

CRITICISING AMERICA

NISSIM EZEKIEL

Serious criticism of American life, society, culture and politics must be distinguished from anti-American propaganda. The former, both by Americans and by others, does not need to be countered but only to be assessed. It has the absolute functional value, from the democratic viewpoint, of all criticism, whatever its objects. Beyond that stage, analysis may reveal flaws, question perspectives, interpret facts and debate the fundamental issues. An open, pluralist, liberal society must accommodate this unending discussion.

Anti-American propaganda is a different proposition. In the first place, it should be recognised and described as a specific category. An extreme example is "Disinformation." This consists of letters and other documents forged in the Soviet Union, or by its supporters outside it, including some in the U.S.A., to mislead public opinion all over the world. Even when it is exposed as a fraud, it has its successes.

Persistent activity of this kind is more reliable evidence of Soviet intentions than offers of detente, with reduction of nuclear arms, and so on.

On another level is criticism as well as propaganda that is ideologically motivated, aimed at undermining and destroying the democratic system in America, the West

generally and countries elsewhere. This operates on a double standard. One is applied to the capitalist world, the other to the socialist.

The assumption is that the first is exploitative, war-mongering and materialist, while the socialist nations represent justice, progress, idealism and peace. So, in socialist societies, wiping out the opposition is permissible, whereas even a vigorous, independent opposition in capitalist societies is not sufficient to earn a single credit mark.

This mode of argument is not only suspect in its aims but dangerously fundamentalist and fanatic in practice. The history of socialism in the twentieth century is largely the history of violence against and total contempt for human rights.

Then there is the anti-Americanism of the international Peace movement, controlled and directed by people in love with Soviet tyranny or blind to its brutal realities. It contains youthful idealists in search of alternative socio-economic and cultural patterns, liberals, clergymen, religious persons of various denominations, scientists, academics, political innocents and intellectuals. They are victims of their own one-sided perceptions, which are manipulated by their communist ring-masters.

The recommendations and resolutions of the Peace movement are based on the view that the Soviet

Union stands for Peace, and America with its allies for War. Every militant Soviet action including the total domination of Eastern Europe and the occupation of Afghanistan is justified on this ground, directly and obliquely.

Particular aspects of American foreign policy or of decisions in internal matters of economics, to mention two examples, may be convincingly criticised without carrying conviction about the possible options. Even less so when it is suggested that the Soviet Union and its allies are superior models in such areas.

When criticism of America, as so often in India, ends with a favourable comment on some Soviet peace move or apparent backing of India in an international political dispute, there is a vicious error at the very root of the argument. The ultimate Soviet aims are ignored in such comments, and so is the nature of the Soviet system.

We should remember in this context that strategies do not create affinities, only values do.

Honest criticism of America is by the norms of democracy and freedom. By these norms, the Soviet Union and its satellites don't stand up to a moment's scrutiny. They are all one-party dictatorships, and within that party there is no freedom and democracy.

Why, then, don't we see the difference in essentials between the words and actions of America and those of the Soviet Union?

A VARIETY OF COMMENT

K. S. VENKATESWARAN

1. REPORT ON AFGHANISTAN

THE second "anniversary" of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan seems to be as good a time as any to embark on a dispassionate reappraisal of the situation in that ill-fated country, especially in the context of the growing inability of international opinion to assert itself against Soviet hegemony.

The Asian Lawyers' Legal Inquiry Committee, a non-official group convened at the initiative of Mr. Pran Nath Lekhi, and comprising seven eminent lawyers (including those from Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Thailand), which took on the thankless task of investigating the situation in Afghanistan in May 1981, has recently published its richly-documented and well-argued report, which makes compulsive reading.

Addressing itself to two specific questions of seminal importance, viz. whether the Soviet military presence in Afghanistan was justified under Article 51 of the U.N. Charter, and whether the present Soviet-backed regime of Babrak Karmal has been committing violations of human rights in Afghanistan, the Committee undertook a comprehensive examination of all relevant facts and documents (including official hand-outs supplied by the Soviet Embassy in New Delhi) before arriving at its findings. It also held a public inquiry for three days in the capital to obtain such information or evidence as was available from members of the public on the issues under investigation.

On the first question, the Committee, after an exhaustive review of the chronology of events, unequivocally holds that not only was the entry of Soviet troops into Afghanistan in December 1979 wholly unjustified under Article 51 of the U.N. Charter, but, having regard to the totality of circumstances, it constituted an act of armed aggression, as defined by Resolution 3314 (XXIX) of the U.N. General Assembly.

As for violation of human rights by the Karmal regime, the Committee records with regret that the unco-operative attitude adopted by the Government of Pakistan (which refused permission to the Committee to visit Afghan refugee camps in that country) compelled it to rely extensively on the testimony of Afghan refugees in India. Despite this constraint, the report convincingly establishes a systematic pattern of gross violation of human rights (including acts of genocide) both by the Russian government and its satellite regime in Afghanistan.

