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Martyrs of Maharashtra

NISSIM EZEKIEL

Maharashtra is to have 204 Martyrs' Memorials at a cost of Rs. 5 crores each. There is some talk of making them useful public institutions by equipping them with libraries, and renting out the auditorium—part of the Memorial design—for meetings and entertainments.

It remains to be seen what happens eventually to these constructions, which meet a non-existent, non-essential need of the moment in the most grotesque way imaginable in the circumstances.

Around the time our dead martyrs were being honoured by such monumental folly, living martyrs were being created in Bombay out of the poorest of the poor, pavement-dwelling destitutes and hutment-colony labourers.

The demolition and clearing up work was started when the monsoon was in full swing. A court injunction prevented further steps in this cruel process and may stop it altogether.

What is called a style of functioning is conspicuous in the Maharashtra Chief Minister to the point of pure whim and subjective extravagance, unrelated to social thought. A dying Urdu poet gets a grant of Rs. 30,000.00. The son of a murdered Professor receives Rs. 50,000.00 for his education. Visitors become state guests in large numbers with hardly any justification.

A foreign car worth Rs. 5 lakhs replaces a humbler model, and a working-class demonstration against the decision is ignored.

Shivaji's sword has been forgotten along with the trip to London solely for the alleged purpose of acquiring it from the British Museum.

A vacation and business fortnight in Western Europe was preferred over India's hill-stations and holiday resorts, all in the interests of the oppressed and the down-trodden.

As in the rest of our country, agricultural growth during the last two years has been approximately 1%, with prospects of a lower rate this year already predicted by the experts.

The problems of congestion in Bombay need to

be solved step by step, even if radically, with carefully thought-out measures as part of a long-term plan. Instead, random decisions are taken which are certain to be enormously expensive without even a reasonable prospect of success.

The mode of thinking, if it can be called that, is reckless and narcissistic. No modern problems involving the lives of millions can be solved that way. Yet, here we have a gross example of feudal-personal rule, princely munificence in patronage without management principles, action exclusively in terms of instructions that X be provided accommodation and Y be helped to get medical care.

It is rumoured that a Jt. Finance Secretary who took his responsibilities seriously enough to offer objective financial advice was told to 'shut up and carry out his Master's wishes "You are only my cashier" he was told, "and must do as I tell you". All Government servants now know that if they don't obey they will be "transferred"'.

A survey of Chief Ministerial performance in all our states, not from the political point of view but in terms of administrative competence, would suggest a dismal picture. In most cases the politics by itself, even if subjected to the harshest criticism, does not, theoretically, preclude efficiency and progress. On the contrary, it is claimed that the version of political practice being followed will benefit the people.

The realities seem to evade these ideologists of all brands, who judge no scheme by its results, no policy by the facts and figures. What matters to them most are their fads, their personal loyalties and relationships, their pet institutions and ideas, above all their eccentricities.

The consequence is management by muddle, tremendous waste of resources and reduction to helplessness of all those who want to and can serve the common cause.

The political opposition is and will probably remain for some time, divided and ineffective. But the general public can and must organise itself to oppose further violations of common sense by the government machinery. The persons in charge ought to be reminded that government by its very nature is not a private hobby, that its policies and actions can only be assessed by the general standards of social order and advancement.

The Ways of Soviet Neo-colonialism

K. V. SUBRAMANYAM

Commenting on the blatant abuse by the Soviet Union of the rupee trade agreements with India, as revealed in an outstanding piece of investigative journalism by D. P. Sharma (CF: *Times of India*: May 25th, 1981), the *Economic & Political Weekly* of June 6th, 1981 observed:

"In discussions of India's rupee trade with the East European countries the possibility of switch trade has figured in a general way. D. P. Sharma has shown how the Soviet Union has been selling large sums of Indian rupees running into hundreds of crores annually to West European importers of goods from this country. In the process the Soviet Union secures convertible currency to finance its imports from the West; and the West European importers of goods from India get their import cheaper, since the Soviet Union sells them in Indian rupees at a 10% to 12% discount.

"The loser in the bargain is, of course, India which is deprived of convertible currency earnings... This gross abuse of rupee trade has been brought to light specifically with reference to India's exports of oilcakes... It is conceivable that the concerned Indian authorities have been unaware of this elaborate operation. What makes this even less likely is that exports of groundnut extractions are canalised through the State Trading Corporation and copies of all export contracts and related letters of credit are submitted and registered by the sellers with the STC."

In reality, payment in non-convertible currency of which "switch trade" is the necessary off-shoot was engineered by Hjalmar Schacht to finance Hitler's war-machine in Nazi Germany's commercial relations with East European countries, and even with others to the extent possible. All that Anastos Mikoyan did was to perfect it with reference to countries like India, Cuba, Argentina and Iraq, once they were politically softened; in India's case it began after Nehru's visit to the Soviet Union in 1955, which heralded the issuance of joint statements concerning all matters of no concern to either country.

Concealed by the political clap-trap was the cold-blooded approach for providing avenues of exploitation by every means conceivable, whether it be currency manipulation, gold-parity clauses, low interest rates and long repayment periods which are made up by the higher rates charged for the sale of equipment and goods, "distress purchase", "switch trade" and financing of local agents — political stooges — when overvaluing the purchases in non-convertible currency.

The subject in all its facets has been studied in great detail by more than one American and European economist, but never received the publicity due to it in the Indian press. No wonder the revelations of D. P. Sharma in the *Times of India* should have come as a surprise to its many readers.

When Hitler came to power, he was clear that the country should switch over to a war economy, which

meant the highest priority for those raw materials needed to build the war machine. The only way by which to pay for them was with consumer goods that could be denied its own people, who were geared to an ersatz living; full employment made up for any deficiencies. Mica and manganese were needed from India and South Africa; and they were paid for by cosmetics, German goods having established a reputation for quality.

The Soviet Union's problems were, by their very nature, different. Unlike Germany, whose unification despite its linguistic and ethnic unity was prevented by religious differences — Catholic versus Lutheran — which was made good by Bismarck at the outset and later by the iniquitous treaty of Versailles, the Soviet Union was an empire that was transformed into a dictatorship under Stalin. Its planned economy prepared the ground for a central trading organisation as part of resource acquisition; and the machinery for this purpose was perfected by Anastas Mikoyan.

In the inter-war years, after the Caucasian oil-fields, owned by Standard of New Jersey and Royal Dutch-Shell, were nationalised without compensation, Mikoyan engaged Standard of New York to dump the oil in India, thus unleashing a rate-war leading in the end to the birth of the International Petroleum Cartel. He undersold timber to European countries in competition with Sweden to buy engineering equipment, and took advantage of the Depression of the 'Thirties to engage itinerant engineers from the U.S.A. to build dredges for mining gold in the Siberian Arctic with "slave" labour to pay for heavy machinery to build its war-machine.

