

JULY 1974

EDITOR: M. R. MASANI

THE BIG BANG

M. R. Masani

AS usual, correspondents of the American liberal press are at it again — living up to their record of misleading their readers about popular attitudes in India. Writing on May 19 from New Delhi, Lewis M. Simons informed the *Washington Post* that it was “almost impossible to find an Indian who did not take enormous pride in the government’s achievement” over the big blast in the Rajasthan desert.

Stuff and nonsense. There are thousands of Indians who feel embarrassed and distressed, if not angry, at the Government’s policy on this point and the Editor happens to be one of them. But by no means the only one. Thus, the *Statesman*, in its issue of May 19 immediately after the blast was quite early to denounce what it described in the title of its editorial as “Total Irresponsibility.” Looking for reasons for this development and failing to find one, the *Statesman* came to the conclusion that it could be nothing other than “plain conceit.” “India”, it wrote, “can make it, therefore let it be made. And to hell with the obvious potential consequences to the peace of the world and every international conference at which India bleats idealism and minds other people’s business.”

Nor is this critical reaction confined to a particular line of thought or ideology. *The Economic and Political Weekly* of May 25, definitely a “leftist” journal, entitled its editorial “Cultivating our Egos with Delight and Terror.” In the same issue, its correspondent from Calcutta wrote contemptuously: “As for the supposedly peaceful uses to follow the blast, one’s first impulse is to break out in a Nixonian expletive: an administration which over a number of years has been unable to set right the troubles bedeviling the nuclear power plant at Tarapur should have the decency to stay away from the theme of how, henceforth, the atom was going to be deployed for peaceful purposes.” The writer’s own understanding of the blast was: “A lifebuoy, an attempt to refurbish the government’s sagging image, a *deus ex machina* to drown the tale of inflation and the crippling railway strike in

the cacophony of manufactured raptures a successful blast could be expected to give rise to.”

Even the communist K. A. Abbas, on the last page of *Blitz*, asks the question: “Bread— or Bombs?” and



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“You wouldn’t let down a fellow club member, would you?”

Courtesy: *Washington Post*

dryly comments: “It is good to read the headlines in the morning newspaper, ‘INDIA JOINS NUCLEAR CLUB’ — but only after a satisfying breakfast!”

Wrong Priorities

The world as a whole, of course, has condemned the Indian government’s policy as being utterly lacking in a proper sense of priorities and has rejected

its pretensions about the peaceful uses of the bomb. The *Chicago Tribune* observed: "They aren't thinking about the peaceful uses of nuclear power: they are thinking about military power and national prestige." At the Geneva Disarmament Conference, the Japanese representative stressed: "There is no distinction between a test for peaceful purposes and a nuclear weapons test."

These suspicions are by no means dispelled by an announcement made in Moscow in *Socialist Industry* that India was undertaking an intensive programme in building the first satellite with Russia's aid and that India's first satellite would be launched by a Soviet-built rocket.

The acting High Commissioner for Canada in New Delhi, after a call at the Ministry of External Affairs, announced that in the view of the Canadian government "there was no such thing as a peaceful explosion."

When the Correspondent of the *Indian Express* in Hong Kong drew attention at a diplomatic party to the statement that the blast was nothing but an earth-moving device, a Chinese close to Peking quipped: "Whose earth do you want to move?"

The Horse's Mouth

In case any one thinks that these foreign comments are uncharitable, we have the truth from the horse's mouth. Dr. K. Subramanyam of the Institute of Defence Studies in New Delhi observed immediately after the explosion: "What the government today described as a peaceful nuclear explosion experiment is the same as the explosion of an atom bomb."

The gravamen of the charge against New Delhi is, of course, its cynical indifference to the lack of food and water for a large part of the people of India shown in blowing up a tremendous amount of money on this noisy gadget. Here are two specimens of foreign reaction. The *Chicago Tribune* wrote: "Now these millions can rejoice—and indeed are rejoicing in the knowledge that while they are starving, they too now have the capacity to wage a nuclear war."

The *Richmond Times Dispatch* observed: "When India appeals to the moral sensibilities of other nations in seeking food and economic aid to relieve massive human distress it is reasonable to ask if Mrs Gandhi's own policy towards the masses is 'Let them eat the nuclear dust.'"

According to Mr P. N. Haksar, a member of the Atomic Energy Commission, speaking in London, the total allocation of funds on research and development of Atomic Energy was Rs 176 crores for five years. On his own admission, then, it was no less than Rs. 880 crores that India spent in the last twenty-five years. That, of course, is a gross understatement. The Indian Embassy in Washington sought to reassure the American public opinion by saying that "since 1951 India

has spent less than one billion dollars on nuclear energy".

According to official figures published in the *Statesman* of June 11, the Fifth Plan proposes an investment of Rs. 497 crores on Atomic Energy. The non-plan amount being Rs. 236 crores over a five-year period, there is thus an outlay of Rs. 733 crores or nearly \$1 billion on Atomic Energy between the years 1974-75 and 1978-79. A "good round sum," as Shylock would have put.

Mr. Kuldip Nayar of the *Statesman* points out that the Atomic Energy Commission has a budget of Rs. 80 crores a year which, over a period of twenty-five years, amounts to Rs. 2,000 crores. Mr. Sharp, the Canadian Foreign Minister, however thinks that India has "devoted tens or hundreds of millions of dollars to the creation of a nuclear device."

An Example

The Egyptian and Israeli action in accepting US nuclear aid and reactors for peaceful uses shows the correct path that a country like ours could have followed with advantage and without imposing an additional burden on our people.

Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, taking exception to international criticism, has said that "this same argument was advanced when we established our steel mill and machine building plants. Precisely. These plants have proved to be White Elephants eating up our substance while our peasants starve for water and fertilizers and when the country is denied the roads it so badly needs, when half the people of India do not even have clean drinking water."

The money wasted on nuclear developments is one more example of the misguided policies launched by Prime Minister Nehru which sacrificed the real interest of the country for the sake of gigantic and prestigious projects.

Who, with a sense of humour, can quarrel with Herblock's cartoon in the *Washington Post*?

Quite apart from the actual amount of resources consumed by our efforts in the nuclear field, there is the further loss for this country to be faced in the diminution in economic aid. It is a "crisis of faith", wrote the *Times of India* correspondent from London, "since most of the donor countries are sceptical about New Delhi's protestations." The point is repeatedly made in all parts of the world whether they should aid a poor nation's government involving itself in a "symbolic prestige project" of this nature. Americans have asked why they should help India if their help only serves to buy India a nuclear bomb.

Finally there is the cost to this country of a major setback to the *detente* between India and Pakistan which would have brought to an end the ruinous arms

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Between You & Me and The Lamp Post



'A Change Without Adventure'

LIBERALS all over the world will welcome the election of M. Giscard D'Estaing as French President and will also be relieved that the Socialist-Communist coalition failed to get its candidate elected. The net result has been well summarised as amounting to "a change without adventure."

France as such has reason to be grateful to its system of the Second Ballot as otherwise M. Mitterand, with communist support, would have been elected President on a minority vote exactly as Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi became Prime Minister after the 1971 elections in which she got only 43 per cent of the votes polled and no more than 24 per cent of the electorate behind her.