2. THE MISHRA CASE

WITH the possible exception of the infamous Habeas Corpus judgment delivered in the high noon of the Emergency, no verdict of the Supreme Court of India has caused as much consternation in recent years as the ruling handed down last month, upholding the withdrawal from prosecution of Dr. Jagannath Mishra and his cronies in the notorious Patna Urban Co-operative Bank Case. Apart from its undeniable potential for mischief, the verdict (arrived at by a majority of 2 to 1, Justice Tulzapurkar dissenting) has been assailed as being based on doubtful legal reasoning.

Nor is the criticism unjustified. For one thing, the Supreme Court's approach in the matter reveals a disturbing lack of appreciation of the strong and almost incontrovertible evidence of culpability against the accused. Throughout the long-winding course that the case followed before finally landing up at the highest court in the land, every single authority who had anything to do with it (with the exception of Dr. Mishra, of course) categorically recommended prosecution of the accused, the Chief Minister's machinations notwithstanding. And yet the Supreme Court has unquestioningly accepted the plea put forward by counsel for the accused, that there existed no prospect of successful prosecution in the light of the evidence on record.

No less surprising is the excessive emphasis placed by the Supreme Court on the theory of "political and personal vendetta" advanced on behalf of the accused. Indeed, if the view of Justices Baharul Islam and R. B. Misra is to be accepted, it would be virtually impossible to bring to book any political figure, however guilty, in cases involving misdemeanours of a wide variety.

Perhaps the only redeeming feature of the Supreme Court judgment is the exceptionally well-argued dissent of Justice Tulzapurkar which heightens the reader's feeling that the sooner the majority view is reversed, the better.

3. REPRESSION IN CHINA

IT is not often that one comes across details of human rights infractions in the People's Republic of China. Even so, the sporadic examples that do succeed in reaching the world outside the bamboo curtain, clearly

reveal the extent of repression practised by the communist regime in that country.

Among the most recent sources of information on the subject is a document published by the Hong Kong Chinese language review, **Baixing**, which describes in some detail the humiliating treatment meted out to over a score of editors of unofficial journals in China. Since 1980, they have been espousing the need for democratic reforms.

Xu Wenli, one of the prominent members of the group, was reportedly tried on 8 June 1982 by the Peking Intermediate People's Court and sentenced to 15 years' imprisonment and four years' deprivation of political rights. Though the official indictment charged him with organising a "counter-revolutionary clique" and of "counter-revolutionary propaganda and

agitation", it is believed that these accusations actually refer to his calls for liberalisation of the Chinese political system and also to a public appeal he made in January 1981 for the release of Lin Qing, co-founder of an unofficial group called the **April Fifth Forum**.

Apart from the manifestly dishonest character of the charges that have been brought against the journalists, an equally disturbing feature of this process of persecution is the utterly sham nature of the so-called "trials". Sources in Hong Kong indicate that even the requirements of the Law of Criminal Procedure, 1980, have not been followed. And, of course, no official record of the verdicts has ever been made public in these cases.

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Call for end to political killings by governments

HUMAN rights workers from 30 countries ended a conference in Amsterdam with a call for the international community to act to halt political killings by governments.

The international conference on Extrajudicial Executions, organized by AI's Dutch Section, said hundreds of thousands of people had died in the past 10 years as a result of the practice, which it described as "unlawful and deliberate killings carried out by order of a government or with its complicity."

In its final statement, the conference said the killings were continuing today in a number of countries: "These killings continue day after day outside any judicial process and in denial of the protection of law."

It said the killings were carried out both by regular military and police forces and by special units created to function without normal supervision, by death squads operating with government complicity, and assassins acting against victims in other countries.

Many of the victims of extrajudicial killings were subjected to "disappearance", illegal detention or torture before being killed.

"The scope of killings ranges from assassinations to the wholesale liquidation of political opposition," the conference said. "The scale of the crime is sometimes not known to the international community before it has reached proportions that will damage a whole society for generations to come."

The three-day conference, called to shed light on

the abuse and to seek ways of stopping it, brought together 120 participants, including independent experts, members of intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, members and staff of AI from many countries, and activists from other human rights groups.