When the war ended, the Soviet Union stripped Germany and Manchuria of all capital equipment as a first step in the rehabilitation of its own empire. By the time Stalin died, the Soviet Union had consolidated it with new acquisitions stretching from the Baltic to the Pacific. It could now re-enact the drama of "Peaceful Coexistence" that earlier was responsible for sapping the will-to-resist of France against Nazi Germany.

By this time, all the old empires had broken up, except that of Russia, and the multiplicity of countries in varying stages of evolution to nationhood that emerged were grist to the Soviet mill. Its avowed purpose at this stage was, firstly, to perfect its war machine as a super-power rivalled only by the U.S.A.; secondly, to acquire political control of the newly emerged nations of Africa and Asia by securing a stranglehold on their economies, making them colonies for supplying raw materials and consumer goods with their cheap labour. It earned funds in local currencies with which to finance local political bosses, and, of course, its Fifth Column, whether it be communist parties loyal to

them overtly or fellow-travellers and their organisations, like the various friendship societies.

As regards the war machines of the two superpowers that emerged after the end of the 2nd War, the technological developments in weapons systems have been so revolutionary that a stalemate had been reached between them, each side relying on the strategy of annihilation: nuclear war-heads capable of being delivered by ICBMs.

Before the 2nd World War, the soldiers slogged and got killed in the trenches whilst generals and ministers were safely stationed at headquarters guiding the massacre of the rival armies. Today, the distinction between officers and men or civilians and soldiers as regards exposure to risks has disappeared.

The Soviet Union was the first to recognise the implications of this and to have its war fought by proxy: by the Cubans, the El Salvadoreans, the Nicaraguans and, may be, the Indians in the not too distant future, by selling them sophisticated but conventional arms.

The Americans realised too late after their costly mis-adventure in Viet-Nam that in the new context the Soviet Union was following the most expeditious course by arming trigger-happy and politically immature countries like Syria, Angola or South Yemen, and exacting a heavy price in return by purchasing strategic raw materials or shoddy consumer goods which they could foist on their own nationals.

The protocol signed by the Government of India with the Soviet Union during the recent visit of Brezhnev includes the export by India of fresh and canned fruits and vegetables, food grains and strategic raw materials needed by the Soviet economy, in return for which India is to receive metals like zinc, machinery and services, but not any goods that would earn free foreign exchange for the Soviet economy, if exported to Western Europe or America, like platinum, or required by its own war machine, like titanium.

All these, however, pale into insignificance before the ingenuity with which the Soviets perfected the mechanism of "switch trade" as the most effective means of exploiting economically weak polities. It should be remembered that, for the Soviet Union, international trade is not just an economic means for the exchange of commodities at ruling market prices, but also a political means for acquiring a mortal grip over the economies of weaker States.

One of the strategic commodities that the Soviet Union decided to purchase from India, in league with its associates in COMECON, has been mica, which played an important part in the 2nd World War. Until the outbreak of the Korean War and its aftermath, Indian mica was earning free foreign exchange from the U.S.A. and the countries of Western Europe. Then the Soviets and its COMECON entered the market in a big way. They paid a higher price in rupees, but it was in non-convertible currency. It could be used only to buy goods of Soviet or COMECON make.

The prices to be paid for these imported goods, equipment and services were decided at the political plane. Thus, the higher price paid for Indian mica was more than made good by the more-than-higher price exacted for the goods, equipment and services import-

ed by India. The mica that the Soviet Union and the COMECON countries import from India is reexported to Western Europe for earning convertible currency. This has been going on for years: and the agency handling this business is the public concern, the MMTC.

The position is not very different in regard to tobacco. While advertising that smoking is injurious to health, the GOI. gives incentives to encourage the increase in acreage under the cultivation of tobacco, while the country has to import edible oils in increasing quantities. The result has been that the small farmers whose production is not purchased by such large businesses as the ITC Ltd., are forced to seek export markets as a matter of urgency.

The Soviet Union has been generously coming to the rescue of these farmers by making "distress purchases", paying from its accumulating rupee balances derived from the sale of goods and services, and disposing it off either to earn convertible currency or balance its trade with African countries or those of COMECON.

What is really ominous is that while India is importing edible oils, of which it is desperately short, it should be exporting oil-cake to enable the Soviet Union to earn free foreign exchange to the tune of over Rs. 400 crores, nearly 40% of Indian exports to the Soviet Union.

India is also helping the Soviet Union to save free foreign exchange by exporting to that country food-grains in return for petroleum products, for elitist consumption.

India is now preparing to import sugar, may be from Cuba, through the Soviet Union, at a price no one seems to care about.

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In December 1979 a four-member AI delegation visited Viet Nam at the invitation of the Prime Minister, Pham Van Dong. It met the Prime Minister and senior government officials and visited three "re-education" camps, where a number of prisoners were interviewed. In a memorandum based on the mission's visit, AI submitted 18 recommendations to the Vietnamese Government and thus began an oral and written exchange between the two parties which continued over 10 months. On 3 June 1981 AI published its "Report on an Amnesty International Mission to the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam", which includes the Vietnamese Government's comments on the recommendations.

Call for End to "Re-education" Camps in Viet Nam

In a series of detailed recommendations to the Government of Viet Nam, AI has called on it to end long-term detention without trial and to abolish "re-education" camps still holding several thousands of inmates without charge or trial.

The camps were set up after the defeat of the South Vietnamese Government in 1975. In September 1980 the Government of Viet Nam told AI that 20,000 prisoners were still being held in them.

The fall of the government of Nguyen van Thieu in 1975 led to hundreds of thousands of military personnel, civilian functionaries and prominent political figures of the previous administration being required to register for a period of "re-education". According to the Government of Viet Nam one million people were "re-educated" in the months that followed the change of government in April 1975. Most of them attended short-term "re-education" courses and were released within a brief period — in some cases within days or weeks.

Forty thousand people were detained for longer periods, according to information given by the government to AI's mission in 1979. They were said to include "29,000 puppet military personnel, 7,000 civilian officials, 3,000 policemen and security officials and 900 members of reactionary parties and organizations".

Although the Vietnamese Government announced in 1976 that the "re-education" period would last three years, AI noted in its memorandum to the government in May 1980 that prisoners were now being held for what appeared to be indeterminate periods of detention in the camps.

One of the recommendations in AI's report is that government should publish a list of all "re-education" camps and other places of detention without delay, including detailed figures on individuals and categories of those still imprisoned.

As a first step towards the abolition of the system of "re-education", AI urges in the report, the authorities should set up an independent commission to examine the reasons for people being held, in many cases for up to six years without formal charge or trial.

