solid evidence that you are in service in Bombay for over ten years! You have to produce your rent receipts and your L.I.C. premium receipts too for the last ten years! If you have been staying in Bombay as a paying guest and have not taken an L.I.C. policy, you just cannot get a domicile certificate even if you have been staying in Bombay for the last fifty years!

Before getting a domicile certificate, you have to be identified and you have to file an affidavit. Who is going to identify you in court? An advocate who has never seen you in a life time! All that you have to do is to shell out Rs. 20 to him and, hey presto! you have instant identification!

A humorous sidelight on this 'Operation Identification' would not be superfluous: A pensioner, who has to produce identification every month for drawing his pension, could not draw his pension for the month of May, 1973. He turned up for drawing his pension in July and produced his identity certificate for the month of June only but claimed pension for both May and June, relying only on his common sense. But the Bumble of a paying authority seemed to have no sense in common with ordinary mortals! He demanded imperiously that May and June must be separately supported by their relative identity certificates!

Even if the law is an ass, must it be as asinine as that? Are our laws meant to help our people, or help feed hungry briefless lawyers?

S. S. Bankeshwar

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MOPEDS ARE FOR OTHERS

K. H. Subramaniam

The annual visitation known as the Union Budget has once again struck the nation and the people are writhing in its gruesome grip. It is sure to maim many and murder many others. The Lok Sabha will expend some empty rhetoric and set its seal of approval on the budget proposals, perhaps after some token "concessions" by the Finance Minister in his generosity towards his countrymen. But it will still be one more turn of the screw on the Indian citizen who has suffered so much stoically in the last three decades since Independence.

Successive Finance Ministers of the Central Government have assiduously fostered the notion that bleeding the rich is a legitimate part of their ministerial duties. The poor have always been led to believe that their turn would not come. But a taxmanic Government, such as ours, is like a man-eater. Everyone is just prey. The fact is, the weaker are gobbled earlier and easier.

Of all the levies concocted by the ruling parties of the day, nothing is more obnoxious than that hidden tax which the citizen, rich or poor pays every day—the excise duty. Its extent and scope is so wide that nothing arrives on the shop counter from which the Government has not extracted its unearned profit. Like an invisible monster, the Government looms behind every transaction to collect its ransom.

And there are no ethics to inhibit the grabbing arm of the Government. It can call a thing "Luxury" and take, by way of Excise, Octroi and Sales Tax, more than what the producer earns by staking his capital and investing his labour. In fact, like an audacious highwayman, government can change the rules of the game at will and call anything a "luxury". From the 28th of February, tooth paste and tooth brush will live cheek by jowl with the fridge and car in Luxury-land. Let not the "Neem stalk" chuckle, for we have many more finance ministers to follow Charan Singh, who may decide oral hygiene is an urban vulgarity and a luxury.

The most favourite target is Petrol. That commodity which propels the urban rich in their pursuit of idle pleasure. The result is that both the motorist and the automobile industry are lying prone at the feet of our Government.

'Motorist' is a dirty word, as I learned the other day. The Indian Liberal Group had called a meeting of the representatives of the Consumer Guidance Society, The Western India Automobile Association, the Taxi Men's Union, the Goods Vehicle Operators' Union and other concerned interests. That was in January before the Budget was presented. The idea was to see if some consumer action could be initiated to forestall any likely price-increase in petroleum products and to promote consumer-resistance in case prices were increased. I have never suffered from a sin complex for owning a

car, which for me is a workhorse—a means of increasing my mobility and productivity. But others in the meeting, more knowledgeable than I in the ways of the Government, advised that to espouse the cause of the motorist was the surest way of alienating the Government's sympathies; that the only chance of the Government looking at our appeal was to give a wide berth to the motorist and talk generally about the inflationary effect of any further increase in the price of petrol. And so it was done. The Finance Minister however took no notice of the memorandum of the Consumer Guidance Society of India and up went the price of petrol by about 15% from 28th February.

Petrol is the outstanding example of the limitless rapacity of our Government. Perhaps with the solitary exception of alcohol, petrol is the highest taxed commodity in our country. Aware that the level of taxation is already too high, the Government has not hesitated to make false claims to justify an increase in the levy on an item that was too irresistible to be overlooked as a source of tax revenue.