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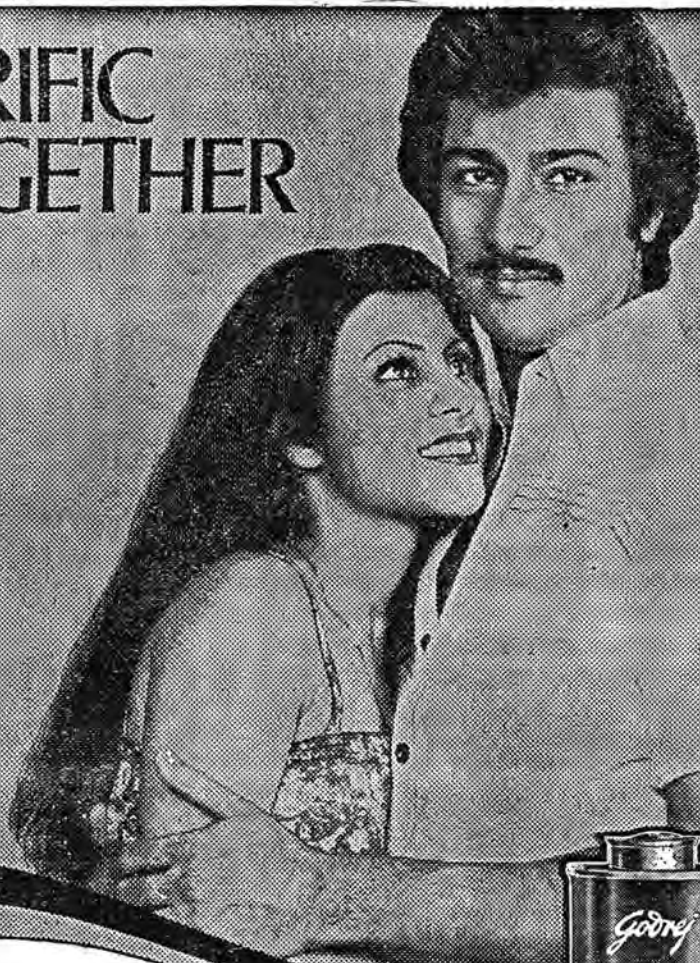


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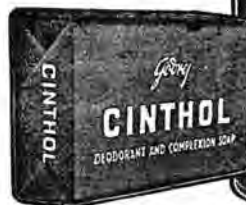
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IN THE NAME OF SECULARISM

NITIN G. RAUT

On 9th December 1982, forty-five Muslim M.Ps. belonging to different political parties issued a statement demanding a ban on all para-military organisations "preaching communal hatred, such as Vishwa Hindu Parishad and Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh". The statement, which is ostensibly issued in the name of secularism, is itself reeking with rabid communalism.

In India the concept of secularism with all its political ramifications has now become a means to justify communal demands.

The memorandum, which is a sequel to the Meerut and Baroda communal riots, is inexplicably silent on the stabbing of a Hindu Poojari or the attack on the Navratri procession in Baroda which ignited the riots. Instead, it merely expresses concern regarding the future of secularism, and goes on to say that chauvinism, whose aim is to generate hatred and distrust against the Muslims, was on the offensive with the slogan "Hinduism in danger".

The communal bias of the memorandum is inherent and manifest. Muslim communalism, encouraged by the pernicious policy of appeasement, is sought to be promoted with impunity under the garb of secularism.

Some of the suggestions in the memorandum if implemented will tear this nation apart. The suggestion on the police force in general tends to cast aspersions on the Hindus as a whole, and the term "effective representation to all sections of our people" is nothing but a veiled demand to reconstitute the police force on a communal basis. Already Muslim police units have been constituted in some places. There is no justification for this. Is it true to say that a Muslim Police Force is required to protect the Muslims, and a Hindu Police Force for the Hindus? Such a policy will reduce the police and other para-military units into rival militias rather than law enforcing bodies.

What the private warlords of Lebanon's Muslim and Christian militias have reduced that country to, may well be the fate of India in the future. In Moradabad it was not the communal bias of the police force but the indiscriminate and thoughtless attack on the Police by a Muslim mob, after the discovery of a piece of pork in a mosque, that caused the trouble.

The suggestion to impart a secular outlook to the younger generation in effect means that history should not be taught as it happened but rather what revivalists and fundamentalists want it to be. In fact, this suggestion sounds hypocritical in the face of Muslim conduct when, what was all these years taught as a "flight of Mohammed from Medina to Mecca", has suddenly become a "journey".

That the Government should succumb to this demand and delete entire chapters from textbooks is tragic. The former Union Education Minister is on record as saying that if the Shivaji-Afzal Khan episode is unpalatable for communal harmony, history will be changed! Can secularism be nurtured by suppressing or mutilating historical facts? If such is the concept of secularism, history may well be reduced to a fairy tale with ideological variations rather than a factual record of the past.

The memorandum fails to appreciate the fact that the Minakshipuram conversions had distinct political overtones, as was evident from the presence of Muslim League M.P's. It jolted Hindu society from its complacency and lethargy, and organisations like the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and the R.S.S. have got about reforming it. The memorandum interprets this as chauvinism whose aim is to generate hatred and distrust against Muslims, with the slogan "Hinduism in danger". It implies that so long as conversion activities continue unobstructed it is no threat to "the future of the secular order"; but when anything is done to counter such activities it is presumed to be a threat to communal harmony.

One of the signatories, Shri Syed Shahabuddin, in an interview with **The Sunday Observer** (January 2, 1983) has said, "It is a Hindu Wave which is chauvinist, extremist, militant. It shakes me. Because it will destroy the country." If attempts at reform are described as "chauvinist, extremist, militant", then such sweeping statements do not deserve serious comment. Shri Shahabuddin, who belongs to the Janata, cannot forget that the Janata broke upon the issue of the R.S.S. and dual membership.

