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Lies About Poland

NISSIM EZEKIEL

IN dealing with the expansionist policies of the Soviet Union, and the subversive activities of its agents, in every country, world opinion is always late, divided and impotent. Poland provides the most recent example of this tragic truth. The human rights of the Polish people have been destroyed by their Soviet-supported government, while protests against "the cold war" can be heard everywhere.

Socialists, leftists, progressives and democrats of various hues oppose "U.S. intervention" in the internal affairs of other countries. But the Soviet Union controls the whole of Eastern Europe, directly and indirectly. It has completed two years of its occupation in Afghanistan. It relentlessly pursues its hegemonist aims wherever and whenever it can.

In Poland, the Soviet Union has now taken over. Why? Because, writes a well-known "Socialist" in India, "it was feared that Solidarity's adventurism would facilitate an easy take-over of Poland by the West" (The Daily, Bombay, 27th Dec. 1981).

But the Soviet Union has not invaded Poland, the "Socialist" would say. It is Poland's own "legitimate" government that acted so that the "crisis" may be "contained" and eventually resolved within the frontiers of the country."

Such is always the idiom of those who, whatever they may say to the contrary, want a permanent dictatorship of the left in every country, under Soviet supervision. They accept the communist lie that when the people under their dictatorship demand freedom they are committing the crime of being "openly anti-socialist." They accept the communist lie that opponents of their dictatorships stand for the revival of "capitalism", serve as agents of Western Im-

perialism and, in general, must be condemned if not imprisoned and killed as "extremist elements" "militant groups", "terrorist detachments". (Ibid)

It is these communist lies that are "transparent" and not the report of the Western news agencies about the suppression of the Polish people's struggle for their human rights. It is a lie to say that if the Polish government had not taken "the emergency measure" in time, it would have led to "civil war and unnecessary bloodshed". The alternative was democratisation, which is what Solidarity stands for and fights for...

Lies, lies, lies, in defence of the brutal Polish government! "Poland is fast returning to normal; and in some areas the emergency regulations have been relaxed". (All quotations are from the same Daily editoria'). No doubt, if by normal you mean success in putting down opposition to communist dictatorship; and about those "some areas" perhaps a map should have been provided, lightly shaded, against the dark shading for the rest of Poland.

The truth about the Polish tragedy is part of the larger truth about communism, leftism, all forms of Marxist-influenced Socialism and so-called progressive thinking about social and political conflicts in the modern world. It is that **in practice** they are **tyrannical**. Ideologically, they are fundamentalist, i.e., they believe that to oppose them is to be damned. They are therefore essentially anti-democratic, since in a democracy, opposition is legitimate, and differences of opinion must always co-exist.

All the attempts of the last hundred years or more to accommodate these modes of political thought and action within a democratic process have failed miserably. There is today not a single communist or socialist society which has assimilated the practices of democratic pluralism.

BETRAYAL OF POLAND

P. N. LEKHI

In June 1956, thousands of workers chanting "we want bread, we want freedom" stormed the Communist Party headquarters in Poznan, the fourth largest city in Poland. They got neither bread nor freedom but bullets. They lit the flame of liberty which Solidarity is holding high today.

By October 1956, feelings against Russians in Poland were so intense that Khrushchev had to cancel his public visit. He was told, Poland was ready to fight. So much so the pro-Russian elements in the Polish ruling party were thrown out from their positions of influence and power.

In December 1970, the Polish workers again rose in Gdansk. The general strike declared by them could be broken only by use of tanks. As in 1956, so in 1970 many were killed or maimed in the struggle.

In the summer of 1976, the workers again rose in Poland in protest against rise in prices. They set on fire Communist Party offices and with bare hands tore out the railway tracks.

It was 16 months ago that Solidarity was born. On 17th September 1980, Solidarity held its first national convention. Lech Walesa warned the Polish Government that Solidarity had grown too big to be pushed around.

Solidarity in this national convention, demanded abolition of censorship, release of political prisoners, right to form independent trade unions and better working conditions for workers. These demands were consistent with the Philadelphia Charter, which is the declaration of the International Labour Organisation, and to which Poland and Russia are parties.

It was not for nothing that Solidarity was recognised as a force to be reckoned with. Its membership is estimated at 8 to 10 million out of about a total of a 16 million labour force in Poland.

It enjoys legal status and recognition under the Polish laws for which Solidarity fought actions in the Polish Courts. On 10 November, 1980, the Supreme Court of Poland ruled in favour of Solidarity that it is not subordinate to the Polish United Workers' Party—which is

Indian Solidarity with Poland

PUBLIC MEETING IN BOMBAY

Solidarity with the people of Poland was the purpose of a public meeting which was held in Bombay on 28th December 1981 under the joint auspices of the Indian Liberal Group (affiliated to the Liberal International in London), the Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom and the Democratic Research Service.

Mr. M. R. Masani who was in the chair described the developments in Poland as nothing short of a Russian reconquest of Poland and expressed particular sympathy for Mr. Les Walesa who he described as one of the few heroic figures of our time.

The main speaker was Mr. P. N. Lekhi, an advocate of the Supreme Court, who had come down from Delhi to address the meeting. His speech was both inspiring and informative. Extracts from his address are published here.

An interesting feature of the meeting was the large number of Polish men and women who were present and who showed their appreciation of the sympathy and solidarity shown for their people.

the name under which the Communist Party in Poland function.

Solidarity won for the Polish workers a 42-hour week. It secured release of all workers who were arrested for taking part in the 1976 strike. It also secured the right to form independent trade unions. Solidarity was banned on 13th December, 1981.

This is a very brief narration of the heroic efforts made by the Polish workers and by Solidarity to rekindle in their land the torch of human rights and civil liberties. It is obvious there is something intrinsically wrong with the system and structure of the Government in Poland, because not the successive generations of working people there but the same generations of workers has been and is repeatedly rejecting that system and structure.

