

A QUARTERLY OF LIBERAL IDEAS

Freedom First

July-September 1989

No. 402

Price

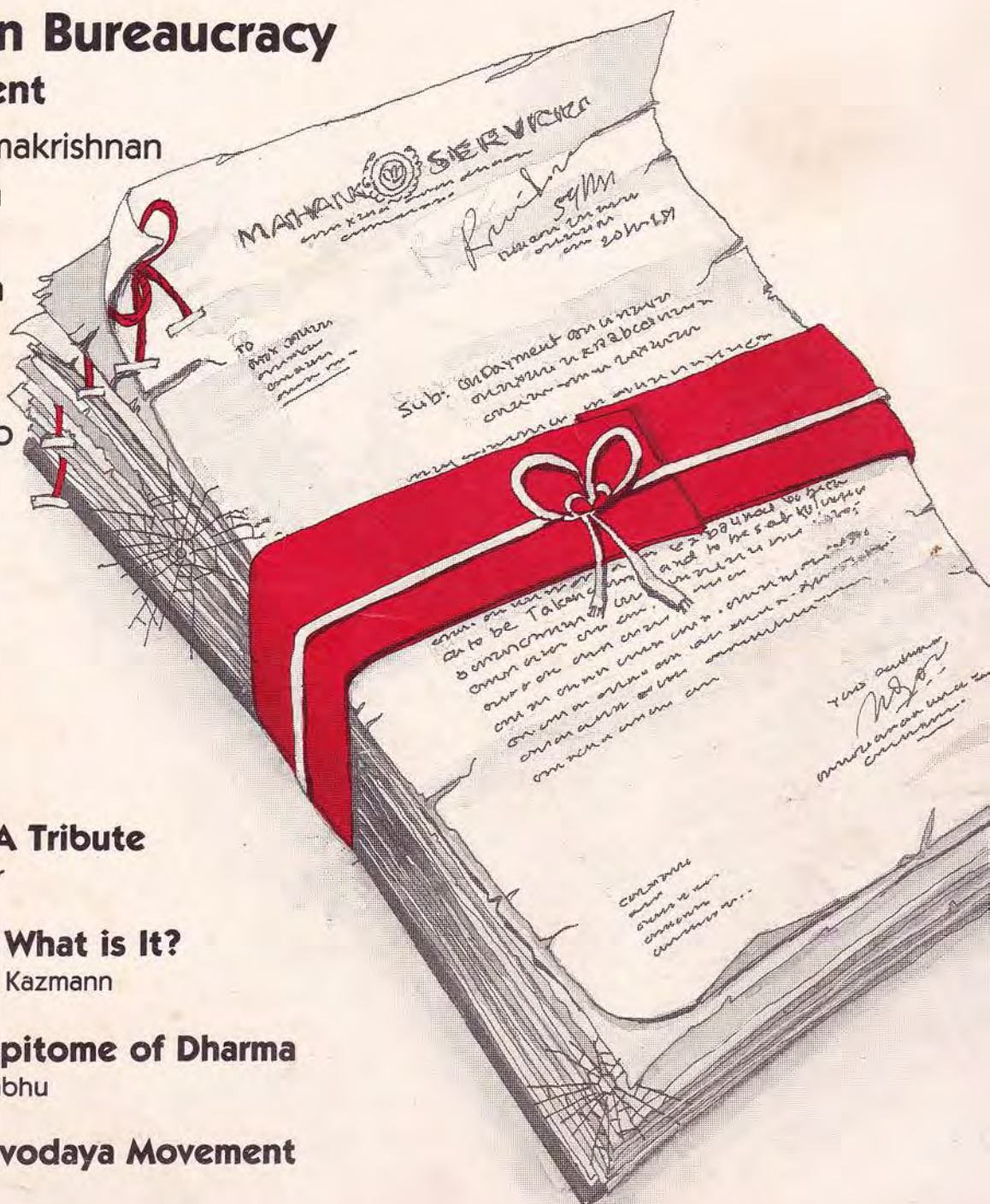
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The Indian Bureaucracy

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- Dharma Vira
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- L.K. Jha
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Freedom First

A Quarterly of Liberal Ideas

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Democratic Research Service
4th floor, Maneckji Wadia Bldg.
127, Mahatma Gandhi Road
Bombay 400 001
Tel: 27 39 14

Published by J.R. Patel for the
Democratic Research Service and
printed by him at Parsiana Publications
Pvt. Ltd. 300 Perin Nariman Street,
Bombay 400 001

Typeset at Ace Fototypesetters,
38, Hanuman Building,
2nd fl., Behind R.B.I.
308 Perin Nariman St.
Bombay 400 001

Single Copy: Rs. 5
Annual Rs: 20
Life Rs: 300

(add Rs. 5 for outstation cheques)

Overseas (Il Class Air Mail)
Annual \$ 10 or £ 6
Life \$ 100 or £ 60

Cheques to be drawn in favour of
'Freedom First' and mailed to publishers
at address listed above

Dear Reader:

Among the three meanings attributed to the word 'bureaucracy' by the *American Heritage Dictionary* is this one: "Any administration in which the need to follow complex procedures impedes effective action." And, adds this dictionary, in the United States the word 'bureaucrat' is almost invariably derogatory unless the context establishes otherwise."

Both, the meaning and the comment, are relevant to India. 'Don't be a bloody bureaucrat' is a rebuke one often hears when the person at the receiving end cites rules, procedures and forms to be filled to undertake or complete a given action. Interestingly enough the Marxist-Leninists who are bitterly opposed to the economic reforms of Deng and Gorbachev describe these gentlemen as "bureaucrat-capitalists"!

In *Mr. Red Tape*, the late Mr. L. K. Jha puts this across in inimitable style: "To every proposal, he (the government servant) has an objection. For every solution he can find a difficulty" — Prof. Parkinson's "Abominable No-man"!

Very rarely does one see anyone go with any eagerness to visit a government office unless of course it is another government servant or someone who has a 'chit' which ensures a reasonably decent reception, if not action. Why is this so? Is it because the government servant today has so much power that he can do or undo a person's or an organisation's future? Is it because the civil servant considers himself to be a servant of the party in power and not of the people?

To be fair, exceptions of the upright; hardworking civil servant are many but in their totality a small minority of the vast bureaucratic machine. They are oddballs who prefer to be loyal to the Constitution and to laws legislated by a democratically elected assembly or parliament rather than to the politician in office. If India can have more oddballs and fewer rules that dictate citizens' lives from the cradle to the grave perhaps the American connotation of a bureaucrat may no longer apply to us.

These and other issues are discussed in some detail by a distinguished panel of former civil servants and from the academic point of view by a university professor.

Being a quarterly events overtake us. We had planned this feature on the bureaucracy many months ago hence some readers might find it rather strange that when events of significant importance are taking place in China or nearer home the growing isolation of India from its neighbours — Nepal, Bangladesh, and now Sri Lanka — we have chosen to discuss the bureaucracy. The idea was to follow up a discussion on the bureaucracy with a look at political parties and their programmes in the next issue on the eve of the general elections.

A number of articles have had to be held up because the recent hike by the Central Government in the price of newsprint has made costs so prohibitive that the additional pages we had planned had to be abandoned. To those who responded to our invitation and contributed articles we apologise for our inability to carry their piece in this issue.

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WITH MANY VOICES

"The deep moans round with many voices. Come, my friends
 'Tis not too late to seek a newer world" — Tennyson

And if he (Mao) hadn't died in 1976, he might also have introduced market-style economic reforms. Mao, you know, also encouraged people to make profits and get rich.

Mrs. Tang Ruiren, *Asian Wall Street Journal*, May 3

The fall of Hu Yaobang coincided with his campaign to punish the children of high officials who had profited illegally from their family ties. Mr. Deng Xiaoping's son Deng Pufang heads a charity that profits from businesses both in China and elsewhere. Mr. Zhao Ziyang's son Zhao Dajun is a senior official on Hainan Island, a 'special economic zone'... Mr. Li Yang, the son of Mr. Li Peng, the Prime Minister, also works on Hainan Island.

The Economist, May 6

We are protesting because we are tired of telling lies.

Lin Ruihua, a reporter for a Chinese cultural magazine (on why he participated in a march by journalists), *Asian Wall Street Journal*, May 6

I love rice but would rather have truth.

A banner carried by demonstrating students, *Sunday Observer*, May 14

Give us democracy or give us death.

A banner carried by demonstrating students, *Indian Express*, May 15

I support their movement and admire their courage.

The Dalai Lama, *The Times of India*, May 15

Yesterday, the intellectuals came out and supported them. Today the people will come out to do the same. We will make the government listen.

A Beijing tool factory worker, *Indian Express*, May 16

Our Gorbachev is probably still in high school. We've only got a bunch of Brezhnevs.

Wang Yaoming, a health ministry official, *The Asian Wall Street Journal*, May 19-20

The People's Liberation Army belongs to the people. It cannot confront the people, even more so it cannot suppress the people and it will never shoot the people.

A letter in *The People's Daily*, signed by seven well-known military men, *The Times of India*, May 23

The government is fascist. How can they do this to me? How can they do this to the people?

A worker hit on the leg by a soldier of the PLA, *The Sunday Observer*, June 4

When the army convoys tried to break through, the soldiers continued to spray their bullets indiscriminately at crowds in the streets.

An Announcer over Beijing Radio, *The Times of India*, June 5

Whatever will happen of China's international reputation?

An African diplomat in Beijing, *Indian Express*, June 5

Tell the United Nations, tell the world what has happened in China. Tell them that the Chinese government is killing the Chinese people.

A Worker, *Time*, June 19

TIANANMEN

No miracle will ever clean
 the memory, bestial and
 obscene,
 of those who, having
 fouled their trust,
 grew warped with dread
 and powerlust –
 and ordered fire on the
 square,
 on unarmed people every-
 where,
 brave people seeking to be
 free
 of rottenness, of tyranny.

Vikram Seth
The Times of India,
 June 6

OF CABBAGES AND KINGS

Misuse of the Media

In the last week of June politicians belonging to several opposition parties gave vent to their sense of frustration and helpless rage by demonstrating outside All India Radio and Doordarshan centres, symbolically breaking up TV sets, shouting slogans and courting arrests.

Their anger is justified. They are being maligned by Mr. Rajiv Gandhi and his cronies. What is worse, these men and women in the opposition are not being given an opportunity to clear their names and record on radio or TV.

Mr. Bhagat, the AIR-TV boss and his lieutenant Tewary (or is it the other way around?) have made it clear that they are doing nothing wrong. And, for good measure TV hero Tewary shoots from the hip to say that AIR and Doordarshan would not be "bamboozled into disseminating the subversive propaganda of the opposition."

Demonstrations and courting arrest or even breaking TV sets is not going to compel a shameless and insensitive government (whose only objective is to win the next elections) to even consider, much less concede, the demand for autonomy.

Moreover what credibility do these leaders in the opposition have? When the Janata Dal (JD) and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) were in power in 1977 (in their *avatar* as the Janata Party) they failed to fulfil a solemn election promise to legislate autonomy for the audio-visual media. It is no use saying, as one leader is reported to have said, that they were intending to do so but they got thrown out of power in the meanwhile. TV and AIR autonomy should have had the highest priority. But the then Information Minister and currently President of the BJP Mr. L.K. Advani prevaricated and the Janata men had more important matters to attend to — squabbling over the loaves and fishes of office.

The fact remains that no government of whichever complexion will ever give up its stranglehold on the audio-visual media. It is too powerful a weapon to

throw away.

In any case, asking for autonomy would merely be changing the brand name of a product. It would be as 'autonomous' as the MTNL or any of the hundreds of public sector undertakings!

There can be only one solution to prevent misuse of the electronic media. Throw it open to the public. Go to court. Cite the Constitution (disfigured as it is, it is still the best bet) and demand freedom of the air waves. It is as much a part of our fundamental right to freedom of expression as the publication of newspapers and periodicals.

Freedom First founder Mr. Minoo Masani and Mr. P.C. Chatterjee, former Director General of All India Radio, filed a writ in the Bombay High Court on September 11, 1987 demanding the right to set up private broadcasting stations. The writ is yet to be heard though almost two years have elapsed. Petition the court to expedite the hearing if you gentlemen in the opposition are really serious. (For details see *Freedom First* No. 395, October 1987).

Incidentally what are the communist parties doing participating in the agitation demanding autonomy? Given half a chance they would not only not grant autonomy but be brazen enough to totally misuse the media for 'progressive' ends as they are now doing in China. In fact they would do a more thorough job than our Bhagats and Tewarys — or, for that matter even Mr. Vidya Charan Shukla Mrs. Gandhi hatchet man in the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting during the 'Emergency' and now a champion of autonomy!

SVR

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

—Lewis Carroll



Of Khomeini and the Chinese Communists

The Government's declaration of a three-day mourning on the passing away of the Ayatollah was widely seen as extremely wanting in decorum and long-term wisdom. Human mortality and the age of political leaders being what they are someone or the other, near or far, will shuffle off his mortal coils. Will the Government immediately declare a three-day mourning? I do not recall what they did when Keryatta or Nkrumah passed away and I would not like to think what they would do in the unfortunate event of Idi Amin following suit. Also it was comical that the prayers sung on the wireless and on Doordarshan were in praise of idols — Hari and Krishna — in memory of one who stood for the abolition of idolatry.

The concern of the Government, and the presence of high Indian dignitaries at the funeral of the "Liberator of Iran" was in striking contrast to the total indifference of the Government of India to communist brutalities in China which were Himalayan in their tragic dimensions. The entire public of the land, barring a minority of the faithfuls, unilaterally condemned the barbarism of the 'Peoples' Government of China in putting down what was a non-violent demonstration at Tiananmen Square.

It was heartening that the message and the method of Mahatma Gandhi shared across the continent have their own relevance. It is also pertinent to ask if the Mahatma would have succeeded if the Chinese Communists and not the British had been our colonial rulers?

RS

"Evaluating the Reality"

In Communist China, Mao's heirs have, by their brutal suppression of a movement for more freedom and democracy, proved that power indeed grows from the barrel of a gun. The naive who are inclined to take the democratic professions of the commissar at face value, need to think again – Poland, Hungary or Gorbachev notwithstanding.

We posed a question in an earlier issue of *Freedom First*: "Is the Soviet ideology really changing?" China, at least, has answered in the negative and proved beyond all reasonable doubt that once communists gain control of a country they will never let go. It is as simple as that. If it was not so, why would the for demand democracy incur the wrath and vengeance of the 'peoples' democrats?

Freedom First holds firm its belief that while a market economy is the only sensible and pragmatic policy that can promote the prosperity of a people it cannot be divorced from a free society where the citizen dictates not only what shall be produced but also who shall rule him. It can never be Bread or Freedom. It must always be Bread with Freedom.

The Marxist-Leninists (our very own Naxalites) are right when they denounce both Deng and his cohorts (who they describe as 'Capitalist-Roaders') on the one hand and 'Western Capitalists' on the other, for the suppression of the movement for democracy. For our Naxalites the students' movement is a revolt against the new economic policy of the Chinese Communist gerontocracy while we view it as a genuine people's movement that proves that four decades of totalitarian rule has not suppressed a people's desire to breathe freely the air of freedom and liberty.

Western nations including the United States have been pulling their punches because trade is at stake. The Chinese market is so big, so inviting, so profitable! The villain of the piece is Japan which is actively campaigning, particularly with the United States, not to take harsh steps or act in anger. Truly have the Japanese taken over the British mantle of being 'shopkeepers to the world'.

And so we agree, for different reasons, with the Marxist-Leninists when they point out that while "Capitalist Roder" Deng was warmly applauded by the West for his opening up the market to them he is found wanting because of the suppression of the movement for democracy. Free trade and commerce are important but never at the cost of human dignity and individual liberty. Herein lies the contradiction and the dilemma for the West.

And while on this subject let us not forget that other fight for freedom in Lhasa where martial law was declared much before it was imposed in Beijing and where thousands have perished at the hands of Chinese imperialist bullets.

The Office of Information and International Relations at Dharamsala in Himachal Pradesh issued a press statement on May 20. The statement drew attention to a resolution adopted by the Tibetan National Assembly in May calling on the Chinese authorities to lift Martial Law in Lhasa.

The statement observes *inter alia*:

"The struggle of the Tibetan people is a struggle for our inalienable right to determine our own destiny in freedom. It is a struggle for democracy, human rights and peace. Most of all, it is a struggle for our survival as a people and a nation with a unique civilization.

"China's sinister objective of reducing the Tibetan people into a minority in our own land is being implemented through an alarming demographic aggression. Today there are over seven million Chinese immigrants in Tibet – far outnumbering the six million and more Tibetans.

"Since 1959 over 1.2 million Tibetans have died as a direct result of Chinese domination over Tibet. Over 6000 monasteries, temples and chapels have been destroyed and desecrated.

"There are fresh reports of heavy military build-up and troop movements inside Tibet in recent months – somewhat like a preparation for war.

"Chinese prisons in and around Lhasa are becoming overcrowded. All prisons in Lhasa are filled with Tibetans who took part in the March 1989 anti-Chinese demonstrations. Due to shortage of space, a large number of prisoners are kept in the Sangyip military barracks. This has been revealed by a number of Tibetans who have recently arrived in Kathmandu.

Is it any surprising that the Chinese colonisers have now turned on their own people?

Not surprisingly our Swadeshi Stalinists (the comrades would consider this a compliment) have not surprisingly supported the massacre of the innocents at Tiananmen Square and praised the Peoples Liberation Army for their 'heroism' in killing unarmed men and women.

And how has the Government of India reacted? Our Prime Minister says: "We have every indication that reports coming from China are not 100 per cent accurate. We would like to evaluate what the reality is before we say" (*Indian Express*, June 16). Presumably he is waiting for a Xinhua report channelled, no doubt, through the PIB, AIR and Doordarshan – all outstanding specimen of credibility!

How many more should die or be executed before "the reality" is "evaluated"?

S.V. Raju

The Civil Service — Then and Now

Dharma Vira

I sincerely believe that the members of our Services are in no way lesser than the members of the Indian Civil Service. They have come low only because they have strayed from the path of their duty, under pressures which they should have resisted, in the pursuit of their personal gains and advantages. In this they have been helped by self-seeking politicians.

The Administrative Services in India for all practical purposes came into being soon after the 1857 disturbances after which the British Crown took charge of the administration of India. Till the country was under the control of the East India Company, the administrators of the Company who administered parts of India under the Company's control, were part time workers who were paid a meagre salary for their administrative work and were at the same time permitted to trade to supplement their resources. This was obviously an impractical system and hence the British administrators decided that the country should be governed by the British Crown with the help of permanent services called the Indian Civil Service and the Indian Police Service.

To start with the members of the Indian Civil Service which was considered to be the leading Civil Service in the country were to be recruited by a system of nomination of young people belonging to the junior branches of the leading families in the U.K. As time passed, this practice was considered to be impractical to produce good administrators and was replaced by a system of recruitment by competition through the British Public Service Commission. This gave birth to the famous Indian Civil Service which administered the country till its independence, with considerable dedication and efficiency. For its efficiency and dedication for the good government of the country it acquired a name which is even now talked of not only in India but in countries abroad.

Ideals of the Service

The Service consisted of young men carefully selected and well trained. By personal example and integrity they

were expected to be swift and decisive in decision and action. The cardinal sins were not to take decisions and to look for advice and counsel to superiors repeatedly. Life was meant for action and even to commit mistakes and to learn from them. They could expect to be supported and to receive sympathetic understanding even if their decisions or actions were wrong, so long as their bonafides were above reproach. The senior officials through constant touring were expected to maintain contact with the people and the subordinate officials had all the time to be aware that they could not indulge in malpractices without being detected. Punishment for malpractices such as bribery, corruption, embezzlement etc. was swift and severe, whilst other mistakes received benevolent understanding. As loyalty was understood to be a two way traffic, the leaders of the administration cultivated a sense of loyalty to their subordinates. They acted as their advisers in their difficulties, sorrows and troubles. Minor faults when noticed did not receive sharp reprimand but only advice on how to remove them. There was much stress on personal example rather than on sanctimonious sermonising. It was an admirable leadership for an imperialist regime

On Independence

When Independence was approaching, the leaders of the country had naturally to think about the administration of the country in an independent India. Sardar Patel who was not a mere freedom fighter, even before independence, started applying his mind to the problem which India would have to face with regard to administration after Independence had been achieved. The country not only had to develop economically and politically but with its

large territory consisting of numerous people with varying religions, languages, castes and creeds etc. there was the inherent danger of disunity which had to be guarded against. Though the country had been one culturally throughout its existence, politically it consisted of numerous territories some large, some small, which, in spite of the cultural unity of the country, very often operated against each other politically.

Sardar Patel saw very clearly that the newly independent democracy of India could not be successful unless it had a well-organised, well paid and well trained administrative machinery not only to provide a good and efficient administration but also to hold the country together. Most of the freedom fighters were prejudiced against the senior services in the country. Under the British regime they had suffered at the hands of these services which treatment was difficult to forget. The Sardar however with his practical mind had a vision and capacity to rise above such biases and prejudices. He felt that if these Services could serve a foreign power, efficiently and effectively, there was no reason why they could not be expected to serve much more effectively and with a greater sense of dedication their own country, when free. So even before Independence he succeeded in getting the Indian National Congress to agree to the continuation of the two main all India Services, viz., the ICS which on Independence became the Indian Administrative Service, and the Indian Police Service. In his opinion these all India Services would not only be effective instruments of administration in the country but also because of their all India character would help in holding the country together.

When he encountered determined opposition in the Constituent Assembly to the concept of the all India Services he boldly declared: "The Union will go. You will not have a united India, if you do not have a good all India Service which has independence to speak out its mind. If you do not adopt this course then do not follow the present Constitution. Substitute something else." He further went on to say in one of his letters to the Prime Minister: "I need hardly emphasize that an efficient, disciplined and contented service, assured of its prospects, as a result of diligent and honest work is a *sine qua non* of sound administration, under a democratic regime, even more than under an authoritarian rule. The Services must be above party and we should ensure that political considerations either in its recruitment or in its discipline and control are reduced to the minimum, if not eliminated altogether."

For this reason when the Services were instituted after Independence, Sardar Patel insisted on having safeguards for them from the stage of recruitment through the Union Public Service Commission free from political control, to the ensuring of their other rights through Article 311 of the Constitution. Thus while the members of the all India Services were to be under the administrative control of the state Governments, the Central Government was given powers in regard to them in matters of recruitment, disciplinary action, promotion etc.

With Independence and the ushering in of democracy a new era dawned. From a law and order government, we came into an era of a welfare state committed to giving a fair deal to our teeming masses and to remove speedily the ill effects in our social and economic structure brought about by the neglect of centuries. Up to Independence the administration of the country was the sole responsibility of the Indian Civil Service, under the guidance and control of the Viceroy and Governor-General of India. But with the advent of Independence and democracy, in the matter of administration, a partnership of politicians and the civil service came into being. Whilst the task of the politicians was to lay down policies and to ensure that they would be implemented, the services were

required to assist in the formulation of policies by tendering advice, to implement the policies decided upon, to ensure continuity of administration as their political masters changed according to the vicissitudes of political fortunes, and to provide a clean and efficient administration. The members of the Services, coming through competition from all parts of the country and with the provision that the members of the Service in any state would be a mixture of all the people of India, integrity in the administration of the country was sought to be maintained. In short, the tasks of the Indian Administrative Services (IAS) that came into being after the advent of independence were as follows :

- a) Maintenance of Law and Order
- b) to provide an efficient and clean government.
- c) to advise the political administrators in the process of laying down policies
- d) to ensure that the policies laid down by the political masters are implemented speedily and well; and
- e) to ensure continuity of administration when political instabilities arise, on account of vicissitudes in political fortunes.

New Tasks and Old Conditions

With the advent of Independence the tasks of the Services became much more varied and all embracing. But the structure of the Services however remained more or less unaltered. One would have thought that with the great changes in the scope of work and aims of the Services, modifications in the methods of recruitment, training and procedures in the Services and administration would be made to suit the requirements of democratic India. This however has not happened and we are continuing to proceed with the same methods of recruitment, training and procedures, even though they are not in consonance with the requirements of our times or the people. For carrying out the principle objectives and purposes of the Constitution and for creating the senior service cadre which the Constitution envisaged, it was imperative that the permanent Services should have been moulded into an instrument suited to its new tasks. This, however, was not done. In the process the services working under the control and supervision of their political mas-

ters have been subjected to pressures which they had never been subjected to before.