"France is a liberal country", observed the new President, "and must set its sights further on going in that direction."

The simultaneous nomination of Herr Helmut Schmidt as the Social Democratic Chancellor in West Germany is a good omen for the strengthening of NATO and undoing the mischief done in the past few

years by the Gaullist penchant for anti-Americanism and the West German policy of *Ostpolitik*.

Corruption in the U.S.S.R.

IT is not only the United States, Britain and India that have their corrupt ministers and their scandals. Communist Russia by no means lags behind but, thanks to the absence of a free press there, neither the world nor the Russians come to know about these misdeeds.

There is an exception however in the recent scandal over the building of a luxurious dacha (country villa) outside Moscow by Mme. Ekaterina Furtseva, Soviet Minister for Culture, who has been imported to this country quite a few times to sell Soviet "culture" to our naive fellow travellers. The *Daily Telegraph* of 28th May, in a report from Moscow, says that Mme. Furtseva is in disgrace and has been reprimanded by the Party for misusing her position for obtaining building material for a wooden villa at bargain prices. Despite the fact that she is married to Mr. Nikolai Firubin, a Deputy Foreign Minister who has also visited New Delhi several times, Mme. Furtseva has been ordered to repay the cost of the building materials.

One of those who will experience a little quiet amusement at this will be Alexander Solzhenitsyn, the Nobel Prize winner in exile, who was at the receiving end of scurrilous attacks from this particular Minister.

As of now, Mme. Furtseva has not been dismissed from the post of Minister for Culture and it is only if this happens that people in Soviet Russia will get an inkling of what has been happening behind the scenes. In that respect, we are more fortunate.

KGB Gets Black Eye

NOT all the news from Russia is bad. Good news also occasionally trickles out. The underground Russian "Chronicle of Current Events" has reappeared after a 19-month gap. Numbers 28, 29 and 30 have suddenly appeared in May to make up for the time lost. One of those involved in its publication has already been sentenced to a term of five years, but it is unlikely that this will stop further issues of the "Chronicle" from appearing. Issue 28 publishes a defiant reply to the KGB's threats: "If we should continue to keep silent, it would be equivalent to support by us of the hostage tactics, which are contrary to moral law and human dignity."

The fact that the *Samizdat* journal is now published

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IN THIS ISSUE

The nuclear explosion in Rajasthan produced a storm of opposition to the Indian Government's hypocrisy over its policy of nuclear power and its false sense of priorities. In his article, the Editor analyses the worldwide reaction and asks: "Was it really necessary?"

Tourists are our biggest foreign exchange banks. What goes wrong in tapping such potential gold mines? Don Mac-Gillis, a young American journalist, tells our Associate Editor.

Has the coup in Chile left footprints on the sands of Sri Lanka? Joseph Pereira discusses the likelihood of a military coup in Sri Lanka.

Jai Nimbkar, well known short-story writer, probes into the social structure of India and finds that we just don't grow up!

Our theatre critic, Manjula Padmanabhan, reviews the rock-opera: *Jesus Christ Superstar*.

INDIA: THE TENDER TRAP

[The lot of tourist in India, despite all government propaganda to the contrary, is a miserable one. From finding accommodation at a reasonable price to making travel reservations to eluding the clutches of touts and beggars, life is an endless process of trips to various office bureaucrats and long queues. Tourists who come on a limited budget are subjected to indignities that we Indians escape only because we know of the two ways of doing things — the right way and our way — the latter is the only way. Don Mac-Gillis is a freelance writer whose articles appear in several publications including The New York Herald Tribune. Below we publish excerpts from a letter he wrote to our Associate Editor on his and his companion's travels in North India.]

THE reason we were out of India a week earlier than planned is that the cool, cloudy weather and general seasonal dreariness of Kashmir quickly in-

BETWEEN YOU & ME—Continued from page 3

by relatively unknown and young persons is encouraging. As the London *Economist* joyfully puts it: "This is one in the eye for the KGB." And so say all of us.

"Bon Bahia"

VANDALISM does not consist only in knocking the noses off beautiful pieces of sculpture and removing statues from their pedestals. Since Independence, these traditional methods of vandalism in India have been supplemented by a process of destroying the historic names of streets and places and using the vacuum thus created for honouring undistinguished luminaries of the Establishment. Thus in Bombay, Delhi and elsewhere, roads and squares with names enjoying a long tradition which were known even to the illiterate have been eradicated and new names given of utterly negligible persons in a futile attempt at perpetuating their memories. Thanks to the common sense of taxi-drivers, pedestrians, and the common men, the changes are almost universally ignored, but the attempt to rewrite history involved in this effort deserves nonetheless to be condemned.

Now the Bombay Municipal Corporation has come up with a proposal which surely represents the apex of nonsense. If the move comes off, Bombay will be re-named 'Mumbai'. Perhaps some councillors thought there was once a lady of that name!

It has been argued that names like Madurai, Thiruchirappalli and Vishakhapatnam were the original names and that the British had distorted them into Madura, Trichinapolly and Vizagapatam. This logic does not apply in the case of Bombay.

Bombay was established by the Portuguese who called it 'Bon Bahia' by way of tribute to its beautiful bay. The British variation of 'Bombay' came from the Portuguese. 'Mumbai' is a further distortion by the illiterate. Thus the move lacks all logic. Or is it argued that whatever the British distorted was bad but that whatever we distort is a change for the better?

clined us to cut our proposed 11 day stay there by five days. This made it possible for us to see everything we had planned in New Delhi and Agra and save a week's expenses by flying home on the charter March 16th instead of March 23rd. Making that change of booking with Air India's charter office in Delhi required four trips and unflappable patience and persistence. Among our techniques were (1) wearing the same outfits for each visit to build up an identification with the bureaucrats (2) getting a conference with the office manager on our request in the most unobtrusive way imaginable (3) by subtly assuring the office peon handling our case that she and the manager were the only two individuals in the office we thought capable of mastering our situation, which also happened to be the truth. No bribe was necessary. Furthermore, the people looked unbribable.

Kashmiri Experience

I think what disappointed us the most about Kashmir was not so much that it did not have its fabled summer charm of flowering gardens and green poplar avenues, but that it also lacked the charm that American and European mountain areas have even in the late winter. And the people (the tradesmen) were the most obnoxious and insistent that we met anywhere in India. Fortunately, we had the most likeable of the lot as our houseboat owners and servants. The boat is called Cherrystone and is owned by the Dubloo family. For Rs. 45/- a day for the two of us we got 3 meals plus 4 o'clock tea plus hot water bottles in the beds at night. A wood stove fire was Rs. 5/- extra, a bucket of hot water for washing was Re. 1/-. On our first day there the sun shined so we climbed the hill opposite Dal Lake. We enjoyed seeing pine trees again. The next days were cool and cloudy so we spent out time either reading in our comfortably furnished boat or taking walks through Srinagar. The old truism that poverty in cold areas somehow is much more depressing than poverty in tropical areas came home to us during these walks. I think we saw a "pants down" side of Srinagar that the summer tourist may be able to overlook. Our walks were made more unpleasant by the hateful merchants and by the habit of the Kashmiri, more pronounced than among other