AI believes that after such an examination of individual cases all those people against whom there are no grounds for criminal charges should be released.

Other recommendations in the report deal with improved safeguards for prisoners against ill-treatment, including the introduction of procedures for people in custody to be informed of the charges on which they are being held and for their families to be notified immediately they are arrested, with the prisoners being allowed regular visits.

Inspections urged

The recommendations deal also with conditions in "re-education" camps and prisons, urging, among other things, that they should be regularly inspected by an independent body.

The report calls for the abolition of the death penalty in Viet Nam and ratification by the government of international covenants on human rights.

The larger part of the Vietnamese authorities' response to AI's May 1980 memorandum explains in detail that people still held in "re-education" camps are officially considered to have committed "national treason". For this reason, the government argues, the policy of "re-education" is more human than bringing such prisoners to trial before courts of law, where they face the possibility of being sentenced to long terms of imprisonment.

On the question of legal safeguards and related recommendations by AI, the government's response is that such provisions are already incorporated into Vietnamese law.

In December 1980 AI submitted an aide-memoire to the Vietnamese Government to follow up on the previous recommendations. In this, AI reiterates its original concerns and illustrates them by providing details of the cases of several prisoners assigned to AI adoption groups. For example:

- Buu Huang, a former diplomat and civil servant now aged 60, has been detained since 1975 — yet he had spent the last 25 years of this career up to then entirely in the financial branch of the Foreign Service of the former Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam) and was in no way involved in the war.

Information is also given on people arrested on political grounds after 1975 and regarded by AI as prisoners of conscience. For example:

- Duyen Anh, aged 45, a writer of children's stories and former editor of two weekly journals, was a popular author in the south with more than 30 books

to his name; he was a member of the national branch of the writers' organization PEN International. His novels and short stories dealt largely with themes of family life and childhood and were directed at young people. After a revaluation of Vietnamese literature by the authorities his writing is now considered to be "decadent". He was arrested in April 1976 and is being held in a "re-education" camp in the Ham Tan region, some 100 km from Ho Chi Minh City (formerly Saigon). *AI's* information is that he has not yet been formally charged.

Concluding its aide-memoire of December 1980, *AI* urgently calls the attention of the Vietnamese authorities to the deteriorating health of some prisoners held for indeterminate periods of detention. It expressed concern that, in addition to the psychological effects of isolation from their families and uncertainty about the prospects of being released, prisoners are not provided with the medical care they require. In some cases this resulted in prisoners dying in detention.

In the final document contained in the report, the Vietnamese Government justifies the detention of people for "re-education" in terms of a 1967 ordinance of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (North Vietnam), which provides for "the severe punishment of heads and ring-leaders stubbornly opposed to the revolution".

At the same time the government states that the tempo of releases has been stepped up for those prisoners who have made progress while undergoing "re-education".

The Society for the Right to Die with Dignity

The Society for the Right to Die with Dignity has been established with its headquarters in Bombay, a branch in Bengal and a membership which includes several doctors and lawyers.

The aim of the Society is to create public awareness and opinion in favour of legislation which would permit persons, particularly those who are old, terminally ill and in great pain, to terminate their lives in appropriate conditions.

Mr. M. R. Masani is the Chairman of the Society, Dr. Fredoon P. Antia is Vice-Chairman, Mr. G. G. Mehta, Barrister-at-Law, and Mr. P. C. Manaktala, publisher, are the Honorary Secretaries, and Mr. A. N. Parakh the Honorary Treasurer.

The Society proposes in due course to appoint a working group including a doctor and a lawyer to draft a model—Bill which can be circulated for public opinion and finally submitted to the Union Government and Parliament.

Those interested in becoming members may please communicate with the Society at 127, Mahatma Gandhi Road, Bombay 400 023.

P. C. MANAKTALA
Hon. Secy.

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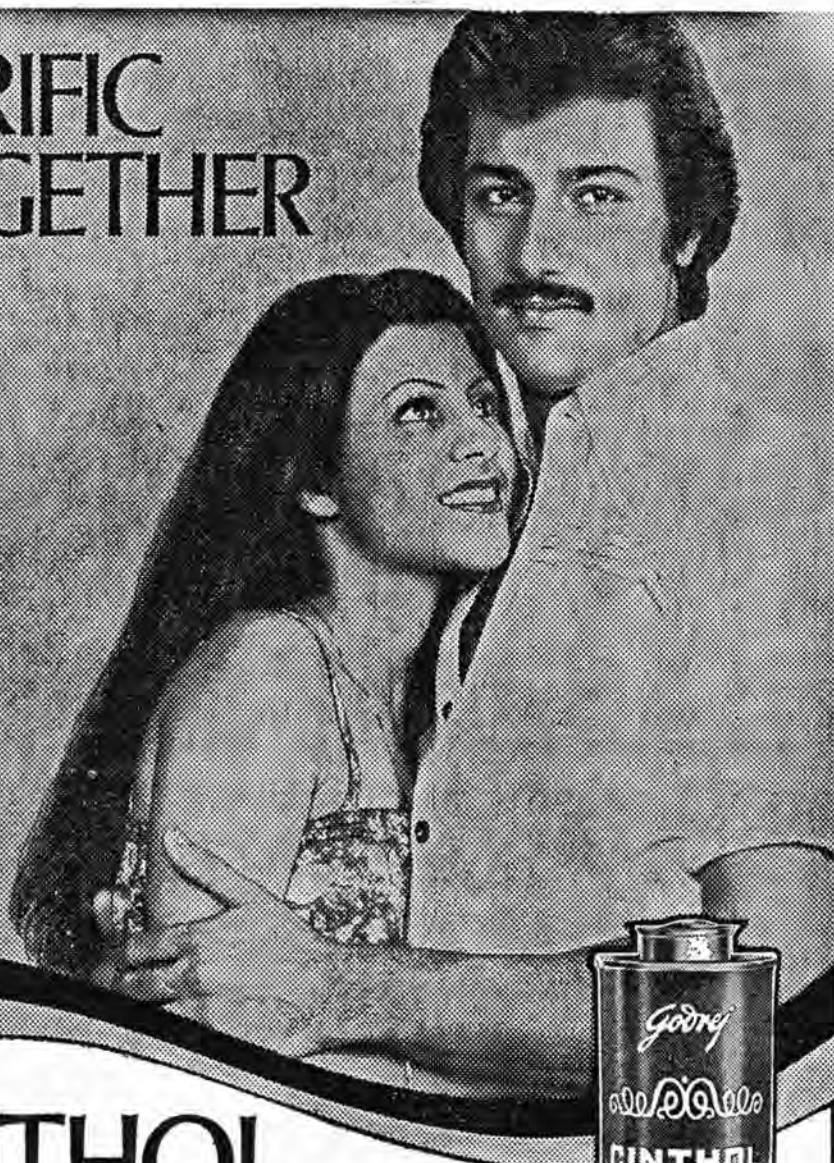
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Persecution of the Baha'is in Iran

ZENA SORABJEE

The recent spate of executions of the followers of the Baha'i Faith in Iran has suddenly brought them into the limelight throughout the world. Their co-religionists outside of Iran have had to reluctantly go public with their complaints against the manner in which the Iranian fundamentalists are systematically organising and conducting the extermination of a community which is nearly 500,000 strong.