Whilst before Independence the Services were known for their integrity, and freedom of expression gradually these virtues got eroded particularly because members of the Services became more interested in their personal advancement and gains rather than the furtherance of the tasks for which the Services were created. The *esprit de corps* which was the hallmark of the Services before Independence has more or less disappeared. Now every one works for his own personal benefit regardless of how it will reflect on his or her colleagues or on the good and efficient administration of the country. The most important task which the Services were given after independence viz., to advise the political administrators in the laying down of policies, has been sadly neglected.

No More Honest Advisers

There are only a very few civil servants now who have the courage to speak out their minds to their political masters on matters of policy or administration without fear or favour. Generally most of them look up to the Minister to give an indication of what and how he would like to be advised and thereafter they advise accordingly whether it be in the interests of the administration of the country or otherwise. Thus the partnership between the politicians and the civil servants which was to be a partnership for the efficient and clean administration of the country has degenerated into a partnership where the premier consideration is not the clean and efficient administration of the country but to please the Minister and thereby to achieve personal advancement and gains. Thus, though because of the past, the people even now look up to the Services to provide a clean and efficient administration, they have signally failed in this, as well as in the discharge of their constitutional obligation to advise their political masters freely and fearlessly. Even the integrity for which the Services were known before independence has now become doubtful.

This has mainly been due to the unwise salary system of the government itself for the Indian Civil Services.

The British Government had ensured that the members of the Indian Civil

Service received handsome salaries so that, because of financial pressures, they may not be diverted towards questionable practices. The salary of the Secretary to Government even in those times of low prices was Rs. 4,000/- per month but under Independent India it was reduced to Rs. 3,500/- per month and, even though prices continued to rise steeply no enhancement in salary scales was permitted. It is only recently that the salary scales have been revised but unfortunately it is too late. In the meantime a large number of servicemen under stress of financial difficulties have been compelled to deviate from the path of integrity. This has been a very unfortunate development in the administration of the country.

Whilst it is true that the members of the Services today are operating in an environment very different from what the Indian Civil Service operated in, yet this excuse is not good enough to justify the present woeful functioning of the Services. After all, their members belong to the highest educated section of the country. Our leaders and our Constitution makers placed great reliance on their devotion and dedication to the good of our country. They were expected to have the courage and dedication to discharge their duties courageously for the lasting good of India. To enable them to do this without fear, safeguards were provided for them under Article 311 of the Constitution of India. They have been placed in a position that the Services in the U.K. and France have established for themselves in those countries. But they have thrown away those opportunities and have enslaved themselves to the politicians because of self-interest and avarice. This position has to be reversed.

No Reason for Despair

Whilst much water has flown down the Yamuna in these last 20 or 30 years, things have gone from bad to worse, I however do not see any reason for despair. If the members of the Services even now wake up to their responsibilities and duties for the good and clean government of our country I have no reason to doubt that even at this stage we can reverse the unfortunate trends which are plaguing the administration of the country, and give to our people a clean and efficient administration. To achieve this the members of the

Services will have to make up their minds and to take the following steps :

- a) To build up an *esprit de corps* where by servicemen will not seek to take advantage over their colleagues in regard to promotions and personal gains.
- b) Insist on all decisions being taken with a full sense of objectivity and fair play.
- c) Take stringent steps to fight corruption. The penalty for malpractices must be swift and sure.
- d) Be fearless in the expression of their views when advising their political masters in regard to matters of policy and administration.
- e) In district administration, resume the practice of touring the district to maintain close contact with the people. This will help them acquire knowledge of what is happening in the district and enable them to maintain a tag on the activities of their subordinate officials.
- f) Resume the practice of greater contact with the younger members of the Service with a view to training them in the performance of the tasks which they would be required to perform in later years.

I am conscious that the above is a tall order but the premier senior Services of the country were constituted with the express purpose of providing a clean and efficient administration to the country. The Sardar had great expectations from the Services. He took a bold stand to ensure the freedom of the Services from political domination at the time of the framing of the Constitution of India. The Services cannot be untrue to Sardar Patel nor to the Constitution-makers of India. In other countries such as the U.K. and France the Services are playing a very effective role in the good administration of their respective countries. This was possible not only because the members of the Services were dedicated to the service of their respective countries but also because they developed a homogeneous society under which they could act fearlessly and honestly in the discharge of their functions.

I sincerely believe that the members of our Services are in no way less qualified or able than the members of the Services in the U.K. or France nor are they lesser in any way than the members of the Indian Civil Service which

functioned and earned a great name during the British period. They have come low only because, in the pursuit of their personal gains and advantages, they have strayed from the path of duty, under pressures, which in the interests of their country and also to ensure their good name, they should have resisted. In this they have been helped by self-seeking politicians who again have strayed from the path of service to their country — a path that was shown to them by Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Patel and numerous other patriots of the country. Not only are we failing those great patriots who had reposed so much hope in the members of the Services but also they are being untrue to their country and to the future generations, who will never forgive them.

Mr. Dharma Vira ICS (Retd.) a distinguished civil servant held several senior positions including the Governorship of West Bengal

The Cobwebs were Still There...

My first responsible job was as sub-divisional magistrate in Bareilly. When I went to the court room... I saw that the immensely lofty ceiling was draped and festooned with cobwebs six feet deep. I told the clerk of the court to see that they were removed and he said that of course it should be as I wished. Three days later, it was just the same. The court clerk had passed my orders to the *Nazir*, who was a kind of quartermaster to the headquarters of the district. I sent for the *nazir*; he too, had passed the order, to the head messenger... Three days later, the cobwebs still stirred sluggishly in the increasing heat of March. I sent for the head messenger; he too had duly passed on the order to someone else. It took about a fortnight to reach the final link in the chain of command. This man, I resolved grimly, would have to be punished. But they led in an old man, hardly able to walk. He had been a messenger fifty years, on ten rupees a month, and since his pension was only two rupees a month he had been given the job of dusting the court for another two rupees. It would be only the walls of the court he was expected to dust and the furniture... But even that was beyond him, and probably a grandson actually did dust the court for eight annas. Of course the old man could not be punished, so we found a contractor with ladders and strong young men and made a special occasion of it.

Philip Mason, *Plain Tales from the Raj*

Mr. Red Tape

L. K. Jha

I do not know if you have had the good fortune of not meeting Mr Red Tape. Most people have come across him in one form or another. And who can escape the filling of forms? When a child is born, when he goes to school, when as a grown-up he applies for a job, when he wants to build a house, when he wants to claim his pension, when he dies, and indeed even after his death, forms have to be filled up. And where there is a form, there is a Mr Red Tape.

Mr Red Tape is a creature of somewhat strange habits. He moves in grooves, he sits on files, he sleeps over reminders and, occasionally, he has been known to eat his own words. He would be a fascinating addition to any zoo, but that is not where he lives. His favourite haunt is a Government Office. However laughable his ways may be, Mr Red Tape provokes not laughter but tears.

There are many stories told about the antics of Mr Red Tape. It is said that in a certain Government Office, there was a large accumulation of old documents and files, dating back decades, documents to which no one but white ants and rats paid any attention. The space which these documents occupied began to squeeze out the people working in that office and the head of that office had a bright revolutionary idea. If the old documents were burnt, so much space would become free. So he wrote to the Head of his Department in the far off State capital, seeking his permission to do so. After three years and nineteen reminders during which the people working in that office were all but suffocated, the sanction came. Yes, the documents could be destroyed, but three copies of each of them should first be made for future reference!

What annoys and worries people about Mr Red Tape is not oddities of

this kind, but his whole outlook and approach to the problems which are brought to him. To every proposal, he has an objection. For every solution, he can find a difficulty.

However annoying a character he may seem in office, if you meet Mr Red Tape in private life, you will find that he is quite a likeable normal human being. In fairness to him, therefore, one should ask what it is that causes his transformation and makes him behave the way he does.

One day, I had the good fortune of catching him in a relaxed mood at home. His daughter, aged ten, wanted him to help her write an essay on the life of Tilak. So, he was glad to be interrupted. In the course of our conversation, I asked him, as tactfully as I could, how it was that he who was obviously so human at home became so inhuman in office. To my surprise, his usually placid face showed signs of animation. There was a gleam in his eye instead of the glassy stares with which he froze visitors to his office.

'What choice have I got,' he asked. 'I am not judged by the results I achieve, but by my adherence to rules. I won't be blamed if I do nothing, but I will be taken to task if I make a single mistake. What does it matter if a battle is lost, if trains collide, or buildings collapse, so long as I have acted according to the rules? It is far better that refugees should wait indefinitely for the relief which is due to them than to run the risk of paying more than their due to anyone. Sins of commission are easier to detect than sins of omission.'

'This must be very trying,' I said, 'How do you manage to function at all?'

'That is very simple,' he replied. 'If someone asks me a question, the first thing I ask myself is whether it is within my competence to give him a reply. This is never easy for anyone to know. So, I start consulting every-

body else who might possibly be concerned or interested. Before they give me any answer, they ask me a number of questions. I fling them back at the poor chap who approached me first. If he still perseveres and comes back with answers I pass them back to my colleagues. If they can find no flaw in the answers, they take a decision. And usually, the decision is to put the matter up to the officers above them. And so the game goes on. Do you think I like it? When I retire, the very rules and procedures which I apply will result in my pension being held up for months and even years. And when it is sanctioned, I shall have to prove by producing certificates on prescribed forms that I am alive and also that I was alive in each of the intervening months during which my pension was under consideration!'

As he paused for breath, I managed to ask him another question: 'Is there no way out?' I asked: 'Can nothing be done to make things easier and simpler?'

There was a sudden change in his manner. He looked at me with a suspicious eye, wondering whether he had talked more freely than he should have and whether he had infringed Government Servants' Conduct Rules in any manner. After a brief pause in which the gleam went out of his eye, he said: 'That is a question which you must address to someone in the Department of Administrative Reforms. It will be for them to consult others, examine the matter at the appropriate level and give an answer in suitable terms in due course to your query.'

Mr. L.K. Jha ICS (Retd.) was the Governor of the Reserve Bank of India, Chairman of the Administrative Reforms Commission and Economic Advisor to the Prime Minister

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Bumblng Officialdom — Vacillation and Dilemma

J.B. D'Souza

India's leisurely drive to development and her creaking administrative system put one in mind of a train, a really slow train, a train that jogs along jerkily, stopping at every wayside station, halting even oftener between stations. At one of these stops an irate passenger demands of the guard: "Guard, can't you go any faster?" "Of course I can", comes the answer, "but I have to go with the train". Compare the guard and the train with our political masters and their official lackeys if you like, but which of these two groups would you identify with the guard and which with the train.

In my own experience officials fall generally into the train role. The cumbersome official machinery that politicians inherit when they assume office usually provides a brake on their initial zeal, thwarting or greatly delaying the delivery of a service oftener than it guides them into administrative propriety, or shows them how to implement the policies they were elected to pursue. Naturally, there are notable exceptions to this generalisation, but exceptions they remain.

The Draft Development Plan

Take a case that has recently caught attention in Bombay. In 1977 Bombay's municipality announced that it would prepare a new Development Plan for the city, to cover the twenty years from 1981 to 2001. It took its time over preparation, and eventually sent it to the Government for sanction in 1985. Since then the Plan has lain with the State Government, how much nearer sanction today than when it came no one can say. Its treatment in the State Secretariat corridors and recesses tells you something about the official slow train. Over a year after the Plan arrived it went to a newly set up non-official committee (We'll call it Committee A) that included well known city planners, "for advice". That advice came to the Secretariat department well within the twelve months that the Government set for the committee to complete its work. On its arrival the Chief Minister gave the

To what extent does a civil servant's obligation to society override his loyalty to the government of the day? Should his commitment be to public service rather than just to government service?

Are senior officials just government servants, or are they public servants whose responsibilities transcend the ordinary master-servant relationship vis a vis the government of the day?

Urban Affairs Department a month to process it. The Department's Secretary, who had sent the Plan to Committee A, and was later to process its report, had sat with the Committee during much of its working. His Joint Secretary had worked as the Committee's full-time secretary. Nonetheless, both Secretary and Joint Secretary were probably bewildered by the arrival of the Plan and the advice without the customary request for more time that most committees make. So they began a (successful) search for more committees — at least two more, to advise on Committee A's recommendations — and consultations with the municipality again, and with almost anyone who happened along, including many that Committee A had already consulted. Today, four years since the Plan came to the Government and two years after Committee A reported, the Department is still nowhere near its adoption. Of the twenty-year plan period eight years have slipped away.

Meanwhile a host of requests for change of individual parts of the Plan are engaging the attention of the Minister and his official aides, requests

that had been considered by the municipality, and considered again by Committee A. There are new requests too, requests that the Ministry's lackadaisical handling of the Plan has virtually invited. Meanwhile, Bombay's citizens impatiently await the major benefits the Plan promises.

The Secretary in charge is evidently shy of finalising this 20-year Plan before its 20-year period has passed. His Joint Secretary, who, we have seen, worked as Committee A's Secretary, had retired some time ago but is now on (his third?) extension to process the Plan. He clearly has a life time job. Vacillation could hardly be more firmly entrenched. You think of a comment by Paul Appleby on India's administrative procedures:

"Specific decisions incident to effectuation of purpose in India are reviewed by too many persons in too many organs of the government in too detailed, too repetitive and too negative terms. Perhaps nowhere else have so many systematic barriers been erected to prevent the accomplishment of that which it has been determined should be done."

Appleby wrote that over a quarter century ago. An experienced, perceptive administrator in Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal, he had been invited by Jawaharlal Nehru to advise on public administration in India. But our steel frame successfully resisted his efforts — and the then Prime Minister's — to temper its rigidity. If they have changed at all, our procedures have grown both more brittle and more convoluted, bringing satisfaction to the likes of the officials processing Bombay's Development Plan in their systematic practice of irresolution.

Are Politicians Alone Responsible?

Returning to the guard-train model, I suspect most officials would hate to be identified with a lumbering train that holds back its politician-guard. Will I be censured for the comparison by the

official trade union, the IAS Association? For officials like to reverse the roles, to claim that it is only politicians that hold them back in their urge to serve the people. Is their claim legitimate? Consider this: Poona still remembers S.G. Barve with admiration and gratitude. He ran the local municipality in the 'fifties, when the Government superseded it and gave Barve, its Commissioner, all the councillors' powers. Unfettered by the councillors' attentions, Barve changed the face of Poona. He was not one to miss an opportunity like that. Should that example change our train-and-guard role-casting? Surely not; Bombay provides an exactly opposite story. When Bombay's Corporation went into limbo seven or eight years ago, the successive administrators who ran the city government left no impression whatever on the city. The vast administrative apparatus available to them remained as inert, as devoid of leadership as before, the Corporation's enormous resources notwithstanding. A case of the bland leading the bland, with no results to show, no benefits to the citizen, who lost even his representation in the Corporation.

At times trains and their guards get reckless and rush headlong to disaster. The set of land reservations in Bombay's Development Plan illustrates this temptation to waywardness. Bombay is desperately short of dispensaries, hospitals, schools, and playgrounds. The Draft Development Plan, 1981-2001, seeks to meet some of this shortage by reserving plots of land all over the city for such amenities, but even after all these reservations and the respective amenities on them materialise, there will still be a severe shortage of civic facilities. So there is hardly a case for lifting any of these reservations; there should be many more of them.

Yet a few months ago the Minister responsible startled the city by announcing that 285 reservations had been dropped. Several lakh sq. meters of land that could have added to the city's civic facilities were instead adding to builders' land banks. This quiet almost furtive diversion had been going on while the doodle on the total Plan itself was stumbling along, as I have described earlier. Here was a case where the officials concerned should have used their wits to restrain the

Ministers. Here was a chance, indeed an urgent need, for them to assume a guard role. Instead, there is every indication that they avidly encouraged this headlong dissipation of the common man's potential assets. Land values being what they are in Bombay city, rumours of venality were rife; reputations tottered. It was left to an environmental pressure group to pull the alarm chain by launching public interest litigation against the "dereservations".

The Role of a Guardian.

How far can an official stretch his guardianship role? To what extent does his obligation to society override his loyalty to the government of the day? Should his commitment be to public service rather than just to government service? One morning about fifteen years ago a colleague brought me a file proposing the disposal of 15 plots of Back Bay land, the most valuable Government-owned land in Bombay and perhaps in all of South Asia. An accommodating Lands Department, of which he was Secretary, had picked a price far below the market value of the land. Strangely enough, the Finance Department had earlier agreed that competitive bids were unnecessary, and Lands had chosen the fortunate ones — mostly builders — who would get this bounty of public assets at a low price. The Lands Secretary told me I mustn't spend too much time studying the case. The file was to go through all the governmental disposal procedures at once, so the Chief Minister, V.P. Naik, could approve the sale that very night. I reviewed the file as critically as I could in the time given, and discovered a good reason to raise the recommended price by at least 11%. On the premises posited that was the most I could do, but even this modest change meant crores of rupees for the public treasury. Barely had I sent the file on its way to the next stage, when the Lands Minister, a man called Vartak, sent for me. He obviously had his spies trailing the file. "You have spoilt the file" he accused. "We had settled everything. Did you have to interfere and ruin the deal?" I pointed out that this was prime land, and the beneficiaries of his largesse, a bunch of builders, would undoubtedly make an enormous profit on it. Government should squeeze them I urged. "But we have already squeezed them", came the Minister's pat answer, before he realised

what he was saying. Followed a session in which I (and the new Finance Secretary, who had by then supported my view) was pressured to rewrite my recommendation. At this stage my attention wandered, and the Minister realised that I couldn't hear what he was saying. Ultimately, neither Chief Minister Naik nor Vartak had the temerity to exercise their undeniable power to overrule me; the 11% price rise prevailed.

Even this was a sell-out. So I searched for a solution less injurious to the public interest. That turned up quite soon. I got a public-spirited friend to stimulate path-breaking public interest litigation in the Bombay High Court, to which that maverick MP, Piloo Mody, and Bombay's redoubtable "*paniwali bai*", Mrinal Gore, lent their names as petitioners. One of Bombay's leading lawyers, Ashok Desai, appeared for us, arguing that Government could not part with public assets at a price lower than their market value. Unexpectedly we won, and the Court jacked the price up to almost double the level Vartak's minions had set. The High Court delivered strictures against the Government. The Ministers were eager to appeal its decision, at least to escape the strictures. By the time they did this a new Chief Minister had replaced V.P. Naik; I was able to persuade him to drop the appeal.

Government Servants or Public Servants?

Was I a good and proper civil servant or was my role, one of clearly dubious loyalty to the government of the day, altogether indefensible? Are senior officials just Government servants, or are they public servants, whose responsibilities transcend the ordinary master-servant relationship *vis a vis* the government of the day?

As a civil servant, whichever way you answer those questions you land in difficulties. If you keep to the traditional book of rules you almost confine yourself to a passive observer role. You state your case for propriety or for the course that in your view best serves the public interest and let your political boss run over you. In the case I have just described I did not even that. Correctly, I should have urged the Ministers to invite competitive offers, notwithstanding the Finance Department's earlier connivance at fixed pricing. I believe I would then have been more readily overruled, and would have lost even the

11% price increase the Ministers reluctantly agreed to, because the departure from competition had been adopted much before, and had even been acted upon in an earlier sale. The public interest would thus have lost out, and the civil servant would have only the dubious satisfaction that he had lodged an ineffective protest. If such protests, mild and ineffective as they are, get too frequent, the civil servant generally has to move to another assignment, to be replaced by someone less inconvenient — there are always plenty of them.

If, on the other hand, an official assumes a more activist role, his loyalty is suspect. There is no course set for him to take in order to promote the public interest. He has to improvise. Court intervention, as in this case? Legislative interpellation? Press exposure, through a leak? Very seldom can such an activist role be kept under wraps, so it is almost surely followed in the short run by a transfer, in the long run by a blight on career prospects. He has, of course, the consolation that the public interest has survived.

Rigid Service Rules

A sad feature of our civil service system is the fact that, while there is plenty

of incentive to good performance, disincentives against laziness, indecision and venality just don't exist. Let's look at the incentives later. For the idlers, the duffers, the crooks, the indecisive, the system has neither an antidote nor a remedy. The service rules have become so rigid that at almost all levels incompetence must be rewarded by promotion if the incompetent one is senior enough. The system also discourages accurate appraisal of the lazy, the corrupt, and the inefficient: a higher officer who is rash enough to evaluate them accurately finds himself in the dock a year or two later. He is required to cite chapter and verse to support his evaluation. Even if his memory is good enough and he does so, a tolerant Government finds it convenient to delete the adverse evaluation nine times out of ten. So you find in the senior ranks of the civil service, filling posts of Secretaries to Government in the "super time-scale", bumbling officials you wouldn't hire as even low level inspectors or clerks.

The Civil Service — A Challenging Career

Yet for one who is dedicated to the people's welfare the civil service

remains one of the most challenging careers this country has to offer. Few other careers combine the intellectual stimulus, the opportunity for intelligent management and the joy of public service — a combination that very largely offsets the inadequacies of salary scales. These have improved somewhat now, but just five years ago a Secretary to the Government of India, and even the Cabinet Secretary (the highest-ranked position in the civil service) got only Rs. 3500 monthly. The fascination of their jobs more than compensated for the inadequate salary they drew. It was those who yielded to this fascination that reversed the guard-train analogy on which I started this article, and led India's development train.

Mr. J.B. D'Souza is a former Municipal Commissioner of Bombay and former Chief Secretary, Government of Maharashtra. He is currently very active in Bombay's Development Plans.

Managers are people who do things right while leaders are people who do the right thing

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The Price of Death

Bill Aitken

Quite often on Doordarshan an official advertisement appears admonishing the public about its duty to record births and deaths. Since it is sponsored by the Government and the motto of the Republic is *Truth will prevail*, the predicament of an applicant for a birth or death certificate ought to be shown more realistically. The truth — as I found out recently when a friend died — is that you have to give a bottle of rum, or its equivalent in cash — say 60 rupees — for extracting the death certificate from the local authorities in Rajiv Gandhi's India.

At least this is the price in the UP hill station where I live. To be fair to Mr Gandhi, he has kept the price of bribes steady, and a bottle of rum to the municipal babus has been the accepted tender for the last ten years. Mrs Gandhi was out of touch with reality when she explained away corruption as "a global phenomenon. In other parts of the world you only bribe to complete the proceedings." In India bribery is the way of life from birth to death. Where I live you have to bribe the babus to get your *bill*, let alone bribe them to issue the receipt.

The situation is pretty standard practice for any Government office. You enter and find the boss missing from his seat. The chief clerk tells you that nothing can be done without the head man. After making enquiries you find the head clerk is authorised to issue an application for a death certificate and you return to confront him with the rules. He has been expecting you and as with every other member of the public (except those related to Mr Gandhi) he indulges in a piece of well-rehearsed theatre.

When you demand an application form (since time is of the essence and a late application can result in official penalties) he languorously opens a drawer and takes out a sheaf of papers riddled with white-ant holes. Feigning surprise, which cannot conceal the note of triumph in his voice, he apologises and gives the Government babu's stock refrain, "out of stock." It will take several days to indent for fresh forms, by which time the applicant will be liable to spend

his money on that great Government fund-raiser: an affidavit.

Most people know perfectly well these tricks, but being in respectable jobs, cannot admit they cough up the rum money for the babu to produce a form from the fresh stock in his other drawer. "*Chalta hai*," "Everybody does it" (usually through an agent), and "It's a fact of life you can't fight," are the justifications most of us come up with to wriggle off the hook of complicity.

You can create a scene and elicit a death certificate if your sense of theatre is greater than the clerk's. But moral courage, fasting and satyagraha will be found much more of an effort against a local authority (who doesn't give a damn what you do) than the high profile activities of a Mahatma pitted against the wicked (but conscientious) British Raj.

Besides, how many days of your life can you spend in the non-violent extraction of all the bills that modern municipalities throw at you? Not only commonsense but good citizenship ought to tell you that a bottle of rum is naught against the crores that pass between politicians and businessmen.