On December 25 the *Indian Express* carried a Government-inspired news item claiming "that the prices charged for domestic consumers of petroleum products are low by international standards". The following figures are a standing refutation of this:

Country-Petrol	Cost	Tax
United States of America	US \$ 0.59	US \$ 1.12 p/gal
Japan	\$ 1.38	\$ 0.44 "
West Germany	\$ 1.31	\$ 0.79 "
Italy	\$ 1.65	\$ 1.13 "
Sweden	\$ 1.25	\$ 0.73 "
India	Rs. 3.32	Rs. 14.— "

It can thus be seen that the tax levied on normal petrol is the highest—around 400%—and the retail price is also the highest in terms of real income of the average wage earner in India.

The same news item in the *Indian Express* added "in official circles, the general feeling is that the full impact of the increased import costs should be passed on to the consumer. The import cost has now risen by 10% due to OPEC price-hike, the supply cost of refined petroleum products would go up by nearly 20%." This again is false. In the U.S.A., for instance, the OPEC escalation translates into an increase of only 1½ U.S. Cents per gallon of petrol and cost of production in India, by comparison, can only be a fraction of the U.S. production costs.

The Government also found the occasion convenient to assume a conservationist posture and to say that this is the opportune moment for the Indian public to be educated on the imperative need to bring down the level of oil consumption. This is like educating a starving man on the virtues of a weekly fast. The per capita consumption of petroleum products in India is already one of the lowest

RUSTIC ECONOMICS

S. A. A. Pinto

Many years ago THE ONLOOKER ran a cartoon in which a fashionable woman referring to another of her species was saying: "She's so ignorant that she thinks rural uplift is some kind of a brassiere". No garment has been invented that can bolster up the sagging morale of urban folk as a result of Mr. Charan Singh's particular brand of rural uplift. All that we know is that when confronted with an irate Mrs. Mrinal Gore and her implacable comrades in the Janata party he has offered them a lollipop by making minor adjustments in excise duty valued at Rs. 31.45 crores, leaving untouched the most objectionable increases, such as the one on high speed diesel oil, which will hit users of public transportation and have a decidedly inflationary effect.

Nobody would grudge Mr. Charan Singh's favours to the rural sector. Nor is the fact that the benefits will accrue to those who do not pay tax on agricultural income, a ground for objection. Where Mr. Charan Singh has gone wrong is in refusing to extend this admirable philosophy to the rest of the economy.

Of the many direct and indirect levies concentrated on the urban sector, the two most deplorable are the removal of the scheme of exemption for long term capital gains and the lowering of tax relief on long term savings.

The gain in the value of a capital asset arises through inflation to which the government is the single largest contributor. The gain is notional until the asset is realised, when it immediately becomes illusory because all other alternative goods and assets have also risen equally in value. The imagi-

native exemption introduced two years ago released the holder from this trap and, while increasing the mobility of these assets, simultaneously mopped up substantial funds for public purposes. In the case of real estate, it gave a tremendous boost to sorely needed building activity.

The chief financial hazard to which professionals, artistes and other self-employed people are subject, is the risk of sharp fluctuations in income. Ill-health or disability can turn the high income of one year into the loss of the next. Whereas in a year of high income most of it is wiped out by tax, in the year in which there is no income or there is a loss, the self-employed person is left to fend for himself. The tax relief accorded to contributions to life insurance and such other schemes is just a small protection against this risk. There was a good case for making the relief 100 per cent without limit and to raise vast funds for the exchequer and other public bodies while relieving self-employed people from the obsessive sense of insecurity which is the prime cause of tax evasion.

The changes which Mr. Charan Singh has made will not merely hurt the enterprise of the most productive sections of urban society who act as a catalyst for progress but it will destroy public confidence in the good faith of the government. In return, the total gain to revenue from these two diabolical measures will be Rs. 23.6 crores as against the background of the gift of Rs. 555 crores to the States last year (to square up their overdrafts) and a non-development expenditure of the government this year of Rs. 11,418 crores! Those who have been honest up to now will get the message.

MOPEDS ARE FOR OTHERS-CONTD. FROM PAGE II

in the world. To argue that a price-increase is meant to curb consumption is a thinly disguised excuse for doing what is otherwise so unjustified.

In 1973 when the OPEC countries sprang on the world a three-fold increase in crude prices, the increase in petrol price posted by most developed countries, where the chief means of locomotion is the automobile, was only a fraction of the previous price. I was then in West Germany, where the petrol price was increased from DM 0.93 to DM 1.00 per litre. There was such a howl of protest that the German Government promptly absorbed the increase. Here, in India, the price of petrol was increased by more than Rs. 2 per litre, nearly double the then prevailing price which was around Rs. 1.25 per litre. The increase by way of excise duty went entirely into the cavernous coffers of the Government of India. The Government of the day was not able, (despite assurances to the contrary) to stem the tide of inflation any more than King Canute was successful in stopping the waves. Our economy still has the rankling sores caused by that inflation.