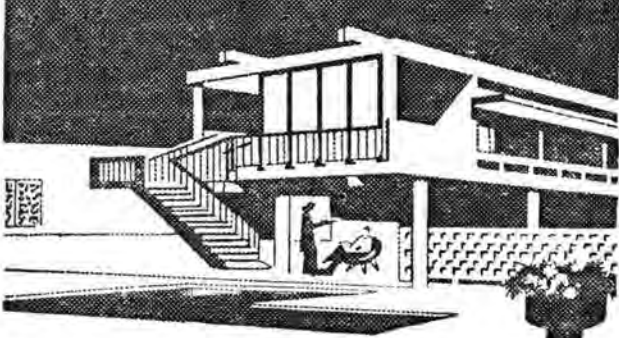
Indians we had seen, to stare rudely at foreigners. Our last full day there was again bright sunny which was great luck since we had booked a one-day excursion up to Gulmarg. We made the last leg of the trip from Tang Marg to Gulmarg via ponies. We enjoyed it greatly, and held on for dear life while our steeds carried us up the narrow path through the snow drifts in the piney air. Our arrival at Gulmarg was a let-down. First we were assaulted by several dozen Gulmargian sled-pullers who implied it would be the height of *déclassé* for us to walk about the snow-covered meadow and not let one of them pull us about. This is the sort of thing honeymooners (of whom we met a surfeit during our trip; at Gulmarg and elsewhere; some nice, some not) go in for but we didn't. We finally begged off by saying that we were on our honeymoon and wanted nothing so much as privacy! They probably had visions of us nestling under three meters of snow somewhere. The day after Gulmarg was again sunny and this put us in spirit for the day-long bus journey through the mountains from Srinagar to Jammu. It was at least as exciting and adventurous as our pony ride. I have never seen such views of mountain passes and crevasses. Evidence of rock slides was everywhere. At one point the slide had occurred just recently and the bulldozers were still clearing the route when our bus joined the line of vehicles waiting for the way to be cleared. At Jammu we caught the overnight train to Delhi. Ingrid and I shared (in shifts) a third class sleeper and sitter in the night train to Delhi. We shared the compartment with three Kashmiri lads on their way to Agra and a scrofulous old geezer who read palms as a hobby. The trip was bearable enough until the next morning when the train became a commuters' local making multiple stops. As our compartment filled up with these newcomers we began getting more of a feeling of what it is really like to ride a third class car. The trip, though, was the occasion for one of the nicest acts of hospitality that Ingrid and I had, extended to us by a stranger during our entire sojourn. A rider in a neighbouring compartment noticed during the night that I was not outfitted with a blanket as all the Indians were and gave me one of his.

In Delhi, Ingrid and I succumbed to the comforts and modernity of the Y.W.C.A's International Guest and paid Rs. 89/- a night for a double with a balcony; full, clean, bathroom, airconditioning and breakfast. Although the price was high we figured it was probably worth it because it gave us a change to wash and relax better than we had been able to in Srinagar. I think both Ingrid and I were at first sight very attracted by the expansiveness of modern Delhi and its pretty greenswards and corner gardens but later during our stay an ugly incident occurred that will inevitably color our overall opinion of Delhi. One evening about 5 after the heat had abated we decided to take a long walk from our hotel near connaught circus to the Jama Masjid and the Red Fort. The most direct route

took us along a narrow commercial street similar to, though even more densely trafficked than, the one where our Radio Club friends in Bombay had their store. There were no other foreigners there, no police and no motor traffic — only carts and bicycle vehicles. Navigating through this bazar Ingrid and I (especially Ingrid) were set upon in a way we never had been anywhere else in India. Boys and young men growled at Ingrid or purposefully bumped into her or furtively pinched her. We were very happy to get out of that neighbourhood. In Delhi we also ran up against one of the great bottle-necks of Indian bureaucracy — reserving a third class ticket on the Taj Express to Agra. When I joined the queue to run this little errand there were five persons ahead of me. It was 45 minutes before I was served. Four of the five were "runners" apparently for travel agencies and each had a list of 8-10 persons desiring tickets to Agra. The amount of writing the ticket seller, a functional illiterate, had to do for each name was encyclopedic. But the hassle was worth it. In Agra we had a good guide who gave us good, factual information at each of the stops (Fateh Sikri, the Agra Fort and the Taj) but then allowed us plenty of time to look about on our own. It was one of our most enjoyable expeditions of 'pure' tourism.

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DANGER OF COUP IN SRI LANKA

Joseph Pereira

NINE months after the coup in Chile the threat of a similar danger looms large in Sri Lanka—one of the last Parliamentary democracies in Asia. In fact, a "military solution" to the country's political crisis has been so obvious for quite some time, that what is surprising is the fact that the armed forces and police have held back for so long.

Sri Lanka—the former British Dominion of Ceylon—was ruled by a pro-Western Conservative Government right upto 1956 when nationalist leader Solomon Bandaranaike came to power. His Nationalist Government opposed by both the Conservatives and the left-wing Socialist and Communist parties, collapsed three years later when he was himself assassinated by Buddhist extremists in his own party.

His Freedom Party was, however, resurrected by Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike—his widow—who came to power in 1960 promising radical reforms. Attracted by these reforms the Leftists joined hands with the Freedom Party in 1964.

In 1962, however, high ranking army, navy, police and civil services officers attempted to overthrow her government. Simultaneously the Freedom Party moved leftwards—nationalising foreign petroleum and insurance, taking over the schools and infusing larger doses of nationalism all around.

In 1964 Mrs Bandaranaike's government fell under the well-organised, superbly orchestrated attack of the country's three major newspaper companies—the *Lake House*, *Times* and *Sun* groups.

For the next five years Sri Lanka had a moderate government headed by Dudley Senanayake, the only other popular leader. However, the inability of US aid to rescue the crippled Ceylonese economy, and the reluctance of Senanayake to abandon social welfarism and State Capitalism resulted in his ignominious defeat at the 1970 polls. His death last April all but ruled out a return of Conservatives. In the meantime, Mrs Bandaranaike had returned to power with a stupendous majority in Parliament—115 out of 150 seats—at the head of the United Front that included the Trotskyite Socialist Party, the Moscow Communist Party and a pro-Peking faction with her own Freedom Party.

In four years this United Front has initiated reforms that the country has not seen in 40 years of self-government. On May 22, 1972, Ceylon became the Republic of Sri Lanka, and although it remains within the Commonwealth, its relations with the UK have been strained.

A Bill that is now before Parliament insists that all sterling companies operating in Sri Lanka register

themselves in Colombo. This is the first step towards nationalising them.

Crucial Issue

In a situation where British firms own 250,000 acres of the best tea and rubber lands and the agency houses that manage them — not to mention the shipping and other auxilliary services and the tea auctions in Colombo and London — the control of the tea industry, which accounts for 60 per cent of Sri Lanka's export earnings, has become a crucial issue.

Western economic interests may be alarmed, but local property owners are in a panic. Widespread property and commercial reforms have created an openly—hostile mercantile sector in Sri Lanka.

This began with what is probably the most radical land reform in this part of the world. There is a ceiling of 50 acres on non-paddy and 25 acres on paddy land, a ceiling on house-ownership and a ceiling on incomes. A capital levy, with a scheme of compulsory savings, is syphoning off a large percentage of profits.