When one reported the situation to a young entrant to the legal profession, how a death certificate may be bought, he tried to defend the local babus thus: A lot of black money had hit the hill station in the last few years and Delhi property developers were to blame for buying their way into the local administration. If I had applied for a death certificate three years ago I would have got it without a bribe! Yes, for birth the babus expected a backhander since it was an occasion for rejoicing (at least if it was a boy). But for death they retained their humanity and did not tax the sorrowing.

According to the young lawyer, the babus, after witnessing the Bofors kickbacks, no longer had any scruples in extending their rum cess to the domain of *Yam Raj*. The next time you watch an advertisement on Doordarshan for the registration of births and deaths remember to say "Cheers."

COURTESY: *Kaiser-E-Hind*, March 1989.

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What is Wrong with our Bureaucracy?

H.M. Patel

What is needed is a total revolution in their concept of their duties as Civil Servants. They must never forget that they are the servants of the people and that they are to serve the people's interests. The arrogance with which they today treat the ordinary citizen must give way to courtesy at all times and readiness to listen and understand their problems. Such a change has also to come over their politician bosses.

There is much confusion in our minds regarding the precise role of the bureaucracy in our scheme of things, in our administration, in our country's economic development, in our country's overall progress.

A former Secretary of the All India Congress Committee, a highly respected follower of Mahatma Gandhi, an economist and a former Governor had no hesitation in saying that the public services in India had not been able to readjust themselves to their new responsibilities and had proved unequal to the great task of rebuilding the country on sound social and economic foundations. And yet it is quite clearly wrong to suggest that it is the responsibility of the civil servant to take on the task of rebuilding the country, for that involves sound policy making and that is and must remain the responsibility of the political part of Government, namely the Ministers.

The public servant in the highest rank assists in the making of policy by collecting and presenting all relevant information and data, and stating his views based on such data in a frank and forthright manner, but the responsibility for the decisions must be the politician's. It would be the duty of the public servant at other and lower levels to carry out the policy laid down by his superiors. To blame the civil servant for being unequal to a task which is clearly not his at all is obviously unfair, the more so as that class by its very nature and position can give no reply. This, however, continues to happen, and even today the public appears to be sufficiently confused to think that the bureaucracy is responsible for so many wrong decisions and so many wrong policies, from the consequences of which the people of this country are suffering today.

The general impression today is that our administration has greatly deteriorated, that decisions are delayed and for long periods, that action on decisions is also unconscionably slow; that it is almost invariably necessary to bribe in order to get papers to move so that decisions are taken more speedily; that decisions are generally not taken on the basis of the merits of the case; that extraneous considerations play an important role in decision-making, and so on. In the execution of projects, no one appears to be concerned about adherence to any time schedule, with the result that a project designed to be executed within, say, a year takes several years and meantime the cost of the project far exceeds the original sanctioned estimate; that welfare schemes are so executed that the bulk of the benefits goes to others than those for whose benefit the schemes were designed.

In the controlled economy such as we have adopted, permits, licences, financial aid, subsidies, incentives are all supposed to be decided or allotted in accordance with well conceived rules, but in practice go to those who know the ropes or to power brokers. Excise and customs duties have also been known to be adjusted to help or harm. Who may be said to be responsible for this state of affairs? Is it the bureaucracy which is at fault? Are Ministers responsible? It is clearly necessary to examine the entire state of affairs with great care and thoroughness if we are to adjudge fairly, to assign responsibility where it correctly belongs, and to take such steps as are necessary to ensure that the right course of action is decided upon to improve matters.

The Partition and After

When the British handed over power to the people of India, they left behind a good and functioning administrative machinery, along with an efficient well-trained and disciplined civil service. Because of the partition of the country and the withdrawal of the British element in the services, there were left noticeable gaps in the services at the highest level. Sardar Patel as Home Minister was, however, wide awake and took prompt action to see that these gaps at the top level, in particular, were filled up in an effective manner as quickly as possible. More important, he assured the civil servants at all levels and in particular at the higher levels that they had no need to be apprehensive of the Congressmen's anger against them for their share in the repressive measures taken during British Rule: They would be expected to work with redoubled vigour for their own Government and they would be judged on that basis alone.

The civil services responded enthusiastically and there is little doubt that their cooperation and dedicated work helped greatly both in restoring law and order during the difficult period that followed the transfer of power on 15th August 1947 and in rapidly resettling the hundreds of thousands of refugees in various parts of the country so smoothly and so well that the country's economy was not only not disturbed, but actually stimulated.

Deterioration in Administration

What then, happened later for the administration to have deteriorated so gravely and gone on deteriorating during the past three decades that we are today faced with very grave problems of widespread corruption, of rapidly growing consumerism, of the development

of a systematically functioning parallel economy and of mind-boggling judicial delays, which is bringing into serious disrepute the one institution of ours which has stood four square against every attempt at destroying our nascent democracy? Law and order still exist, but crime is so rampant and disorder so frequent that it is no exaggeration to say that we are not far-removed from anarchy.

During, say roughly, the first decade after independence, all had gone reasonably well. The problems created by partition, and particularly by the massive transfer of population were satisfactorily tackled by the new Government with the enthusiastic support of the administrative machinery that had been inherited. The services were reorganised, the merger of the princely States and the numerous associated problems were also overcome efficiently, and the task of development taken up in earnest with the creation of the Planning Commission.

With the adoption of the Constitution, one of the finest of its kind, drawn up by the Constituent Assembly, the Dominion Status period of Independence came to an end in 1952. A general election, on the basis of universal suffrage, was successfully carried out and the new, Independent India appeared to have started on its career as a sovereign republic in high hope. Many, quite revolutionary measures were decided upon relating to land reform, the most important of which was the abolition of the *Jagirdari*, *Zamindari* and permanent settlements. The major task of industrialisation was begun and pursued vigorously. The newly awakened giant gave every sign of moving forward spiritedly.

Political Opportunism

Unfortunately, with the very first General Elections it was realised that new and progressive ideas were not going to have it their own way. The factor of caste, instead of being ignored, was for instance given significant recognition in the process of selecting candidates. Power having been tasted began to take its insidious toll. Congress Party organisers started looking at things from the point of view of the impact of administrative and policy decisions on future elections. Decisions in the states and to a lesser extent at the Centre began to be influenced by exter-

nal pressures and invariably were not taken on the basis of merit. The two basic essentials of good Government and right action "the personal integrity of the ruler and the moral sense of the citizenry" began to be eroded and departed from. And the progress down the slippery slope, slow at first, while men of character still predominated among those in power at the top, gathered momentum later when their successors began giving opportunism and expediency greater weight. Dr. Ashok Mitra has very aptly summarised the situation that exists today:

"We have, as a nation, succeeded with extraordinary speed, to obliterate the dividing line between right and wrong. The Government has acted as the principal cheerleader. Under its auspices, facts have been stripped of their emotional significance. Some people admittedly received bribes and kickbacks in connection with the Bofors Howitzer, and the HDW submarine purchases. So what, our Government makes the point that while facts might be facts, it would be wrong to delve deeper into them and try to establish the identity of the recipients of the kickbacks and commission.

"In other matters, too, the Government has shown the way how to switch right and wrong. Justice Thakkar was wrong to suspect a particular person of complicity in the murder of Indira Gandhi. It is, however, not right to share with the public the reasons why the authorities think the judge was wrong, or why despite the apparently outrageous nature of the judge's finding, it was not wrong to go ahead and appoint him as Chairman of the National Law Commission."

Who is to Blame?

The blame for the existing situation cannot be laid at the door of any one of the several forces which together constitute Government. The Ministers, the civil servants, the politicians, the industrialists, the businessmen, the farmers, the educationists – all have contributed their mite to bring the country to the present sorry pass. The two essentials, integrity at the top and the high moral sense in the citizenry, have all but disappeared. It has been well said that no amount of progress in technique or machinery can be of much help, if the

moral standard of those in charge of Government is deplorable, or the people as a whole are dishonest and self-seeking.

During these intervening years, we chose to adopt economic policies, which have eroded our sense of moral values so seriously that today tax evasion is almost universal, and black money abounds to an extent that virtually two parallel economies operate in the country simultaneously. Corruption too dominates every activity so much so that even those few who, left to themselves, would keep away from corruption, are forced to bribe and assist the process of tax evasion, not to make any gain for themselves but just to be able to carry through their own legitimate affairs.

While many sections have jointly contributed to the creation of this state of affairs, the primary responsibility, to my mind, rests on those who have held the reins of Government during the greater part of this period. It is they who had formulated the relevant policies and implemented them and in the process set the moral tone. It is they who in their anxiety to retain power adopted policies and practices which have been most harmful to the development of sound principles and conventions that would have consolidated a democratic country. Civil servants have inevitably adapted themselves to the values of their political masters. They are not, nor can be, the final authority. Let me give one recent illustration. The Planning Commission and the Public Investment Board had firmly turned down the proposal of Indian Airlines to buy a dozen Airbus. The Prime Minister overruled the highest organs of the so-called bureaucratic machinery without assigning any reason. A similar overruling by the Prime Minister has enabled the modernisation of Durgapur Steel to go through even though it was considered inadvisable at all other appropriate bureaucratic levels. But civil servants at the highest levels certainly cannot escape responsibility. They have not always stood firm on what they considered to be the right policies to adopt or point out the damage of a permanent nature that the pursuit of proposed policies would cause.

Norms for the Bureaucrat

The bureaucracy is a necessary

instrument for the execution of policies of Government and for ensuring that the machinery of Government functions smoothly. If it is manned by men of high character and ability the machinery operates well and efficiently. But if the general atmosphere all around is corrupt, the bureaucracy on its own can do but little. What the civil servants of today can do, they do not do. They are public servants, but they conduct themselves as if they were the masters and not the people. In doing so, they may only be imitating their masters, the political bosses. The civil servants at the higher levels are arrogant enough to think that the people, those not in Government service, the ordinary citizens, know nothing, can do nothing except under guidance provided by the civil servants. And yet, the fact is that the civil servants of today at the higher levels have very little knowledge of realities, they have but rarely had to implement policies and consequently have usually very little idea of how well or ill the policies have worked. The former members of the Indian Civil Service used to do considerable spells of their service in the districts, used to

travel extensively in their districts, and used to know large numbers of the residents of their districts. When they moved to secretariats, they were, therefore, well equipped to apply their knowledge of realities on the ground to the new policies proposed to be introduced and advise appropriate modifications. Their successors of today have but a fraction of the knowledge of ground realities and yet are arrogant enough to lay down the law on all manner of subjects.

What is needed is a total revolution in their concept of their duties as civil servants. They must never forget that they are the servants of the people, and that they are to serve their interests. Today, when they take a decision, however, belatedly, they make it appear as if they are doing a favour, forgetting that they are only doing their duty for which they are paid. The arrogance with which they today treat the ordinary citizen must give way to courtesy at all times and readiness to listen and understand their problems. Such a change has also to come over their politician bosses.

This can only be brought about by the people themselves when elections come round and they have to exercise their right to vote. This is perhaps too much to hope, nevertheless, hope, we must.

Mr. H.M. Patel ICS (Retd.) is a Member of Parliament, a former Union Finance Minister and a distinguished civil servant.



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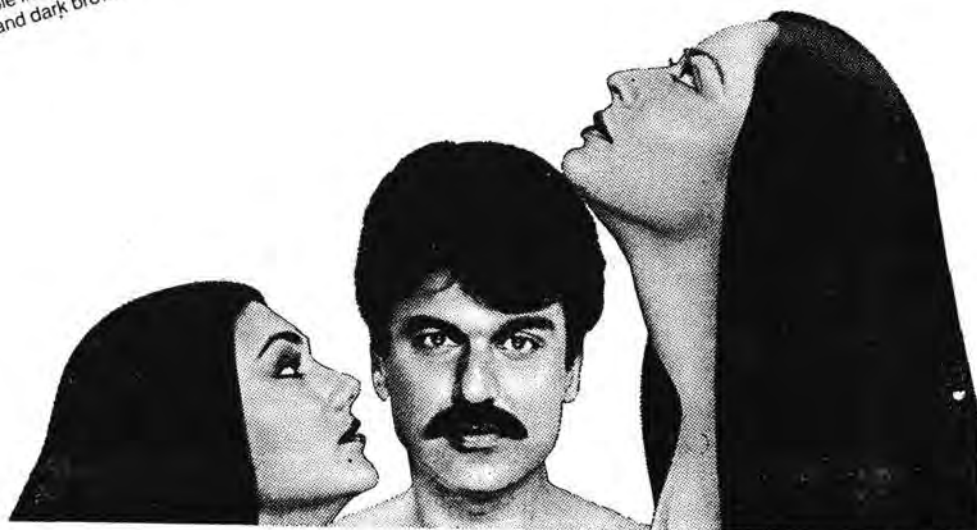
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The Steel Frame — Some Reminiscences

A.G. Sivaramakrishnan

It needed a far-sighted Sardar Patel to realise the capabilities of the men of the Indian Civil Service and, what was then even more important, the nation's dire need for competent administrators. It is a sad irony that these brilliant men of many parts were consigned to the scrap-heap by an unsympathetic political leadership which succeeded the Sardar.

Philip Mason

The Indian Civil Service (ICS), like the Judiciary, Railways, Post and Telegraphs and Macaulay's much derided educational system, were the peculiar 'gift' of British rule to India. It was a much fancied service even for Britons, who given the choice, opted for it in preference to the British Colonial Service or the Home Civil Service. So it was for our countrymen too, particularly at a time when adequate representation in the higher service, was one of the major privileges which even the Indian National Congress sought from the colonial government. Understandably, this coveted service, drew men of talent from aristocratic and intellectually well-endowed families both in Britain and India.

It is undeniable that the ICS officers have been a much maligned group. They drew flak even from understanding national leaders like Pandit Nehru. By a curious quirk of fate, a few among them were leaders of our national movement for freedom. Names to conjure with like Sri Aurobindo and Subhas Chandra Bose not to speak of H. V. Kamath and others in recent times, were to start their careers in the ICS, only to throw away what, in those far-off days, were regarded as plum jobs.

It is generally agreed that the ICS men, British and Indian, served this country, by and large, truly and well. Described popularly as the 'Steel Frame' of the British Raj, they were all inspired by a genuine love of the country that they had chosen to serve. They respected the legitimate aspirations of the people of this country and identified themselves with the interests of the people, of course within limitations. At any rate, whatever might have been their record in pre-independence days — there are many analysts who hold this record to be

unimpeachable — given the severe restrictions which were in-built in the system, they served independent India with sincerity, devotion and conspicuous ability. If India has been one of the few stable areas in this part of the world particularly during the nascent post-independent stage and continues to be so, in a manner of speaking, we have much to thank those enlightened administrators.

It needed a far-sighted Sardar Patel to realise their capabilities and potentialities and, what was then even more important, the nation's dire need for competent administrators. It is a sad irony that these brilliant men of many parts were consigned to the scrap-heap by an unsympathetic political leadership which succeeded the Sardar

One such officer was Philip Mason, a British ICS officer who was, during the War, Joint Secretary in the then War Department headed by the Commander-in-Chief. Though the War Department had, as its Secretary, a senior Indian ICS Officer, C.M. Trivedi, who later held several high appointments including the gubernatorial, Mason was the king-maker in that Department. The Commander-in-Chief was the Defence Member of the Viceroy's Executive Council and Mason who was then in his late thirties was the Commander-in-Chief's favourite and that meant everything in war-time. Mason was incomparably brilliant, shrewd and effective and carried India's war-machine lightly on his shoulders. Yet for all the power he wielded, he was intensely human, simple and austere, though he could be scathingly sarcastic when the occasion demanded it.

Those were the days of petrol

rationing. Senior officers in Government, though permitted to use their cars were expected to set an example by economising on petrol. Not many did. Mason, however, was a notable exception. During the war years, he used only a bicycle and pedalled nearly eight kilometres daily. His office was on the first floor of South Block. On arrival there, he would himself take the cycle to the ante-room near his office and would not allow a peon to carry it. What a contrast to what is happening these days, when one's personal resources and the government's have become indistinguishable.

He had no racial prejudices and treated his Indian staff with the utmost courtesy and consideration. I recall a revealing experience when I was working as a Senior Scientific Assistant at one of the Directorates of Defence HQ. Sometime in July 1944, I had to see Mason about a note which he had prepared on a somewhat complicated problem. I was duly let into his room at the appointed hour and the discussion that followed was going on for about ten minutes, when suddenly a British Brigadier, Ivor Jelu who was then the Director of Public Relations at Defence HQ (He later became the Editor of *The Times of India*, Bombay) darted in without so much as a knock at the door.

Mason was visibly annoyed and showed his displeasure by refusing to look at the Brigadier but continued the discussion with me — much to my discomfort. This awkward situation continued for about ten minutes during which the Brigadier grunted and started showing signs of impatience not only at being kept waiting, but even worse at the importance Mason gave to a very junior Indian Assistant. The Joint

Secretary looked up at his unscheduled visitor sharply. I was about to leave when Mason asked me to stay on. In a dignified tone, Mason asked the high-ranking Army Officer : "What is your business? Why have you come to see me without an appointment? Why have you barged into my room without being called in? Why are you disturbing the discussions I am having with my young friend here by the peculiar noises you made? Have you taken leave of your manners?"

The visitor was completely non-plussed at this volley of questions. Yet he tried to put on a brave face and feebly urged : "Sir, I had an important point to discuss with you and it would not have brooked delay. I thought you would give me preference over this Indian youngster, who I learn is not even an officer". The latter observation turned out to be the Brigadier's undoing. Mason exploded :

"No more of this nonsense with me, Brigadier; who are you to decide that you are more important than this Indian youngster? And, by the way, no more gibberish about Britishers and Indians. Everyone is equally needed for the war effort. You may see me later after fixing up an appointment."

There it ended. The Brigadier marched out meekly, all the blood on his cherubic face drained off. This incident showed that in spite of the Brigadier's superior position in the hierarchy of the war machine, Mason showed greater consideration to a very junior Indian assistant and pooh-poohed the concept of racial superiority. This was a touching experience and is still fresh in my memory even after the lapse of almost forty-five years.

Philip Mason was an excellent draftsman. His notes on files were crisp, pungent and hit the nail on the head. The writer remembers two such notes in particular. One related to a Study Committee which was set up by the Government at the instance of a brilliant British scientist, C.O. Tattersall who headed the Ordnance Laboratories, Kanpur which was at that point of time the only Defence Research Institution in the country. Tattersall wanted the expansion of his laboratory to keep pace with the increasingly heavy demands of the Defence Services on its skills and ingenuity. Tattersall desired a

better organisational set-up. He suggested that a Study Committee be set-up comprising Sir Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar, as Chairman, Sen Gupta, Director of the Alipore Test House and himself as members. Bhatnagar was then a rising star.

As Joint Secretary of the War Department, Mason, had to sanction the setting up of this Committee. He was not quite in favour of Bhatnagar for the Chairmanship, perhaps as a result of some previous experience and tried to dissuade Tattersall from pressing Bhatnagar's candidature. This was not to be. The Committee was eventually formed with Bhatnagar as Chairman and Sen Gupta and Tattersall as members.

Right from the start, the two Indian members who had a somewhat queer sense of patriotism vowed to torpedo any proposal that might be sponsored by the lone British member of the Committee. The meetings of the Committee were often deadlocked with Bhatnagar and Sen Gupta on one side and Tattersall on the other, until the British member, in sheer disgust, wrote to the War Department suggesting the dissolution of the Committee, which he himself had sponsored with such enthusiasm earlier.

The relevant file went to Mason. Though his fears about Bhatnagar's stewardship of the Committee were confirmed, he was magnanimous enough not to tell Tattersall 'I told you so'. Nevertheless, as a responsible senior officer of the War Department who had set up the Committee, he felt that it would be improper to abolish the Committee before it had submitted its report. It was quite another matter as to what the Government could or would do with the report. He expressed his reaction to the whole episode in a pithy remark : "The Ordnance Laboratories have themselves raised this genie (the Bhatnagar Committee). It cannot be bottled up until it has had its say". With this two-line comment he not only expressed his eloquent contempt for the Chairman of the Committee, but also had a dig at the total lack of a sense or responsibility on the part of the Director of the Ordnance Laboratories in suggesting the dissolution of the Committee in mid-stream, as well as asserting Government's confidence (which, in this case, meant his capacity)

in dealing with the Committee's report independently.

Another remark of Mason which I vividly remember related to a proposal made by one of the branches of Defence HQ to procure some stores and equipment urgently required for the troops. Mason as the Joint Secretary concerned, initiated the proposal informally and got it blessed by the then Financial Adviser, Military Finance Department, a very senior civilian by name Sir Eric Coates. The proposal was formally submitted by the Branch concerned to the Military Finance Department. As was the wont with most of the staff in this Department, the Assistant who dealt with the proposal prepared a strong note turning down the proposal and got it signed by his immediate superior, the Assistant Financial Adviser, one Major Bowman, an Englishman whose handwriting was abominably poor and whose signature was difficult to read.

When the note rejecting Mason's proposal went back to him, he was furious and wrote on the file : "Only the other day I had discussed this with Sir Eric Coates who had informally given financial sanction and this was specifically mentioned in the note initiating the proposal. I was, therefore surprised to receive this negative answer from Finance. At any rate, I am not prepared to have a proposal of mine turned down by an Assistant Financial Adviser with an illegible signature. Will Sir Eric kindly see and agree". Needless to say, the hapless Bowman got a mouthful from his superior. That Bowman was himself a Britisher and a commissioned officer of the British Army, was no consideration for Mason who believed in calling a spade a spade.

After retirement, Philip Mason wrote a few books about the British Raj. Two of these called *The Men who Ruled India : The Founders and The Guardians* are still worth reading.

Mr. A.G. Sivaramakrishnan began his career in 1940 as a Scientific Officer in the Defence Research Laboratories at Kanpur and retired over three decades later as a senior official in the Government of India.

My way of joking is to tell the truth. It's the funniest joke in the world.

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

Committed or Neutral Bureaucracy?

Marina Pinto

In the Indian context, bureaucrats and political leaders have not been able to identify common areas of work relationship and to conform to institutionally prescribed norms. The ethos and norms of a participative system have yet to be accepted and internalised by the two sets of actors. Hence, each works for his own gain, creating conflict situations and tension areas.

India's political system is modelled on the Westminster type. Her administration is framed on Weberian lines and rests on the bedrock of neutrality. The doctrine of neutrality, with its accompanying features of anonymity, impartiality and loyalty which gives it pith and substance and provides the strongest bulwark of democracy, has been singled out as being largely responsible for the high profile and imminent success of the career service in Britain. The same has been said of the services in India which have imbibed the British tradition. But the question repeatedly asked is: How neutral is our civil servant? Can a development administrator afford to be neutral? Must we not forsake neutrality for the sake of commitment?

The Doctrine of Neutrality

Neutrality means absence of any political activity or bias on the part of the civil servant in the discharge of his duties and the assurance that he will faithfully carry out these duties regardless of the political complexion of the party in power. The doctrine of neutrality rests on the premise that governmental activity can be dichotomised into policy-formulation and policy-implementation. The civil servant's zone of operation is the latter. In practice, neutrality means public confidence in an administration which is free from political influence and trust among ministers that their orders would be implemented faithfully irrespective of party ideologies. Hence, neutrality goes hand in hand with impartiality. It also calls for loyalty of a high order in that a civil servant is loyal to his political boss, and the minister reposes trust and confidence in him. Rightly has Lord Hankey said, "These men would sell their souls before they would sell their Chief".

Anonymity is a condition of neutrality. To render expert advice impartially, frankly and freely, a civil servant must have the assurance that he is not dragged into public debate or openly identified with a given policy. Given the compulsions of democracy, the civil servant is answerable to the minister who in turn is responsible and responsive to the public, press and parliament.

W. Beveridge, in 1920, compared the civil servant-minister relationship to a Victorian marriage, where the minister like the head of the Victorian household, made all the decisions and undertook all public acts. The Permanent Secretary, like the Victorian wife, kept house and exercised power by influence. Metaphorically speaking, the Permanent Secretary has to ensure that the Minister has all his buttons on and his hat brushed for public appearance. The Minister, like the Victorian husband, is responsible for the acts and faults of his Permanent Secretary and must stand up for them in public. The marriage between the two is an arranged one and a divorce is as difficult as an Act of Parliament.