It is difficult to accept the assurance from the Government that this time prices will behave differ-

ently. Taxi fares have already gone up, so will the freight rates of road transport which carries a good bit of our daily necessities like grains, cereals, milk and vegetables to mention a few.

The deliberate lie being spread by the Government that the petrol price-increase will affect only the affluent section needs to be exposed. I would not be far from the truth in asserting that the majority of cars on our roads are run on the expense account of Company executives, business men or Government officials, none of whom pays for his own petrol. There are very few private motorists in the strict sense of the word i.e. those who own and operate automobiles from their wage or salary earning.

I would dearly love to see our ministers crawling up the Raj Path to the North Block on that contraption called "Moped", on which our Finance Minister has lavished his sympathies. That will be a lesson they can set for others on conservation (if not on pollution) and simplicity.

But mopeds are meant for others. Ministers are meant for Motor Cars. At least in India, that is Bharat.

Book Review

SYMPTOMS OF FASCISM

By Arun Shourie, Vikas Publishing House, 1978
pp 322. Price Rs. 60

It is a sad comment on our larger English dailies that they should have chosen to ignore *Symptoms of Fascism*. Perhaps the title has put them off since most people refuse to accept that the Emergency was in essence fascist in nature. Even serious students of political affairs have sought to repudiate any comparison with what happened in Germany and Italy by arguing that the Emergency did not have all the features which characterized Fascism in Europe. Arun Shourie's book of essays, however, tells a different story and exposes the Emergency in all its fascist ugliness.

Symptoms of Fascism is not a political tirade; some of the essays, specially the one dealing with Fascism, are marked by scholarship. The important works in the field—those of Hannah Arendt, K. D. Bracher, Alan Bullock, Joachim Fest, William Shirer and others—have been consulted and he quotes extensively to prove his point. Ordinary readers may perhaps find this formidable documentation somewhat tiring, specially when they intrude into the text. But this is not a book for those whose "teeth" have been softened by soft dough. Nor, let me add, is Shourie a fair-weather critic. The book commands attention precisely because some of these essays were written and published during the emergency.

The essays are grouped into five sections: *Prelude* ("On Keeping Silent"), *The Emergency*, *Mrs. Gandhi*, *The Sequel* and *New Beginnings*. What holds the different articles together, imparting unity to the book, is the author's concern for the preservation of the rule of law and for the creation of a just society. With his passion for freedom expressed in hard, uncompromising language it is no surprise that Janata leaders too come in for an excoriating attack. With regard to the Janata Government's handling of the Shah Commission's Reports, for instance, he writes: "Justice Shah uncovers gross abuses. He hands them a rapier of a report. Hardly any one of them reads it. They turn the report over to a Committee of Secretaries. The Secretaries are horrified. The report leaves them no option but to recommend her criminal prosecution. But they will be damned if they recommend that. What if they recommend it and it backfires politically? What if it does not backfire but she comes back? So they tell the Cabinet to wait. Wait for the second report, they say, then place both before the public, watch public reaction and act accordingly, they mumble. This is freedom guarded—by an inert Cabinet on the one side and a committee of plasticine wonders on the other. This is democracy given a magnificent choice between death on one side and suicide on the other! Since these words were written, the third and final volume of the Shah Commission has been released but it is so valuable a document that it has to be treasured up in some government godown!" Shourie argues that what one

is witnessing today is not the rule of law but its destruction. In more than one essay he shows how the legal system operates in favour of the rich and against the interests of the poor. There is a touch of tragic irony in the fact that while the real villains of the Emergency are still at large, under-trial prisoners should spend years in jail. Equally tragic is the fact that the fight against fascism far from being over has, in fact, yet to begin.

With the central arguments of this book I am whole-heartedly in agreement; so too with his analysis of Mrs. Gandhi's character and leadership. But in attempting to drive home a point, he tends either to ignore the other side of the picture or take it for granted. I also feel that the later essays which originally appeared in newspapers could have been rewritten. Occasionally his language seems to depart from his own high standards and is marred by colloquialism. Books from Vikas are not always noted for their accuracy in printing. Having seen several Vikas books during the past one year perhaps the worst mistake I notice appears on page 193 of this book which mentions "Mrs. Gaddhi"!