The excuses for the imposition of martial law peddled by Gen. Jaruzelski, in his broadcast to

the Polish people, are strikingly similar in content with the 26th June, 1975 broadcast to the Indian people by Mrs. Gandhi, when she inflicted a similar calamity on the people of India.

We know on the authority of findings of the Shah Commission, that on 26th June 1975, Mrs. Gandhi traded brilliant lies in her broadcast and we can safely assume, by parity of reasoning, Gen. Jaruzeski did no less in his broadcast to the Polish people when justifying the emergency declared by him in Poland.

The very next day of Mrs. Gandhi shackling this country in June 1975, *Pravda*, the official organ of the Communist Party of the USSR, deliberately published misleading and dishonest comments on the Indian situation, in its issue of 27th June, 1975. It wrote :

"The decree on the proclamation of the state of emergency in the country. . . . (was) rendered necessary by the open conspiracy of reaction against the government of the country. Democratic forces approved the arrest of leaders of the right wing parties, introduction of censorship and the end of noisy gatherings organised by the right wing parties."

I do not intend to paraphrase "democracy" and "right-wing parties." I leave it to you to give these expressions the right meaning, as we are all familiar with it in the peculiar political jargon employed by the Russian Imperialists. The point I would like to make is, as in the case of the internal emergency in India, *Tass* and *Pravda* repeated the exercise in defence of the emergency in Poland on the 14th December, 1981 on somewhat similar lines, *Tass* said :

"It is no secret to anyone that the enemies of socialism in Poland, aiming to overthrow the existing social system. . . . have jeopardised the independence of the Polish People's Republic."

Unlike the comments on the emergency in India neither *Tass* nor *Pravda* claimed that the people of Poland had approved martial law in their country. This omission is a tribute to the people of Poland.

But the Russian lackeys in India, the Raos and Krishnans of the C.P.I., understandably reacted as they did. In June 1975 *New Age*, the official organ of the C.P.I., came out with a banner heading, ("Fascist Conspiracy Crushed" In 1975 the same paper, in its issue dated

20th December, 1981 announces on its first page in bold capital letters : "Counter-Revolutionary coup bid by Solidarity foiled."

Solidarity in Poland is a movement, like our J.P. movement. Solidarity advocates social change, electoral reforms and the like in Poland as did the J.P. Movement in India. For the bandwagon of Communists in India and their mentors in Moscow, both movements are conspiracies of counter-revolutionary forces.

The speed with which the J.P. movement gained popular acceptance in India has been matched by Solidarity in Poland because of a common factor existing in both situations. It is the quest of the common man and woman for a popular platform to register the universal protest against the tyranny of the system and the structure of an evil and unpopular government.

The popularity and universal acceptance of Solidarity in Poland alarmed both Moscow and the Government in Poland propped up under the Russian umbrella. Six years ago, the popularity of the J.P. movement in India had caused a similar alarm both to Mrs. Indira Gandhi's unpopular government in India and the Russian government in Moscow. In like circumstances and conditions, both India and Poland came under emergency rule. Emergency rule is always an outlet for the tensions which build up in a system of government when it gets out of tune with the times. It is nothing but a conspiracy hatched by discredited rulers against their own people.

Mrs. Gandhi admitted in the Rajya Sabha on 22nd July, 1975, that foreign heads of the States and governments had advised her to resort to emergency provisions. And it would be clear to any reasonable person, after reading the statement on the Polish emergency circulated by *Tass*, that the emergency in Poland is also Russian-inspired.

Poland, along with Russia and 5 other East European States is a member of the Warsaw Treaty Organisation. This Treaty contains the "consultation" clause. India has also signed a treaty with Russia in 1971 which contains a similar clause for "consultation". According to the Russian interpretation of "consultation", it is an enabling provision for Russia to interfere in the internal affairs of the other signatory States.

Russia only recently gave a practical demonstration of how it understands the meaning of "consultation" by marching uninvited into Afghanistan with which State it had signed in 1978 a similarly worded treaty, containing the "consultation" clause. So long as the Indo-Soviet Treaty is in force, Russian interference in the affairs of any third State with similar Treaty provisions of "consultation" becomes our legitimate and natural concern.

Russian designs in India are suspect because in the Russian view creation of a puppet government in India is a realizable near-term objective. Let us not forget we are willy-nilly invited to lean heavily on Russian support and assistance. Today four-fifth of our total import of weaponry is from Russia. Today there are over 13,000 Russian advisors in India who are invisibly interfering in every branch of our national activity. A Russian Parliamentary "Board" only recently came to India to interview Mrs. Gandhi's son, to evaluate and assess if from Russian policy objectives he filled the bill and deserved to receive Moscow's approval and support when succession opens.

As in Poland, Russia wants a full say as to who should head the Central Government in India. This position is as unacceptable to us as it is to the Polish workers. Enlightened self-interests dictate solidarity with Poland's Solidarity.

The Polish people are today waging an unequal battle. Russia is fighting the people of Poland by proxy. It is a struggle no different from the one in which they were engaged in 1939. No station of perpetual safety for democracy, as we understand this expression to mean, will be arrived at if we allow ourselves to fall victims of the camouflage practised by Russia in the Polish situation.

On 17th September, 1939, Russia stabbed Poland in the back, Russia invaded a beleaguered Poland, which was already reeling under the blitzkrieg of the German Air Force and the pincer movements of the German Panzer divisions.

In 1939, Russia deported more Polish slaves from Poland to Labour camps in Siberia than did all the Pharaohs of ancient history put together.