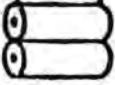
One is inclined to ask whether the signing of such a memorandum is not the result of dual loyalties if not dual membership. Instances of Muslim communalism are not only innumerable but are on the increase. There are some organisations who question

Kashmir's accession to India. Still others demand an exclusive Muslim district in each state of India. Suffice it to say that when Muslim renegades seized the "Kabaa" in Mecca, Muslims in India burnt Hindu shops in Hyderabad and stoned the U.S. Consulate in Calcutta! If this is not Muslim chauvinism, militancy and extremism, then what is it?

The memorandum has failed to make a dispassionate analysis of the dangers to secularism in India. Secularism, with all its multiple notions, is only used to justify communal demands. It would not be far-fetched to say that the Islamic fundamentalism sweeping the Middle East is finding its echo, in this sub-continent with the creation of such communal lobbies.

In secular India, if the Assam movement seeks the expulsion of aliens or deletion of their names from electoral rolls it is dubbed a Hindu communalist movement. But if Chief Minister Faroukh Abdullah passes laws like the Jammu and Kashmir Resettlement Act inviting Pakistanis who left India more than thirty-five years ago on their own volition, it is tolerated in the name of secularism.

Strange as it may sound, more than 45,000 Hindu refugees and citizens of India do not have voting rights in Jammu and Kashmir, while lakhs of aliens enjoy the right to vote without citizenship.



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THE ECONOMIC MALAISE IN INDIA

A Report

A luncheon meeting was organised by the Indian Liberal Group in New Delhi on December 17, 1982. Prof. A. R. Prest, a senior professor from the London School of Economics, spoke on "Model for Public Finance in a Developing Society". M. R. Masani, Patron, Liberal International, presided. Mr. D. N. Patodia, Convenor of the Group in New Delhi, organised the function and introduced the guest.

The meeting was attended by nearly 170 persons representing a cross-section of Delhi citizens including senior secretaries and government officers, leading economists, teachers and research scholars, diplomats, leading businessmen, bankers, professionals, persons in public life and journalists. The proceedings of the meeting were sympathetically covered by the press.

While initiating the proceedings, Mr. Masani quoted from the resolution recently passed at the Hague conference of the Liberal International, entitled "From the Welfare State To a Truly Human Society". Referring to the Indian pattern of public finance, including excessive taxation, massive deficit finance, unproductive expenditure and its adverse effect on growth, Mr. Masani requested Prof. Prest to suggest an alternative model for India.

Prof. Prest in his address dealt with various aspects of public finance in terms of economic theory, historical experience and general conclusions and in the context of conditions in India.

At the outset, Prof. Prest strongly emphasised that there is no separate economic theory for developing countries. Economics is one subject whether for the developing countries or for the developed countries, and the general principles apply equally in all cases.

Dealing with economic theory, Prof. Prest stated that there was considerable evidence to suggest that market forces would produce a better allocation of existing resources than government intervention, except in very particular circumstances. He explained that historical experience offers no evidence that government enterprises produce more economically and more efficiently than private enterprises. Very frequently, a strong presumption exists in the opposite direction.

Prof. Prest made the following specific points:

- (a) Where a great deal of activity was undertaken by government organisations, wrong goods were produced at the wrong time for the wrong people;

- (b) There was no evidence that a large tax effort made in a country was a necessary condition for a faster rate of growth;
- (c) The need to avoid excessive government borrowings from the central bank had become clearer than ever;
- (d) The harmful effects of high marginal tax rates were pervasive;
- (e) Undue complexity in tax arrangements needed to be avoided. If in any country the tax system provided a very lucrative life for the lawyers, then there was something wrong with it.

Dealing with Indian conditions, Prof. Prest was forthright in his views. He was critical about the working of State Enterprises, and their growing inefficiencies, the discrimination practised between state and private enterprises, and between local and foreign enterprises. According to Prof. Prest, this intervention resulted in mal-application of resources.

In his view, marginal rates of income tax and corporate tax in India were very high by international standards, leading to consequences like avoidance and evasion of taxes, and the creation of a parallel economy. He thought that a reduction in marginal rates of taxation might result in gains for revenue. Imposition of a wealth tax in India had no justification whatsoever. Whereas it did not earn any proportionate revenue, it did cause serious disadvantages, and was clearly a disincentive to savings.

He was equally critical about the tax administration and the slow speed at which assessments were finalised, resulting in massive tax litigation and avoidable delays. The complexity of tax laws in India and the way in which the tax system operated have created strong disincentives to savings in the private sector.