Traditional Framework and New Tasks

Over the years, especially after World War II, thinking has changed and the concept of neutrality is under attack. This is so, not only in Britain, but the world over. It is particularly so in third world countries like India. In British times, the administration had a limited role to play, being essentially regulatory in nature. As R.P. Noronha so succinctly put it: "The Raj moved in stately fashion down the streets of time like a London bobby, maintaining law and order, collecting land revenue and engrossed in all the tremendous trifles that make up administration".

With Independence, administration has to grapple with the problems of socio-economic transformation. Administrators must serve as prime movers and energizers in the process of modernization. To ensure development through democracy calls for change in ideas, attitudes and values, for these affect behaviour. From a colonial legacy of representing the strong arm of the British Raj, administrators must see themselves not as rulers but as public servants who rule only to serve. Along with elected representatives of the people, theirs must be a partnership that meets the demands of the revolution of rising expectations. The bureaucracy has to handle unpredictable new tasks in an ever-changing environment and embark on programmes that call for high professional skills along with a capacity for initiative, risk-taking, innovation and change. In the development context, the bureaucracy must be rationally structured, functionally oriented and achievement conscious. In a democratic milieu, administrators and politicians must see themselves as performing different but complementary roles concerned with system maintenance and goal attainment.

In transitional societies, political institutions are weak due to factionalised political parties, coalition governments and unstable political leadership. Administrative structures on the other hand, are well institutionalised and have stability and continuity thanks to colonial rule. But they are not geared to undertaking developmental activity. On the contrary, expansion of governmental activity is seen in innumerable programmes conceived and operated within the traditional framework. This has exposed administrative inadequa-



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cies and led to the persistence of an ethos not conducive to development. Again, political leaders, fighting the British had developed hostile attitudes to the bureaucracy. The bureaucratic and political leaders were in opposing camps and had developed traditions that ran counter to each other. Now to be appreciative of each other's role, acquire new orientations and adopt a new work culture is no easy task. Then, there is the public antipathy towards the bureaucracy that cannot be explained as just a hangover of the past. Insistence on forms and procedures and strict adherence to rules and regulations can lead to excessive red tape and conjures up an image of the faceless and soulless bureaucrat.

Back-room Boys No Longer

Whether it is the higher echelons of the Services where there is close interaction between politicians and administrators especially in policy making areas, or down the line to the base level where bureaucrat-citizen interaction defines the cutting edge of administration, the civil servant no longer maintains a low profile. The inter-twining of the political and administrative processes has become inevitable. The fusion area of politics and administration has come to be highlighted. The neutrality theory has broken down because, it is felt, its assumptions are no longer tenable today.

A civil servant content as a 'back-room boy' who sees, hears nor speaks any evil is an anachronism in a developing country. The colourless attitude of strict neutrality impedes the successful implementation of development programmes. In the British days, the neutrality of the official was essential to make him appear just. It helped to insulate him from the public eye. Today, in the new milieu, one needs a public official more in tune with the country's traditions and needs. He must empathise with his clientele and serve it in a spirit of dedication and self-sacrifice. For this one needs a committed civil servant.

The neutrality *versus* commitment debate shot into prominence in India in the late 1960s. Civil service neutrality was blamed for non-performance and the inability of government to deliver the goods. Neutral administrators were viewed as 'stumbling blocks' on the

road to progress and development. They had to be 'committed' to the ruling party's ideology, policies and programmes. The late Prime Minister, Mrs. Gandhi, voiced this sentiment and Jagjivan Ram categorically stated that "the theory of a neutral bureaucracy is hardly relevant to Indian conditions". Commitment therefore meant politicisation of a high order. It could be loyalty to the political ideology of the ruling party or personal loyalty to a leader or the Head of State.

The commitment idea has gone pretty far in the India of today so much so that some civil servants are nothing short of full-fledged politicians. Civil servants find themselves in the 'Yes Minister' syndrome and bend over backwards to please the political boss. They have been variously described as compliant, suppliant and defiant, the last mentioned being a fast disappearing tribe! An interesting categorisation is that of J.K. Ray who distinguishes between promoters and accommodators who get all the plums of office for being 'flatterers and opportunists' and the resisters and detractors who pay the price for their bold advocacy of public interest.

New Style Commitment

The other position is taken by those who could be described as traditionalists. They uphold neutrality and are suspicious of any move to over-politicise the bureaucracy. They fear that a compliant bureaucracy will make it easy to sabotage the democratic frame. It is not as if neutrality and commitment mean commitment of a special kind. It is not personal or political commitment. It is not commitment of a kind that makes a civil servant wear a party label and be sucked into the vortex of politics, but commitment to the values and principles in the Constitution and the basic philosophy of the political system. This commitment has been variously described. To mention a few, R.K. Vepa sees it as commitment to "objectivity", M.K. Chaturvedi as "commitment to welfare of people and public interest" and V. Subramaniam defines it in terms of 'emotional' identification of the bureaucracy with the masses "without indulging in sycophancy". They are certain that neutrality is not devoid of commitment. The commitment they advocate is one against a narrow parochial outlook and a reactionary ideology

that saps all social dynamism. It implies intellectual and emotional conviction of a kind and for a cause.

Though one subscribes, in large measure, to the views of the traditionalists, difficulties surface when one examines the realities on the ground and the functioning of the Indian bureaucrat. It is then that one realizes that neutrality cannot be total. A civil servant cannot avoid being politicised. Up to a point this is desirable because it can check the growing power of the administration, make it service-oriented and responsible and accountable to representative political institutions. What is dangerous is over-politicisation which can make for inter-changeability of roles with politicians, bringing in all kinds of distortions of the political system.

Over-politicisation can legitimise political meddlesomeness and make for a decline in standards of administrative efficiency and integrity. It can open up avenues for corruption and encourage indiscipline.

Since politicisation is unavoidable, the question is to gauge its permissible limits. O.P. Dwivedi and R.B. Jain in *India's Administrative State* (1985) have defined the indices for measuring politicisation. They are 1) bureaucratic influence in the decision-making process which would be spelt out in terms of anticipating policy needs, developing alternatives, suggesting choice of alternatives, and working out the mechanics of implementation and evaluation; 2) the degree of involvement of bureaucrats in politics which can be measured in terms of political linkages, participation in political activities etc.; 3) political and party interference in a bureaucrat's work and 4) the image of the public service. If a bureaucracy is sufficiently de-politicised, it will appear as a highly professionalised group known for its integrity and impartiality. In a multi-party system, ridden by factionalism and in the absence of basic consensus or national goals, the bureaucracy could constitute a power structure and play a dominant role in politics.

Given the imperatives of development through democracy, administrators do find themselves in the political limelight. The entire gamut of relationships between bureaucrats and politicians assumes a new complexion when bureaucrats assume high

political visibility. To ensure that politicisation is within bounds, various suggestions have been made. Bata K Dey is sympathetic to the idea of a limited kind of 'spoils system'. Kuldip Mathur would want top key posts in the services manned by bureaucrats who "will come and go with a political party and are as much answerable to the people as the party". R.D. Pradhan visualises structural changes to accommodate a 'political bureaucracy' interposed between the higher levels of civil services and the political executive. This bureaucracy should be directly accountable to the public in general. The same idea has been spelt out by C.P. Bhambhri in terms of a mini-secretariat for the minister, whose tenure would coincide with his. Operating on the lines of the French or Italian system, these aides would serve as "the brain of the Minister and the eye of the Master" forming a "flexible bridge which joins administration and policy."

Inevitability of Politicisation

The politicisation of the bureaucracy is a universal phenomenon. The British system of marginal politicisation and

that of France or USA of heavy politicisation represent two ends of the spectrum. Undoubtedly, the higher the level of politicisation, the greater the negation of neutrality. Because politicisation is very much on the cards, it is not as if the doctrine of neutrality is untenable. Neutrality provides the necessary administrative objectivity, enhances the democratic principle of equality and provides shelter from arbitrary rule. What is called for is not to enter into a sterile debate of neutrality *versus* commitment but to re-define the doctrine of neutrality to find a place for commitment of a kind and politicisation up to a point. The traditional concept of neutrality was based on limited government and the politics-administration dichotomy. Today we need a civil servant who empathises with the public, who is positive-minded, action-oriented and humanely inclined. Democratisation and development call for qualities of initiative, leadership and responsible behaviour. The civil servant must be politicised, but not over-politicised. One is not pleading for political sterilisation, but political sensi-

tivity. Neither de-politicised, nor over-politicised, he cannot help being semi-politicised. His commitment must be to discipline and hard work. For this he has to develop the qualities of courage, fortitude, justice and prudence. He must be guided by a code of conduct and a proper value cluster which make him realize the sanctity of public office as a sacred trust.

In the Indian context, bureaucrats and political leaders have not been able to identify common areas of work relationship and to conform to institutionally prescribed norms. The ethos and norms of a participative system have yet to be accepted and internalised by the two sets of actors. Hence, each works for his own gain, creating conflict situations and tension areas. Bureaucrats have to come to terms with the operative mechanisms of democracy. In the process they must devise their own variant of a neutral bureaucracy.

Dr. Marina Pinto is Reader in Public Administration, Department of Civics & Politics, University of Bombay.

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La Affaire Indian Post

One of the most outrageous acts of interference with the freedom of the press in India has now come to light with the resignation from the editorship of the *Indian Post* of Mr. Vinod Mehta.

According to the Express News Service, it appears that Mr. Satish Sharma, about whom the less said the better, is once more the villain of the piece.

The management of the Paper was told to sell the Paper to some one close to the Prime Minister. Simultaneously the Management asked the editor to stop publishing criticism of Mr. Rajiv Gandhi, Mr. Satish Sharma, Mr. Amitabh Bachchan and five others. This was the Express News Service disclosure, which I believe is correct.

Mr. Vinod Mehta, as a decent journalist, tendered his resignation to the Management. All honour to Mr. Mehta on the one hand and a vote of no confidence in the Prime Minister and his gang who are threatening the press in an effort at securing immunity from criticism.

It has been the Government's constant refrain that the Indian press is not free, because newspaper owners have their business interests. It is precisely those interests which are being manipulated to undermine the independence and perhaps, the very existence of a newspaper. Next time Mr. Rajiv Gandhi talks about freedom of the press, let us all have a good laugh at this contrast between profession and practice.

The JP letter

It is a pity that my good friend Jayaprakash Narayan's name has got involved in a controversy in certain sections of the press. It seems that on 23rd December 1975, soon after he entered Jaslok Hospital and was placed on a dialysis machine because his kidneys had been badly damaged during solitary confine-

ment in Chandigarh during the 'Emergency', he wrote a letter to Prabhakarbhai Mehta, a young man who was devoted to JP, in the course of which he ventured to observe that "V.P. Singh, V.C. Shukla and Om Mehta have no ideological convictions and are pure self-seekers and *jee huzurs*. Hence I do not mind if they consider me the villain of the piece, the arch conspirator, traitor, reactionary and what not. V.P. Singh is a spineless Congressman."

Unfortunately, those who think that anything said against V.P. Singh will help Rajiv Gandhi to survive have rushed to suggest that the letter, which was published in a section of the Gujarati Press, is not authentic. The only reasons given for this wild allegation is that the typing is not perfect and that this language is not characteristic of JP.

I have seen a photo copy of the original letter. There is nothing so bad about the typing or about the language. I am not a handwriting expert but I have no doubt that the signature is genuine.

As the reader knows, I am not an admirer of Mr. Rajiv Gandhi, but should one carry one's dislike of a person so far as to attack the authenticity of a letter which contains criticism about Mr. V.P. Singh's support of the 'Emergency'? I for one do not think that the end justifies the means.

Seervai's Verdict

One of the eminent men, who was among my contemporaries in Elphinstone College was H.M. Seervai, who was later Advocate-General of Maharashtra from 1967-1974. He lent distinction to an office which has since, like so many others, deteriorated in its quality.

Mr. Seervai has now published a book entitled "The Partition of India - Legend and Reality". The book is the result of a close and deep study of the events that led up to the parti-

tion of India. The author deserves congratulations on his perceptive and fair analysis. He has pointed out that the main responsibility for the partition of India was not of M.A. Jinnah, but of Gandhiji, Jawaharlal Nehru and Vallabhbhai Patel. I think Seervai has been rather hard on Gandhiji. He has been fair to Lord Wavell, a Viceroy who worked for the freedom of India in unity. I agree with Mr. Seervai's view that the suppression of 30 pages of Maulana Azad's book for 30 years was not in India's interest, and that the people of India were entitled to the truth in 1959 and not in 1989. However, better late than never.

My own support and documentation of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad's charge against Jawaharlal Nehru has already been published in this column.

Socialists Privatize in Portugal

The world tide in favour of privatization of government enterprises, which has reached formidable proportions with India being a dishonourable exception, has now reached Portugal. It is announced that an agreement has been reached between Portugal's ruling Social Democratic Party and the Socialist Party to amend the Constitution to facilitate privatization of government enterprises.

International Management of December 1988 reports: "At present, the Portuguese Constitution holds that the nationalization carried out in 1975 are 'irreversible', a rule that has forced the government to put a 49% ceiling on the amount of private equity in state-owned firms it can put up for sale. The limitation, along with the heavy indebtedness and poor performance of most of the state companies, has kept away potential buyers..."

*“WE MUST REBUILD
OUR LOST ARISTOCRACY,
NOT OF BIRTH OR NOT OF
WEALTH OR EVEN OF
INTELLECT, BUT OF
CHARACTER”*

Rajaji



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To be Fair to the Maulana

I have read the well-written, but somewhat tendentious review of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad's autobiography by Mr. Nagindas Sanghavi in the April issue of *Freedom First*. I do not think that Mr. Sanghavi has been altogether fair to Maulana Azad. For instance, having listened to him throughout the '30s and '40s on numerous occasions, the impression I have gained is that Maulana Azad used very sophisticated and polite language and never allowed himself to be rude. I am therefore intrigued to learn from the review that Maulana Azad described Gandhi as a stupid bum. Most unlikely.

At another point of the review, it is said that the Maulana's contemporaries who could have embarrassingly refuted or corrected the Maulana are now silenced by death. I am sorry to say that I am one of the exceptions and can aver that far from correcting him, I can endorse what he said about the partition of India, namely that Jawaharlal Nehru was responsible for it more than anyone else. I shall now quote from my column in the *Statesman* of 27th November 1988:

"I am glad to be in a position to document his charge that Nehru was largely responsible by what he did in 1937 and 1946 for the partition of India. There is no danger of hindsight because what I have to say is recorded in my earlier memoir (*Bliss was it in that Dawn*) published as far back as 1977.

On page 109 of the book I have recorded an incident which happened when I was at Jawaharlal Nehru's breakfast table some time in 1937:

"During another of my visits to Allahabad, the results of the United Province State Assembly elections had been published. The Muslim League had done very well. At breakfast one morning, Sayed Mahmoud, one of Nehru's proteges, came from Lucknow. He reported on the discussions some of the Congress Muslims had with Chowdhury Khaliquzzaman, the Muslim League leader. Khaliquzzaman had suggested that a couple of Muslim leaders be taken into the Cabinet that was to be nominated in the United Provinces under the new Government of India Act, so that the Muslims of the United Provinces might not be left out of the administration of the province. At this point, Jawaharlal lost his temper and, in somewhat choice and colourful Hindustani, he swore not only at the Muslim League leaders, but also at poor Sayed Mahmoud for having carried such an outrageous message. The victim's plea, that he had only come to consult the great leader and was quite prepared to carry out his behests, appeared to have no effect on Jawaharlal's indignation. The League offer of coalition was duly turned down and the Congress formed its own Cabinet. Many have expressed the view that this act of Nehru was the turning

point that led to the alienation of the Muslims of the United Provinces, gave rise to the Two Nation theory and led to the partition of India."

Thus Maulana's charge that Nehru prepared the ground for the partition of India by his churlish attitude as far back as 1937 is absolutely justified.

On page 201 of my memoir I have recorded that "I distinctly recollect Gandhiji's unhappiness at a brash speech or statement denouncing the plan made by Jawaharlal Nehru on July 10, 1946. JP happened to be visiting Gandhiji in Panchgani. When he returned to Bombay he told me how Gandhiji was in tears at the manner in which Jawaharlal had sabotaged the effort to keep India united. Many years later, I checked with JP about this recollection, and he wrote back to me on August 2, 1971:

"I fully recollect the incident you mention... I do distinctly remember that Gandhiji was deeply perturbed over a rash statement of Jawaharlal which he thought had dashed all hopes of settlement on the basis of undivided India, even though divided into three autonomous zones".

Thus Jawaharlal Nehru's sabotaging the last effort at the unity of India is documented by Jayaprakash's confirmation."

The Narmada Bachao Andolan

Earlier this year I had written about the disastrous implications, from a social and environmental point of view, of the so-called Narmada Project.

A lot of controversy has since marked the discussion on this subject. That there is "something rotten in the State of Denmark" is obvious from the fact that the authorities initially applied the Official Secrets Act to the Narmada area, thus making the entry to the area illegal and preventing journalists from visiting the area and writing about it. This was a gross misuse of the Official Secrets Act and a further step on India's Road to fascism. Fortunately this misuse of the Act came to an end with the withdrawal of the order. But this was followed by another authoritarian step. The Customs in Delhi held up a book

on the Narmada. The banning of Salman Rushdie's book was bad enough and encouraged Khomeini to threaten murder, but this ban is much more laughable.

The *Narmada Bachao Andolan* launched a campaign against this unconstitutional action which violated the citizen's fundamental rights in February this year. The Narmada Project stinks of inhumanity. For one thing, it would result in the biggest forced emigration of human beings in history from their homes and their lands. The promises of resettlement are hollow and cannot be fulfilled because there just is not enough land on which to resettle the oustees. The inhumanity is aggravated by the fact that the victims of this measure will be largely tribals,

the original inhabitants of India, for whom the forests are their home.

There has already been enough de-forestation in India and the Narmada Project area is no exception. It is now proposed to add to this crime against nature and the environment by further vandalism. It will incidentally drown 177 historical monuments in Madhya Pradesh.

I am glad to hear a report that the World Bank, which was to have financed this ill-conceived project, are going to withdraw their financial support. I hope they do so.

Then why are the politicians in Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh so keen on the idea? The answer is obvious. The larger the project, the greater the pickings for our corrupt politicians.

The Bi-centenary of the Impeachment of Warren Hastings

In February 1988, the Edinburgh University held a bi-centenary commemoration conference on the impeachment of Warren Hastings, the Governor-General of India, when the East India Company ruled the land. The papers presented there will soon be published. But what is indeed surprising is that Indian newspapers and journals paid no attention to this important conference. One of the papers presented at the conference by Conor Cruise O'Brien, was printed in the *Encounter* of February 1989.

It was Edmund Burke who impeached Warren Hastings and students of Indian history will be familiar with the charges. It was believed that Burke was prejudiced against Hastings and depended upon his cousin Will Burke who suffered at the hands of Hastings. Also, another charge generally made is that he was led by Philip Francis. Both these have been found to be without foundation. Burke seemed to have been independent in his views and in his devotion.

The House of Lords acquitted Hastings for want of evidence — something that is very common today. What Burke said then is still of contemporary relevance;

"... The Lords ought to enlarge and not to contract, the rules of evidence, according to the nature and difficulties of the case, for redress to the injured, for the punishment of oppression, for the detection of fraud — and above all to prevent, what is the greatest dishonour to all laws, and all the tribunals, the failure of justice..."

His views on bribes also has contemporary relevance and deserves to be read by men in authority and those in public affairs:

"On a transient view, bribery is rather a subject of disgust than horror — the sordid practice of a venal, mean, and abject mind; and the effect of the

crime seems to end with the act. It looks to be no more than the corrupt transfer of property from one person to another — at worst a theft. But it will appear in a very different light, when you regard the consideration for which the bribe is given — namely, that a Governor-General, claiming an arbitrary power in himself, for that consideration delivers up the properties, the liberties, and the lives of a whole people to the arbitrary discretion of any wicked and rapacious person, who will be sure to make good from their blood the purchase he has paid for his power over them. It is possible that a man may pay a bribe merely to redeem himself from some evil. It is bad, however, to live under a power whose violence has no restraint except in its avarice. But no man ever paid a bribe for a power to charge and tax others, but with a view to oppress them. No man ever paid a bribe for the handling of the public money, but to speculate from it. When once such offices become thus privately and corruptly venal, the very worst men will be chosen (as Mr. Hastings has in fact constantly chosen the very worst); because none but those who do not scruple the use of any means are capable, consistently with profit, to discharge at once the rigid demands of a severe public revenue and the private bribes of a rapacious chief magistrate. Not only the worst men will be thus chosen, but they will be restrained by no dread whatsoever in the execution of their worst oppressions. Their protection is sure. The authority that is to restrain, to control, to punish them is previously engaged; he has his retaining fee for the support of their crimes. Mr. Hastings never dared, because he could not, arrest oppression in its course, without drying up the source of his own corrupt emolument. Mr.

Hastings never dared, after the fact, to punish extortion in others, because he could not, without risking discovery of bribery in himself. The same corruption, the same oppression, and the same impunity will reign through all the subordinate gradations."

One of the most damaging charges that Burke brought against Hastings was the judicial murder of Maharaja Nanda Kumar. The majority of the Council of Hastings was hostile to Hastings and depending upon their support, Nanda Kumar "brought a number of charges against him, accusing him of putting offices up for sale, receiving bribes etc. But before the charges could be heard Nuncomar, (Nanda Kumar) was himself charged with forgery. The court which tried Nuncomar was presided over by Sir Elijah Impey, an old friend of Hastings, and devoted to his interests." Finding him guilty, he was sentenced to death, according to English law — where forgery invited capital punishment. According to the then Indian custom, forgery was only a scribble not inviting this dire punishment. With Nanda Kumar hanged none would come forward to give any evidence. A contemporary wrote "... the Blacks know not which way to look; everyone is cautious and reserved and I hope they may continue in their disposition..."

O'Brien compares the disposal of Nanda Kumar as an act that would have delighted Cesare Borgia and won the approbation of Machiavelli.

Burke's impeachment set up a standard of conduct for the servants of the Company. However elevated an official be, he could be brought to the bar of public opinion, and judged publicly. We can do with some more people of Burke's disposition today.

R. Srinivasan

S.M. Joshi — The kind-hearted Socialist

Govind Talwalkar

Mr. S.M. Joshi (or SM as he was affectionately known to the public at large) who died at a ripe old age was in the thick of politics for over six decades. He never occupied a seat of power, though he fought elections to the Legislative Assembly and the Lok Sabha. The authority that he wielded was moral and his leadership was acknowledged by the people at large for the enormous sacrifices that he had made.

It is rare to find a more self-effacing politician who, whenever there was power or honour to share, would always recommend someone else. This was not because he suffered from any inferiority complex, but because he believed more in service than in promoting himself. He was conscious of his abilities but did not believe that the reward for these was exclusively in terms of power.

Humane

There are instances in history where we find individuals brought up in dire poverty later turn hedonists and power-hungry authoritarians. In the case of SM his long years in poverty made him more compassionate and humane. In his memoirs he has described how, when in school, he and his family had often to miss a meal but he mentioned this not to evoke sympathy. Whenever he thought of the poverty of his countrymen he would remember his own miserable days.

SM was compassionate but not meek. His intense feeling against injustice manifested itself right from his school days. His schoolmates recall how he fought with authoritarian teachers unjust to students who suffered from economic or physical infirmities. In later days, the same trait prevailed whenever he found injustice done to any individual or to any section of society.



It is rare to find a more self-effacing politician who, whenever there was power or honour to share, would always recommend someone else. This was because SM believed more in services than in promoting himself. He was conscious of his abilities but did not believe that the reward for these was exclusively in terms of power.