If cold statistics can capture the picture of genocide of the Poles by the Russians, 15 lakhs

mostly Polish males, perished in the Siberian wastes—one out of every 15 Poles died in Russia's concentration camps.

Amongst the five acts which the Genocide Convention recognizes as a crime of genocide is imposing measures intended to prevent births in a group. Deportation of males is such a measure. The imbalance in the population ratio in Poland caused by this act of the Russians continue to this day. There are 17 million males as against 18.1 million females in Poland. This is the conclusive proof of genocide the Russians committed in Poland. If Poles are angry, there is a good, valid, and historically sound reason for it.

In the Potsdam Conference the Allied Powers handed over Poland to Russia after the end of the Second World War.

The mass support in Poland for the struggle launched by Solidarity for "cleaner democracy" was obviously not to the liking of Russia. Therefore in March 1981 Russia summoned leaders of the Polish government to Moscow and gave them an ultimatum to either turn the course of events and crush Solidarity or face Russian intervention. The Russian ultimatum was nothing but the practical application of Brezhnev's doctrine of limited sovereignty. Incidentally Brezhnev propounded his doctrine on 12th November, 1968, in an address to the Polish Communist Party Congress held in Warsaw. Stripped of its oblique language, the doctrine means that when internal forces in a Russian Satellite state rejects the Russian model, it shall be imposed by force.

Russia cannot contemplate any person or organisation, within its sphere of influence, demanding the right to strike, lifting of censorship, access to media, effective popular voice in forming national policies or the winding up of the rule by Commissars.

Had Gandhiji been alive he would have repeated in the Polish context of today what he said in 1939. He would have raised his powerful voice in protest against what is happening in Poland. He would have championed the cause of a "cleaner democracy" in Poland.

But what does the one, who passes off as a Gandhi these days, say on the events in Poland:

"My Government feels that since what has happened in Poland is essentially an internal matter, it is not required to express any views on the merits of the action."

A VARIETY OF COMMENT

K. S. VENKATESWARAN

Judicial Integrity

EVEN at the best of times the public, by and large, has seldom looked up to the law with any particular fondness. Indeed, the general attitude of the lay citizen towards litigation has been one of unconcealed disfavour.

It shouldn't surprise anyone, therefore, if the recent spate of unsavoury disclosures about happenings in the Indian judiciary spawns many more cynics among our sturdy citizenry. The proverbial shortness of public memory may have succeeded in erasing from most minds the shameful episodes in 1973 and 1976. Judges of proven independence and integrity were then brazenly bypassed for appointment to the highest judicial office on purely political grounds.

Also, very few of our articulate masses might still remember the sad lowering of judicial dignity which ensued from the unprecedented act in 1980 of an honourable judge of the Supreme Court crystalising his eulogistic views on the Prime Minister in a letter addressed to the worthy lady herself.

Even so, it seems reasonable to believe that the publication, six weeks ago, of the controversial correspondence leading to the non-confirmation of two judges in the Delhi High Court is bound to leave an undesirable impression. Surely it will on at least that segment of our populace which still retains some faith in the intrinsic fairness of our judicial system.

As if to reinforce that impression comes the latest of Mr. Antulay's periodic outbursts on the judiciary. Mooting the idea of doing away with the Original Side of the Bombay High Court, the learned Chief Minister, who we are told, is also a barrister, waxed eloquent on the "unnecessary" waste of judicial time and talent that the appeal procedure in the Original Side entailed.

Apart from the utter unsoundness of the logic behind the purported move, it is worth asking Mr. Antulay and his fellow-travellers as to what the Government has done in filling the existing vacancies to the various High Courts.

More important, what they have done to ensure better conditions of service so that the best legal talent is attracted from the Bar. The boot, alas, is on the other foot. The sooner this is recognised, the better.

The Stature of Wodehouse

IT is definitely far from cheering for Wodehouse fans that the centenary of the great humorist's birth should have gone virtually unnoticed in India. Except for an odd article or two and some salacious snippets from Mr. Auberon Waugh's controversial piece in the *London Observer* (in which he advanced some novel suggestion about Jeeves ideological and sexual preferences), the Indian media was surprisingly indifferent to the event.

Arguably, few writers in contemporary history have been subjected to as much acerbic, sometimes hostile, criticism as Wodehouse. Few have won as much acclaim and approbation in a productive career that covered well over three score years. Hilaire Belloc hailed him as 'the best writer of English now living', while Sean O'Casey denounced him as "a person (not) of any importance whatsoever in English humorous literature, or any literature at all."

How many detractors or, for that matter, defenders, could claim to really know the man? The truth is best brought out by the publishers of one of his autobiographical works: "...there are few modern authors about whom less is known or more is speculated. A gentle, unassuming man, he has side-stepped personal publicity where he could, preferring to return to the quiet backwaters where he could devote himself to his two life-interests—reading and writing."

Perhaps the only consolation that Wodehouse fans in this country may have is that this year has seen publication of what is evidently the first serious study on the writer ever undertaken by an Indian. Dr. M. N. Sharma's *Wodehouse, The Fictionist* seeks to "convey an idea of how much serious thinking, minute ob-

servation, linguistic skill, careful arrangement, critical study and, above all, painstaking practice must have gone into the weaving and writing of Wodehouse's comic fiction."

Though sketchy in parts, the book is not without substantial merit. At any rate, as David Jasen notes in his Foreword, it is "a welcome addition to a growing body of explanatory Wodehouse literature."

Honour Thy Elders

"If there is any fixed star in our constitutional constellation," observed Justice Jackson of the U.S. Supreme Court over four decades ago, "it is that no official, high or petty, can prescribe what shall be orthodox in politics, nationalism, religion or other matters of opinion to force citizens to confess by word or act their faith there."