In his concluding observations, Mr. Masani congratulated Prof. Prest for his fine address, and pointed to the recent elections in Sri Lanka where something encouraging had happened on the economic front. The Government of Sri Lanka made a U turn by cutting down taxation, abolishing centralised planning, inviting foreign capital and stimulating competition. President Jayawardene went to the polls with these measures and returned with a resounding victory, demolishing the earlier myth that in a backward country only demagoguery and leftism would thrive.

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Food Crisis In Socialist Countries

A. KUMAR

World-renowned agriculture scientist and Nobel Laureate Dr. Norman Borlaug told his audience in New Delhi on a recent visit that it is no wonder the socialist countries headed by the Soviet Union are deficient in foodgrains, as they have given preference to ideology instead of inspiration. Right from the time of the Great October Socialist Revolution the stress was on Communist ideology. Those who did not actively subscribe to it, who were not interested in enrolling themselves as party members were systematically liquidated, harrassed, banished to Siberia, sent to lunatic asylums and of course, demoted.

None who was not with the ruling group ideologically, was given any facility to carry out research and experiment and to contribute to the green revolution. The result was that the Russians succeeded in a revolution which fed the people ideology and not grains. Russian food crops failed, there was no green revolution worth the name, and the great socialist "big brother" had to depend on imports to feed its own people as well as all those who were made to depend on it for food.

The Soviet Union made great strides in industry, heavy industry and arms industry, but lagged behind in agriculture. The Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations estimate that USSR will have to import around 15m tonnes of grain this year alone. China, another Communist giant, will import a million tonnes more than Russia. All the East European and "Indo-Chinese" (Vietnam, Kampuchea, Laos) allies of the USSR depend on the USSR heavily for their food.

The recent lifting of the embargo on food shipments to the USSR by the United States government has also helped in highlighting the fact that the Russian system has miserably failed to produce bumper crops. They have to import from countries that are supposed to be capitalist, exploiters, bourgeois, etc. The United States, Canada, Argentina, Australia and Brazil—and now even India—have produced bumper crops not only enough to feed their own people but others also. Surely this is not a good commentary on the socialist system and the revolution brought about by the Russians.

FAO studies indicate that the USSR may not be able to get its target of 236m tonnes of grains this year, may fall short by 20-21m tonnes. In the year 1980-81, Russia imported 16m tonnes of wheat and wheat flour, setting an all-time record. The other "friends" are in any case dependent on the USSR for almost all their requirements of food grains. FAO

further estimates that the United States this year may set another record in spring production of wheat and coarse grain.

In this regard one has to keep in view also American pricing policy by which the farmer is subsidised for keeping his production low if there is a glut in the market. In 1980, US grain production was of the order of 268.8m tonnes, though the previous all time record was 301.1m tonnes. According to the FAO, opening stocks of foodgrains in the United States in the 1980-81 season was 52.6m tonnes. Exports this year may reach 73m tonnes, an amazing performance!

New Communist countries are emerging on the political map of the World **but not on the agricultural map.** Vietnam and its protégé Kampuchea are food-deficit countries, the former devoting more attention to raising an army than farming. Vietnam is regarded as the fourth strongest nation in the world, militarily. It is estimated that the strength of the Vietnamese armed forces is over 1.5m, over two hundred thousand of which is in Kampuchea and another 50,000 in Laos. This means a sizable part of the entire able bodied manpower of the country is engaged in the war effort and not in farming.

The result of such a policy is obvious. FAO studies have forecast a serious situation in the "Indo-Chinese" states, and warned that in the absence of adequate and timely assistance the three states may face a critical food situation and even famine.

Six years ago when, in the face of withdrawal by the Americans, the North Vietnamese overran South Vietnam with massive aid from Russia, their party leader, Le Duan, had promised every family a radio, a refrigerator and a TV set in ten years. Only four years remain of the promised golden decade but the dream is nowhere near fulfilment. On the contrary, a massive military build-up and maintaining a big army outside its own border is telling upon the resources of tiny Vietnam, making it more and more dependent on the Soviets.

Vietnam, says another UN finding, produced 10 m tonnes of rice in 1980, which was three million tonnes below the target of the year and two million tonnes less than the crop of 1979. This year the prospects are no better with a likely shortfall of 4 m tonnes.

UNICEF officials were told by the Vietnamese experts that "malnutrition is the most common serious illness among the children today." Big Brother Russia is also not in a position to help much and a big chunk of the estimated \$3 m a day aid from it to Vietnam is in the form of military equipment.

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TWO INSIGHTS

M. R. MASANI

ANDROPOV

In my last column, I had concluded by putting a question about the future of the USSR. I had also wondered whether it was sheer coincidence that the release of Mr. Lech Walesa took place simultaneously with the death of Leonid Breznev. That question has since been answered in two separate quarters.

In *The Observer* (London) of November 14, Neal Acherson doubts if it was coincidence while *The Guardian* of November 19 has an article by Hella Pick which takes the same view.

In fact, there is a very amusing story that has just come out of Poland. When General Jaruzelski asked Breznev during his last visit to Moscow whether they could release the Solidarity leader, Breznev exploded and said: "Over my dead body". That is exactly what the Polish General did a little later!