Next to the land reform the most radical and controversial piece of legislation is the Business Acquisition Act which empowers the Government to nationalise any firm. So far all the graphite mines and cocoanut oil monopoly—known as the British Ceylon Company—have been nationalised. What is more, the State is acquiring a monopoly in the import-export trade, the local purchase and marketing of paddy and heavy industry.

In political terms, the most important reforms are those covering newspapers. The situation that existed in 1964 has been completely reversed a decade later. The *Lake House* Group is now state-owned, *The Sun* Group has been sealed and *The Times* Group has become docile after a change of management.

In a situation where the state owns the radio and the cinema news service, this gives the Front actual control over the entire media.

With the passing of each day, the Front consolidates its position making remote the chances of its defeat at the polls, which in any case are three years away. This makes the military and the police, whose officer corps come from the disgruntled propertied classes, the only countervailing force.

The military, which originated from the British Army, still retains its traditions which isolate it from the mainstream of political developments. And, unlike India where frequent wars gave the armed forces a nationalist consciousness, no such nationalism has grown in Sri Lanka's armed forces. As in the case of

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A NATION OF CHILDREN

Jai Nimbkar

A FEW years ago while doing a survey, I had occasion to travel extensively in villages displaced because of the construction of the Koyna dam. The villagers, hoping that they might get something out of the survey, were happy to pour out complaints in response to our questions.

In one village the people complained that they did not have sufficient drinking water. They had one well but the population of the village had grown since that had been dug, and the government had so far turned a deaf ear to requests for another well. I asked them who had dug the first well. It appeared that the villagers themselves had, under the supervision of a Sarvodaya worker. What was wrong with their getting together and digging another well? They were not prepared to even consider such a suggestion. They felt that the government owed it to them—in return for their having lost some of their lands in the lake—to

provide them with a well. Incidentally, they had received adequate compensation for the lands.

Idle

Many of the villages which were located higher up on the banks of the lake had been allowed to lift lake water for irrigating crops and provide with diesel engines and pumps. All the pumps were lying idle and we asked why nobody was lifting water. Because the pump sets were out of repair, we were told. The government had helped one man from each village to attend a course in maintenance and repair of these pump sets, but these men did not feel competent to undertake the repairs. Getting the sets repaired by an outside mechanic was out of the question because the government had no budget for such repairs, and the villagers could not come to an agreement about who among them should pay how much. In the meantime, either already planted crops were being allowed to dry, or lands which could grow crops were allowed to lie fallow, while the villagers complained bitterly about how the government ill-treated them.

The villages which had been moved considerable distances had been given land in exchange for the land lost under the dam. This was uncultivated land, often overgrown with bushes, strewn with rocks, uneven. The government had promised to send bulldozers but had not got around to doing it. Many of these pieces of land still lay fallow at the time we interviewed the villagers, six years after they had moved. They had spent these years eating through their compensation money while waiting patiently for the government to fulfil their promise. Even granting that the villagers' expectation was only fair, and that the government had been grossly inefficient, it was still difficult to understand why the villagers had not even tried to clear the land and make it cultivable manually. In no case was the land belonging to one family too big for manual clearing and digging.

These examples illustrate an attitude which is by no means confined to this one river valley. Rather, it typifies the attitude of countless people in all walks of life. In private conversations, public speeches, articles, letters to editors, one comes across incessant demands that the government—in one form or another—do something, stop someone from doing something, or make someone do something. Among other things, the government is expected to repair roads, keep towns clean, stop farmers from selling ergot-infested grain, force doctors to go to rural areas, get rid of corruption

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Chile they remain an integrated entity capable of independent action.

Paradoxically, the Front has been forced to lean heavily on the military. This trend began during the April 1971 insurgency when an ultra-left youth movement began attacking police stations and state institutions.

During the last three years, the military and the police have grown in size and stature and their influence in civil affairs is reminiscent of Chile before September 1973, and Indonesia before October 1965.

In April, when the Opposition decided to defy the Government's ban and hold protest meetings, for example, the police insisted that a 28-hour curfew to be imposed—thus rescuing themselves from the embarrassment of having to use force against the Opposition.

Sensing the danger from the police and the military, Mrs Bandaranaike has attempted to place some of her relatives in high positions in the army, has personally appealed to the troops, removed the Deputy Inspector-General of Police for the Colombo Region and allowed the left to set up Workers' Defence Squads in factories and offices.

Whether these measures will placate the services, currently under tremendous middle class pressures, or whether these measures will only serve to hasten a coup remains to be seen. The future of the "show piece democracy" of Asia thus hangs in the balance.

—FWF

and the pest popularly called 'congress' weed which is encroaching upon vast tracts of farmland.

Unwilling

Some of these demands are undoubtedly justified, some of them require action which cannot be taken by individuals but must be taken by some public governing and/or law-making body or the officials who represent it. However, for many people, saying that the government ought to do this or that amounts to shrugging off their own responsibility, which then becomes confined to making such demands. Two factors are implicit in such an attitude — the refusal of individuals to accept ultimate responsibility for themselves, and their readiness to give up the freedom which can only accompany responsibility. Anybody who expects the government to undertake tasks which should really lie within the sphere of individual or collective social action, is showing his unwillingness to act for himself in these and often many related areas, and thereby losing his initiative to the government. Although a few hardy individualists among us scream about too much government interference, most of us quite meekly accept it and all that it implies. Why?

It would be too facile an explanation to say that illiteracy and poverty are responsible for this. A lot of our ills can be and are blamed on illiteracy and poverty, but this attitude of dependence has nothing *per se* to do with these factors. In other countries under different social systems where conformity and the carrying on of a tradition are not all-important, and in our own country, occasionally, there have been examples of individual initiative, of rebellion, by the most humble, unlettered persons.

It is actually our social organization which predisposes us to this child-response to any form of authority. It is traceable to the strong family, clan and caste (or caste substitute) groups on which our social life is based. In the smallest of these groups, the family, where pattern of behaviour are learned, the democratic way of individual responsibility and individual freedom has never been accepted. One makes all the decisions—financial, marital, educational, professional—and all the others, men, women, children, whether they number ten or fifty, accept his decisions. In return for this obedience they are given certain guarantees—food, clothing, shelter. If there is an occasional rebel, the place for him is outside the family. Living within the family and raising a rebellious voice is unheard of. If you live within the family, you cannot make your own decisions, organize your own life the way you want to. Thus most of us learn to trade freedom and initiative for the security offered by the group, the feeling that there is always going to be someone who will take care of us, back us in a crisis, and no matter what, can be counted on to give us the basic necessities of life.

"Maybap Sarkar"

This dependence pattern has simply been widened to include the government. Whatever else independence may mean to us, we have quickly learned that we are now governed by our own 'sarkar' (in Marathi very aptly called 'maybap sarkar') and, like our family and kinship group and caste, it too can be made responsible for us. We have learned to visualise the government as a parent figure which is expected to sustain us, protect us from evil and coax us into behaving ourselves.

One might say, what about all the demonstrations and gheraos and strikes? Are they not expressions of protest, of rebellion, against the government, or other authority, or simply against the established social order? The answer, of course, is yes. But these are all group protests, organized by a couple of leaders who are followed sheeplike by thousands of disciples. Even the protesting individuals in this country want the security of belonging to a group. In fact, conformity and protest have one characteristic in common — the intolerance of dissent. Individual members of protesting groups — whether they be students or mill workers or bank employees — are not allowed to desist from protest.