This is not the first time in the history of the Baha'i Faith, which originated in 1844 in Iran, that the followers in the land of its birth are being made to suffer for their religious beliefs. In the last century, thousands of the early believers were killed in the most barbaric manner possible, these atrocities being confirmed by noted orientalist like Count Gobineau, A.L.M. Nicholas, Lord Curzon, etc.

In the early twentieth century, the persecutions continued sporadically, but now the attacks were directed not only against individuals but against Baha'i institutions as well. Later, in 1955, Government sponsored harassment against the Baha'is was once again initiated. The National Baha'i Headquarters in Tehran was confiscated and the building was sought to be destroyed.

In rural areas Baha'is were murdered by mobs incited by the clergy. The Baha'is of the world had to appeal to the United Nations to protest to the Iranian authorities. For some time the fanatical elements were then held in check.

Through these early years of the twentieth century, the followers of Baha'u'llah, the Founder-Prophet of the Baha'i Faith, adhered strictly to His teaching of non-violence ("It is better to be killed, than to kill") and submitted meekly. Yet, in the latter half of this century, the attitude of the Baha'is has undergone a change. Whereas earlier they had submitted meekly to all that was meted out to them by religious fanatics, now they began to take a more positive (though still non-violent) defensive stand. Whenever and wherever possible, action was taken through the courts of the country. And international opinion was sought to be raised through appeals to the world forum.

Today, once again an appeal is being made to the world's conscience, as all pleas to the Islamic Revolutionary Courts have failed. These courts now have legitimised the executions of Baha'is on the charges of "teaching the Baha'i Faith" and "running Baha'i Centres." Loyalty to the Baha'i religion has become a capital offence in Iran.

The Baha'is are also being accused of being heretics, as they accept Baha'u'llah as the Manifestation of God, which station they say also belongs to Krishna, Buddha, Moses, Zoroaster, Jesus and Mohammed. They follow the principle that the source of all religions is one, and that source is the Divine Creator.

The fundamental truths of all religions, Baha'is believe, are the same, and they therefore cannot accept the belief of the fanatical Iranian clergy that some

religions are "true" and others "false". They are accused of "spreading prostitution", since their religion enjoins upon them the belief in the principle of equality of the sexes, thereby encouraging women to acquire education and knowledge and put these to good use. Baha'i women also do not wear the veil.

Baha'is are charged with "supporting the Shah", whereas in fact they were persecuted even during the last regime and yet were the only community as a group that refused to join the single political party, Rastakhiz, that the Shah formed in 1974.

It is part of the Baha'i religious creed that they will not take part in politics or hold any political office though remaining loyal to the government.

The charge of being "Zionists" is a strange one. This must stem from the fact that the Baha'i World Headquarters are based in Haifa, Israel.

The Iranian Government is fully aware that Baha'u'llah was exiled as a prisoner to Akka, Palestine in 1868 by the then Shah of Iran and the Sultan of Turkey. Baha'u'llah passed away there in 1892, still a prisoner.

It is but natural that where His earthly remains lie, there the Headquarters would be established and this took place more than half a century before the formation of the State of Israel!

Discrimination against the Baha'is has reached a new high, which is fully supported by the Government. Government teachers have been hounded out of their jobs and official documents say this is because they are Baha'is. Police officials, doctors and other government employees have been purged for the same reason. They are at the same time told that if "you choose to return to Islam, you will be reinstated."

The University has issued a notice that only those belonging to the officially recognised religions, Islam, Zoroastrianism, Judaism and Christianity, will get admission. Consequently Baha'i youths cannot now enter into colleges.

Repeated pleas from the Baha'is of Iran and of the world to recognise the Baha'is as a minority in the Iranian Constitution, have fallen on deaf ears. The National Baha'i Headquarters have once again been confiscated and the membership lists, seals and documents are in the hands of the revolutionary guards. The building itself has been converted into an Islamic college.

All Baha'i properties have been appropriated. Baha'i hospitals, which were meant for all communities, have been taken over. Baha'i homes for the aged have been closed down with the inmates not knowing where to turn. Baha'i cemeteries have been desecrated and the guards turn a blind eye to the looting and destruction of Baha'i homes.

The holiest Baha'i shrine in Shiraz was systematically destroyed and razed to the ground whilst it was in government possession ostensibly for its "protection".

How long can the world tolerate this religious persecution in our supposedly enlightened age? This flagrant violation of human rights should bring forth protests not only from governments of the world but also from citizens of all countries who are anxious not to see another holocaust perpetrated against an innocent and law-abiding people.

Russia's Dilemma

RASHMI TANEJA

It is now almost a year since the first wave of strikes began in the Baltic port of Gdansk. During this period the Poles have won numerous concessions from the government. These have included the right to form independent trade unions, the right to strike, the relaxation of press censorship, the regular broadcasting of Sunday Mass on radio, a five-day working week, as well as the promise of economic decentralisation.

The genuine desire for change has affected not merely rank and file Poles, but members of the Polish Communist Party itself. On July 14th, it met in an extraordinary congress to elect a new central committee as well as a party leader.

Being Eastern Europe's first secret ballot, the election has broken precedent, as delegates to the congress could choose from a list of candidates. Apart from voting for several hitherto unknown members to the central committee, the delegates have given a mandate to the moderates for the leadership of the communist party, such as Mr. Stanislaw Kania and General Jaruzelski. Both men are committed to the path of socialist "renewal" or cautious reform.

The deliberations of the Ninth Congress taking place against the background of labour unrest, shortages and a steadily worsening economic situation have been closely observed by the Soviet Union. In spite of the upheavals within Poland, the Russians have shown remarkable restraint in dealing with the crisis in the Eastern bloc.

Why have the Russians held back from military intervention? What prevents them from repeating the scenario enacted in Czechoslovakia in 1968, when Czech reformers led by Mr. Alexander Dubcek were arrested, and the experiment of "Communism with a human face" brought to an end.