In so far as the future is concerned, one of the major developments of the last fortnight has been that the hold of the dreaded KGB over the Soviet apparatus has, if anything, strengthened. Apart from Mr. Andropov himself, the promotion of another KGB functionary, Mr. Geildar Aliyev, as first Deputy Premier and member of the Politburo, would go to indicate that Mr. Andropov is moving his KGB cadres into key positions.

This can hardly be considered a cheering development. In view of the persecution of dissidents like Sakharov, Solzhenitsyn and Bokovsky, and of the Soviet Peace Committee which still continues, the omens are not auspicious.

Mr. Andropov's own record of ruthlessly breaking his promises is best illustrated by his behaviour as Soviet Ambassador in Hungary in 1956. He first assured the Communist Prime Minister Imre Nagy that the Russians had no intention of re-occupying Budapest.

While he was doing so, Soviet tanks were already entering the city! He then invited General Paul Maletier, the head of the Hungarian army, to his headquarters under safe conduct to discuss a ceasefire. The moment Maletier entered his office he was arrested and instantly shot.

Within a few weeks of this, Mr. Andropov assured the Yugoslav Government that if they asked former Prime Minister Imre Nagy to leave the Yugoslav embassy where he had taken refuge, he would not be harmed. The Yugoslavs accepted this assurance and the result was that Nagy was executed in a shameless breach of faith.

President Reagan and Mrs. Thatcher would be extremely naive if they trusted promises or assurances that came from such a quarter. They are both perfectly

justified therefore in saying that concrete Soviet actions in the right direction would be required before they can accept the bonafides of the Kremlin.

They at least cannot be accused of what Bernard Levin describes as "the profoundest and most dangerous mistake", which is "to assume that the Soviet representatives on the other side of the negotiating table are the same kind of people, moved by the same attitudes and pursuing their own interests in the same way, as are the spokesmen from our own side."

How about withdrawing Soviet puppets and troops from Afghanistan for a start, Comrade Andropov?

NON-ALIGNMENT

THE dubious quality of the Government of India's non-alignment has once again attracted notice by the way in which it is treating the representation of Kampuchea at the so-called non-alignment summit meeting to be held in Delhi next March. As is well-known, New Delhi had stuck its neck out by recognising the Vietnamese communist invaders of Kampuchea as the legitimate Government of that unfortunate country.

This position has been rejected over and over again by the U.N. Assembly which has turned down the absurd proposition. Only as recently as December 10, the Prime Minister of Malaysia appealed that the Indian Government should accede to the wishes of the majority in the non-aligned movement that Prince Norodom Sihanouk, leader of the anti-Vietnamese coalition, should attend the New Delhi meeting in March.

He went on to observe that it was not right for India was the host country to ignore the wishes of the participating countries, when the majority of the members of the non-aligned movement had voted in favour of the Prince and his coalition government at the United Nations General Assembly only recently.

The obstinate rejection of this plea came on December 13 when the Ministry of External Affairs announced that Prince Sihanouk would not be invited to attend the summit. Obviously, New Delhi wishes to persist in the thoroughly pro-Soviet attitude it has adopted in this matter.

All this in spite of the fact that a group of U.N. experts from the Third World drawn from Egypt, Kenya, Peru and the Philippines have found evidence that toxic-chemical weapons have been used by the Vietnamese in Kampuchea and Laos!

It is to be hoped that when the other countries come to Delhi in March they will assert themselves and invite Prince Sihanouk to join them. Otherwise, they too will be tarred with the same brush.

From "As I See It." Courtesy:
The Statesman, Calcutta.

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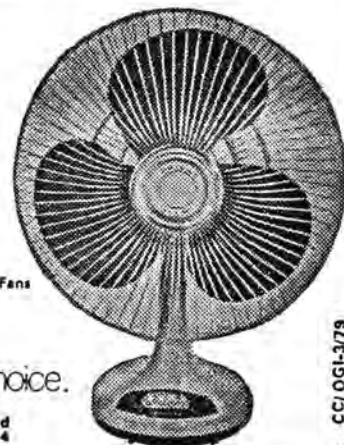
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Consumer Education in Schools

Report of Conclusions of the "Asian Seminar on Consumer Education in Schools", organised by the International Organisation of Consumers Unions (IOCU) in collaboration with the Karnataka Consumer Service Society and the Leslie Sawhny Programme of Training for Democracy, Bombay, from Nov. 22 to 25 in Bangalore.

Educating the consumer has a socially meaningful and economically productive value. There is a certain correlation between good citizenship and consumerism. Just as a citizen is one who takes an intelligent part in public life and exercises his civic rights and privileges with a sense of responsibility, similarly, a consumer is a responsible, disciplined and discerning user of scarce and fast depleting natural resources. He is, therefore, by implication a trustee of the community's interests and resources, whose behaviour, choice and life-style imparts a social and moral dimension to all commercial and industrial activities and can help preserve a clean, healthy, sane and humane environment.