S. P. Aiyar

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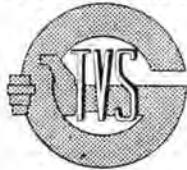
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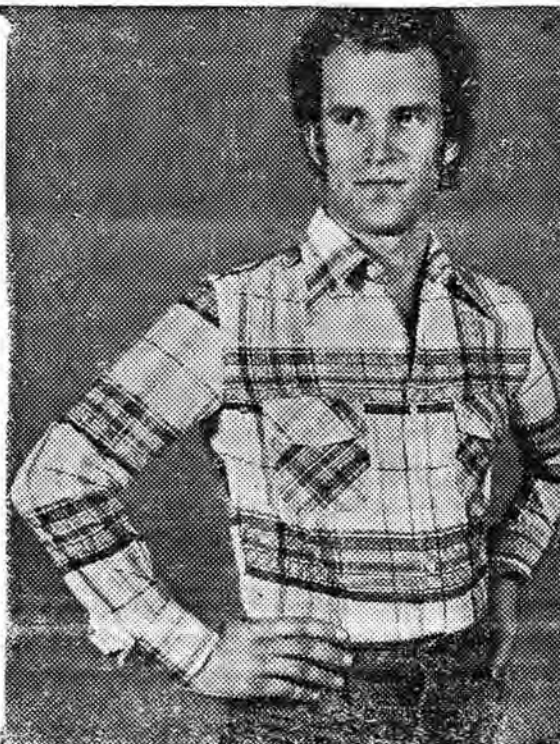
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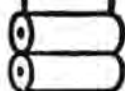
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—Tennyson

I have come to the conclusion that the majority of people in our jails ought not to be there: and the majority of those who ought to be there are outside living as free men.

K. F. Rustamji, Member
National Police Commission

"In recent times, no totalitarian regime has ever evolved into a democracy, while several authoritarian regimes—Spain, Greece, and Portugal—have done so."

The Daily Telegraph
February 6

America may no longer have her old strength: but can she not preserve her dignity?

Sunday Telegraph,
February 18

Please your boss, cover your ass and always, always be cautious.

One bureaucrat's advice
to another.
Time, March 5

Alexandr Solzhenitsyn says communism is a "dead dog" in Russia, "while for many people in the West, it is still a living lion."

Times of India, March 15

No Communist country has solved the problem of succession.

Henry Kissinger
Time, March 12

Mr. Bhutto will be a liability so long as he remains alive; he could be an even greater liability dead.

The Observer February 18

Do not use the word 'democratic'. That is Western, and we don't want it.

Ayatollah Khomeini
Time, March 12

"We have forgotten how to investigate, frame charge-sheets and pursue a case in the court. The Preventive Detention Acts since 1971 have ruined our habits".

S. K. Sinha, Calcutta
Police Commissioner
Statesman February 28.

Onwards, oh nation of mushroom-growers and doubtful debtors!

Anant Kumar Sundaram
Times of India, March 10

"A stupid budget presented by an intelligent man or an intelligent budget presented by a stupid man."

H. R. Ranina,
Times of India, March 2

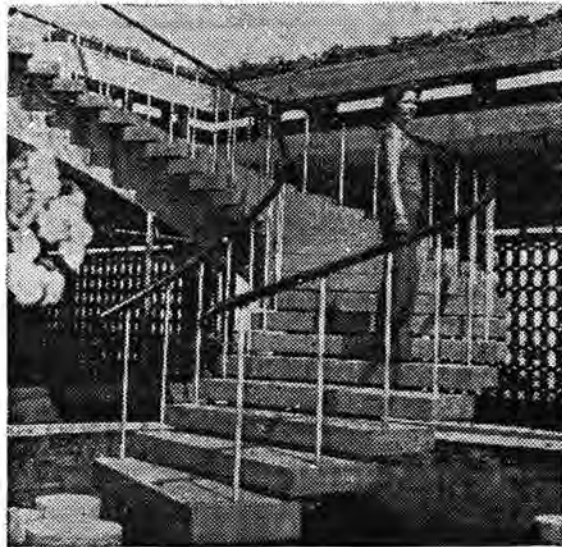
"Mrs. Thatcher is the only man among a lot of women."

The Telegraph, February 14

"You must not over exercise these forms of protest" (strikes).

Joti Basu,
Statesman, March 2

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