One would have thought that this unquestionably wholesome proposition applied as well to the Indian Constitution as it did to the American, given the broad congruence of values enshrined in either document. Apparently, the

Government of Maharashtra is of a different mind, if a recent circular issued to all educational colleges in the State is anything to go by.

The circular, signed by the Director of Education last month, enjoins the heads of all colleges in Maharashtra to ensure that every student takes a pledge twice a year, on Republic Day and Independence Day, as follows: "I will honour my national flag and anthem, standing at attention. I will honour my elders. I will not harm the national wealth. I will keep my home and surroundings clean. I will strive to be honest to the best of my capacity."

Now, no sensible person can seriously object to such an innocuous affirmation of manifestly desirable values. Even so, it is debatable whether, on principle, the idea of mandatory oath-taking can be allowed to receive the imprimatur of the best of my capacity."

Justice Jackson's words merit recall: "To believe that patriotism will not flourish if patriotic ceremonies are voluntary and spontaneous instead of a compulsory routine, is to make an unflattering estimate of the appeal of our institutions to free minds."

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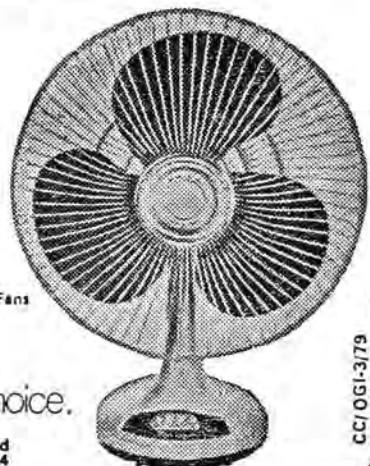
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The Real Battle in Angola

South Africa has taken a leaf out of Israel's copybook. In the words of General Lloyd, South Africa's commander in Namibia, a decision has been made to "go for the wasp's nest, not the single wasp".

And, as it turns out, some pretty big hornets have been winkled out in southern Angola. A nest of Soviet military men, no less. Several of them were killed, one was captured, and the rest fled. Western journalists taken into Angola by the South Africans have been able to inspect the empty vodka bottles.

Well, we have always said as much. But in the floods of Communist propaganda which now cover African affairs, such news tends to get swept away. What is important now to keep from being swept away is a little-mentioned aspect of this Angolan problem. For the South African incursion, the damage to SWAPO, and the predictable UN debates have been well reported.

But in southern Angola, squeezed between Scylla and Charybdis, a genuine people's army is fighting for its life and for the future of the country. The South African incursion took place along the western half of the frontier with Angola. On the eastern half, all was quiet, however. Because the eastern half in Angola is held by soldiers of Jonas Savimbi's UNITA movement, whose arms are turned not against South Africa but against the Communist masters of Angola.

UNITA is strong in southern Angola. A regular army of 11 infantry battalions has been created. Most of their arms are of Soviet make, captured from the MPLA forces in the last few years. The rest are Chinese: in 1979 a 550-ton consignment of arms was sent from Peking, including AK47 rifles, 75mm recoilless cannons, 60mm and 82mm mortars, anti-tank mines, rocket-propelled grenades and 12.7mm anti-aircraft guns. The latter have enabled UNITA to shoot down two giant Antonov 26s, an MI-8 helicopter and a C-130 transport plane belonging to the Communist government. Most UNITA officers have been trained in Morocco,

and the biggest contributor to UNITA's funds is Saudi Arabia. So UNITA has friends too.

Although UNITA's relations with South Africa are normal, the only actual aid it receives from Pretoria is a continuous flow of diesel fuel. Savimbi detests apartheid as much as any black African leader to the north or west of him. But he is concerned with Soviet and Cuban colonialism in his own country; and, hemmed in as he is, he has not too much time on his hands for solving South Africa's problems.

He is planning a northward offensive later this year. Apart from his infantry, he has 80,000 guerrillas throughout Angola. His is a representative movement, and in spite of its precarious position it already has fledgeling democratic institutions — the only democratic institutions that Angola has ever seen. He would like these to be installed in Luanda to rule the country. He is prepared to negotiate with the MPLA government, but only on the basis of total independence for Angola, which means departure of the Soviet and Cuban occupation forces.

Yes, Soviet too. Whatever the world thinks about South Africa's motives, the world knows of the Soviet presence now. And not just from UNITA handouts. The real freedom-fighters on the ground are Jonas Savimbi's men, fighting for the freedom of Angola. This news does not change anything for them. They have known all along about the Soviets. They know what faces them when they start the march north-westwards towards Luanda.

IAN TICKLE

Swiss Press Review and News Report

VOICES—2

Tele-Review

The considerable talents and good looks of actors Naseeruddin Shah and Tom Alter (both of Junoon fame). Luku Sanyal, and Shanta Gokhale were telescoped into Saturday night's (12-12-1981) "Vibrations" on Doordarshan, featuring Saleem Peeradina and his Poems. A welcome feature, but on thinking back one that was flawed by over-production. One felt that perhaps the poems, and the poet's personality,

might have come across better had he been allowed to recite and talk about his own poems.

The flaws in the programme arose basically from two causes. The address of poetry is to the "inward eye"—clear but unrefined. The visual medium leads to excessive definition, and pre-empts the working of the imagination. This happened to some of Peeradina's finest poems, 'Marriage Manual', "Tree" and "Finalities". Clever lighting, stage effects and facial expressions only led to greater distraction.

Then again, Mr. Peeradina was never allowed to finish his thoughts while replying to Ms. Gokhale's many posers. Ironically, as the chief person, he was given the least exposure. This was unfortunate, since the poet had lucid thoughts about what, for him, was a poem, and about how a poet sets about externalising his sensibilities.