Since a consumer has to constantly remember that nature provides enough for everybody's **need** but **not enough** for everybody's **greed**, it is imperative and best to begin this process of education and awareness from childhood itself; hence the need for consumer education in schools.

This was the consensus of the discussions held in Bangalore at the Asian Seminar, the first of its kind in India.

The participants came from Malaysia, Hongkong, Bangla Desh, Fiji, U.K., U.S.A., Holland and India (from Bombay, Baroda, Delhi, Madras, Hyderabad, Trichi, Bangalore).

The seminar's inaugural session was addressed by Mr. Veerappa Moily, Minister of Finance and Tourism, Karnataka. Mr. M. P. Patil, Minister of Food & Civil Supplies, Mr. Bishen Singh Bahadur on behalf of IOCU President, Mr. Anwar Fazal, and Mr. Arvind Deshpande, Jt. Hon. Secy. of the Leslie Sawhny Programme. Mrs. J. Mandana, President of KCSS welcomed the delegates. The valedictory session was addressed by Mr. G. B. Shanker Rao, Karnataka's Minister of Education, Mrs. Kamladevi Chattopadhyaya and Mrs. Alma Williams, Vice-Chairman of the British Consumers Association, and a Consultant to UNESCO, IOCU and ECM on consumer affairs.

The three working groups which considered ways and means of taking consumer education to schools and particularly to rural areas recommended that consumer education should be included in a formal way in appropriate classes for school children in the age of about 10-12. Consumer education should continue

in a non-formal way throughout school education. For this purpose, it would be necessary to identify at least one teacher in each school and train him to continue the work and be in contact with local and national consumer associations.

It was heartening to find that Mrs. Indira Gandhi, Prime Minister of India, and the Karnataka State Government have accepted in principle the need to make consumer education a part of the school syllabus.

The seminar stressed the need to make rural people "viable" consumers and create awareness among children and women in villages by training carried out through the mass media, including radio, theatre, folk music and films.

The seminar's suggestions will be sent to the Prime Minister and to all State Governments with a view to help introduce consumer education in schools at the beginning of the next academic year. An institute for training consumer activists, teachers and others is proposed to be set up near Bangalore.

Mrs. J. Mandana (KCSS)
Arvind Deshpande (L.S.P.)

A LETTER

Sir,

Contrary to its claims never to seek hegemony and superpower status, Communist China has embarked on a path which will unmistakably make it a big nuclear power. A news report says that it had recently successfully test-fired a medium-range missile from a submarine in the East China Sea, some 300 miles north of Taiwan.

While the China media hailed it as "a major achievement", the South East Asian countries got panicky, as it poses a serious threat to the peace and security not only of the Taiwan, Penghu, Kinmen and Mastu areas but also to the Western Pacific and even the whole of the Asian-Pacific region.

The latest demonstration of Chinese naval strength should be seen in the light of the fact that the Chinese Communists have always been belicose and have never given up their intention to seize Taiwan by force. The free world should have no illusions about the Chinese Communists, since they have no reservations or inhibitions whatsoever on the use of armed force to solve international disputes, to mitigate their internal turmoil, as exemplified by their naked aggression against Vietnam in February 1979 to "teach the Vietnamese a lesson", violating all international norms and regulations.

New Delhi

RAMA SWARUP

Soviet Satirical Novel Underlines a Crucial Truth

FLORA LEWIS

NOW comes a Soviet writer to . . . stress some human verities. He is a dissident who has not been heard from in the West before, and his special power is that he has a devastating sense of humour. With corrosive, sometimes brutal satire, Iouz Alechkowski illuminates the central fact about the relations between the people and the regime in Soviet society today. They are not trying to overthrow the system. They are trying to beat it, to wring from it the chance to lead reasonably normal lives and get what they can for themselves. The book, called **The Kangaroo**, was written in Moscow, where it circulated underground, and was recently published in France. An American edition is scheduled, but the book is very difficult to translate because it is written in the street slang Russians really use with no pretensions to high-minded literature. That is not only refreshing, but it gives Mr. Alechkowski's hilarious if cruel story the stunning impact of a "Candide," a Schweik, a "1984."

In this book, for the first time I know of, a Russian has stripped away the sonorities of Soviet history to highlight its absurdity from an ordinary, human point of view. It shows the way thought has evolved on the inside of the closed society. Mr. Alechkowski

was forced into exile, but he obviously knows what goes on beneath his people's skin, the rulers as well as the ruled.

His hero is a petty crook, with many aliases, who has worked for the KGB as an informer but who keeps protesting that he is a "normal man," who only wants to survive with a bit of everyday comfort.

Caught in the bureaucratic web and offered a choice of confessions to help with a required propaganda trial, he claims to have raped and killed the oldest kangaroo in the Moscow zoo. Because it is so outrageous, that seems to him the least dangerous and least inhuman of the idiotic self-accusations available.