It is always said that man is a social animal, and that he exists as a social animal by voluntary association with other men. But when he allows the groups which have been formed by such voluntary association to dictate to him in everything, he becomes only a social animal, and no longer remains a man. When for the sake of security he gives up his right to be, above all, an individual entity, he accepts totalitarianism in some form or another and rejects freedom.

Is it possible to correct an attitude of mind which is ramified by all social forces? One obvious means of doing it is education. But unfortunately, the same philosophy which pervades our social organization pervades our educational system as well. Our education is still mostly organized in the 'guru' system, where students are expected to reverently absorb whatever teachers teach them. They are not encouraged to think for themselves, to discuss, argue, differ. Originality of any kind is frowned on, and in a totally examination-oriented system, students learn to tow the line, to write and think the way the teachers want them to.

In India freedom and democracy have existed so long not because we have consciously and vigilantly nurtured them, but because of the tremendous variety in our population which defies quick regimentation, the inadequacy of our communication media, and the absence, so far, of any group which wants to assume total power. These have been safety factors but if we do not cultivate individual freedom and initiative while these factors still operate, we may be dooming ourselves to a totalitarian society.

Reviews

EDITORS AND EDITORS

The Press by M. Chalapathi Rau; (National Book Trust, Delhi; Rs. 8.50)

AFTER reading the 200 page book *The Press* by M. Chalapathi Rau, one is tempted to ask the question whether the author has heard of a paper called *Hindustan Times* which played a prominent part in the freedom movement and another paper called *Indian Express* which struck a new path in journalism. The book under review makes significant omission of these two papers. Surely they were not accidental. Condemnation by omission, as one critic said earlier about Chalapathi Rau, had been his trick. The present book follows the same pattern.

For any one who wants to write a learned article on journalism, the Press Registrar's report provides a mine of information and Rau has dived deep into the report to give copious figures about newspapers, their circulation, their proportion to population. In fact, these figures have been cited *ad nauseam* by journalistic writers.

For the earlier part of the book, Chalapathi Rau depends entirely on the monumental work, Margaret Barnes' *Indian Press*, which is still the most authentic work on the subject. Here he seems to have confused some names and places.

In trying to compress too many facts in too short a space, the author has not been able to do adequate justice to the subject. He simply catalogues the papers that were started in various languages in several states which do not give a clear idea of the role that some papers played. For that very reason a lot of factual mistakes have crept in. Here is a glaring instance. The author says: "In 1940 the *Bharata Devi* of Madras started publication as the organ of the non-Brahmin movement." This is absolutely incorrect.

Sadanand wanted to compete with *Ananda Vikatan* and to bring out a Tamil weekly double the size of *Ananda* and called it *Bharata Devi*. The great Tamil writer "Va Ra" was its editor. But the journal died after a few months. S. V. Swami left *Indian Express* in 1940 and with the help of Sadanand started an English daily *Free Press* and a Tamil daily called *Bharata Devi*. Both were nationalist papers. Khasa Subha Rau and Santhanam had been the editors of *Free Press*. Some time in 1950 or 1951 *Free Press* was closed down and *Bharata Devi* was taken over by Baktavatsalam. *Bharata Devi* was never an organ of the non-Brahmin movement. It was out and out a nationalist paper. It is most unfair on the part of Chalapathi Rau to make this charge.

Chalapathi Rau calls the Press Commission report the 'Bible' for journalists, which means it should hold

good for all time to come as something infallible and sacrosanct. Even our Constitution has undergone a change and is being changed constantly but Chalapathi wants the recommendations of the Press Commission, of which he was a member, to hold good for all time. Conditions in newspaper industry have thoroughly changed since the Press Commission gave its report twenty years ago and journalists are facing new problems and new situations and they can be tackled well only if a new Press Commission is appointed.

Rau refers to a tri-weekly *Swatantra Sangham* which was supporting civil disobedience movement in 1930. Here again he has confused names. In 1930 many quarter anna weeklies, bi-weeklies and tri-weeklies appeared, all of which supported the Satyagraha movement. They were *Sangu*, *Desabhaktan*, *Gandhi*. These quarter anna journals were greatly responsible for the success of the Satyagraha movement. Rau makes reference to *Ananda Vikatan*, *Kalki*, *Kalaimagal*, but fails to take note of *Tuglak* edited by Ramaswamy who is known by his pen name 'Cho'. A lawyer turned an actor and later a successful journalist striking a new path in journalism is really a phenomenon in journalism.

Chalapathi writes that Sachchidananda Sinha founded the *Searchlight*. Sachchidananda was one of the founders, the rest being Dr Rajendra Prasad, P. R. Das, Sir Ganesh Dutt Singh, Syed Hasan Imam. *Searchlight* owes its origin to the joint ventures of a large number of

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top-ranking leaders of Bihar who later became its directors. While broadly supporting the Congress policy, *Searchlight* had also been criticising the Congress. The directors allowed perfect freedom to the paper, and it has not hesitated to criticise the Congress where it had felt criticism was called for. This is what Dr Rajendra Prasad wrote in 1938 to the President of Manbhum District Congress Committee in answer to a query. Chalapathi Rau's version gives the impression that *Searchlight* was a one man show launched by Sachchidananda Sinha.

Chalapathi Rau elaborates on the freedom of the editor but offers no solution to bring in that happy state of affairs. The fact is there are editors and editors. The extent of freedom that an editor gets depends on his own personality, character, integrity and professional skill. The profession has to guard itself more against lackey editors who out-proprietor the proprietor and who are more dangerous than either proprietors or the government. And what about committed editors who day in and out have to search for arguments to justify every unjustifiable act of the government? What is the freedom they enjoy, what freedom can they preach to others, and what is the freedom they can give to their own staff?

"A JOURNALIST"

A COMMENDABLE EFFORT

Legislation, Principles and Practices by M. Ruthnaswamy, (D. K. Publishing House, 1974. Price Rs. 45.)

SAIID the famous author of *Gulliver's Travels*: "Laws are like cobwebs, which may catch small flies, but let wasps and hornets break through." This reminds one of the operation of our income-tax laws where the wasps and hornets manage to escape in the highest taxed nation in the world! Throughout the centuries writers have reflected on the absurdities and iniquities of legislation and the presentation of law-makers. But they have also written profoundly on the nature, purpose and limitations of legislation. The author of this book provides introduction to this fascinating and instructive aspect of the history of nations.

One picks up a book by Prof. Ruthnaswamy with interest. Although associated with an opposition political party, his writings are remarkably free from bias and are marked by a deep concern for the progress of India. Some of his earlier books have the fruits of his careful scholarship and at least one of them, namely, *Some Influences that made the British Administrative System in India* (1939) will continue to be read by those interested in the evolution of the civil service. Apart from such scholarly books, Prof. Ruthnaswamy was associated with legislative work for several years and is, therefore, most competent to write on the principles of legislation. Now almost ninety years old his

scholarly effort puts to shame the work of men half his age at our universities!