The crisis in Poland is a crisis with a difference. Even before the birth of the 10-million Solidarity trade union movement, and the Gdansk strikes, the country had an active Roman Catholic church independent of the state. It also had a large private sector. While the reforms in Czechoslovakia were inspired by a liberal leadership, the demand for reforms in Poland had grassroots support from the masses, tired of a discredited and corrupt leadership.

Mr. Brezhnev faces something of a Catch-22 dilemma in tackling the Polish crisis. If Soviet troops are ordered to suppress the uprising, the soldiers would face resistance from the mass of the Polish people. The repression would be protracted and bloody. Besides, the Polish Army's allegiance to the Warsaw pact forces could be seriously in doubt. Armed resistance to the invading army would be a certainty. A puppet government imposed by Moscow would be powerless to control the situation. Furthermore, the Soviets would also run the risk of severely

straining their relationship, such as it is, with the United States.

If, on the other hand, Mr. Brezhnev accepts the reforms in Poland and allows the Poles to solve their own problems, he runs the risk of further liberalisation and democratisation within the country. The influence of these could be far-reaching, spilling across the borders, and threatening to "de-stabilise" other Soviet bloc regimes.

The Russians over the past year have not been standing idly by. Having failed in their attempts to impose dictats from the top, they have given ominous warnings to the Polish leadership along the lines of "Halt the reforms, or else". In the course of the next few months, Mr. Brezhnev and his comrades will play for time, occasionally prodding the Polish leadership to get a hold on the country and the economy.

Should the Polish economy recover with outside help, the Russians will probably accept the process of socialist "renewal". However, if the members of Solidarity become overambitious in their demands, begin to question the supremacy of the Communist Party, and the Polish leadership is unable to get to grips with the economy, the threat of military intervention cannot be ruled out.

People's Union for Civil Liberties —

RESOLUTIONS

National Council Meeting at Bombay, 4th July 1981.

1 Alarming increase of Preventive Detention

PUCL views with deep alarm the increasing application of NSA to suppress legitimate exercise of civil liberties and the recent extension of preventive detention laws enacted by the different States.

Whilst PUCL condemns lawlessness and recourse to violence by any person or group, PUCL reaffirms its belief that enactment of preventive detention laws in peace time is wrong and a violation of civil liberties, and unequivocally condemns the detention without trial of any person who has not been found guilty by a competent court of law.

2 Attacks on the Judiciary

The main function of the judiciary in a democracy is to uphold the rule of law and to protect the civil liberties of the people against executive encroachment. In order to be able to discharge this function, the judiciary must be independent of the executive.

Independence of the judiciary can be maintained if the appointment, transfer and promotion of judges are free from political influence and do not depend on executive approval.

In all genuinely democratic countries, the executive respects and promotes the independence of the judiciary. This tradition has been abandoned by the present Government of India. The Government on the contrary has adopted a course of action which is calculated to bring the judiciary, particularly at the level of the High Courts, and the Supreme Court, under its

control. If this policy succeeds, the civil liberties of the people will be entirely at the mercy of the executive.

The independence of the judiciary can be preserved by the active support of public opinion. The public at large must realise that judicial independence is essential for the protection of their rights and liberties. PUCL strongly condemns the frequent denigration and maligning of the judiciary by Ministers and politicians which is calculated to shake public confidence in an independent judiciary.

The People's Union of Civil Liberties will develop a country-wide movement to enlist public support to the demand of judicial independence. It appeals to all friendly organisations and freedom-loving people to join this important task.

3 Intensified attacks on the Press

A Over the past year Central and State Governments have exhibited growing intolerance of a free press. Among the measures they have adopted to ensure a press willing to do their bidding are:

- * Pre-censorship — as in Assam;
- * News-management — as at the district level in Bihar;
- * Abuse and vilification — as in the statement of Mr. Gundu Rao who, having called pressmen "dogs", has now declared them to be "prostitutes"; or those of Mr. Antulay, who has declared them to be "snakes, vipers, poison for the people"; or those of Mr. Sathe who has declared that "the editor's pen is for sale as is that of the reporter"; such abuse parallels the vilification of the judiciary and is intended to serve the same purpose;
- * Physical intimidation of individual journalists as in Orissa, as well as of entire papers as in the 1980 gheraos in Karnataka;
- * Systematic — and in many cases successful — attempts to plant sympathisers of the government in key positions in newspapers;
- * Systematic pressure on owners and editors — again, successful in several cases — to ensure that truth is suppressed;
- * Systematic attempts — again successful in several instances — to divide the press, setting small against large papers, owners against editors, journalists against editors, etc.

B Statements by Ministers in Central and State governments reveal a systematic design to institutionalise the pressures and to persist with them till the governments get the servile press they want. Thus, to cite but a few instances, it has been officially stated that:

- * The government is exploring ways by which newsprint can be denied to any paper that has been indicted by any body approved by the Central Government;
- * The government is exploring ways by which a newspaper does not conform to the government's stipulation regarding advertisement-news ratio can be de-registered;
- The governments may purchase shares in news agencies.

C At a time when people are increasingly preoccu-

pied with their struggle for a living, when the sections in the press itself want to pursue their immediate advantage rather than stand up for the freedom of speech and democratic institutions, when incestuous relationships between sections of the press and the State apparatus gravely debilitate the former, these measures of the government can have very grave and far-reaching consequences.

D The PUCL, therefore, appeals to the press to

- * Assess each measure of the government not from the effect it has on the individual publication but on the press as a whole;
- * See behind and expose the impersonal formulae — be they on advertisement-news ratios, on ownership structures, etc. — under the cover of which the government will pursue its designs;
- * Publicise fully the attack on any section of it;
- * Resist all encroachments on the freedom of speech;
- * Fight all forces and agents within the press that by design or negligence or sheer mediocrity are becoming tools of those who would end free speech in this land of Mahatma Gandhi, Lokmanya Tilak and Tagore; and
- * Stop writing and publication altogether rather than write and publish truncated, censored or untruthful accounts.

E The PUCL reaffirms its belief that the best guarantee of free speech today is plurality — in sources of news, in ownership structures and in all other aspects bearing on operations of the press. It shall co-operate with bodies like the Editors Guild to challenge in the courts and elsewhere every attempt to curtail freedom of speech.

6. Interception of Postal Communication

The National Council of the PUCL expresses its astonishment at the order of the Karnataka Government in regard to interception of mail of certain citizens, and more so at the defence of this action by Mr. Stephen, Central Minister for Communications.

It is shocking that the Central Minister should seek to justify police interception of private correspondence as a "constitutional obligation". This is gross violation of the sacred right of privacy, and no repressive law of colonial vintage can be allowed or invoked in defence of this violation.