A True Gandhian

It was no wonder that SM was attracted to the nationalism preached by Lokamanya Tilak and later joined the *Satyagraha* movement launched by Mahatma Gandhi. Along with some young Congressmen he became one of the founders of the Congress Socialist Party and continued to be associated with the socialist cause to the last. But it cannot be said that SM was deeply versed in the so-called scientific social-

ism. He knew the principle tenets of Marxism but not being an intellectual in the etymological sense of the word he did not make it a subject of study.

Some members of the Congress Socialist Party eventually turned to the Communist Party. SM did not. His nationalism was deep rooted and his compassion could not stomach the unscrupulous and servile politics of the CPI. One can say that SM was more a Gandhian than a Socialist. Even as the British Labour movement had taken its inspiration more from the Bible than from Marx, SM too was inspired more by Gandhiji than by that messiah of socialism, Marx. It was quite natural therefore for SM to be drawn closer to JP than to any another socialist.

No Power-Seeker

His disinterest in the politics of power would make him take such positions in social matters as to sometimes embarrass his party colleagues. It is customary for politicians not to take a stand against social reactionaries and often turn a Nelson's eye to them. But this was not so with SM. That was why he joined the temple entry *satyagraha* and was also insistent that Marathwada University be named as Dr. Ambedkar University which the State Assembly had resolved unanimously.

True to the Gandhian spirit SM had no rancour or animus against any political opponent. He was a trade unionist who once supported the management of an enterprise when a worker was to be dismissed because of gross misbehaviour. He laid stress on means and would not sacrifice them to achieve an end.

SM was not an effective speaker but he was listened to with great attention

as everybody knew that he spoke from his heart and would follow the precepts that he preached. His was a transparent personality and anybody could approach him to seek his help in redressing a grievance. In intra-party matters SM was often at a disadvantage because he could not understand why people were so obsessed with power.

It is not that only men in authority exhibit the arrogance of power. Hamlet talks of the insolence of Office. SM would not believe that there are people who make sacrifices, serve the people and yet are insolent because they think they have a right to be insolent and arrogant. When that great liberal Gopal Krishna Gokhale explained his scheme of the Servants of India Society to Sir Pherozeshah Mehta the latter warned him that in course of time these servants would think themselves as masters. With SM there was no trace of arrogance nor did he demand respect. He commanded it.

Public life these days has been reduced to a rat race and individuals like S.M. Joshi are rare. "To be honest

as the world goes is to pick one out of ten thousand" said Hamlet. SM would surely have been that one. In his passing away the people have lost yet another champion and the country is so much the poorer.

Mr. Govind Talwalkar is the editor of the *Maharashtra Times*, Bombay.

SM

S.M. Joshi was one of my close colleagues in the days when I was Secretary of the Congress Socialist Party. He and N.G. Goray used to run the Maharashtra branch of the party. Unfortunately, they were both brahmins, and although the anti-brahmin feeling in Maharashtra is not as strong as it is in Madras, this was a definite factor that came in the way of their position in public life. This they accepted cheerfully.

SM as I called him and as he was popularly known, was a very likable and affectionate person. He was a

civilized man in every sense of the term and his political views or activities had a basic humanism.

I last saw him in a Bombay hospital where he was undergoing treatment for cancer. His cheerfulness was so infectious that instead of my cheering him up, he cheered me up. I mentioned this to him and he said he had lived a full life and was not frightened of death, and so why should he not be cheerful?

I can only join others in paying my humble tribute to the memory of SM who was a good son of India. Unfortunately, the generations to which he belonged is getting thinner and thinner. One hopes the young people of India will replace men like him.

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Democracy — What is It?

(Part 2)

Raphael Kazmann

Any law passed by a legislature is presumed to be legal but it may not be moral. If it is not in accord with moral law, it is deleterious and society will find that justice is impossible to achieve by applying it. Ultimately a society must judge the impact of its laws on individuals; any law that violates any injunction will be bad for society, no matter how skillfully the matter may be concealed by verbiage.

Moral Principles and Where They Come From

Before we can understand the function of moral principles it is necessary to look at the underlying motivations of human behaviour. Moral principles are the distillation of human experiences (some might say the experience of all life forms) that have proved beneficial, life enhancing. In short, "what makes people act as they do?" is the fundamental question that must be examined.

Rational Man

People act in response to their recognition of values. At any particular moment they do what is, for them, the most important thing to do. Their motivations are not always logical, for emotion and instinct play a part in determining their actions. The role of reason in determining actions was beautifully expressed by Ayn Rand. She wrote extensively on the subject of values and her writing was both logical and insightful. Her most important belief and assumption was that man is a completely rational animal. In her essay "The Objective Ethics" she puts it this way:

"Value is that which one acts to gain and/or keep. The concept *value* is not a primary; it presupposes an answer to the question of value to *whom* and for *what*? ... Where no alternative exists, no goals and no values are possible ...

"There is only one fundamental alternative in the universe: existence or non-existence — and it pertains to a single class of entities: to living organisms. The existence of inanimate matter is unconditional, the existence of life is not; it depends on

a specific course of action. Matter is indestructible, it changes its forms, but it cannot cease to exist. It is only a living organism that faces a constant alternative: The issue of life and death. Life is a process of self-sustaining and self-generated action. If an organism fails in that action, it dies; its chemical elements remain, but its life goes out of existence. It is only the concept of *life* that makes the concept of *value* possible. It is only to a living entity that things can be good or evil.

"To make this point fully clear, try to imagine an immortal, indestructible robot, an entity which moves and acts, but cannot be affected by anything, which cannot be changed in any respect, which cannot be damaged, injured, or destroyed. Such an entity would not be able to have any values; it would have nothing to gain or to lose; it could not regard anything as *for* or *against* it, as serving or threatening its welfare, as fulfilling or frustrating its interests. It could have no interests or goals...

"An organism's life depends on two factors: the material or fuel which it needs from the outside, from its physical background, and the action of its own body, the action of using that fuel *properly*. What determines what is *proper* in this context? The standard is the organism's life, or: that which is required for the organism's survival.

"No choice is open to an organism in this issue: that which is required for its survival is determined by its *nature*, by the kind of entity it is...if

an organism fails in the basic functions required by its nature — if an amoeba's protoplasm stops assimilating food, or if a man's heart stops beating — the organism dies... Life can be kept in existence only by a constant process of self-sustaining action. The goal of that action, the

ultimate *value* which, to be kept must be gained through its every moment, is the organism's *life*". (Ayn Rand, 1954 *The Virtue of Selfishness*, Signet Books, New American Library)

Concept of Ultimate Value

This concept of "ultimate value" is subject to testing, because it may be possible, in theory at least, to find exceptions that might prove it wrong. Is the ultimate value of any entity its own physical survival? Few among us have not heard or read stories about cats going into burning buildings to rescue their kittens. Robert Ardrey, in his book *African Genesis*, retells Eugene Marais's story about two young baboons who deliberately attacked a leopard that was threatening to destroy their band — and baboons fear leopards more than any other animal, man included. The baboons, of course, were killed by the leopard, but not before they fatally injured it. And who has not heard of fathers and mothers willingly sacrificing themselves so that their children might survive? Grandparents have, on occasion, acted in the same way. So when we speak of "ultimate" values, as did Miss Rand, there can be no values that rank higher. We must conclude, based on empirical evidence, that all of her arguments apply to the next-to-ulti-

mate value, the life of the individual. In reality the ultimate value for each living being is not its own individual life; the ultimate value for a living being appears to be its *biological immortality*: perpetuation of its gene group in all degrees of kinship, and of its species. All other values are secondary. It is from the concept of value that a continuum from good (life) to bad (life-terminating) exists. There is, objectively, a difference between good and bad, *it is not a matter of arbitrary choice*.

For an entity to evolve and develop towards its ultimate goal, it must achieve secondary goals as well: life must be sustained. But mankind did not arrive on the earth by itself; it has been accompanied by a myriad of living beings from amoebas to elephants. All these creatures have certain responses, to sustain life, built in. Or, in computer terms, we would call these "hard wired" responses. Most of us would call these responses "instinct" and behaviourists would call this "instinctual behaviour". Men add to instinctual behaviour by reasoning and by meditating on the activities and experiences of others.

Reason and cogitation enable people to learn from experience, for example from what might be called "useful deaths." A man eats an unknown root and dies; his associates, thus alerted, avoid this type of root. Our culture has institutionalized this process: after every major accident, and many minor ones, we investigate the cause so that we can warn the survivors against making the same mistakes. In theological terms we say that when we deliberately, or unwittingly, ignore the operations of natural law, we commit a "sin". We extend this term by distinguishing two categories of sin: retrievable and irretrievable — venial and mortal. A retrievable sin would include blundering off the edge of a three-foot deep trench. We could be injured or severely shaken up, but would probably survive with temporarily diminished capacity. If we blundered off the edge of a thirty foot high cliff, the damage would probably be irretrievable — mortal sin — and there would be no recovery.

Natural and Man-made Laws

No individual can possibly know of all hazards, so society does its best to fill the gap by providing warnings. Many common warnings could be cited: on

highways, deer crossings and railroad crossings are all marked; detours are indicated, safe speeds around curves are shown; bottles containing poison are clearly marked with warnings as are power lines and transformers. These warnings are so commonplace that we accept their presence without question as society warns its members of possible "sin". Newton's laws of motion (that enable engineers to compute the safe speed for a motor vehicle to negotiate a corner), the laws of electric currents, the laws of chemistry, nuclear physics, and thermodynamics — all these, and more, are the sources of man-made warnings and rules. Sometimes legislation has been passed so that people who ignore natural law and endanger their own lives and the lives of others may be punished by society for ignoring the warnings. Currently, legislation is being passed in the United States to punish those caught driving vehicles who have more than a minimal percentage of alcohol in their bloodstream. They are not being jailed for drinking (although alcohol temporarily interferes with the optimum operation of the body); they are being jailed for their potential violation of Newton's laws of motion, actions which would jeopardize themselves and other members of society.

Violating a man-made law is punishable only after a violator has been caught, tried, and convicted. For example, parking in a no-parking zone is a violation that will be punished only if a policeman sees the violation and issues a citation; a driver who tries to round a curve at 100 miles per hour (a speed in excess of the posted speed limit) when computations based on Newton's laws show that the vehicle will not be able to make the turn and will go off the road if its speed is more than 75 mph, has violated the speed limit and would receive a traffic ticket if he were caught. However his "violation" of Newton's laws punish him immediately by causing him to leave the road at a high rate of speed and, possibly, destroying him — all this without the intervention of human hands.

It is clear that the word "violation" is misleading when applied to natural laws, for no one can actually violate a natural law. When applied thus it means that the "violator" has ignored the operation of the particular law and has placed himself in a life-threatening situ-

ation. The "violator" is automatically punished by objective circumstances. If a driver corners too rapidly on a slippery surface, his car may leave the road and he will wind up in a ditch. He did not "violate" a natural law; he operated according to its dictates but without regard for the life-threatening results. Thus the phrase: "violation of natural law", "sin" (in theological terms), will be taken to mean that the individual or the society has acted in such a way that the normal and inevitable operation of natural law has produced, or will produce, deleterious (contra-survival) consequences.

Moral Principles

Many people seem to believe that moral principles are primarily religious in origin, are arbitrary and therefore relative — they believe that there are no absolutes. One of the best expressions of this attitude is a statement by Professor Henry David Aiken (*Harpers Magazine*, Feb. 1968, "The New Morals" that

... modern ethical theory has brought many "enlightened" people to a certain presumption about the nature of morality: unlike the objectively verifiable theories of science, moral judgements and principles are merely expressions and incitements of emotions... moral experience is something wholly real — but its reality is wholly personal.

I maintain that moral principles are no different from any other set of principles that govern the operations of the natural universe: they were not created by man and they will not be changed by man. Moreover they are discovered, not devised. Newton did not create the laws of motion; he discovered them. Moses did not create the Commandments; he received them from the same non-human source that enabled Newton to "discover" his laws.

The moral principles of particular pertinence to this discussion of democracy are these:

1. *Do not murder*. That is, the injunction applies to the deliberate taking of the life of an innocent member of society by another member. It has nothing to do with conflict with an external enemy, when a tribe, city, nation, or social order must be protected and an enemy destroyed. We enforce this injunction with legislation in order to protect the

members of society and provide the murderer with his earned punishment. In a real sense, a murderer attacks the society as well as the individual victim. The injunction assumes that murder is premeditated, which is why an accidental killing is classified as manslaughter — accidents may happen in any society without threatening it.

2. *Do not steal.* This injunction is essential to the continued operation of any social system. It is inconceivable that a stable and just society can be organized if stealing is an acceptable mode of behaviour. For if stealing is acceptable, why should anyone be industrious and productive? Acceptance of stealing would simply discourage the industrious and cause the entire society to sink into poverty and become prey to external forces, such as disease or unfriendly neighbours. You can evaluate the prospects for a stable Soviet society against the operation of this principle.

This principle is applicable to individuals, groups, and governments, since to *steal* refers to "any surreptitious taking not only of money or valuables but of anything comparable in any way." (Webster's *New Collegiate Dictionary*, 1957) The word, "steal" undoubtedly includes armed robbery, and it might be defined as the taking, without compensation, of valuables of any kind. The stealing of possessions (including any property owned by individuals) is unacceptable conduct. Stealing includes passing a law to countenance theft. Examples of legislative stealing include the confiscation of property owned by Jews and "enemies of the state" and the "nationalization" of the property of individuals and corporations (a corporation is simply an organization of individuals, not an entity in itself). For example, the expropriation of properties owned by American oil companies in Mexico in the 1930's, or the "nationalization" of the properties of steel companies in Great Britain by a Labour Government. It also includes such "income transfers" as embodied in the present "social security system" of the United States, payments to farmers of money obtained by taxation, subsidies to ship builders, etc. Taking money from one set of people and bestowing it on another group, without the second group rendering service in return, is stealing from the individuals in

one group and dividing the proceeds with others.

Just because an action is legal does not mean that it complies with physical and moral laws. A legislature can pass a law that makes the value of PI equal to 3.0000 instead of 3.1416, but that does not make it so, and anyone who uses this "legal" value instead of the actual value will diminish his chances of survival: tire rims won't go all the way around wheels, speedometers will misinform, highway curves will require more material than the designer calculates, drive shafts will be too weak, and a generally unsatisfactory condition will result — all legal. In this instance the law would be an evil one, for our definition of evil is "contra survival".

3. *Do not tell lies.* This injunction is extremely pertinent to a discussion of democracy. In fact it also pertains to the entire endeavour that we term "science" or "scientific research". No single one of us can do all things or verify all statements. We must rely on the reports by others as to what they saw, what they did, and what they found. Admittedly, all of us are prone to error, and everything we report is not always in accord with the facts. Society can live with such errors, painful though they may sometimes be. But no society can survive if lying is acceptable conduct.

We know certain universal laws and the relationships that govern their operations. We also know that, if we transgress these laws, the consequences can be very unpleasant. Thus any society can assist its members to survive if the pattern of activities that produce disaster ("sinful conduct") can be described and transmitted to future generations. But to do this the information must be truthful and the observer must not lie or misrepresent facts. Lying is to society what the ingestion of psycho-active drugs (LSD, for instance) is to individuals; it causes the members of the society to operate under dangerous, life-threatening misapprehensions.

For example, the despatches from Japanese troop-commanders during World War II which reported local victories instead of local defeats caused the higher commands to issue orders that were wrong and, in turn, caused additional losses. Thus, every individual and governmental organization must tell the truth so that society and its members can make proper decisions. The com-

munist empire is well aware of the part that reliable information plays in preserving a society and its internal cohesion. Thus the Soviet Union, alone, is estimated to spend some \$2 billion per year on "disinformation", which includes spreading false rumours, forging documents, planting news stories in Indian, European or American media, and doing everything possible to distort the underlying political reality.

It is no accident that scientific progress is based on the observance of this injunction: the truthful reporting of observed fact is absolutely essential so that members of the scientific community can build with confidence on the work of others. There have been several scandals recently when researchers were found to have falsified data. Likewise, in the realm of everyday life, we are all acquainted with penalties for perjury, lying under oath. In wider political matters we can turn to the Profumo incident in Great Britain or the Oppenheimer case in the U.S. where the transgressions consisted purely of misrepresentations, not matters of substance injurious to their respective countries, to realize that the laws of survival behaviour, first codified 3,500 years ago, still apply.

It is essential, in this discussion of democracy, to emphasize the difference between what is legal and what is moral. Any law passed by a legislature or governing body is presumed to be legal, but it may not be moral. If it is not in accord with moral law, it is deleterious and the society will find that justice is impossible to achieve by applying it. Ultimately a society must judge the impact of its laws on individuals: any law that violates any injunction will be bad for society, no matter how skillfully the matter may be concealed by verbiage. And the injunctions apply to individuals, groups, and governmental bodies at all levels, local, state, and national, without exception.

The writer contends that the entire concept of democracy is workable only in the context of a general acceptance of the injunctions and moral principles outlined above. There are, of course, additional principles that are important to the continued operation of any society, but these must be left for another essay.

(To be Continued)

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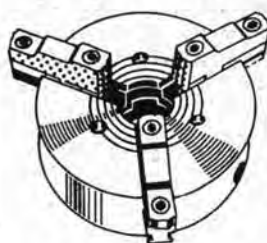


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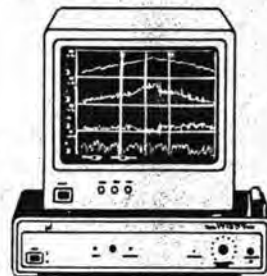
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Rajaji — The Epitome of Dharma

Louella Lobo Prabhu

The word *Dharma* is an Indian concept, and is not exactly translatable into Western terminology. Mere 'duty' as one perceives it in a purely human sense, would be inadequate. Though the duty may not be a pietistic one, in the religious sense, duty does here connote a concept which embraces religion and morality. It is also linked with *karma*, and the belief that men are bound to act at all times as moral beings, to atone for the imperfections of a past life, or to better their prospects in the life to come. Chakravarthi Rajagopalachari, or Rajaji as he was better known to his countrymen was a *Karmayogi*. Perhaps, that is an inadequate description. He was a *Rajayogi*, too, an almost impossible achievement for one who was — unlike that other *Rajayogi* Gandhi — in the field of active party politics. It was comparatively easier for Gandhiji to take what was a strictly moral path in his perception (even if, at times, today's scholars, with the hindsight of history dispute his perceptions). Much more difficult for Rajaji to do so, as he did not shun the field of party and political office, but brought to both, his sense of *karma* and *dharma*. The first lesson of his life, is therefore for those who self-righteously proclaim, that they keep out of politics — because it is a dirty business with which they would not like to soil their lily-white reputations. Does this then mean that governance — the most important field of all — should be abandoned to those lacking both intelligence and integrity? The lessons drawn from Rajaji's life, come back to us, with a resounding No! It is possible to enter politics; to keep personal standards high, and perhaps even spread that brand of ethical culture which permeated our political scenario at least up to Independence, when men fought for a cause, and there were no



spoils of office to taint them — at least not at that point of time.

The taint began to show, even about a decade before independence, when the formation of provincial governments along developing democratic patterns, turned many of the 'pure' into seekers after power. Maulana Azad's book traces the seeds of Partition, even as far back as the thirties, when, in his judgement, the failure to accommodate certain powerful Muslims, suggested to the whole community that their acceptance in free India might pose the problem of living in a Hindu State — even if it went by the nomenclature 'secular.' Opponents of the Azad thesis discount this explanation. Rajaji's was a novel point of view. Like Gandhiji — and unlike Nehru — he was a pious practising Hindu, whose genius would even manifest itself in his marvellous translations of the two great Indian Epics, the

Ramayana and the Mahabharata. His approach to the problem of the Muslims was based not on a desire for independence and power as soon as possible, but on a genuine appreciation of their apprehensions about their future after the departure of the British. Thus, in 1942, just after the departure of the Cabinet Mission, Rajaji got passed a resolution in the Madras Assembly, accepting the Muslim League formula for the partition of the country.

Some may question the soundness of the decision. Certainly, it was unpopular among the Congressmen of the time, and it would not be the last occasion in his life when he stood more or less alone. One cannot doubt the honesty of his intentions. Gandhiji did not. Not many people know that the Rajaji formula was approved by Gandhiji in 1943, during his epic fast. Eventually, the various leaders who condemned Rajaji's stand in 1942, became sudden votaries of the two-nation theory, when, with Independence in sight, Gandhiji toyed with the idea of Jinnah as the Prime Minister of a United India! This *volte face* by other Congress leaders, who had sought in 1942, to hound Rajaji out of the Congress, comes through vividly, in the Attenborough classic, "Gandhi." The faces of the possible contenders for the office visibly fall, and while Nehru and others say they would accept the mantle Gandhiji was offering Jinnah, what about the Indian people? It is on celluloid, rather than in cold print, that motivation becomes clear. Other than Rajaji, whose stand was made known for good reasons, much earlier, their eagerness to accept the division of India is clearly visible because they do hanker after "the kingdom, the power and the glory."

The lessons to be drawn from Rajaji's life are that it is possible to enter politics; to keep personal standards high, and perhaps even spread that brand of ethical culture which permeated our political scenario at least up to Independence, when men fought for a cause, and there were no spoils of office to taint them — at least not at that point of time.

The Job Not the Chair

Office and honours came to Rajaji without his seeking them. He had the honour to be the first Indian Governor-General of India after Mountbatten. He was to be a member of the Nehru Cabinet. Yet, he did not resist transfer to Calcutta, and eventually to his home state of Madras as Chief Minister. In Calcutta, he probably reckoned that he could contribute something to soothe that simmering cauldron of communal tension. In every office he held, he touched nothing he did not adorn. There has been carping criticism of one action in his political life: his elevation to Chief Ministership through nomination to the Madras Legislature. It may be said here that there is no written, legal provision against this. And on every count, enunciated by the Constitution for nomination: journalism, social work and the like, he had a most distinguished record. With Gandhi and Tilak, he was one of the most prolific, articulate and elegant of Indian-writers-in-English. Even his translations of the Epics, like the *Prefaces* to Shaw's plays, are laced with brilliant parallels, tracing appropriate connections with English

and European literature. His acceptance of the nomination was well deserved and entirely justified.

Parting With Power

The great difference between Rajaji, and other giants of the freedom struggle — among other things — was the fact that he lived so long. He was thus able to see, with sorrow, the great moral decline of the Congress Party in which he had grown up with a life-long commitment. He also had an excellent rapport with Nehru, who, reportedly wanted him to be the first President of the Indian Republic. It must have been a heart-wrenching decision to leave the parent Congress, when he saw it go in a crypto-communist direction, on the one hand, and into the Augean stables of corruption, on the other. In respect of the first, the drive towards collective farming, which had caused such a bloodbath in Russia was a disquieting pointer for any clear-eyed reader of contemporary history. (Nehru tended to see what he wanted to see: the vision, not the carefully manicured reality, shown to selected visitors to the Soviet Union such as he). The second arose from the State assuming a role in which

it commanded the heights of economic power, through a wide-ranging, indeed, all-entangling network of permits, licences and quotas. On the one hand individual initiative was smothered. On the other, the absence of competition made for high prices and low quality in the private — and worse — the public sector. The latter answers to no master. The former must at least face its shareholders.

The result of his cogitation on the national situation, resulted in the birth of the Swatantra Party. This was at the age when he, like any good Hindu nurtured in classical concepts could justifiably claim that he could take *Sanyas* or *Van prastha*, having played his part on the centre-stage of national politics. But he perceived this to be his *dharma*, and he did it. Not for him, the perpetual limpet-like grasp of aging politicians on office of any kind, particularly when it came with the perks that ensured a good lifestyle. Indeed, many who served the freedom movement well enough, reaped sufficient rewards later, to make their earlier involvement seem like a calculated investment in harvesting the benefits of power which free India could

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Once More, Against the Tide

Populism is always easier to sell than pragmatism — Predictably, the Party was dubbed as one of the rich, for the rich, and by the rich. Nothing could be further from the truth. Far from wanting de-control, the Indian industrialist was happy with his sheltered seller's market. It was chiefly the consumer who suffered in this situation, though it would seem that the Party never really succeeded in putting across the idea that free enterprise is not free-booting, but free competition, which would make a buyer's market of a seller's one. Indeed, it was the rural masses which better understood the message that Rajaji's Party had to propagate. Most seats won by the Swatantra Party were in rural, rather than urban areas.