Prof. Ruthnaswamy's approach, as in most of his earlier books, is historical in character and he has a way of packing into his writing interesting anecdotes and arresting quotations. He tells us, for instance, that ordinary legislation was wisely discouraged in some of the city-states of the ancient world and cites the law-giver, Zaleucus of Locri (in Italy) who provided that any one who initiated a new law would have a halter round his neck which would be tightened if the law failed to be passed. Zaleucus is said to have committed suicide when he offended against one of his own laws. A similar device at New Delhi may seem to be an act of mercy but it is unlikely that it would ever succeed for the will to survive is too strong in our law-makers!

Several aspects of legislation are dealt with in this book. The chapters are of uneven length and some of them do not extend beyond two or three pages! But they contain much wisdom and occasionally the author's dry humour breaks through. He remarks that neither the people nor the Government of India have become aware of environmental pollution and that there has been little or no legislation against it and he adds, "Probably, they are waiting till it becomes widespread and more dangerous." Professor Ruthnaswamy has an interesting chapter on legislation and economic progress. He points out that the irrigated area affected by ceiling legislation is no more than 22% of the

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total irrigated area. He calls it token legislation in the pursuit of equality, with no prospect of promoting agricultural prosperity. In his discussion of income-tax laws he mentions that they are based on distrust and therefore breed deceit. They do not aim at helping the poor to become rich but rather to make the rich less so. I wish he had elaborated in the inconvenience caused to the citizen by frequent amendments to the Income-tax Act for, more than any other legislation on the Statute Book, it prompts us to exclaim with that famous Dickensian character, "the law is an ass—an idiot".

Although Prof. Ruthnaswamy's effort is commendable, there are some serious flaws in presentation. The earlier chapters are somewhat repetitive and ignore chronology. One has the uncomfortable feeling of moving backward and forward and at other moments of riding some kind of intellectual merry-go-round. Equally serious are the numerous errors in the spellings of proper names, titles of books and, worst of all in dates. This is most unfortunate because few readers are likely to suspect them. The very first sentence suffers from this defect. It mentions the French philosopher, Helvetius, as being born in 1725 while he actually saw the light of day ten years earlier, in 1715! Likewise, Edmund Burke was born in 1729 and not in 1727. David Ricardo in 1823 and not 1833 as mentioned. Leibnitz died in 1716 and not in 1717. The Corn Laws were abolished in 1846, not in 1848. In fact one could make a long list of errors in this book. Finally, the methods of citation are almost maddening. As a rule, footnotes do not furnish page numbers and this is a cardinal sin in a writer. The use of *op. cit.* plays havoc with the reader's patience. Occasionally, the date of publication is provided but not uniformly. A man who has lived much beyond the Biblical span of three score and ten years can be expected to be pardoned for these literary sins. But one wishes that at least the publishers had taken up the job with a professional conscience.

S. P. AIYAR

POWERFUL PORTRAITS

Portraits of Power by S. E. Ayling (George G. Harrap & Co, London; 5th Edition; 1971; 2.00; pp. 432)

THIS book gives us the background of the world in which we are living and of the men who have made it. Instead of being just puzzled it helps us to know what to do in the light of what was *not* done in the past. The world has been made by great men and also by those who should never have been born. There are seventeen "portraits", ten of which are of dictators. Among the democrats we have Nehru and Gandhiji, Churchill and De Gaulle, Nasser and Roosevelt. There

is also an interesting attempt at comparison between these—such as that between Nehru and Gandhi.

The book answers many vital questions in which we are all interested but find difficult to get proper guidance: (a) What are the lessons India can learn from the mistakes made by dictators and democracies alike. (b) What serious mistakes were made by Nehru in the formative years of our freedom? (c) What is the greatest weakness of the Soviet economy—and in what precisely lies the strongest comparable point of American economy which should be of interest and inspiration to starving India? In short why is it easier to train technologists than farmers and "easier to orbit the earth in a spacecraft than to reach the grain target"? (d) How far was the World of 1914, though the greatest holocaust the world has seen, the one war which could have been prevented? How did we fail to prevent the "lunatic logic" of the Balkans working itself out? Why, if we heed this lesson well, we should help rather than hinder American efforts to solve the Middle East problem which is the new "Balkan" lunatic problem of our own making? (e) If we take the Dictators who have shaped or misshaped the destiny of the world, who would stand out as (i) the best, (ii) the worst, (iii) the most misunderstood and (iv) the "least considerable" of all?

Though the book's coverage is vast, the author has a style which makes the reading easy and very pleasant: About Dictatorship *vs* Democracy, "It is a weakness of democracies that they cannot always move fast in the right directions—but then it is a worse weakness of dictatorships that they can move fast in the wrong directions". About American public opinion, "Roosevelt knew the war was coming but was checked by American public opinions which was isolationist—perhaps it was not possible for the elephant of American opinion to learn to jump through the unaccustomed hoops so quickly". About our caste system, "what of caste, the hobble round the legs of the new India?... it has been part of India too long to be legislated away in a decade or probably in a century. Caste declares these truths to be self-evident, that men are born unequal and that those outside the castes are born, and must live, unclean". About corruption in India, "The Congress Party in particular has perhaps been living on its past and putting on a sort of spiritual fat that Gandhi would have scorned. Its Ministers have often flaunted the trappings of power, with a limousine much larger than their sense of responsibility."

The book is as much a *study of the patterns of power* as it is of the "portraits" concerned. Apart from the author's excellent grasp of history (which he was teaching) is his impartiality in approach. Clearly he neither flatters nor fools. He handles man as man, and his portraits bring out the innate personality of the men he has handled. So we see clearly that whilst some democrats can be as conceited as dictators with-

out being inclined towards dictatorship, since dictators can be as self-effacing as the best of democrats without being democratic at all.

The central theme of the book seems to be that if history makes men, men too make history. The happiness of the world depends upon our awareness at all times of the dangers of Power and our ability to stand up against human monsters who would destroy the world for sake of their personal power or due to the imbalance in their personalities that accentuate poisons like national hatred. Among the dictators, Marshal Tito stands out head and shoulders above all others and no one will fail to respect him after reading what the book has to say.

The author has rendered a great service to democracy in showing how power in the hands of democratic politicians can be no less an evil than in the hands of a normal dictator. The study of France and Charles De Gaulle is of special value for us in India. Party conflicts and corruption do not automatically disappear even after the blood-bath of a war as can be seen from the example of France which had twelve different Ministries in five years and twenty in a decade. In fact during ten years after the war France was without any Government at all for a cumulative total of 241 days which included serious periods of international crises like Korea and the Indo-China war. If some Indians today sigh for the days when we had stability though under foreign rule, the France of 1946 faced such a bad time that "some, not altogether in irony, wrote letters to the papers sighing for the days of the German occupation". France then faced almost the same difficulties about food shortages, inflation, strikes by workers and the quarrels between the Communists and their (late) allies in the party coalition, as we are facing in the uncertainties of today. It may be worth while recollecting that France was saved from another civil war through the timely arrival of American aid. No open minded reader, whatever his views, will fail to note the important part played by American aid throughout the world. Speaking of Egypt, for example, by mid-sixties one half of Egyptian bread came through the American aid programme even though Nasser "could snap at the hand that fed him". One may be forgiven for pointing out in this review in a lighter vein that just as Morarjibhai Desai in India talks of the English language as "foreign", even though a part of the food in his stomach may be "foreign", Nasser was made a Hero of the Soviet Union with literally American food in his stomach.