And is it a good idea for the interviewer to be the poet's critic as well? Ms. Gokhale talked tentatively about the poet's admirable gift of 'conceiving concrete images', and about his "use of irony as being at once the source of his strength and his weakness" and so on. It would have been better for the poem to be recited, and for the viewer to come to his own conclusions. Such anterior criticism merely generates self-consciousness, unmeant patronising and defensive attitudes.

INDU SARAIYA

VOICES—3

Oh to be an Indian!

Madras is in the grip of a new parlour game called "Who is an Indian?" It's played between any number of people anywhere, but works best in the columns of newspapers for some reason. The best thing about the game is that the rules can be changed to suit the situation.

For instance, when two Hindus meet, they can denounce the government, discuss the treasure hidden under Mrs. Gandhi's framehouse which they allege could buy up the entire middle east, and conclude that things were better under the British. But neither can under the circumstance corner the other into an endgame position.

If however a Muslim stricks his neck out and makes the same statements, everyone else can scream "Are you an Indian?" while spectators

can mutter "All Muslims are really Pakistanis at heart". If at this point the player is reduced to a speechless state, one point is scored by the side that shouted the question first.

Sometimes the game is played through amplifiers, the louder the better. During some seasons, every temple in the city is allowed three days of celebration when it can broadcast its message as frequently and stridently as it wants. Since every street corner has its temple it means an uninterrupted barrage of noise, though of course people call it "filling the air with the name of the Lord".

If however a mosque, in keeping with the times, installs an amplifier and the mullah calls the faithful to prayer with nerve-shattering insistence five times a day, people don't complain about the noise but curse loudly and ask, "Is that an Indian way of behaving?" By the time this game is played out, most of the participants are generally deaf and the only people to benefit are, presumably, the manufacturers of loudspeakers and other related gear.

Or else the game can be played on the sports field. Any number of Hindus or for that matter Christians and other infidels may talk about Pakistani cricket scores or their hockey team's chances of winning the gold at the next Olympiad; but if a Muslim happens to voice a favourable remark, the others are all entitled to jump up and down over him and shout, "But are you an Indian?"

The most interesting variation of the game has however not yet been worked out, though one hopes someone will have the stamina. Here again there are two sets of people, both of whom have gone abroad. One set which migrated to the USA with their doctor's degrees, engineering certificates and scientist's stamps belong, in the South, mostly to the upper-crust Brahmin classes. Though they may have sent money back to their parents, and to educate further of their kin for the foreign market, they have as a whole preferred to forget their country which, as everyone knows, gave them no opportunities for their talents, only the training.

The other group consists of unskilled or semi-skilled workers for whom nobody cared until they found work in the middle east, where

MAJOR CHANGE IN BRITISH POLITICS

RASHMI TANEJA

CROSBY, which lies in north-west Lancashire, could well go down in history as the town which dealt a seismic shock to the British body politic. In the by-election held on 26th November, the predominantly middle-class residents elected to Westminster the first Social Democrat M.P., Mrs. Shirley Williams. Mrs. Williams captured this safe Conservative seat by a margin of over 5000 votes. The Tory candidate fared badly, while the Labour candidate lost his deposit.

The Crosby result is a barometer of the intriguing state of politics in Great Britain. It is conceivable that the era of the traditional two-party system may be at an end, and that we are witnessing the emergence of a strong and viable third force in the guise of the Social Democratic Party which has formed an alliance with the smaller Liberal Party.

The astonishing success of the SDP-Liberal coalition at the polls takes place at a time when

(Continued from page 8)

they had to slog more or less like slaves, but even then no one cared much since it was after all their choice. When this group started sending money back home, however, people began to get suspicious, "Gulf money is pouring into the country", they said.

Yet these people kept remitting the money back faithfully to the homeland rather than into Swiss bank accounts, like some of the more astute people in the other group, to build better houses in their native places, to build more beautiful places of worship to thank god for their newly found fortunes, and perhaps even to build a better country to which they could one day return. For, unlike the first group, most of them do return.

The only problem is that since the second group happen also to be Muslims nobody seems to enjoy the game anymore. The rules are being re-worked so that they don't stand inside their mosques one day and scream back, "Who is an Indian now?"

GEETA DOCTOR

the two major parties—the ruling conservatives and the Labour opposition—are beginning to look decidedly ragged. The government led by Mrs. Margaret Thatcher, which is now halfway through its term of office, has achieved no success on the economic front. With inflation running at 11½%, and unemployment figures touching the 3 million mark, the government's popularity has plummeted.

Mrs. Thatcher's sole obsession is to bring down inflation through the pursuit of tough monetarist policies. Her firm fiscal measures, which include public spending cuts and high interest rates, have however only served to fuel inflation, ravage industry and lengthen the dole queues.

Mrs. Thatcher's hard-line policies have resulted in growing disquiet both among members of her parliamentary party and within the Cabinet. In September, in a move to quell the growing criticism of her policies, she removed three of her dissenting ministers and replaced them with loyalists. These critics, whom she calls "wets" favour a re-appraisal of her doctrinaire strategy, which is causing severe economic hardship.

One of the dismissed "wets", Sir Ian Gilmour, the former deputy Foreign Secretary, sharply rebuked her for "steering full speed ahead for the rocks".

Notwithstanding her critics, Mrs. Thatcher has made it plain that she will not be stamped into changing her over-all strategy. At last year's Conservative Party conference, she challenged her critics who favoured a U-turn in her policies with; "You turn if you want to. The lady's is not for turning."

The Crosby verdict and the low rating at the opinion polls, along with the absence of any signs of economic improvement is clearly causing concern among Tories. They fear that they will lose the next general election, to be held in 2½ years from now. There are no prospects yet of an open revolt within the party. As the Tories by tradition do not change leaders in

mid-stream, it seems likely that Mrs. Thatcher will complete her term of office.