It is correct that the Party did have, what would today be called "feudal elements". However, such people came in on a popular franchise, with majorities which appeared to indicate that they enjoyed wide popular support. It is an irony, that the Congress, which criticized the Swatantra Party as one of princes; which broke solemn covenants made to the princes during the takeover of their States, now openly courts erstwhile rulers, and has brought back the practice of addressing them with their old prefixes! More significantly, former rulers bore their status with grace. Nothing matches the arrogance of today's ruling princes — ministers and members of parliament — who live more ostentatiously than the princes of old, but without the natural dignity which comes from tradition.

Nor do most people realise, that British democracy succeeded so well, and is still relatively clean, because it featured the phenomenon of the gentleman in politics. Those who already have wealth and status, have something to give — rather than to get. Today's Johnny-come-lately, or beggar-on-horseback is out to get as much as he can — as soon as he can. Indeed, when the present Prime Minister took over, there was hope that by inducting successful professionals without a murky political background, he would eliminate the power-broking mafia which had grown up under his mother's rule. The "clean" young men have belied any hopes of a change in political culture, while every discredited politician is back

in the ruling Party.

A Successful But Short Lived Experiment

Despite the bad public image sought to be pinned on it, Rajaji's Swatantra Party was the only qualitatively different Party of its time, offering a polarised, secular, pragmatic ideology, against the right-wing religiosity of the Jana Sangh and all the other pink-red hues of other Parties on the Indian political scene. The Party did well, in 1962, and exceptionally well in 1967, when it was the leading Opposition Party in Parliament. Its highly literate and erudite members made lasting contributions to the debates in the House, on issues of finance, foreign affairs, and human rights.

Rajaji's heart must have broken again, when, in the so-called "Grand Alliance" of 1971, the Swatantra Party joined with other opposition parties, and was badly beaten.

Sunset

Though the Party he built up from a dream to a reality, was all but destroyed, Rajaji was not. His fertile mind continued a lively battle against the Ravana of Indian politics. Like Dean Swift, his weekly articles in *Swarajya* must have been a constant goad to the ruling party.

It is a consolation that he lived to a great age, with all his senses intact. Unlike almost every other politician beginning with Nehru, he was, (again like Gandhi), the only one who never used his name and position to advance his immediate family. Some of them did well. Others are unknown.

There was no double-think, or double-speak about him. He lived modestly, but not poorly, making no distinction between his public life and private persona. Minoo Masani, J.M. Lobo Prabhu, H.M. Patel — remain among the few living survivors of his legacy today, having kept faith with some sense of idealism in public life.

In an interesting conversation with Monica Felton, his informal biographer, Rajaji once mentioned that the Christian concept of heaven and hell as a reward or punishment for good action, was closely allied with the Hindu concept of *karma*. But he said there was a higher morality in the *Bhagavad Gita*, which propagated the theory "Action and not the fruit thereof."

On that note: Rajaji's own concept of *dharma*, I would like to end, with my poem further elucidating that approach to life:

*To do the thing you believe is right
— not just from hope of heaven,
dread of hell, or human thanks;
demands life lived by lights,
with which few common people
choose to dwell.
For its own sake
the proper thing to do
sans wish or even hope subconscious
that there will be
some recompense to you.
Ah that indeed is true morality,
uninfluenced by favour or by fear;
concerned with action not with reward.
A soul-state achieved by few men here,
transcending us
as they rise up to God.*

Ms. Louella Lobo Prabhu is Associate Editor of *Insight*

On Restricting the Interference of Government

The third and most cogent reason for restricting the interference of government is the great evil of adding unnecessarily to its power. Every function superadded to those already exercised by the government causes its influence over hopes and fears to be more widely diffused, and converts, more and more, the active and ambitious part of the public into hangers-on of the government. If the roads, the railways, the banks, the insurance offices, the great joint-stock companies, the universities, and the public charities, were all of them branches of the government; if in addition, the municipal corporation and local boards, with all that now devolves on them, became departments of the central administration; if the employees of all these different enterprises were appointed and paid by the government, and looked to the government for every rise in life; not all the freedom of the press and popular constitution of the legislature would make this or any other country free otherwise than in name.

On Liberty, J. S. Mill



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FROM THE FOREIGN PRESS

The Suit Against Stalin

Roy Medvedev

I would never have become engaged in trying to discover the huge number of Stalin's victims — those millions arrested, shot, starved to death, banished to the North and East, broken by tortures and buried in unmarked mass graves — had that macabre data been published. But no official statistics have yet been published and I suspect these statistics never existed. In the meantime, every time I lecture on Stalinism, I receive lots of notes from the audience all asking the same question: "How many people were victimized?" So I have to make at least some rough calculations. My figures are less than Western estimates, because I would hate to exaggerate things. Still my own results make me shiver every time at the scale of repressions and victims.

The Beginning

The first wave of mass repressions came as early as 1927-1928, after Stalin's triumph over the united "leftist" opposition. Tens of thousands of Trotskyites and Zinovievites were exiled to remote areas in the country, locked up in political "isolation wards," expelled from the Party and fired from their jobs. Nearly all returned to their professional lives in 1930-1933, after the humiliating procedure of "repentance" and "taking the oath of allegiance to Stalin". In a year's time the same road was travelled by tens of thousands of "rightist deviationists". In 1936-1937 all those people were re-arrested, never again to return to their families. Most of them were former oppositioners (or even students and Komsomols who had supported them in the 20s). They were shot on a special secret order in 1938-1939. Not more than several hundred prisoners in this category lived to see the 1954-1957 rehabilitation.

It was at the height of the struggle against Trotskyites and Zinovievites that Stalinists launched fresh political campaigns and repressions on a mass scale. Persecutions of "bourgeois nationalists" were started in various Union and Autonomous Republics. In the wake of the widely reported "Shakhty affair" (1930), the campaign of political repressions against "wreckers" (a name used for "bourgeois specialists" and technological experts from pre-revolutionary times) gathered momentum. Between 1930 and 1931 all the prisons and "isolation wards" were filled to overflowing with technicians and professionals, plus the remaining Menshe-

viks and Socialist Revolutionaries who had been threatened with exile before. These victims of Stalinism numbered in the tens of thousands.

Repressions in the late 20s involved tens of thousands of oppositioners. The "wreckers", Working Peasants Party (WPP) members, "bourgeois nationalists" and later NEP-men who were arrested — most of whom died in prison — numbered in the hundreds of thousands. Only several thousands members of these "alien" sections and classes managed to get out of prison in Stalin's time. Several thousands survived those hard years to be freed from the camps in 1956-1957. They spent between 25 to 30 years in prison or exile.

How Many Kulaks were Dispossessed?

The sweeping forced collectivization lasted almost four years (1929-1932). This was an unprecedentedly broad repressive campaign to dispossess the kulaks (well-to-do-farmers). It was totally unlike the 1918-1920 anti-kulak actions. Then it was "surplus" land and implements that were taken away from well-to-do peasants, now their farms were seized in toto, and they and their families were shipped to remote areas in the country's north and east to settle forever in jerry-built "special settlements".

Official statistics of the early 30s clearly understated the number of those dispossessed. Addressing the 1933 January Plenary Meeting of the Party Central Committee, Stalin quoted the suspiciously precise figure of 240,000 families shipped from the areas of

sweeping collectivization. Works on the Party history in the 60s mention 330,000 dispossessed families. These two figures, however, raise many questions.

Firstly, we do not know the average size of the dispossessed families. Well-to-do peasant families in 1930-1932 rarely had less than 5 or 6 members. Assuming that the average family had 8 members, 240,000 families means 2.7-2.8 million people. But according to the 1927-1928 statistics, we had more than one million "kulak" families. And there is no evidence that even a tiny fraction of them was allowed to stay put. Moreover, according to figures of the 1930s and figures quoted much later, in many areas many not-so-well-to-do peasants were also evicted. In some areas they were more numerous than the kulaks. It is also known that even the poorest peasants who opposed collective farms and the methods of collectivization were deported from many areas around the country. Nobody is sure of their number. Also exiled were rural clergy and monks, small retail traders, blacksmiths and people generally disapproved of. Whole villages were exiled. In the Kuban area, for example, an entire 16 villages, including members of the collective farms and small individual holders, were packed off. Similar things happened in Byelorussia.

The next ghastly episode caused by Stalin's policy was the 1933 famine. Again no statistics are available. Hardest hit was the southern Ukraine. Less affected were the Northern Caucasus, the Volga area, Kazakhstan and Soviet

Self-reliance: the keynote of our independence

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Central Asia. Different researchers quote different figures — between 4 and 10 million people. My guess is that we can accept (till more precise figures are available) that 6 million people died during the famine.

December 1, 1934: A new Reference Point

1934 may be the only year that saw no major mass repressions, though people were arrested and groups of "counter-revolutionaries" were exposed. But the tail end of this calm year — after Kirov's assassination — brought more arrests of "Zinovevites" followed by large scale exiles from Moscow, Leningrad and other cities with "alien" elements. The exiled included families of former "aristocrats" (most of the former gentry in fact), as well as many former merchants and capitalists — roughly one million people all told. Thus, even before the frightening year of 1937 described by many as the start of the "Great Terror", Stalinists victimized, according to a rough estimate, at least 17-18 million people, at least 10 million of whom either died or were murdered.

In my estimate, between 5 and 7 million people were repressed in 1937-1939. Nearly one million Party members and one million former members were purged between the late 1920s and the mid-1930s. The remaining 3-5 million people were non-Party people from all walks of life. Most of those arrested in 1937-1938 were put in the "corrective labour" camps that peppered the country. Considerable numbers of those who came from the top party and government echelons were shot soon after arrest or after investigation on trumped-up charges. Death sentences were recorded at one time. I used to think 700,000 — 800,000 of these people were shot. But many it appears were shot on secret orders in the camps, so a more realistic figure would be one million.

The scale of repressions diminished in 1939-1940. More accurately, their nature and geography changed. There were mass arrests in the Western Ukraine and in Byelorussia. Their aim was to "withdraw" elements of the "alien class". The remnants of the Polish army were interned. Polish families who lived permanently in the Western Ukraine and Western Byelorussia were exiled to Siberia. In 1940 arrests started

in the Baltic states, Bessarabia and northern Bukovina. The total number of people arrested and deported could be around two million.

* The war did not stop the NKVD's repressive policy. In 1941 the entire population of the Autonomous Republic of the Volga Germans were deported to the country's east. Most of the deportees ended up in "special settlements", but many were sent to the camps to swell their work forces. The point is that the start of the war took a toll on the food supply to the camps while their inmates had to work harder and longer hours. That accounted for the increased death rates.

In 1942-1943 the NKVD's activities were geared to war needs. Rather than decreasing, its staff increased. By the end of 1943 and throughout 1944 the NKVD returned increasingly to its old practices. On the decision of the State Defence Committee, the Kalmyks, Chechens, Ingushes, the Crimean Tatars, Karachays and several smaller ethnic populations, including some Greeks and Kurds, were deported to the east. The total number of deportees from the Crimea, the Volga area and the Northern Caucasus approached three million. According to some estimates, at least one million children, old people and women died of the rigours of deportation in the first years of life in the new areas.

The NKVD took over the enormous job of screening people in the recently liberated Soviet territories. As is known, more than 60 million Soviet people lived in regions occupied by the Germans. A considerable number of people in the Ukraine, Byelorussia, Moldavia and the Baltic Republics lived at least three years under the occupation. So as not to die of hunger, these people had to work on collective farms, in factories and on railways, to run schools for their children. In the vocabulary of Stalin and the NKVD, they "collaborated with the occupation forces". Undoubtedly, all those who served in the Germans' punitive squads, in the police in General Vlasov's army in the Goebbels press and some other institutions deserved punishment. There were many such people and they were severely punished. We won't list them among the victims of Stalinism. But there were many people for whom work at factories, collective farms or on the

railroads was the only way to save themselves and their children from dying of hunger. Of course, not all of these people were repressed. If they had been, it would have been impossible to restore normal life and economic activity in the country's western areas. But practically all those who happened to live in the occupied areas had their rights curtailed. Many were sent to the camps where the number of inmates thinned because of the high death rate during the war.

I'm at a loss to quote any figures here. I can only quote the roughest, hypothetical one of 2-3 million people. If one also considers those repressed in 1945-1946, the figure can be increased to 5 million. The victory in the war brought release for surviving inmates of the camps for Soviet POWs and for millions of those who had lived in the occupied areas or been deported to work in Germany. All these people had to go through temporary "screening" camps. Many never made it home. Many were shipped to the camps on the Kolyma, to Kazakhstan, and Norilsk. Some had been heroic defenders of the Brest Fortress, of Sevastopol, Odessa, Stalingrad and Moscow.

Thus the total number of victims of Stalinism in 1941-1946 can be put at least 10 million.

Grim statistics. But they should be known.

Roy Medvedev, a Soviet historian, was recently elected to the revamped Soviet Parliament — the Congress of People's Deputies.

COURTESY: *Moscow News Weekly*
No. 48, 1988

STALIN'S MEDIOCRITY

The personality of Stalin and his career are different. It is not Stalin who created the machine. The machine created Stalin. But a machine, like a pianola, cannot replace human creative power. Bureaucracy as bureaucracy is impregnated through and through with the spirit of mediocrity. Stalin is the most outstanding mediocrity of the Soviet bureaucracy. His strength lies in the fact that he expresses the instinct of self-preservation of the ruling caste more firmly, more decisively, and more pitilessly than anyone else.

Leon Trotsky:
Life, October 2, 1939

PERESTROIKA FOR INDIA

Kanchan Aneja

When even Soviet Russia and China have embarked on a programme of radically re-structuring their economies, must India remain chained to stagnant, ineffective systems that retard our progress and stunt the growth of our people? Cannot we too allow the winds of change to blow in and benefit from the new breeze of thinking and action? We need this not because our neighbours are changing direction, but because of an urgent *need* for reform that cries out for adoption. The incidence of poverty, corruption, an inefficient educational system, unemployment, inflation, urban blight and the growing harassment and helplessness of the common man are all too glaring and call for immediate solutions.

Initially, India's planning took its inspirations from the Soviet model and still continues to be so. As a result, we remain the most regulated economy outside the communist world. The message of Perestroika therefore has greater relevance to us than to any other country in the non-communist world.

Recently, a seminar in Bombay, organised by the Project for Economic Education, Bombay and the Friedrich Naumann Stiftung of Bonn applied its mind to the question of a 'Perestroika for India.'

Participants at the seminar included eminent economists, including a member of the Planning Commission, industrialists, lawyers, educationists, journalists, administrators, men in management, social workers and activists.

When I see a wounded man on the road, I deliberately turn away, drowning my conscience under 'rationality'. Why? Not because I'm inhuman but because I am afraid of the harassment it involves in having to deal with the police, hospitals and the law courts! So, what happens? Self-preservation prevails and the moral fibre further disintegrates! In a larger context, the same is true of other aspects — whether it is deliberately bribing a clerk or an officer to get work done, or by-passing anticipated trouble



that could stretch for years! Or not protesting out of fear of consequences, or having to ignore one's rights knowing the futility and delay that recourse to law entails!

Little Progress in Four Decades

42 years of independence still sees 210 million of our people below the poverty line. Yet, we have pretensions to bigness as a military 'super-power'! 64% of our people are illiterate and over 30 million unemployed (that too, only those listed on employment exchanges). As for medical aid, there are just 85 hospital beds and 45 registered doctors available per lakh of population. And still the government spends crores of public money on 'functions' often unnecessary and 'programmes' that are unable to bring about the desired change or development. Unfortunately for us, our systems of control, implementation, and accountability have got in the way and so, the lofty ideals often remain only on paper.

Where have we gone wrong? Why has such widespread inefficiency and corruption permeated every pore of our system? And why do we *continue* to helplessly compromise with the situation, even while desperately aware, that something *must* be done?

Need for Pragmatism not Rhetoric

Perestroika means a clear shift towards pragmatism and *action* and away from ideological rhetoric. It means

a realistic and honest appraisal of our situation, our policies, and systems and taking honest steps to stem the rot that has set in; and refashioning our tools to promote efficiency even while ensuring that changes introduced in the system are evaluated not only on economic grounds, but also from the socio-cultural criteria because social justice and individual dignity is what civilized democratic society is all about.

The seminar, stressed the need to create a consensus on priorities and evolve a clear policy framework. It was agreed that if social justice and the greatest good of the greatest number is our goal, we need to move away from the regime of controls and excessive state intervention. For, there is little hope for re-construction so long as the *Neta-Babu Raj* continues.

Management of the Economy

For Perestroika to be a success, re-structuring must first begin in the economic field. It is time to change our policies on government expenditure, the public sector, defence expenditure (at the cost of development), taxation etc.

Another important priority is to make a massive effort for universal literacy, and the creation of a political constituency. This means radically accelerating and reforming the educational system and institutions, because it is *they* that play an important role in moulding our

human resources. Ultimately, it is the quality of people that determines the quality and progress of a country.

Need for Dharma

We must return to our Indian roots — not by a rigid adherence to traditional beliefs and customs, many of which are obsolete and only perpetuate social evils, but the true essence of our spiritual, religious and cultural heritage that has nourished India for 5000 years. Hence, there is need to inject a moral purpose and the external values of *Dharma* whereby we view life not from a merely materialistic point of view, but come to realize the oneness of all humanity.

A Useful Seminar

The seminar on Perestroika was a heartening effort in this direction. Because it not only created awareness of the dire need for reforms, but also discussed ways to make them possible and effective. I had the privilege to be present there and listen to the many ideas thrown up by the participants.

Mr. Viren Shah's paper on 'Perestroika for India' was a brief but comprehensive analysis of the Indian situation. It brought into focus the many areas that we need to look at. In addition to the economy, there is need to review our electoral laws, foreign policy, autonomy of the electronic media, accountability of the civil services, family planning and unemployment to mention a few.

One felt that the time given to each speaker and to the panel for discussion, was too short to deal with such a wide spectrum of topics. Even when the discussions were confined to the economy there was not adequate time to discuss issues in depth, whether it was the public sector, deficit financing and inflation, planning and excessive controls or the consumer rights movement in the rural areas.

It is necessary for us to make detailed studies of *each* aspect of our institutions and systems within *each* specific field. One hopes that the good work started by this seminar, gathers momentum and future seminars will have more detailed discussions of just one or two topics of the subject selected.

But what I feel imperative is that we should hold public debates at each level everywhere, not only in English but in

all languages in schools, colleges, offices, social and cultural organizations, associations, voluntary groups and gatherings. The need for Perestroika must engage the attention of every section of our people to really be able to bring about any real transformation. It is only when the problems, difficulties and realities are constantly discussed openly, that public awareness and opinion is created, which will throw up solutions, answers and lead to their public acceptance.

This calls for a party that believes in Perestroika not in the Soviet sense, but in every way relevant to the Indian ethos and context. It also calls for dedicated people to come forward, take up and shoulder the task of Perestroika. If this sounds idealistic *it is*. But how else can reality be carved, if one does not dream...?

The seminar is a small but significant step in this direction. One hopes the Project for Economic Education will continue to hold more such seminars involving different sections of society. But would it consider allowing attendance of small groups of the public, so that they too can benefit from the many ideas suggested by the eminent speakers? A framework for allowing public participation could be drawn up so as not to interfere with the formal proceedings of the seminar. This is important because the seminar faced the question of how the various suggestions thrown up during the discussions could get public or mass support. To begin with, a small public presence seems to me to be a good way.

The larger hope of course lies in groups and individuals committed to Perestroika actively helping to make it a reality. A reality emerging from what some people might describe as an utopian dream of an India without poverty and strife; an India rid of corruption; and an India standing on the strong foundations of peace and prosperity.

Impossible?

No. Not when the people will it, want it, work for it.

Mrs. Kanchen Aneja is a freelance journalist

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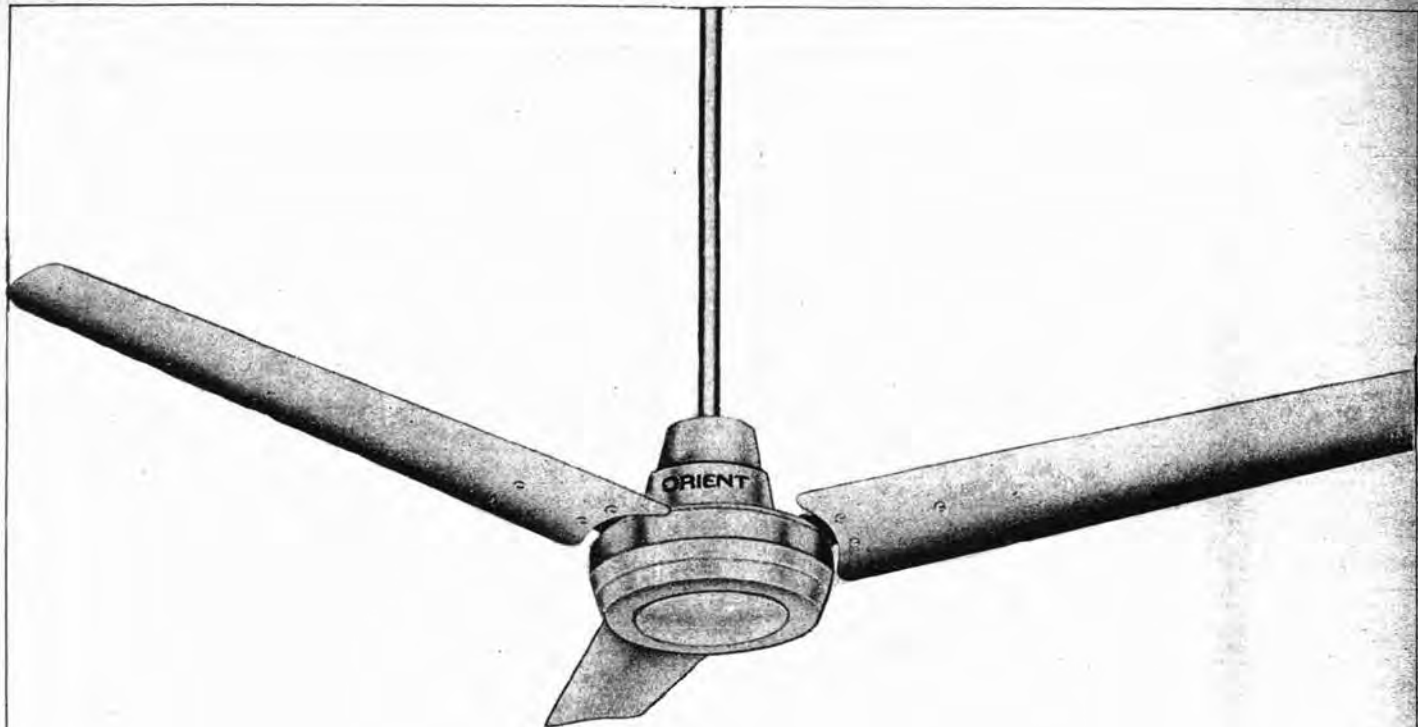
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JP and the Sarvodaya Movement

Aloo Dalal

In Jayaprakash Narayan's *Prison Diary*, there is an entry for September 6, 1975, where reflecting on the Bihar movement, he wonders whether it had not after all been a mistake because of its involvement with political parties. This and many other issues concerning the *Sarvodaya* movement are articulated, analysed and discussed by Geoffrey Ostergaard a sensitive British scholar who has given a detailed account of the Gandhian movement in India after Gandhi*

To Gandhi, non-violent revolution was not a programme of 'seizure' of power but of transformation of relationships ending in a peaceful transfer of power. Gandhi was a social and political revolutionary and advocated what JP was to later call 'Total Revolution'. Although his approach included both 'civil resistance' and 'constructive work', his cast of mind was basically revolutionary and anticipated the need for civil resistance even beyond the attainment of political independence. Ostergaard deals with the development of the movement after Gandhi's death, especially from 1969 to 1982.

Although the author claims that the book is not a 'rounded history' of the *Sarvodaya* movement, its orientation is chronological and narrative rather than theoretical or analytical. It is this narrative treatment which gives the central characters a certain roundedness, which makes them real, life-like personalities. Ostergaard himself justifies the attempt on other grounds. In the first place other studies have discussed JP as a social and political thinker but have not delineated his historical role in the *Sarvodaya* movement, for JP's thought evolved not only from his own search for truth but was also influenced by his *Sarvodaya* colleagues.