It will be admitted that all politics and history requires a sense of humour. In trying to show the feet of clay behind many of the world's great men, like Nehru, Mussolini, Nasser, etc. the author necessarily seems to expect his readers to have the same sense of humour as he has, if he is not to be misunderstood at times. Of course at times he comes very near the

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precipice here and has not hoped to escape a kick or two "from the hoofs of controversy" as he puts it. It is pleasant to read for example, "In one sense the Egyptians are no more Arab than the Welsh are English. The true Arabs were... Semites like the Jews..." It may not be equally pleasant to read that "the typical Egyptian is primitive cultivator-knee-deep in his pestiferous mud". Talking of Italian soldiers under Mussolini he says, "they simply surrendered to the British preferring to play football behind barbed wire rather than to die for Fascism". Rightly criticising Nehru's reluctance to assign blame during the Russian invasion of Hungary in 1956 with his immediate condemnation of the British and French action in the Suez zone the author tells us, "no man, least of all an independent Indian, is independent of his emotions and history—and Nehru, however rational and moderate, was clearly the creature of both". One hopes the countries of the "third world" will have the same sense of humour as the author has when, in speaking of Egypt he says, "Nasser's Egypt had much in common with the world of *Alice Through the Looking Glass*—and indeed with all the third world—where 'it takes all the running you can do to stay in the same place'." The most devastating humour of the author is reserved for Mussolini for whom there is unqualified contempt. One wonders at the end what Franco or Salazar would say regarding Mussolini's remark that "Christ was a small, mean man". It may be added that the author, unlike most Indians, can laugh also at himself and his own country. In referring to Mussolini's critical attitude about the British, the author says, "But what could one expect of a nation who (he understood) changed into dinner jackets every afternoon to drink tea?"

Though the author himself may or may not perhaps agree, the reader tends at the end of the study of the book to reach the conclusion that *all power tends to corrupt*, therefore much depends on the individual rather than on mere forms of government or administration. Whether we like it or not one tends to reach the truth taught by Pope and referred to by the author himself at one place, viz, that

For forms of government let fools contest,
Whatever is best administered is best.

Anyway some readers are likely to be led by the feeling that the truth taught by Salazar is ultimately worth more than what we are inclined to accept from dictators—viz, that Liberty was a fine thing; but one must find "a safeguard against the vagaries of his freedom", he must discover thru God the Law that he must obey. The only fly in this ointment is that a normal man is as vague about his concept of "God" and Law as about his freedom.

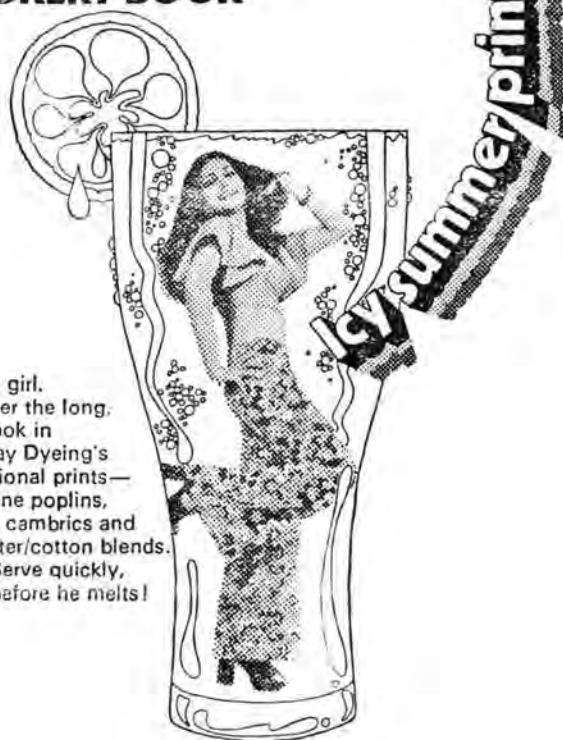
P. N. DRIVER

FOR A FALLEN STUDENT

Breast to bullet
Is only a thud
The awakening of an opening
To dead man's land
In a blotch of blood.
Causes are worms
Wriggling and dying
In a labyrinthine
It is enough you courted the magic of darkness
Sticks, stones, slogans
And the roar of the crowd with you
As you jumped into the fray
Like the whizz of a rocket
And singed the air
Where you fell.
No rose, no grass, no ripening corn
Grows there
The pavement is hard and cold
Like the heart of this old, old bitchy world
And footsteps are heard everywhere.
There
In the hustling of children by fond mothers
In the scampering of the guilty and the graft-takers
The sparrow of fright takes wings
A young man passing by
Reaches out to it, far far away in the sky
And finds a star with the splendour of a thousand suns.
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JESUS CHRIST UNDERSTUDY

SEEING Alyque Padamsee's *Jesus Christ Superstar*, one gets the strange sensation of watching a foreign film which has been badly dubbed. While the music, lyrics and plot of the play are those of a highly controversial rock musical which was a smash hit on Broadway two years ago, the actors, stage and direction are all too clearly home-grown products.

The result is a curious bifurcation such that one can split Padamsee's production neatly into two planes of entertainment—the musical and the theatrical. On the strictly musical side, he appears to have made every effort to maintain identity with the original version. The show, from this point of view, is a keenly cynical account of the last week of Christ's life. Banished to some distant limbo is the Jesus we have grown to know—Broadway's Saviour is a strong iconoclastic young man who appears to think a great deal of himself as when he sings

*You'll be lost and you'll be so sorry,
When I'm gone.*

Similarly, Judas is a passionately emotional devotee of Christ, and at the beginning of the play, we perceive that he has begun to have serious doubts about Jesus' methods of spreading the Good Word. The language of the play is Contemporary American Patriots and the Play is so devised that while one appreciates the mockery being made of the conventional picture of Christ, one also recognizes the similarities between Jesus and modern young revolutionaries. The priests and the representatives of the Roman government are therefore metaphors for the present day 'Establishment', and accordingly, we see them plotting against Jesus because they rightly interpret his increasing popularity as threat to their own power. Meanwhile, Jesus dallies with a winsome Mary Magdalene, their relationship verging on the blasphemous as she sings plaintively

*I don't know how to love him
He's man, he's just a man
And I've had so many men before
In very many ways
He's just one more.*

Meanwhile, Judas remains unconvinced that this Jesumania will do the group of Apostles and the Cause any good, so he goes to the High Priest, Caiaphus, and spills the beans. The rest of the play is common knowledge—Jesus is arrested, passed from Rome's Ambassador, Pontius Pilate, to the Jewish puppet king Herod, and back to Pilate, as neither know on what charges to convict the "Carpenter King." In a chilling scene he is denounced by his own fickle people, flogged, and

finally sentenced to the Cross where in all humility he dies.