Whereas the Conservatives are disheartened by the dogmatism of their leader, the members of the Labour Party appear to be intent on hara-kiri. Opinion polls as well as the by-election results indicate that Labour's unpopularity has reached its lowest level since 1930s. Labour appears to be irrevocably split into right and left-wing factions. Since the last general election the two wings have waged "a struggle for the soul of the party."

Unlike the Tories, Labourites love to exhibit their ideological differences in public—differences that were brought to the fore at the party's conference in October. In the contest for the deputy leadership, although Mr. Denis Healy, the candidate for the moderate right won by a slender margin, the delegates overwhelmingly endorsed several of the left-wing measures propounded by his rival, Mr. Tony Benn.

According to the policy document published by the party's national executive, the next Labour government would take Britain out of the EEC without a referendum, would be in favour of unilateral nuclear disarmament, but would remain committed to NATO. The contradictions in Labour's foreign policy demonstrate the gulf dividing the moderates from the radicals.

Mr. Benn, the articulate but abrasive darling of the Left clearly believes that only a full-blooded socialist programme would solve Britain's economic problems. He is pledged to enhancing trade union power, and to the re-nationalisation of industries without compensation. His support comes mainly from the "fat left" or the Trotskyite militant activists who control the party at the constituency level.

Mr. Benn's opponents on the right are alarmed that such measures, unpopular with the larger electoral constituency throughout the country can only take the party sliding to disaster. They blame their party leader, Mr. Michael Foot, for fudging issues and not fighting hard enough to curb the disruptive activities of Mr. Benn and his followers. Mr. Foot's belated attempts at disowning Mr. Benn seem unlikely to save the party from catastrophe.

As the Labour party lurches to the left and the Conservatives swing to the Right, the deserted middle ground has been captured by

the new SDP-Liberal alliance. The third party has won considerable popular support with the broad mass of the population, disenchanted by both major parties. Mr. Roy Jenkins, one of the founder members of the SDP, and a former-president of the EEC insists: "We are not a Mark II Labour Party," answering the criticism levelled at the Social Democrats that they are all former Labour members. The SDP commands the support of 25 MPs. 24 of them former Labour MPs. and 1 Tory.

While the major parties at first dismissed the Centre alliance as a case of mid-term blues—after by-elections in the past—there are signs of anxiety in both Labour and Tory camps as the new alliance sweeps the by-elections.

If present trends continue, the rise of the new coalition may well be unstoppable, unless the unthinkable occurs—Mr. Tony Benn abandons his policies of the radical left, and Mrs. Margaret Thatcher of the revolutionary right does a U-turn.

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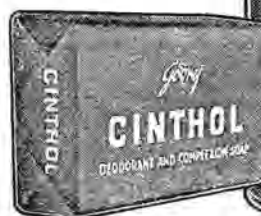
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THE WORLD OF BOOKS

MEN AND RIVERS by Humayun Kabir

First Published, 1945. Reprinted by Orient Longman, Sangam Books, Rs. 12.00, 1982

This novel records the ebb and flow of human relationships within a small rural community. Nazu Mia and Asgar Mia, earlier the closest of friends, are now the bitterest of enemies. Nazu's son Malek is yet welcomed into Asgar's household when by unhappy circumstance the young lad is left alone in the world. As Malek grows into manhood, the affection between him and Asgar's daughter Nuru develops into love.

This tide of feeling serves to uncover a long submerged secret: both Malek and Nuru have been born of the same woman. The "law of blood" prohibits a union of the two in marriage, and a shattered Malek leaves home to forge a new life elsewhere.

The action occurs within a village situated on the banks of a mighty river, and the narrative draws a direct parallel between the unpredictable course of human destiny and the capricious nature of the elemental world within which the individual lives and dies. The novel highlights the frailty and ineffectiveness of human beings when confronted with the sweeping forces of Nature and Fate. Even as Nazu drowns in the river during the sudden eruption of a violent storm, so the life of his son unexpectedly undergoes a violent upheaval when he learns the true facts of his parentage.

Like the theme itself, the mode of characterization is simple and straightforward. Nazu and Asgar function in accordance with their roles in the action as character contrasts, the one short-tempered and jealous, the other calm and sensitive. The figures in themselves, however, lack depth and resonance and remain one-dimensional. We see only the one side of character and not the many facets. Our views of Malek and Nuru are equally limited, though the

surge of tender feeling that draws them together is delicately traced.

It is the minor characters in the novel which are indeed rendered with greater impact than the principal figures, for the mode of characterization lends itself with greater effect to short sketches than to sustained and well-developed portraits. Particularly memorable are the figures of the *faqir* and the *hakim*. With quick, deft strokes, Mr. Kabir exhibits the fundamental quality of the "holy" man who garners esteem with a few vague phrases and promises.

Equally striking is the character of the doctor who is most flatteringly polite to Nazu as long as he perceives some advantage to be gained but who becomes childishly rude and pettish in his disappointment.

The style of the narrative reflects the unsophisticated quality of the life it records. Events are depicted in the same clear and direct manner in which the villagers converse with each other and go about their daily affairs. Certain scenes are vividly rendered, such as the tussle with a crocodile, the whipping of a girl believed to be possessed by evil spirits, and the plight of the villagers in the years of drought.

These scenes are indeed the more effective for the plain diction employed in their presentation. It must be noted, however, that Malek's encounter with the river pirates verges towards melodrama and is not in keeping with the general tone of the narrative.

Men and Rivers, then is a simple story, simply told, and this simplicity becomes at once the novel's major strength as well as the source of its greatest weakness. It is nonetheless a novel well worth reading if only as a base from which to measure how far Indian authors writing English have moved in the 35 years since this book was first published.