At one point, the interrogator explains why a confession and show trial are necessary: "The people are bleeding the government white with their demands." So the hero is told his patriotic duty is to help put down the people by providing grounds for his own execution.

The kangaroo nonsense seems to promise the lesser evil, but it is only less than death itself. And that too is a basic truth, for the Soviet people manage to endure and survive no matter what. The happy ending is simply to persist in avoiding disaster.



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BOOK REVIEW

THE MEDIA CRISIS A Continuing Challenge.
Published by the World Press Freedom Committee,
Rex Rand Fund, The Newspaper Centre, Box 17407
Washington, D.C. 20041. Pp. 150.

This is a valuable and timely compilation of essays and statements on press freedom today. Allied topics include the question of what the third world wants, Unesco's scheme for a new world order in information, and the challenges that face media organisations.

The World Press Freedom Committee is pledged to a media free of government interference, a full and free flow of international news, a responsible and objective media, and providing technical assistance where it is needed.

Mr. C. R. Irani, managing director of **The Statesman**, Calcutta, and immediate past chairman of the International Press Institute, gets pride of place in the book with a forthright attack on Unesco's proposals, which first "provided the philosophical justification to member governments bent on controlling the media in their countries."

Mr. Irani also criticises the Macbride Commission report which implies "demands to tailor what we publish to the needs of governments". Unesco's International Programme for the Development of Communication and other Unesco bodies reflect what Mr. Irani sharply describes as "the permanent built-in majority against a free press."

A defence of the new information order is provided by Jean Ping, ambassador of Gabon and president of the group of African States at Unesco—none of which has a free press, of course! Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow, director-general of Unesco, talks about pluralism and the responsibilities of freedom, etc. but carefully avoids reference to the greater part of the world where pluralism is anathema. His quotations are confined to two Americans and the Pope.

In contrast, Carmel Budiardjo, who edits the Bulletin of the human rights organisation Tapol in London describes "How a 'New Order' Limits the News in Indonesia." Unesco, needless to say, is unlikely to be disturbed by this account of how, in addition to censorship and control, "the authorities use a variety of methods to promote pro-government newspapers, none of which enjoys a large circulation." It is interesting to read about an official "newspapers-to-the-villages" project which is limited to papers that refrain from creating "cynicism and apathy towards development, frustrations about conditions . . . and negative examples from city life."

Indonesia may be trusted to support Unesco's New Order!

Shankar Raj

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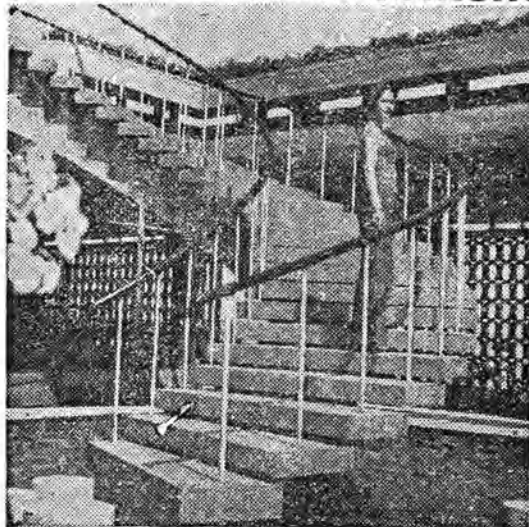
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WITH MANY VOICES

All communists believe that the next communist state is going to be heaven.

—Joe Grimond, M. P. in *Modern Liberalism*.

For 10 years, detente was based on words, from them, and not any deeds to back those words up. And we need some action—it takes two to tango—that they want to tango also.

—President Reagan quoted in *The Times*, November 13.

I have enjoyed politics far more than becoming a minister.

—Joe Grimond, M. P. in *Modern Liberalism*.

The profoundest and potentially the most dangerous mistake which we can make is to assume that the Soviet representatives on the other side of the negotiating table are the same kind of people, moved by the same attitudes and pursuing their own interests in the same way, as are the spokesmen for our own side.

—Bernard Levin in *The Times*, November 26.

The Socialists, even when they are Social Democrats, are by now barren.

—Giovanni Malagodi in *Modern Liberalism*.

We can in fact establish as a rule of thumb the fact that a hard line on the part of democracies results in a soft line on the part of dictatorships and that a soft and yielding line by democracies leads to increased aggression by dictatorships.

—Peter Sager in the *Swiss Press Review*.

No welfare state is possible in an economic cemetery.

—Fritz Bolkestein, M. P. in *Modern Liberalism*.

I will never get married again.

—Elizabeth Taylor quoted in the *Observer* (London), January 2.

I am extraordinarily patient, provided I get my own way in the end.

—Margaret Thatcher quoted in the *Observer* (London), January 2.

I am being frank about myself in this book. I tell my first mistake on page 850.

—Henry Kissinger quoted in the *Observer* (London), January 2.