The Power of Non-violence

Secondly, non-violent revolution is a novel and challenging concept but is

The *Sarvodaya* movement after 1980 appears to be entering a post — JP phase which is more revolutionary than reformist. The belief now is that no government of whichever party is capable of bringing about a fundamental change, and the call to the people is to practise *Lokswaraj* here and now, by taking into their own hands the management of their local affairs

frequently dismissed as absurd or impossible mainly by those who lack informed knowledge and understanding of the movement. Moreover, as Margaret Chatterjee observes in her book, *Gandhi's Religious Thought*, in pre-independence days, *Satyagraha* was looked upon by many in the West as a kind of political blackmail. But, a generation familiar with Martin Luther King, the politically involved clergy of Latin America and the catastrophic effects of violence — assassinations, the taking of hostages and terrorism against innocent victims — is in a better position to appreciate the work of Gandhi. The mighty weaponry of powerful states has not been able to control or neutralise non-violence.

Dealing with the period, 1969- 1973, Ostergaard describes how the *Sarvodaya* movement ran into several difficulties. A strategy debate took place, the outcome of which was the adoption of a revised strategy of which

the initiator was JP. The *Bhoodan* and *Gramdan* campaigns were running into a morass and doubts began to be expressed about the wisdom of this strategy. The movement, moreover, suffered from a triple malady — a want of atmosphere, a want of workers and a want of finance. The *Sarva Seva Sangh*, the organ of the Movement, therefore passed a cautious resolution sanctioning the use of *Satyagraha* to redress people's grievances, remove injustices and secure the implementation of land reforms. However, when the practical opportunities for land grabbing came, the *Sarvodayites* differed and there was a division of opinion. Two discernible groups, one looking to JP was pressing for a militant strategy and the other to Vinoba, calling only for re-dedicated effort but no change of strategy.

Movement Politicised

While JP continued to take a keen interest in political affairs, commenting and offering advice from a non-partisan standpoint, Vinoba seemed to have retired into quietitude. However, things now began to move very fast in a direction that was distinctively authoritarian and it was inevitable that JP would raise his voice publicly against the excessive centralization of power. The politicisation of the movement was well under way and soon JP was asked to take the lead in uniting the opposition parties.

It was necessary to adopt on a large scale, negative *Satyagraha* as was used by Gandhi during the British Raj; students and youth were to be the main source of recruitment of the revolutionary cadre; to secure the support of concerned but politically uninvolved citizens, particularly middle class intellectuals, attempts had to be made to solve the other problems affecting the masses eg. rising prices, unemployment, corruption and land reforms. The movement could not be confined to villages but also had to advance to towns and cities; to take a more active interest in party politics and apply more resolutely Gandhi's *Lok Sevak Sangh* idea of guiding political power, the move-

NON-VIOLENT REVOLUTION IN INDIA by Geoffrey Ostergaard; J.P. Amrit Kosh, Sewagram, Gandhi Peace Foundation, New Delhi, Silver Jubilee Publication; 1985; pp. 419; Rs. 150

ment had to be more actively involved in elections in a non-partisan manner and even promote "people's candidates". Inevitably many things followed — JP's assumption of the leadership of the student's agitation in Bihar down to the declaration of the Emergency in 1975.

Students' Agitations

The student agitation (Gujarat, January, 1974) followed by the Bihar one in March 1974, found JP and some of his *Sarvodaya* colleagues psychologically and intellectually prepared to welcome such agitations — the hope being that here was an opportunity to transform them into a mass movement for non-violent total revolution.

Beginning as a student movement, what we witness is the steady march of JP's student forces gradually veering towards violence — as happened with the *Gherao* of Bihar Legislators. He planned and personally took charge of a peaceful march in Patna which was dignified and reminiscent of Gandhian *Satyagraha*. Though JP insisted on non-violence, the outbreak into violence became inevitable as did its merciless suppression by the forces of law and order which were to shock a whole nation (on the issue of the Ghafoor ministry in Bihar).

While Vinoba and his followers remained isolated from these movements and turned a blind eye to their suppression, the JP movement tended to strengthen opposition to the Congress by creating a climate conducive to the unity of the opposition parties. Partyless democracy continued to be the basic element in JP's thinking right up to the imposition of the Emergency in 1975, but his stance in relation to political parties increasingly became ambiguous.

JP gave his call for Total Revolution in Bihar on June 5, 1974. Within a few months the agitation broadened into an unprecedented novel form. People's Struggle Committees; attempts to paralyse the state administration, the courts and other government offices; *gheraos* of legislators' houses; no-tax campaigns; and, in the villages, steps to set up a system of parallel government (which would be genuinely a people's government developed from below both non-violent and peaceful). All these were not known in post-independent India. Further, if the revolution was to succeed, it had to be

an all-India movement. However, as the movement spilled over into other states, the opposition parties assumed a larger role in it. But, within *Sarvodaya* circles it was felt that the Bihar movement was making a mockery of the *Sarvodaya* ideology and was ignoring non-violence and self-restraint.

Was JP Doing the Right Thing?

JP's march to Parliament along with the leaders of four opposition parties on April 6, 1975, to present a Charter of Demands was an impressive demonstration, disciplined and orderly, thanks mainly to the co-operation of the Jan Sangh. JP himself compared it to Gandhiji's Salt March of 1930. People everywhere pledged themselves to Total Revolution which would create a new order of society, economic equality, genuine democracy and respect for moral values.

Despite her position of entrenched power, Mrs. Gandhi had misjudged the JP movement. Contrary to her charge, JP was not a fascist, who, in his old age, had developed an insatiable appetite for power. In fact JP emerged from the ordeal with passion, dedication and zeal which astonished everyone. His grand strategy now was to fight Mrs. Gandhi on all fronts and he was not going to keep away from extremist parties like the Jan Sangh who took off their caps and flags and marched behind him. Also, for the first time, a large number of professionals, doctors, lawyers and technicians participated in the Delhi march. The JP movement had become an all-India phenomenon with a popular base. JP had been able to provide a national focus to the prevailing discontent and give it a political direction.

Even when elections to the Gujarat Assembly were announced, JP's attitude was ambivalent towards political parties. When he finally accepted Mrs. Gandhi's challenge of confrontation in the elections, the movement seemed to be set on the path of winning power. Yet, in JP's own mind, there was ambivalence and vacillation. He simply lacked "a mastery of the mechanics of power."

Nor did JP's increasing association with political parties endear him to many of his colleagues in the *Sarvodaya* movement. The movement had already split and with increasing politicisation did look as though JP and his supporters departed substantially

from their original *Sarvodaya* principles. Yet, he admitted that it was impossible to keep political parties from coming into an open mass movement. Moreover, the participation of opposition parties was not an unmixed evil. Its first result was that it lent strength to the movement. But the more important thing was that the parties underwent a sea-change in the process. This does not always happen, but it did happen in Bihar.

The politicisation of the movement did of course represent a threat to Indira Gandhi's government, especially after the Allahabad Court Judgement. There was agreement among various opposition parties that they should unite in forming one party and campaign to compel Mrs. Gandhi to resign.

On 25th June, 1975, JP addressed a massive rally at the Ramlila grounds in Delhi presided over by Morarji Desai. The *Sarvodaya* leader spoke for ninety minutes and his predominant theme was the need for Mrs. Gandhi to resign. She had been found guilty of telling lies and misleading the people on various occasions. He also called upon the police and the army not to obey any orders which they might consider illegal or immoral. "We must be prepared not to co-operate with the government, and refuse to pay tax". The arrest of JP and the Emergency were only a few hours away.

Paradoxes and Inconsistencies

In this saga of the *Sarvodaya* movement in India, there are many paradoxes. Was JP right in taking recourse to large scale negative *Satyagraha* and politicising the movement? What about the overtly coercive, albeit non-violent, methods like *gherao*? Although JP's ultimate objective right till the end was partyless democracy, he became the one great symbol of Opposition unity and the father of the Janata Party.

In pointing out these inconsistencies, Ostergaard does not imply that JP was wrong and that Vinoba, who remained neutral throughout, was right. Devanagiri script and cow protection (Vinoba's priorities) were hardly themes which could become the *foci* of a revolutionary non-violent movement. This could not have been sustained after Gandhi's death. But it is also true that Vinoba did allow his name to be used in order to legitimise the Emergency

which he called 'anushasana parva'.

By politicising the movement, JP, hoped to make it a more suitable instrument of non-violent revolution. But he was ambiguous especially in his last years and was never quite sure whether he wanted to revolutionise or reform the existing system. As has been observed, JP acted in two roles; as the leader of a revolutionary movement and also as a liberal democrat fighting for civil liberties seeking to strengthen the existing democratic institutions and trying to promote a viable opposition party. He believed that these were not contradictory roles until he had to choose between the one or the other.

Would JP's movement after the successful Bihar *Bandh* (October 1974) with its plan to establish people's government at all levels, and his call to the armed forces not to obey immoral orders have led to a revolutionary path? The author thinks so but points out to the logic of having the opposition parties within the movement which made the entire movement enter the electoral arena. With the imposition of the Emergency and the later Janata regime, the entire people's movement collapsed. Whether it was due to the inherent weakness of the movement or due to the compulsions of authoritarianism and, later, democratic rule is an open question.

The Sarvodaya Movement Today

The *Sarvodaya* movement after 1980 appears to be entering a post-JP phase which is more revolutionary than reformist. The belief now is that no government of whichever party is capable of bringing about a fundamental change, and the call to the people is to practise *Lokswaraj* here and now, by taking into their own hands the management of their local affairs. Nevertheless, ambiguity between reform and revolution still remains. Any slide towards authoritarianism in the government once again underlines the need to defend democratic values and institutions and to preserve civil liberties. Arun Shourie writing in the *Indian Express* of August 14, 1987, about the Parliamentary Committee on the Bofors Deal recalling the Mahatma's counsel exhorts "if parliament fails us and if we are worthy to call ourselves a nation, we must refuse to uphold the government by withdrawing co-operation from it...Leave the parliament itself to the



Jayaprakash Narayan

government. Go to the people."

Ostergaard also takes up JP's suggestion of "actively intervening in elections by setting up people's candidates." He feels the existing system of representative party democracy cannot be so easily transferred into a partyless democracy by grafting on to it "people's candidates." Instead he suggests that Vinoba's tactic of boycott of elections is more appropriate for a revolutionary movement.

This book is not meant for light perusal nor is it inspirational. It is detailed, and its painstaking scholarship narrates in a lucid, informative and interesting manner the developments in the *Sarvodaya* movement in the post-Gandhian era especially between 1969 and the death of Vinoba in 1982. The notes at the end of the book show the great variety of primary and secondary sources consulted by the author besides his own personal interviews with many *Sarvodaya* leaders.

Scholarship, however has not dulled the edge of sensitivity. Nor does Ostergaard pretend to be a neutral, value-free observer of the *Sarvodaya* scene in India. His moral and social commitment, not bias, is clearly discernible. What finally emerges is not only a fine work of scholarship but a work rich in dramatic feeling which is intensified by a continuous perception of crises. There are plots and sub-plots, the main thrusts of the JP movement alternating with the counterpoint of the struggles within the Sarva Seva Sangh, building up to the climax of the

Emergency to be followed by the anticlimax of the rise and fall of the Janata regime. And then the young saplings of the post-JP phase tentatively reaching out towards the 'non-party alternative.'

Ostergaard confesses that he personally finds the concept novel, challenging and attractive. As a political scientist, he says he does not agree with those who describe politics as the art of the possible. Prising open the limits of the possible is what politics and much else in human life should be about. This reviewer is inclined to agree. However, reality keeps breaking in and its refrain is that we in this country often succeed in making the possible, impossible!

Leaving aside the controversy as to whether JP's contribution to *Sarvodaya* has been reformist or revolutionary, one cannot help but observe that the outcome of non-violent revolution depends to a great extent on the personal charisma of its leadership. Surveying the national scene one feels a sense of dismay that in the country's hour of need, there is none who can give the people JP's clarion-call:

*"Sampurna kranti ab nara hai
Bhavi itihas hamara hai".*

(Our slogan is Total Revolution. The future is ours)

Dr. Aloo Dalal is the Head of the Department of Political Science, Wilson College, Bombay.

TOWARDS TOTAL REVOLUTION

"The question is ... how to bring about a systemic change in society; i.e. how to bring about what I have called a total revolution : revolution in every sphere and aspect of society. The question becomes harder to answer when it is added that the total revolution has to be peacefully brought about without impairing the democratic structure of society and affecting the democratic way of life of the people. Put in this way, even the most legalistic and constitutionalist democrat would agree that all this could never be accomplished if the functioning of democracy were restricted to elections, legislation, planning and administrative execution. There must also be people's direct action. This action would almost certainly comprise among other forms, civil disobedience, peaceful resistance, non-cooperation — in short, *satyagraha* in its widest sense.

Jayaprakash Narayan in
Towards Total Revolution (Vol. 4)

The Project for Economic Education is a non-political, non-partisan programme established with the objective of enlightening the intelligent layman on economic issues. The three booklets reviewed in these pages are published by them. Priced at Rs 10 each, these are available from the Project's office, 3rd floor, Army and Navy Building, 148, Mahatma Gandhi Road, Bombay 400 023. As Mr. M.S. Dabke, Deputy Secretary, Indian Merchants' Chamber, Bombay, who has written this review observes: "These three publications make a welcome beginning in the effort of the Project to educate public opinion and up-date them on recent thinking on subjects which have, over the years, acquired connotations that are no longer valid."

Who Gains by Liberalisation?

Swaminathan S. Anklesaria Aiyar

Among the meanings attributed to the word 'liberal' are: having or showing a broad mind free from prejudice. By a corollary, therefore, 'Liberalisation' means a process that prompts the framers to adopt broad-minded policies, bereft of prejudices. Judged by this criterion, the process of liberalisation ought to bring a universal, rather than a restricted, benefit. In that event, the question, "Who gains by Liberalisation", ought to sound impertinent.

However, in this country policies and practices are often poles apart. Consequently, good policies are either not carried far enough fast enough or, are implemented in a haphazard manner. The fruits of such policies are thus considerably diluted. That is possibly the provocation for a writer of the calibre of Swaminathan Aiyar to raise this question.

Long before Mr Rajiv Gandhi accelerated the process of liberalisation in 1985, economic thinkers like the late Mr L.K. Jha had stressed the need for it. The main plank of their argument was that persisting controls had only helped business at the expense of the consumer. However, as long as the Left lobby in the ruling party called the tune, the views of the Jhas were largely ignored.

A strong protagonist of liberalism, Mr.

Aiyar opens his discussion by citing the example of two-wheelers. As against one out of the then three manufacturers reigning supreme in the market until the early eighties, there are at present ten manufacturers. The result: a decade's waiting period almost melting into a "cash and carry" situation and premiums yielding place to price reductions. The TV and the computer are the other instances given by the author. The list could be lengthened further.

However, Mr Aiyar has raised a basic issue. He writes, "... most businessmen want limited liberalisation, which enables them to boost sales and profits without encountering much competition. But some of them fear wholesale liberalisation, which can threaten their existence". Obviously, there are at least two broad classes of businessmen: Those who would like to function in a professional manner and those who are interested only in fly by night operations. The latter, naturally have no love lost for the liberalising process. However, the philosophy of the former — those who want limited liberalisation — deserves a slightly better consideration. Because, is not self-preservation the first instinct of the animal world? Even businessmen in this class could, later,

be persuaded to see the sumptuous benefits accruing to a very large section of society and, in particular, to the middle and lower middle classes from optimum competition.

The real question, however, is: To what extent have the benefits of liberalisation really started flowing? The author quotes the findings of the late Dr Raj Krishna who once estimated that a medium sized industrial unit needed some 28 clearances before starting operations. The "costs" of such clearances need hardly be brought to the notice of a discernible reader.

Mr. Aiyar goes on to quote from an article by Mr Rajeev M. Pandia. He gives as many as seven outstanding instances to illustrate the fact that the philosophy of liberalisation has, more or less, remained only on paper. The result: Inordinate delays in commencing projects of high public utility and cost overruns to the tune of hundreds of crores of rupees.

Mr. Swaminathan concludes by striking a neat balance-sheet of the gains and losses of liberalisation — the former far out-weighting the latter. Naturally, one is inclined to agree fully with the author's premise that there "is both benefit and social justice in liberalisation".

The Public Sector

Gangadhar Gadgil

"The climate of thought and opinion not only in the communist countries but also in the Western countries in the post-war years was highly favourable to socialism. Socialist policies were adopted with great fervour in Britain and Western Europe. The models of economic growth developed by leading Western econom-

ists recognised the necessity of the state playing a pivotal and active role in launching and sustaining rapid, healthy, all round and socially beneficial economic development".

These lines at once put the reader in historic perspective of the subject which Prof. Gangadhar Gadgil so ably handles in his essay on the Public Sector. The

assumption underlying the quotation is that political authority always had both the will and the capacity to offer a panacea for the economic ills of the country, by raising the Public Sector to the "commanding heights", as the high-sounding phrase subsequently coined in India suggested.

Prof. Gadgil summarises the Indust-

rial Policy Resolution of the Government of India in 1948, in a manner intelligible even to the laymen.

Tracing the continued weaknesses of the economy such as dependence on imports of essential commodities like edible oils, capital goods, critical raw materials and a widening technical gap between advanced countries and India, Prof. Gadgil points out that the "inadequacies and failure of the public sector have also adversely affected the growth, efficiency and productivity of the private sector." In effect, what the author brings out is the fact that the setback resulting from our persisting with expanding the public sector irrespective of its performance, has affected all sections of the economy.

It would be naive to think that an economist of the stature of Prof. Gadgil will indulge in generalities. Every time he advances an argument or draws a conclusion he invariably supports it with statistics from official sources. He points out that the estimated loss of the 142 Central Government manufacturing enterprises in the year 1986-87 was placed at Rs 7,000 crores. In this context, it may be interesting to correlate this figure with a few budgetary parameters that year. According to the

Accounts for the years 1986-87, the total revenue receipts were Rs 50,332 crores. The loss of the 142 Public Sector units at the rate of Rs 7,000 crores that year works out to about 14% of the revenue receipts. Viewed slightly differently, the total revenue deficit in the year 1986-87 was Rs. 7,776 crores. This means, had these units even balanced their books, almost the entire deficit for that year could have been wiped out.

Pointing out that even the indiscriminate promotion of the Public Sector was prompted by biased policy, Prof. Gadgil deals elaborately with this bias. He points out that the policy stance adopted by the rulers towards the so-called "rich" when the Seventh Five Year Plan was almost midway, severely damaged the economy. It was essentially an arm-twisting approach based on the simplistic calculation that taking from the rich to give the poor would achieve economic progress. Prof. Gadgil points out that in the process, the economy (and thereby both the rich and the poor) were the losers. As the author correctly points out such approach had already failed in China and Iran.

Despite the inherent limitations of the monograph, Prof. Gadgil gives the

reader useful information on the recently adopted practice by the Government of India of signing Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Public Sector units. Such Memoranda spell out in great detail the rights and obligations of the parties involved. Among the industrial giants who have signed these are the Steel Authority of India (SAIL), the Oil and Natural Gas Commission (ONGC) and Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL). It may interest readers to know that the number of MOUs signed has increased considerably since Prof. Gadgil's monograph was published, which was only to be expected.

This move at least indicates that there is rethinking at the highest policy level of the extent of prominence which the public sector should continue to have in our economic policy. Besides, some officials from the younger generation are also far more motivated than their predecessors.

Nevertheless, Prof. Gadgil's essay provides in a concise manner a historic perspective on public sector undertakings. It is undoubtedly the duty of a mature society to draw proper lessons from the past.

Privatisation: Myths & Realities

D.R. Pendse

Privatisation is a topic that is now being widely discussed in India. Apart from intellectual gatherings and forums, it is also a topic for talk even at the Derby and powder-puff assemblies. And yet the fact remains that the subject is more talked about than really understood. In the circumstances, the eminent economist Mr. D. R. Pendse provides in a span of less than forty pages an interesting and clear analysis of the concept.

Without any disrespect to other writers and scholars on privatisation, one could possibly say that it needs a person of Mr. Pendse's clarity of mind and ease of diction to properly orient an average reader into an economic dogma of this type. The proof of such clarity lies in Mr Pendse giving the reader as many as seven well thought out distinguishing features of privatisation.

Through any one or more of those attributes privatisation can be achieved. Mr. Pendse lists the various objectives

privatisation has served in developed countries. These objectives range from tackling "acute fiscal stringency or a resource crunch", to reducing political meddling which is the bane of many state-owned enterprises."

Mr. Pendse's probe into privatisation in other countries includes a brief discussion on how other countries such as Malaysia, Japan, Great Britain and even the USSR have benefited by judicious application of this "versatile tool"

Drawing lessons from the experience of other countries, Mr. Pendse points out that (a) there is no ideological divide in the practice of privatisation and (b) tackling acute budgetary strains has almost always been a common trend among the countries resorting to privatisation. The implications of the author's hint are obvious.

In the chapter on 'myths', Mr. Pendse explodes some of the myths propagated by opponents of privatisation with the dexterity of an able Captain

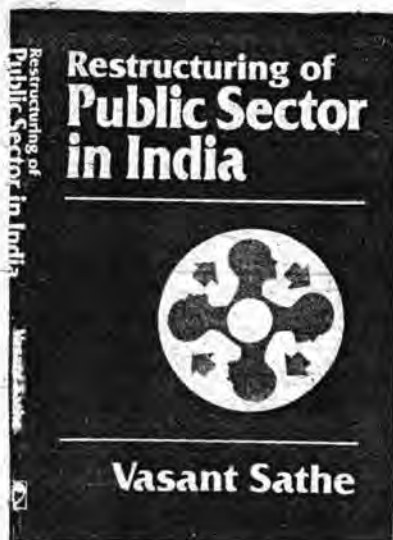
guiding his squad in a mine-sweeping operation. Among some of these myths are (a) Privatisation is a sell-out to monopolies and (b) Privatisation weakens the Government. Others, such as that it is a new fad and that it is not suitable for the service sector is born out of a generally low level of information assimilation in this country.

A word about the suitability of privatisation to the service sector appears pertinent at this stage. With competition thrown in, services like transport and communication would register a marked improvement. However, what about the privatisation of services such as health and education? Will the private sector be equally enthusiastic about them too? The limited experience of this scribe makes him somewhat sceptical about the prospects.

Be that as it may, Mr Pendse has, through this small but tidy monograph, filled in an important information gap on the precept and practice of privatisation.

BOOK REVIEWS

RESTRUCTURING OF PUBLIC SECTOR IN INDIA by Vasant Sathe; Vikas Publishing House Pvt Ltd., New Delhi; 1989; pp-xii + 164; Rs. 150



Active cabinet ministers are not given to writing serious books, but Vasant Sathe, India's Minister for Energy, is an exception. He published, a few years ago, a volume advocating a social revolution for achieving what he called economic democracy. Now he has come up with another volume – this time it is about that big white elephant, our Public Sector.

Everyone knows that Vasant Sathe is one of the old dependables. During the dark days of Madame Indira Gandhi, he stood by her, and pairing with Abdul Rahman Antulay, stoutly defended that redoubtable lady. Sathe has survived the many subsequent palace revolutions and retains his *Mansabdari* intact. Not that he is a low-key functionary, because he has definite views on a variety of subjects, ranging from the "Presidential Form of Government" to the "sexual mores" of modern Indians, which he is not hesitant to parade before the public. Though one is not sure of his influence in the present power structure, his views are something that cannot easily be bypassed.

This latest offering by Vasant Sathe is intended to cover all aspects of our public sector, and it is a remarkably

candid book. Sathe knows why the public sector was given importance, what role it should play, what ails this gargantuan heap of public enterprises, how far these ills can be cured, and so on. Were anyone reading the book to conclude that the author was an obscure and disgruntled hack, he could be forgiven because who would expect that a minister – a Cabinet Minister too – of the central government and an active member of the party in power would write such a book that may be read almost as a confessional report on his own failure or helplessness?