FEROZA VAGHAIWALLA

ME GRANDAD 'AD AN ELEPHANT': Three Stories of Muslim life in South India, by Vaikom Basheer. UNESCO Publications £ 3.00 pp. xviii + 204.

THERE is a kind of writing which is aggressively parochial. There is another in which the human situation is more important than an exotic locale. Basheer's artistry is of the second type.

In this collection, all three stories have Basheer's native Keralite Muslim setting—the most natural choice for him. But the localizing in no way limits their appeal. The fact that the stories succeed in translation testifies to the author's universality.

Central to the writer's vision is a remarkable authenticity, a commitment to the human and the possible. He never overstresses uniqueness or grotesqueries. The unusual background adds to the reader's interest but is never the centre of attention. The people are familiar, working out their ives in an alien world. Basheer has no ideological axe to grind, his writing is therefore unspoil in its simplicity.

The stories are life-like but not confessional, not even *Pathumna's Goat* which is largely autobiographical. The most tragic of the three is *Childhood Friend*. Its plot is melodramatic. The heroine Suhra dies of T.B., leaving Majid poor and alone in an indifferent world, with a mother, father and two sisters to support. Basheer never indulges in the violent breast-beating of the Hindi movie tradition. The tragic element is muted. The story ends as people might react in sorrow, with a vision and a nostalgia for the past.

The title story is structurally more complex. The protagonist, Kanjupattumma, is a naive and charming young girl. Her love story unifies the many strands of the narrative. It is humorous, ironical, satirical of customs, rituals, and decadent beliefs.

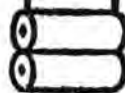
Basheer is no missionary. His ways are gentle, his views unobtrusive. He is a story-teller in a very basic sense. The stories are depersonalized. The writer never manipulates the reader's attention with recarks or asides.

In Kanjupattumma's insular world she is a special person. She is "darling daughter of the darling daughter of Anamakker. Her grandad 'ad an elephant—a huge tusker". This refrain is prevalent throughout the narrative, with the elephant becoming a symbol for past glory and present degeneration.

The quality of Kanjupattumma's life disintegrates with the decrease in her father's income and power. Her mother's obsession with her past prevents her from adjusting to a poorer life-style. She does not evolve in a crisis. She remains the same person with the same dreams.

Pattumna's Goat is again funny, ironical and self-deprecating. It dwells on the details of the everyday existence of country people in ordinary circumstances, portraying even pettiness and deviousness with a sense of fun.

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Raj Inqalab's Life and Death Struggle in Bhagalpur Jail

A young artist whose paintings and songs could easily be seen and heard on the streets of Patna during the hectic days in 1974, has been rotting in Bhagalpur jail for the last three years without trial. He has spurned bail, and for about two and a half years has been on a fast unto death, while the police have resorted to forced feeding.

The name of this extraordinarily spirited young man is Raj Inqalab who, years earlier, had come to Patna from Meerut with the intention of participating in the Bihar movement. Patterned on martial tunes, he composed many a song against oppression and high-handedness. These songs are great favourites with the young of Bihar even today.

The only crime of this young poet and composer is that in the Rajaun division of the Bhagalpur district he organised bands of people near the villages of Nawada and Neema, placing before them a scheme for constructing a bridge and a dam. Before this, Raj lived at Kalpanakutir in Rajendranagar, Patna, where workers who came to participate in the Bihar Movement from outside Bihar often lived. There, on two wooden planks fixed on a four-wheel wooden cart, he had designed a full-size portrait of Jayaprakash Narayan.

This portrait, depicting among other things the shackles of oppression, melted before the blazing sun in the form of the movement. Raj took this portrait out on the roads of Patna every day and incited the people against dictatorial methods by singing songs in his loud attractive voice. Later, when the Loknayak gave his clarion call to institute Janata Sarkar (People's Government) in every village, Raj Inqalab, along with the poet Nagarjuna, went to the Pachrukhty division of the district of Sivan and courted arrest even before the declaration of the Emergency. After getting confined to Sivan and Buxar jails for a few months, he was at last brought to the notorious Bhagalpur camp jail. Even after the Janata

Party government got installed in 1977, he was among the last to be released.

Raj stayed in the Gandhi Peace Foundation centre at Bhagalpur. He took his meals in an ordinary hotel named Lakshman. He ate only once in twenty-four hours and that too quite sparingly. The hotelier was highly impressed by his idealistic nature and genial personality, so that he refused to take any money for the meals he supplied to Raj. He also requested Raj to keep the former's son with him so that under his benign influence the son's character might improve. Being a highly self-respecting man, Raj's temperament as also his behaviour was often misunderstood by his companions, and by the personnel at the Gandhi Peace Foundation centre at Bhagalpur.

Came the rainy season and when the hotelier who supplied food to Raj at Bhagalpur started for his village home with a view to getting his fields ploughed and sown, Raj prepared to go with him. Getting down from the bus which took him there, he arrived at the Rajvad village in the Rajaun division. A village market was held there at that time. Raj impressed the people by his songs and speeches. Within a short time he gathered around him a number of village young men and others. He asked those to raise their hands who wanted to work with him. Quite a number of them raised their hands.

Raj had come to the village along with the hotelier, and although the hotelier himself left the village because of paucity of rains, Raj strayed on in the village and started his work there. The persuasive manner of his speech and his inspiring songs, as also his innate sincerity, cast its spell upon people and they joined him in his work. Two pressing needs of the area, a village road from Rajvad to Navada and a damaged sluiceway, were made the immediate goals of his work.

Raj took up these things very seriously and declared that if these demands were not met, people would perform a relay fast at the village

market at Navada, and that on a particular date he would perform self-immolation. Voluntary labour for constructing the road started in due course and Raj himself was seen participating in the manual labour daily. But public enthusiasm couldn't last very long.