It is the great merit of the original composers—Rice and Webber—that, though no effort is spared to pervert all the usual approaches to the subject, *Superstar* retains the intense emotional appeal of the Good Story. Undoubtedly this is because the transformation from the Son of God to Superstar is complete; because Jesus is made to seem human, frail, close to the common man, his effort and sacrifice appear all the more stupendous. With the Judas of the scriptures, we can have no sympathy: but the broken man who cries at the end

*My God I am sick I've been used
And you knew all the time.
God! I'll never ever know why you
Chose me for your crime,*

is as moving as Jesus when he prays for strength in the Garden of Gethsemane the night before his arrest. It is because the music is vital and young, it is because the musty pages of the New Testament have been shredded apart and made over that *Superstar* succeeds so well. The very boldness of the approach takes one's breath away and the air that one inhales is sharp, refreshing, stripped of the sanctifying molds which have stifled the original message for so long.

It is for precisely these same reasons — or the lack of them — that the theatrical part of Padamsee's production fails. He chose, for instance, to inflict a bout of community hymn singing on the audience before the show started. A vast array of gangly boys and girls collectively called the Pradeep People clapped their hands and sang wholesome little ditties on finding freedom in Jesus. Then the lights dimmed and a probing spotlight picked out the Virgin Mary, looking distinctly nun-like as she began a remorseful song about her famous son (composed in Bombay by Noel Godin). Simultaneously, above and behind her on a large double screen were flashed slides of Christ in his myriad incarnations — as he was seen in the Middle Ages and in the Renaissance, by French artists and the great masters. Impressive though the display was, nowhere among the plethora of crucifixion scenes was there any allusion or trace of Christ as Superstar. There is even a slide of Gandhi included in the repertoire, making one wonder what Padamsee's objectives were in producing a play like *Superstar*.

The Christ of Padamsee's production is, as he explains in his Director's Note, "A simple man. He spoke of love and humility. And the people rallied to him." Accordingly, in his play, Madhukar Chandra Das is

quiet and unassuming, the quintessential Christ-figure. This makes it all the more unnatural to watch him mouth the reactionary sentiments of his songs with a uniformly pained expression and make valiant attempts to smile lasciviously when in the company of Mary Magdalen. The only scenes where he comes to life are in the Garden of Gethsemane and, paradoxically, at the Crucifixion. The latter, in fact, had all the makings of a good sequence. It was made to seem as if he had been actually nailed on to the huge wooden cross, while piercing rays of light poured down in benediction from on high. For a fleeting moment, the tableau captured the timeless poignancy of the scene — and then was promptly ruined by the appearance of the Virgin Mary and friends, wending their way forward with little candles held piously aloft.



It is also a mystery why Padamsee insisted on choosing a large cast of amateur and mediocre talent. In the scenes involving the High Priest Caiaphas, it was Conal Almeida, singing in his venomous bass, who made the scenes excellent. Similarly with Keith Stevenson as a hilariously profane and semi-transvestite Herod. Yet these were among the handful of performers appreciably above twenty years old. Much as they enrich the play, their easy professionalism and maturity, Almeida's especially, only served to make the puerile antics of the remaining cast seem more so. Judas, for instance gyrated vigorously throughout the play, in an effort to simulate the agony of a man

turning from the light but all he achieved was an impersonation of a juvenile pop-singer. Mary Magdalen looked unbearably like an overdressed schoolgirl mincing around unsteadily on heels, wearing a gaudy red gown, with her hair in a mound of straggling lacquered curls. Her voice could have been pretty except that it was noticeably untrained, and at no point did she appear to understand the words she sang, remaining totally emotionless throughout. There were droves of kurta-clad adolescents who sprang up on-stage from the audience for the big choral scenes. Apart from swelling the ranks of performers on the programme, they served no purpose — looking pitifully amateur and selfconscious as they choked up the stage in confused, sloppy clusters.

The comparison of *Superstar* with a similar play produced in Bombay last year cannot be ignored. This was *Godspell*, in which, also, there was a large cast of young non-professionals singing in a Jesus-opera. The reason why *Godspell* excelled where *Superstar* floundered is soon explained: *Godspell* was a smaller, quieter play, not dealing with Christ's life so much as his teachings, whereas *Superstar* dealt with the actual events in the last week of Christ's life. The original version of *Superstar* was big, grandiose, the music strident and hard-hitting, while *Godspell* was intrinsically folksy and whimsical. Thus any production of the former would have to be handled with strength and inspiration rather than with the casual spontaneity which succeeded so well in *Godspell*. Not only did Padamsee chose to disregard these points of difference, he committed the further indiscretion of not having understood the pitch of the play. He seemed to feel that it was a sort of nativity play in reverse, to be treated with reverence and Christian piety. And in his attempts to prettify and sanctify the *Superstar* he has only succeeded in obscuring further the light which has filtered across two thousand years.

THE BIG BANG—Continued from page 2

race in which these two nations with destitute people are indulging.

Addressing the Rotary Club of Bombay on May 21, I had described this development as a "disgraceful violation of proper priorities by people who talk of socialism." I had asked how many wells could have been dug and how many villages would have got clean drinking water which they do not at present get, and how many million tons of foodgrains could have been produced by minor irrigation projects for which a large part of this country is thirsting. That question has not yet been answered. The people of this country have a right to an answer.

WITH MANY VOICES

Moans round with many voices. Come, my friends,
"Tis not too late to seek a newer world."

—Tennyson.

Is there a Nobel Prize for hypocrisy? If there is one, Indira Gandhi is the most likely candidate to receive it. While she preached loudly against violence, she secretly developed her own little A Bomb.

—Michael Karmi in *Time*, June 17.

I couldn't care less whether long or short hair grows on the scalp. I am only interested in what's inside the skull.

—Chancellor Schmidt quoted in *Time*, May 20.

In the Soviet Union the military and the bureaucracy get political and social nourishment from the empire. It guarantees their tenure by perpetuating the dictatorship.

—Louis Fischer quoted in *Problems of Communism*, January-February, 1974.

Men do not replace policies.

—*The Economist*, May 11.

Mr. Sartre and Miss De Beauvoir have always had a reputation of demanding the legitimization of illegal acts, crimes and bad actions.

—South Viet Nam's spokesman Bui Bao Truc in *Time*, May 27.

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What exists at Westminster now is chiefly a House of Humbug.

—*The Economist*, May 4.

A kept press is not a press at all; it is a state publishing house.

—*The Economist*, May 4

Lofty schemes can come to grief on vulgar things like the price of a pound of butter.

—*The Economist*, May 4

Will inflation plus illusion mean victory for the left in the end?

—*The Economist*, May 25.

Of all the injustices of inflation, one of the most explosive is that it transfers wealth from people who do not possess the power to hold a gun to the economy's head to those who, by belonging to the right trade union, do possess it.

—*The Economist*, May 25.

There is a lot to be said for the Ten Commandments.

—Dr Coggan quoted in *The Economist*, May 18.

M. Mitterand will never say in five words what he could say in fifty.

—*The Economist*, May 18.

Anti-rightism should not make us see ultra-rightism where it does not actually exist.

—Beatriz Diaz in *The Economist*, June 1.

Northern Ireland is not a Palestine from which the British government can pull out and leave the two sides to fight it out as best they may; it is a part of the United Kingdom.

—*The Economist*, June 1.

The man (Jean Jacques Servan — Schreïber) who has thought more intelligently and behaved more stupidly than almost anyone else in recent politics.

—*The Economist*, June 1.

All great historical facts and personages occur, as it were twice—the first time as tragedy, the second as farce.

—Karl Marx quoted in *The Economist*, May 11.