The PUCL National Council demands that the Government issue instructions to stop these unhealthy practices which are destructive of human rights and direct that no superintendent of post offices or any other officer shall intercept citizens' correspondence. The obsolete statute on this subject should also be amended in keeping with the civilised concept of human rights and civil liberties.

As the cases in this regard come up in courts, the PUCL will seek to intervene so that the illegality and unconstitutionality of parts of the Act and of the manner in which it is being misused is fully brought before the courts.

Membership forms and the Constitution of the PUCL are available from Mr. Arun Shourie, A-31 West End, New Delhi 110 021.

THE WORLD OF BOOKS

Indira Gandhi In the Crucible of Leadership by Mary Carras. Jaico Books. Pgs. 289. Rs. 15.

Disconcertingly objective is this American author's biography of Indira Gandhi. Unbiased in her approach as few Indians can hope to be, the book includes an insight into the events that led to the Emergency.

After the flood of books on Mrs. Gandhi, predictably as dull as exercises in sycophancy usually are, and countless others on Emergency "excesses" that obviously decried them in repeatedly boring pronouncements, here at last is a study that despite being factual, concise and precise is incisive in its analysis. Every reader, including those who feel they have had a surfeit of Mrs. Gandhi and the Emergency will profit by it.

Indira Gandhi to all accounts had an unusual childhood and adolescence, Nehru being at the helm of affairs and Kamala Nehru plagued with ill health. Mrs. Gandhi has also to contend with tension in the joint family on account of her aunts' ill-treatment of her unsophisticated mother. She spent three years studying in Europe while her mother recovered at sanatoriums. In general, her upbringing was vastly different from that of other children.

Since Emergency rule was assumed to have been declared because of Mrs. Gandhi's "overweening ambition for power" her dictatorial nature, and irrational action in declaring it when most people believed it unnecessary, Carras sets out to discover if all the above premises were true. Surprisingly, her balanced reporting and reasoning makes a case for believing that Mrs. Gandhi was the best possible leader India could have had at that time. She is depicted as "the only man in her cabinet".

However, Carras points out that "neither Mrs. Gandhi nor any other Indian leaders have grappled in any systematic way with the thorny problems inherent in the country's social conditions. Rather, they have preferred to proceed on an *ad hoc* basis."

Logical reasoning and cold clarity mark Carras's book. Methodically, she demonstrates that "a political climate propitious not for a revolution but for anarchy existed in pre-emergency days." But "in a way it was her (Mrs. Gandhi's, own policies that provided the soil upon which it could grow"). The Indo-Pak war of 1971, the Bangladesh refugee problem, spiralling food prices, inflation in the wake of the oil crises, added to economic distress that, says the author, "must be recognised as a long term failure of leadership," — (of Mrs. Gandhi) with reference to agrarian and social reforms for "radically redistributing economic wealth and power".

However, of JP's movement she is more critical, stating it failed to "outlast democratic norms and practices," and was "subversive of public order and conducive to anarchy and violence," especially because of his incitements to the army, people and civil servants, to "disobey orders that were anti-democratic,

anti-people." "In other words," says Carras, "police-men, civil servants and soldiers, were being invited to interpret the legality and morality of their orders." She points out that JP's statement, "It is the duty of the army to defend the Constitution from authoritarian threats," could change the whole complexion of the Indian constitutional structure, and even indicate a "justification of military dictatorship."

She flays JP's ambivalence in justifying his movement as "unconstitutional but not anti-democratic," his justifying the need for sedition in the forces and bureaucracy, if orders were "unjust and beyond the call of duty", his inability to demarcate between violent and non-violent revolution when he spoke of "total revolution" as finally, his Bihar movement ended in violence in 1974. She quotes from JP's speech in early 1975, a "revolution will not come either through elections or from Parliament, — but a revolution peaceful or bloody will always be of the people by the people".

Even the Shah Commission is not spared Carras' cold-blooded assessment. Carras writes that Justice Shah and the commission counsel — Karl Khandalawala, and Ram Jethmalani — had concluded there was no emergency situation in 1975, as there was no law and order problem at time of declaration. "This suggests to me (Carras) that the head of government is legally bound to wait until there is bloodshed in the streets before taking any action." Or that "Conditions of threat to the security of the country, are always subject to sort of scientific empirical legal test which leave no room for a difference of opinion and requires no political judgement".

In the concluding chapter — an interview with Mrs. Gandhi — Carras is at her questioning best. Almost as if justifying the Emergency, Mrs. Gandhi is quoted: "Mrs. Bandarnaike did not have emergency. Mujib did not have emergency — Why then was he killed? Nobody thinks that was undemocratic." Her concluding remarks are telling. "There was no official visit cancelled to Bangladesh after Mujib's death and the establishment of a military dictatorship."

Carras's reasoning that Mrs. Gandhi "was moved more by a desire for achievement rather than by a quest for power", is open to question. In her own words, to many, Mrs. Gandhi remains a magnetic, enigmatic and fascinating personality, while to others she is a sinister spectre hovering in the political wings."

It all depends on which side of the moon (INDU) one wishes to see. If the glossy cover with a beautiful photograph of a smiling Mrs. Gandhi is any indication the author invites one to see the brighter side.

PREETHI BIDDAPA

The book has ten stories and a short but perceptive preface by G. S. Amur, Department of English, Marathwada University.

The preface and blurb lead me to expect an intelligent, sensitive and dedicated author who explores themes central to our everyday existence, with a measure of craftsmanship. I am not let down. I find myself responding adequately to the stories and their creator. I see a line uttered by a poet in the last story, "The Eternal Theme" as applying to Mrs. Deshpande's art. "Poets take the whole of life. All its beauty and all its ugliness. All its meaning and all its futility."

The beauty and the ugliness, the meaning and the futility are conpetualized in terms of human relationships, mostly in the family. An exploration of these would lead to major themes: loneliness, loss of privacy and inner sanctity, guilt and the fragility of emotional needs, especially the more meaningful ones, as in "The Dim Corridor". That story depicts a special student-teacher connection, while "The Eternal Theme" describes a young woman's perception of reality through a short and epiphanic encounter with a poet.

These themes are set in the middle-class Indian home, and in a society which dictates that "the wife always walks a few steps behind her husband" or else must suffer in silence the wrath of his wounded ego, as does the brilliant lady doctor, married to the mediocre lecturer in "A Liberated Woman".

Similarly in "The Intrusion" a story about the thoughts and feelings of a young bride, just before her marriage is consummated with a stranger, the girl asks her father why she should be married to someone she scarcely knows. The reply, which silences her, is the age-old one — "I have two more daughters to be married."

In "Rain", Radha, a young widow, attempts to dissuade her lover from marrying her because "One doesn't marry a widow." She must belong for all time and eternity to the same man. Most of us have come across similar prejudices and discriminations against women, propagated and glorified endlessly by the Indian Screen in particular, and attacked both in fiction and non-fiction.