The relay fast was undertaken with persistence. Fifty to hundred people participated in it every day even under petromax lamps during the night. Whenever, the police came to arrest Raj Inqualab, he was hidden by the people, and thus the police were frustrated in their attempts to trace him. When, finally, on October 1977, the police party raided the Nanda village in the dead of night, and failed to find Raj, it arrested five to six persons and subjected them to harassment.

As the news spread in the countryside about the police's highhandedness, people gathered in thousands in the early hours of the next morning. Some miscreants and bad characters also joined the mob. In the clash that followed many a police officer was injured. The police retanated by resorting to firing but luckily none got either killed or injured.

The police implicated sixteen persons in the case of which the man named Naresh Singh has been registered as the main accused. Shri Raj, however, does not figure in any of the cases as the main accused. What is strange about this incident is that although it happened in October 1977, yet the police failed to apprehend Raj till April, 1978. It is alleged that during this period, Raj Inqualab developed very strained relations with Shri Govind Jethi, one of the notorious characters of the area, on the following two counts:

1. The District Magistrate ordered all fire arms in the area to be surrendered. Shri Govind Jethi met the D.M. and pleaded with him, that as he was often threatened with danger, he might be permitted to keep his fire arms. The D.M. agreed to do so on condition that Shri Govind Jethi either surrendered Raj or helped the police to arrest him.

2. In the meantime elections for the village headman were held and a rather unimportant person opposed Govind Jethi. Raj helped the opponent of Jethi with a view to diffuse the fear complex generated by Jethi's highhandedness.

It was during the month of May 1978, that Jethi summoned Raj to the Navada market. Troughs belonging to Jethi's party hid themselves nearby, ready for any eventuality. When Raj arrived, Jethi himself beat him up and handed him over to the police. So, after remaining only ten months out of jail, Raj was again behind bars. Jethi himself, for unknown reasons, was murdered later.

Raj wrote to the government from his prison many times either to legally prosecute him or set him free, but in vain. Only twice in three years has he been produced in the court. Even when the judges were willing to grant him bail, he was not prepared to accept it. In as many as seven cases, Raj has been implicated under thirty-two sections. The charges against him include inciting violence, creating tension and attempts at murder or suicide. Only recently, the police has charge-sheeted him in two cases, and it is hoped he will be exonerated in at least these two.

Soon after entering jail, Raj resorted to a fast unto death, in resentment against what he termed the inertia, lethargy and oppression of both police and judiciary. He has now been put in a cell. The administration does not allow anybody except his "near ones", to see him, and it is tragic that no near ones have yet appeared. It is believed that his father's name is Shri Rajendra Singh and his old mother too is alive. Both of them are from Meerut Road, Meerut, U.P.

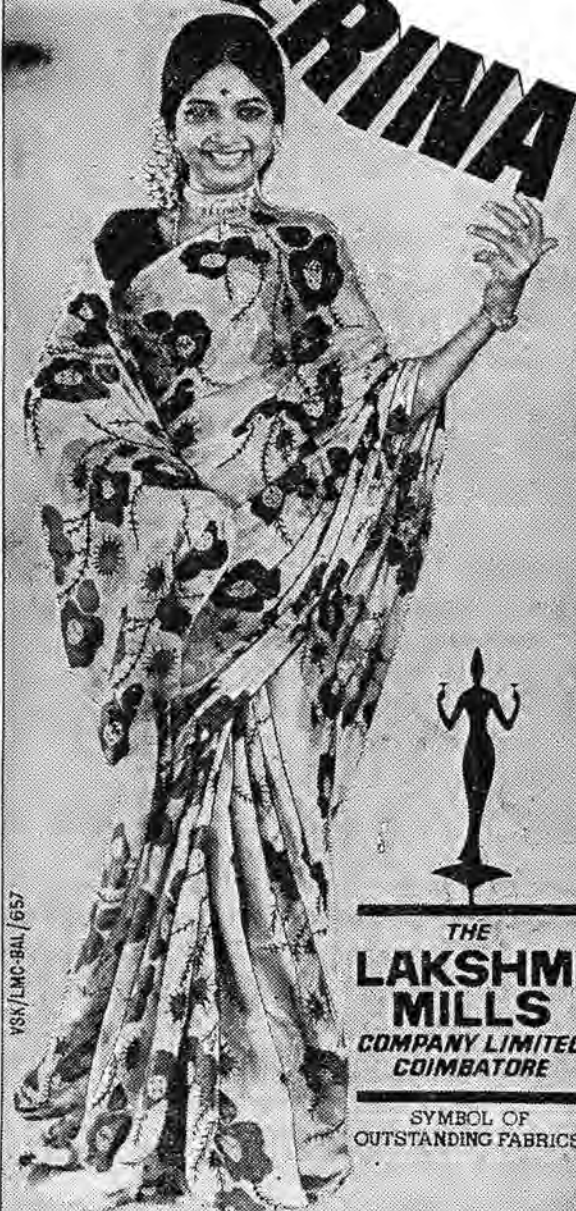
With the efforts of Shri Rama Saran of the People's Sangharsh Vahini, friend of Shri Ranajiva of the Sangharsh Vahini, a committee of alert and active citizens has been formed at Bhagalpur. This committee is doing whatever it can to help Shri Raj. But it needs to be augmented from outside, and that too immediately, for the sands of Raj's life are sinking fast. If the efforts to free him and give him proper treatment to restore his health are delayed even by a few months, we may not find him alive among us. A fine, active, energetic intelligent and idealistic young man will be lost to humanity.

The death of Shri Raj inside Bhagalpur jail may well trigger a trial, and innumerable Indian Bobby Sands may lay down their lives in protest against the present stagnant system.

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