I believe the attack could be much more effective, if made by a good *fiction* writer. Shashi Deshpande rises to the challenge and not only hits out at these cruel prejudices, but portrays most of her women protagonists as endowed with a finer sensibility and potential than the dull men, their husbands, who are mostly responsible for shattering their dreams: that life, sex or childbirth could be exciting experiences. This is one of her major contributions to Indian fiction, particularly to the short story, which still tends to be regarded largely as a medium for recording exciting external events.

The style is extremely simple, energetic and in keeping with spoken Indian English. This adds to the value of the stories. Most of them are first person narratives, and this form is well suited to the content.

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Unemphasized Issues in Economics

SAMPATH S. IYENGAR

The objective of planning and government as well as private effort in India, as elsewhere in the world, has been to raise the standard of living of the people. Unfortunately, this goal has eluded the economy. In spite of Government's best efforts and experimenting with different policy options during the last 30 years, the economy has barely been able to average a growth rate of 3.5 per cent per annum, the per capita income growing at just 1.3 per cent per annum.

Even this meagre growth has been so inequitably distributed that it has not helped in any significant way to reduce the number of people below the poverty line, a line so low that one wonders how those below it live.

Given these trends in income and its distribution, it appears that there is something inherent in the system which prevents the truly underprivileged from participating in economic growth. The market mechanism allows only those to participate who have initial endowments in the form of either capital, education, talent or power.

If this analysis holds, very little could be achieved for the really poor as they would be unable to use changes such as lowering interest rates, etc. which may be introduced with their well-being in mind. Are we then in an impasse?

Not quite, if we are willing to change our attitudes. The "economic" man walking about with only the measuring rod of money to calculate gains and losses will have to give way, in some form, to a more moral man.

One personality who has powerfully explained the moral basis of economic development in recent times is Prof. E. F. Schumacher. He insists that Economics should be studied as if people mattered. Conventional Economics, he argues, is based on strong negative drives, namely, envy and greed. He faults the market mechanism because in it the buyer is reduced to a bargain-hunter, totally unconcerned with the origin of goods or the conditions under which they have been produced.

In such a system, for example, it would be "un-economic" for a wealthy seller to reduce prices for poor buyers or for wealthy buyers to pay higher prices merely because the suppliers are poor. In all modern production, labour is treated as cost, and work as disutility. Consequently, society ends up trying to achieve output without employees and income without work. This type of a system, Schumacher observes, needs to be replaced by "meta economics" which would give a supreme value to the right to livelihood.

Bob Goudzward in his recent book, *Aid for the Over-developed West*, poses the moral issues forcefully by emphasizing that many of today's economic (and social) ills stem from misplaced social values. In this context he gives examples of social arrange-

ments in older societies that helped to preserve the making of a just society. These were:

(1) Land can never be fully alienated from its owner. If given to another person, it must revert to the original owner after a fixed period;

(2) There cannot be perpetual slavery. Every slave had to be redeemed after five years;

(3) Every field had to be kept untilled every third year; and

(4) 1/5 of every ploughed field was for everyone's use.

It may be observed that following basic rules such as those outlined above would imply a society which sees to it that no one goes without food, and within which is embedded the prevention of excess inequality of wealth and income — that mass corrupter of our times.

Currently, one of the great champions of the moral basis governing societies is the outgoing president of the World Bank, Robert McNamara. His presidential addresses to the Board of Governors show a deep concern for Man—the fulfilment of whose aspirations is the subject and object of economic development.

In an interview with *Time* Magazine (June 4, 1979) McNamara expressed the belief that the main reason for helping struggling nations is not just self-interested economics. According to him:

"The fundamental case is the moral one. The whole of human history has recognized the principle that the rich and powerful have a moral obligation to assist the poor and the weak. That is what the sense of community is all about—any community, the community of the family, the community of the nation, the community of nations itself."

Or consider, to take another example, Willy Brandt's introduction to "A Programme for Survival—North—South Dialogue", where he emphasises that the most important result the authors expect from their report is, "To contribute to the development of world-wide moral values."

Does India really have a problem of people going without food during a drought or flood if those who have are willing to take care, for a limited period, of those who do not have? Can there be illiteracy in this country if each person takes it upon himself to make at least one person able to read and write?

The cost in terms of effort would be negligible, but the gains in terms of the chain reaction of human betterment would be incalculable. Little do we realise the amount of law and legislation we could do without, and the tensions we could avoid if only society takes even a single step up the moral ladder.

In the ultimate analysis it is this type of a society which is advocated by all religions. Unfortunately, the economic injunctions of religion, such as feed the hungry, clothe the naked and shelter the homeless have been conveniently ignored and importance given only to rituals.

An economic order based on moral values was what Buddha, Ashoka and Mahatma Gandhi advocated.

Indo-Pak Relations

P. M. KAMATH

Ever since the birth of Pakistan, with the independence of India, Indo-Pak relations have been caught in the web of Super Power rivalries in the South Asian region. Of course, the Super Powers could gain a foothold in the region because of the inherent sense of insecurity experienced by Pakistan. That was because Pakistan was established on a theological foundation. Thus Pakistan took shelter under the military alliances led by the US on the basis of anti-communism, to ensure its security against India.

India began as a non-aligned country but was forced since 1954 into seeking friendship of a veto-clad Super Power — it could only be the Soviet Union — to protect her national interests. Thus, since independence, in the Indian sub-continent it has been a perennial conflict between a member of a military bloc and a non-aligned country.

However, the 1971 war over Bangladesh changed the scenario in the sub-continent. With Pakistan joining the non-aligned movement in 1979, it was hoped that for the first time Indo-Pak relations could be governed on the principle of beneficial bilateralism, without being tagged to Super Power rivalry in the region.

The massive military intervention in Afghanistan has completely belied such a hope. Once again Super Power contests have been introduced in our neighbourhood. The presence of Soviet troops in Afghanistan poses a security threat, not only to Pakistan but also to India. Unfortunately, the two nations differ in their perception of the security threat posed by the Soviet Union and remedies for it.

India has gone a long way to mend its early blunder on the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. Early in 1980, we expressed confidence that the Soviet Union would withdraw their troops when asked to do so by Kabul, on the intolerably blind premises that the Kabul government is independent of the Soviet Union. But at the Non-aligned Foreign Ministers Conference in New Delhi, in February 1981, we have asked for unconditional withdrawal of all foreign troops from Afghanistan.

This falls short of the Pakistani expectation of an outright condemnation of the Soviet invasion, but India and Pakistan have come closer to their goal in relation to Afghanistan.

Two important environmental aspects have to be borne in mind in understanding Indo-Pak relations at the present times. One is the fact that Pakistan is ruled by a military dictatorship, which probably would have been a part of history but for the Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan. Another important fact determining Pakistan's behaviour is its psychology of seeking parity with India. Thus, for instance, her nuclear programme has to be understood as a desire to match the Indian nuclear test of 1974.

In view of these two dominant factors, the rulers of Pakistan, instead of developing closer relations with India, have once again moved towards the US in search of their own and their nation's security. The US has agreed to provide \$ 3 billion in the form of military and economic assistance, during the next five years. This time it is not through a military alliance but through a common security concern in the region. It enables Pakistan to purchase arms on a most-favoured nation basis. The money is provided by the Arab countries!

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The basic question that has been raised by many politicians and diplomats is: against whom are these weapons going to be used? The weapons purchased by Pakistan could be used only for war on plains and not in a mountainous region. By implication, it is more likely that new sophisticated weapons like the F-16 aircrafts and M-60 tanks proposed to be sold by the US to Pakistan will be used against India.

However well armed Pakistan might be, it is foolish for any one to think that its weapons could be used against the Soviet Union in case Afghanistan, aided by the Soviets, or the Soviets themselves, attacks Pakistan from the North West.

As though to confirm this possibility, of weapons being used against India, there are now reports that Pakistan has completed its war-like preparations all along a 1,500 k.m. Indo-Pakistan border. Pakistan may be working on a plan which includes a pre-emptive attack on India from its southeastern front, in case the Soviets, directly or through Afghanistan, move in from the north West. In such a strategy, Pakistan probably hopes to make its conflict with India an indirect or direct confrontation between the two Super Powers.

India signed a Peace and Friendship treaty with the Soviet Union in 1971 which has a military consultation clause. In the event of one of the signatories being involved in a conflict, the other will come to its aid. The Pakistan rulers have already hinted openly of the possibility of their concluding a treaty with the US, similar to India's Peace and Friendship treaty with the Soviet Union.

In Pakistan's national security perspective, it is possible for them to think that such a scenario would prevent a Soviet backed attack from the Afghanistan side.

The basic question now is: will the US intervene militarily in a conflict of that sort? It is handicapped by the distance separating her from Pakistan, while the Soviets enjoy a free land access to the theatre of conflict, through Afghanistan. Recent history indicates that whenever one Super Power is directly involved, the other exercises restraint almost amounting to impotency. The Soviet behaviour during the American bombing of Hanoi is an example of that kind.

What can be done? There has been a tremendous sympathy for Pakistan in India since the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. India has already conceded Pakistan's right to arm herself in self-defence. But how can that kind of self-defence be achieved by amassing troops and weapons on Indian borders and acquiring sophisticated aircrafts like the F-16 which could attack remote Indian cities without being noticed by Indian radar?

While an Indian stand of open disapproval of the Soviet presence in Afghanistan would certainly help to create a greater sense of security in the minds of the Pakistani rulers, India could also de-emphasise the Indo-Soviet Friendship treaty of 1971.

India needs preservation of Pakistan as a buffer state between her and the Soviet Union. This could be done in case Pakistan is willing to accept India's offer of a no-war pact. Pakistan could do that if it becomes realistic on two counts; one, realise that its claim on Kashmir is untenable; and, two, give up thinking in terms of parity with India.

Such a change with the present military rulers might be difficult. It would be difficult even with an elective leadership, unless it is based on a secular ideology.

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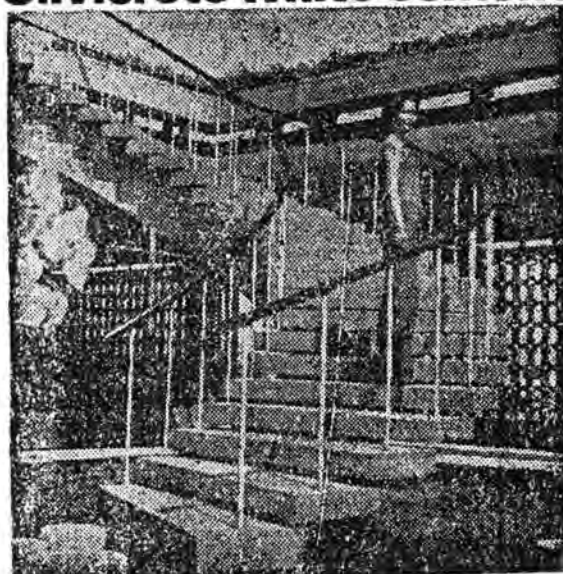
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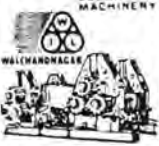
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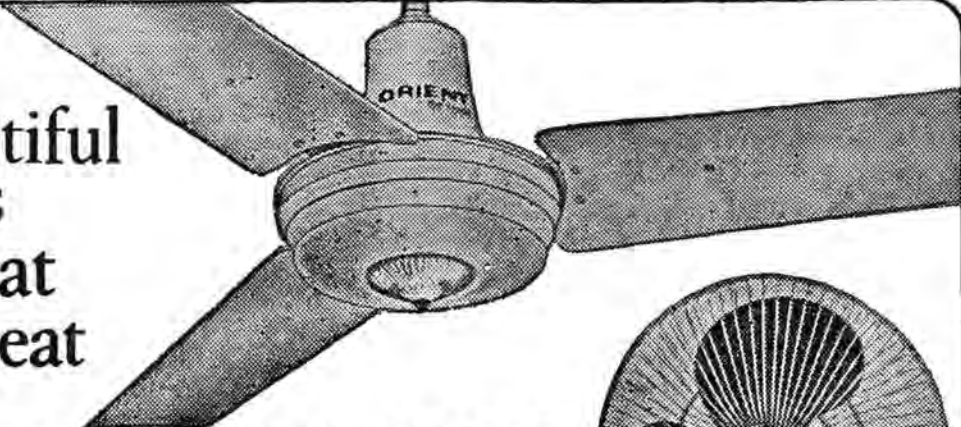
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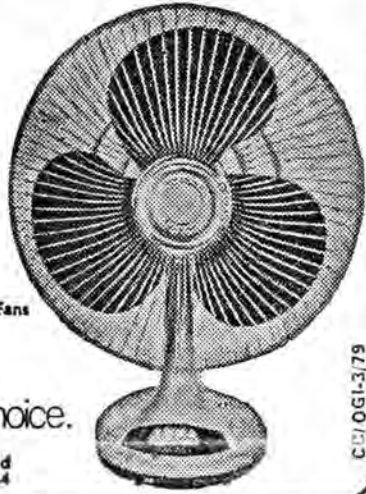
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