That the Indian public sector is large will not be disputed, and we know that the public sector undertakings have been growing at an enormous rate. Even during the pre-planning period (that is, before 1951), there were some public sector undertakings, but their number was small and the total investment in them was less than Rs. 30 crores. But now there are more than 220 such undertakings, and the total investment is around Rs. 60,000 crores. These are only the Central Government's public enterprises. The State governments have their own public sector undertakings (843 Government companies and 76 Corporations with an investment of Rs. 44,738 crores), and they too represent a considerable slice of the economy.

The reasons for the enormous increase in the size of the public sector are not far to seek. There is, first of all, the perfectly natural growth in the public provisions of private services because of natural monopolies, reluctance of the private sector to enter certain avenues of investment due to the amount of capital required, and the accelerated demand for certain services due to the general increase in prosperity that could be provided only by the State. While these factors no doubt played a part in the expansion of our public sector, the main reason was Jawaharlal Nehru's 'Vision of Public Sector' as Vasant Sathe terms it. Whether vision, delusion or megalomania, Nehru believed, like Lenin, in controlling the 'commanding heights of

the economy' such as the railways, banks, insurance and other key areas of the economy.

To be fair to him, he really thought that the expansion of the public sector was going to usher in a 'welfare state of the socialist pattern'. At the Avadi session of the AICC, he had declared: "It is not enough to pass a resolution even a law to limit our thinking to nationalisation of existing industries. We have to increase production and aim at an economy of plenty". This of course suited the bureaucracy and a lot of expansion of the public sector was really due to the innate bureaucratic propensity to expand itself. Then there was the public sectorisation of private enterprises. Instead of allowing the sick private sector firms to die a natural death, they were absorbed in huge numbers by the State for a variety of reasons. There was expansion too, as during Bank nationalisation, to score easy political victories.

Another widely accepted fact is the poor performance of these public sector undertakings. If there was any doubt on this score, a quick reading of Sathe's book will dispel it completely. The question "What does the nation get out of this enormous investment?" evokes the answer "Not much". As Sathe says, "the net profit after tax for the year 1986-87 represents a return of 3.3 per cent only ...If we exclude the fortuitous profit of 11 petroleum sector companies... there is only loss from the remaining public sector units". Not only is the rate of return low, "the profitability of Central Government enterprises shows a declining trend". If the net profit after tax is considered, Sathe tells us that "public enterprises have been running in loss except during 1981-82". Actually, some of the public sector undertakings "have accumulated losses which are far in excess of their equity capital base". Although Sathe does not discuss them, the State-owned public sector undertakings are equally unprofitable. The total profit was a small Rs. 151.32 crores and many companies are so hopelessly sick that they will never make a profit. Thus instead of being the pace setter and guiding the economic

development of the country, the public sector has become a millstone round India's neck absorbing a vast sum of scarce resources but contributing hardly anything to the long run interests of the country. Their non-performance comes loud and clear when one sees how little of the capacity created is actually utilised. We will let Sathe himself speak: "The poor profitability of most of these undertakings is largely due to under-utilisation of capacity, which in the case of some units was as low as 13 per cent during 1981-82".

But wherefore this non-performance? The answer is not all that complex. Our public sector undertakings have everything that should not go for them. There are indeed some problems that are common to both private and public sectors which could erode into their profitabilities. For example, the cost of projects has been going up, but more particularly in the 1980s compared to those projects set up a decade earlier. Imported machinery costs a good deal more now than before. Japanese, Korean, Swedish and German capital goods cost 143%, 543%, 150% and 60% more respectively in the 1980s as compared to the 1970s. The deferred credit and the depreciation of the rupee in terms of these currencies also have increased the capital cost of plant and machinery. Take the case of investment per tonne of steel. In the mid-fifties, it was Rs. 1100, in the mid-1970s, it was Rs. 4600 and it became Rs. 14000 in the mid-eighties.

The poor performance, then, is not necessarily due to externally caused factors — although they cannot be entirely ignored — but is inherent in the structure and operation of the public sector undertakings themselves. What are they? The prime reason for this state of affairs is in Sathe's felicitous phrasing, "over-manning or over-staffing, thereby diluting productivity". It is not simply the case of a few extra hands here or there, but the wholesale subversion of efficiency. As he says: "In the name of social objectives, we made the public sector units uneconomic from the very word 'go' by employing people — to the tune of ten times more — and saying that this is social objective". This enormous over-employment is as characteristic of the flagship of the Indian public sector, i.e. the Steel Industry, as it is of others. In the coal

industry, the manpower employed has gone up from 5 lakhs to 7 lakhs, and the average earning per worker has gone up from Rs 100 to more than Rs. 2500 per month. The result of all this was despite a Rs. 6000 crores investment, the net loss in the coal industry has crossed Rs. 1000 crores long ago, but the output of coal has barely increased from 78 million tonnes before nationalisation to 90 million tonnes after.

Agreed that there are too many workers and high wages, but are they happy to give their best? No, says Sathe, because while we may have good engineers at the top, we have a lackadaisical work force without much awareness. This in its turn is compounded by mediocre management of the public enterprises. Sathe is particularly harsh on the management side of the equation: "the real problem facing our industry is the problem of management and not so much the machine or the workman". Poor management, according to him, is reflected in the poor maintenance of our enormous industrial edifice which in turn leads to poor capacity utilisation.

The question naturally arises as to why our public sector management is so mediocre and not able to deliver the goods. Of course Sathe is fair enough to admit that "We have adopted tough labour laws to protect labour. Obviously all this has caused problems in delivering profitability", but he soon brushes this aside saying that it "is all part of our development process". Sathe's main grouse is that there is no accountability in the public sector, the management of which is run like the bureaucracy. The managers of the public sector undertakings are no different from the Secretary of a Central Government department who, knowing that "he is there only for 1 year, will say 'Yes Sir, Yes Sir. After this where am I going to? I have to become a Governor somewhere'. So what am I going to get from him."

The one result of all this mismanagement is the high cost of production of public sector enterprises. Obviously this cannot develop the economy in any significant manner. "A moment's thought" has shown Sathe that "even the objective of providing maximum employment would have been served only by producing infrastructure facilities in maximum quantities at cheaper

and most competitive rates in the world".

What, then, can be done about it? Again Sathe has the answer: "the most important value concept we should place before ourselves is that of excellence". In addition to this *pranava mantra*, Sathe has a four page list of what should be done to improve the performance of the public sector, and nobody would question the wisdom and operability of these excellent suggestions. If these were carried out it would give the management of the public sector enterprises "(a) authority; (b) continuity of that authority; (c) accountability; and (d) participatory work culture of the entire working force as a family from top management to the last, the sweeper".

Excellent, Mr. Sathe; but may we ask him: "You have been a minister of the Government of India and your party has been in the saddle since 1946 except for three years. Why did not these reforms take place? Aren't you in some measure condemning yourself?" The answer to this question is sprawled over this hysterically articulate book.

Mr. Vasant Sathe piously quotes Jawaharlal Nehru: "We must search into our hearts and be honest to ourselves". Good, but has Mr Sathe or members of his party ever done that? It is this *tamasic* uninvolvedness that is responsible for the sorry state of the economy including its public sector. One instance will suffice. In his strategy for speedy growth, Sathe says: "Salaries, wages and other benefits, such as, bonus, etc. must be linked totally to production and productivity". But look at what happened to the salaries and wages in the energy sector. It is now common knowledge that every norm of wage fixation was flouted by the management of public sector undertakings like the Indian Oil Corporation at the behest of the ministers of the Central Government because of the proximity of elections. How can the managements of the public sector undertakings run their enterprises efficiently when the politicians interfere and interact all the time? Similarly, despite Mr. Sathe's advocacy of continuity, his Government is notorious for frequently shifting the chief executives of public sector enterprises. Recently Mr. V. Krishnamurthy of the Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL) had this to say about the better performance

of Tata Steel relative to that of SAIL: "Russi Mody has been there for forty years, he knows every employee by name. This is not the case in SAIL, where the Chairman, Minister and Secretary change all the time".

The lack of sincerity and openness shows in another aspect of our body politic too that is discussed *in extenso*, viz. the question of corruption. Talking of the ideals of the Congress party, we find Sathe quoting Nehru approvingly: "But the Congress, if it is to perform its true function effectively and worthily, must not only remain true to its ideals, but must also maintain high moral standards of behaviour". One would have thought that Sathe would be most concerned about the large scale corruption, kick-backs, black money and so on. But, then, that would mean implicating the still higher-ups. So he takes a different tag: "We often see so much talk about corruption these days including the siphoning off of big money into foreign banks, kick-backs, commissions, middlemen, etc. However, we close our eyes to the very creation and accumulation of wealth or capital in the hands of the few ...(hence) all talk of corruption is dishonest hypocrisy...those belonging to government service and private professions, who spend five to ten times more than those living below the poverty-line, do not have any moral right to talk about corruption when our own life is based on the inherent corruption of enjoying a disproportionate share of national wealth". Having thus obliquely defended the conspicuous guilty ones, Sathe waxes philosophically eloquent on the essentially transient phenomenon of this life: "This is about the reality that life in this human form itself is a temporary affair although we in our small ego, act as if we were immortal."

One can never be certain why Mr Sathe wrote this book. Perhaps in a day dream he fancied himself as an Indian Gorbachev, and wanted to give his own version of *perestroika* and *glasnost* for India. However, despite all the froth, fire, and sanctimonious postures, the book remains but a bizarre evocation of a Government that does not and will not work.

Reviewed by: Prof. S. Ambirajan, Professor of Economics, Indian Institute of Technology, Madras

THY HAND, GREAT ANARCH! INDIA, 1921-1952; by Nirad C. Chaudhuri Chatto and Windus, London; distributed by UBS Publishers' Distributors Ltd., Bombay; 1987; pp. 979; Rs. 375.



This book which is a sequel to the famous autobiography published decades ago, is perhaps one of the most important books in recent years written by any Indian in English and none who is educated can ignore it. Not to have read this would be to miss a valuable perspective of happenings in the sub-continent during the last half a century written from an extremely individualized intellectualized coin of vantage.

This is a liberal testament written by one who unhesitatingly testifies to the very positive advantages of India's association with the western world particularly the British. A sedulous student of history, he intertwines his own personal and mental development with happenings in the country and his responses to them.

Simultaneously, this is an account of Bengal's literary development, of the national movement as well as being an autobiography. There are unforgettable accounts of people of Bengali literature as varied as Motilal Majumdar, (his own teacher), Ramananda Chatterjee, Bhubuti Bhusan Bandopadhyay (whose works have been immortalized by Satyajit Ray), Sarat Chandra and of the controversies around the famous literary journal *The Saturday Letter* (*Sanibarar Chitti*) in the running of which he had a hand. Other characters like Amal Home too flit through it. A magnificent long chapter on Tagore recapitulates what the Noble laureate

meant to the sceptical Bengali intelligentsia who were not idolaters.

More interesting to the average reader and most perceptive are the pages on the politics of the Calcutta municipality and of the Calcutta Congress in the 1930s. For a few brief years, he was personal secretary to Sarat Chandra Bose and was in the very midst of the stuff of politics and of these he writes with candour and relish. The hunt for contracts, favouritism, the open jobbery, the twisting of rules to favour particular individuals, the skulduggery, all have a contemporary ring. To those who had their education in political values in an earlier era as did Nirad Chaudhuri these were indeed to be very educative of new realities.

This leads him to reflect upon the nature of the Indian nationalist movement which he holds took a wrong turn in 1921 with the undisputed emergence of Gandhi and populist politics. By this period "Indian nationalism had lost all its positive content" and the only aim that mattered seemed to have been to get the British out. It was negative, crude, irrational, xenophobic, and primitive; worse it grew in a cultural void. The leaders, unlike those of the earlier generation knew very little of India. They obtained what little knowledge they had of the country through ill-digested books in English. They destroyed institutions which took decades to build. Knowing little of any economic and political programmes, they were totally unprepared for the future political set-up of India. The mobilization of the masses meant resorting to crude methods like the *Khilafat* agitation that had little of Indian interests to recommend it and was totally medieval.

The leadership that gathered around Gandhi was extremely sanctimonious and arrogated to itself, all knowledge and had a *hauteur* all of which he had an unique opportunity to study closely for quite some time. For more than a week they had descended to the house of Sarat Bose in 1937. One needs to read these pages in the original to savour the type of leadership that was emerging. The only people who stand out among these with grace are Rajen Babu and Nehru. The personality of Sarat Bose who tried his best to lead the Congress in Calcutta and who patiently parried the assaults emerges in noble proportions. The author believes that not sufficient justice has been done to

him.

He also details the conflict between Sarat Bose and Gandhi and the backbiting and wrangles that led to Sarat Bose quitting the Congress; he regards Gandhi to be wholly responsible for this. The clique that surrounded the Mahatma stoked the embers but the Saint himself was authoritarian. "In nothing else have Western writers gone more wrong about Gandhi than in overlooking his insatiable love of power and implacability in its pursuit. In this he was in no way different from Stalin. Only, he did not have to kill because he could eliminate his opponents equally well by means of his non-violent *Vaishnava method*."

Gandhi's role in leading the masses, according to Nirad Chaudhuri has been exaggerated. On a number of occasions he failed totally and he accepted it. The Congress leaders thought that they led the masses but in fact, the masses acted only when they wanted to and the leaders floated with them.

To a generation that had come of political age during the Partition of Bengal in 1905, the question of partition of the country was unthinkable. The entire historical logic was that of a unified India — if nationalism meant anything, it meant that. The British having ruled the land for 200 years failed in the most elementary of duties, that of protecting their charges.

Chaudhuri also argues that the Congress acceptance of partition was due to the tiredness of the leaders who had grown weary of the battle and also had been softened by the 'comforts and fleshpots' of office in the Interim government in Delhi. He cites the instance (very little known) of the Sardar ordering the most expensive furniture and carpets. These were done without tenders and when exposed flatly denied. Dispassionately, the author describes in great detail the looting, the arson, the slaughter of innocent people in Delhi which he watched helplessly. The government was just a mile away and the police were most ineffective. This was immediately after August 1947. "I at last understood a historical situation which as a student of history I had always tried to resuscitate imaginatively but had not succeeded in doing *viz*. What it felt like being a Roman citizen in Gaul or some other province of the Roman Empire contiguous to the Germanic fatherland, when one tribe of Teutonic barbarians

driven out of their home territory by other stronger tribes came into these provinces. I could see that the memory of their dispossession by the stronger barbarians and of their headlong flight before them had done nothing to chasten their savage impulse to dispossess the civilized peoples who were weaker than they. All these make us wonder how tenuous are civic life and civilized virtues."

However, readers should not get the impression that the book is only about contemporary history as viewed by the author. It is simultaneously an account of his personal and family life, the privations he had to undergo; his ceaseless pursuit of his interests in spite of these; and a tenacious hold on his individuality and person. He did not permit his difficulties to come in the way at all of cultivating the things of the mind and to pursue a civilized living. We surely cannot do better than attempt similarly.

R. Srinivasan.

VALLABHBHAI PATEL: Power and Organisation in Indian Politics by Rani Dhavan Shankardass; Orient Longman, New Delhi; 1988; pp. 325; Rs.175

There is nothing personal or subjective about Rani Dhavan's scholarly treatise, though the book centres around a dominant personality of the

age. Starting with the thesis that the Gandhites forged the formidable Congress organisation to fight on two distinctly separate fronts — the British Imperialists and the Socialists — she has marshalled an impressive array of facts and opinions to substantiate her submissions. Sardar Patel, who played a key role in building up the structural and electoral edifice of the Congress Party for capturing political power was but a natural subject for any such study and she has exhaustively analysed his political activities and attitudes.

But her syllogism appears to suffer on account of two premises of doubtful validity. The struggle against British Imperialism was not a triangular contest — the Regime, the Congress and the Socialists — and there was no basic diversity of goals between Gandhites and Socialists about the struggle for independence. Socialists, very often denounced Patel and Gandhi not because they were anti-poor but because they were not sufficiently anti-British. The role of Gandhi and Patel was not to crush the Socialists, but to curb their exuberance by a sober appraisal of resources and opportunities. As the author herself has noted at the beginning, the Sardar was a man of silence and expressed himself only through acts. It would be unfair to judge him against those whose words flowed copiously and easily.

She has also certified at the end of her study that he had no personal axe to

Law-Lathi Compromise



The separation of the Judiciary from the Executive is left to be effected in God's good time.

grind. He had a peculiar style of functioning in that he would never speak of tomorrow, not even of today but only about the moment at hand. Though his radicalism was circumscribed by hard practical realities, he was as radical as anyone else when forced by circumstances. His ruthless uprooting of the Indian princes was quite contradictory to the stand he had all along adopted and which had earned him quite a mouthful from the Socialists. His actions on this front did go far beyond the wildest expectations of the Socialists.

He castigated the *Kisan Sabhas* for their impractical approach but tenancy reforms were initiated by the Congress governments under his supervision and with his encouragement as Chairman Of the Congress Parliamentary Board. It is true that the Sardar insisted on weeding out all groups and the Socialists did suffer on account of his emphasis on strict discipline particularly for those who aspired to be someone in the Congress. But then, he was attempting to convert a movement into a party and could not afford to tolerate any dissent, especially dissent inspired by egoistic aggrandisement as was the case with Nariman, Khare and to some extent even Subhas Bose.

The Sardar poured scorn on the Socialists for not being sufficiently Indianised, for all their book-talk and total ignorance of the Indian people and their problems. He was impatient with these day-dreamers, but he had no animus against them or their ideology. In fact, Yusuf Meherally, Shantilal Shah, Sampurnanand and several others from the Socialist group benefited from his support at crucial junctures. The Sardar had no interest in any ideology and considered all theories as sheer waste of time and energy. Both the Sardar and Gandhi have been accused of dictatorial, even of fascist behaviour at times and Rani Dhavan seems at times inclined to believe in these charges. But during the period under review, the authority they exercised was totally devoid of all the sinews of power. It was largely an exercise in moral pressure and Rani Dhavan Shankardass, at times has confused the moral aspect of Authority with the physical ingredients of Power.

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CHANGE OF HEART by Kishore Thackedath; Lok Vangmaya Griha Ltd; Bombay; 1988; Rs.25.

If you live in Bombay and if you ever think of such things as college teachers' morchas, then whether they fill you with enthusiasm or horror you are certain to have heard of Kishore Thackedath, lecturer in mathematics and tireless union activist.

As was to be expected, his are poems with a message — they tell you about brotherhood and unity and how wrong it is to stand aside from the union and then complacently count up your personal gains from a hard-won victory. What might be a surprise though, especially if you aren't personally acquainted with the poet, is that the poems don't read at all like a string of slogans. They are sensitive and likeably earnest and they work by means of characters and situations rooted in a real context: you read of the background of another student met years later courting arrest and greeted with the double compliment, "Good to see you here; you have grown tall", of Sulvan the hard-drinking, wife-beating peon who is still a better democrat than a spineless academic, of kindly Tukaram the convict-turned-jail-warder.

Still there's something in the tone of the poems that keeps them unfulfilled. This isn't a demand for poetic diction and figures of speech — the solid chunks of unionese are promising enough:

was in the front line
of a procession
in a programme of courting arrest
to demonstrate
against the burning of harijans
and gang rape of tribal women

It's the poetic flights that aren't really very useful; not much is gained for example by describing the policeman who knocks at the door late at night (wearing the old blue uniform with put-teed legs) as "the blue street wound stranger". Everywhere the simpler touches work best, like "Our cat went up and perched on the detached beam/ and sunned itself" in the poem where Hindu and Muslim neighbours work together to put right earthquake damage. Then there are the more sustained metaphors like the scribbled piece of

paper that is both the "Non-Member's" calculations of salary and allowances and his pocketed conscience. And the occasional speaking gesture, as in "Breath":

I remember
later how you leaned
against the table to breathe,
and on walks
your grip tightened on my shoulder
that I might pause
in your breathlessness.

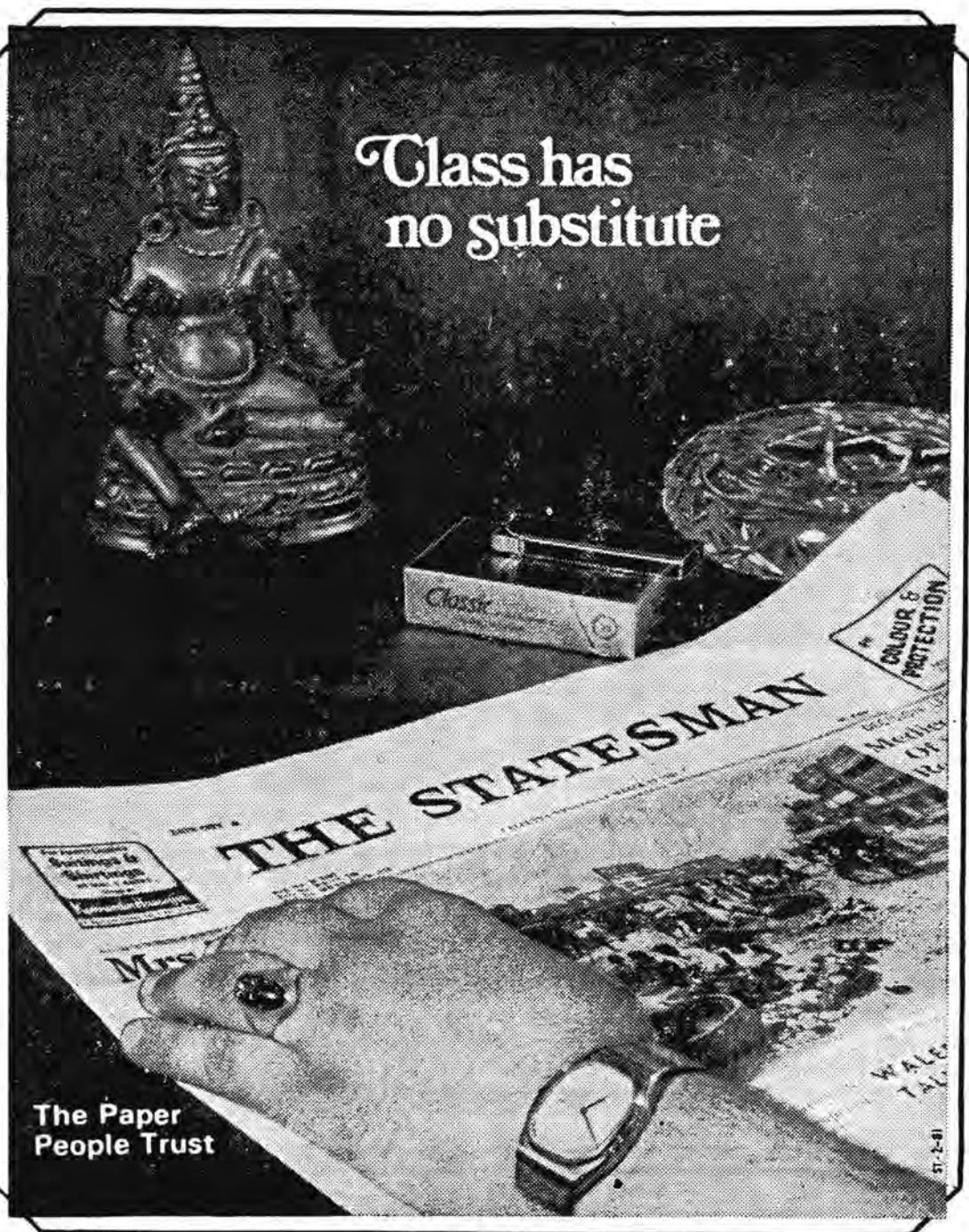
Unfortunately the vital pattern of breath and smoky air and dissolution is nearly lost in over explanation. There's too little of this kind anyway or at least it doesn't get enough of a chance, as if all appeal to imagination and senses were frivolous indulgence in a society beset with serious problems. Even phrase and sentence shapes are kept to a grim uniformity. Again it's not that one wants lilting melodies and dancing daffodils, only some kind of inbuilt tension such as gives power to Brecht's poems for example, even in translation.

Inside me contend
Delight at the apple tree in blossom
And horror at the house-painter's
speeches
But only the second
Drives me to my desk.

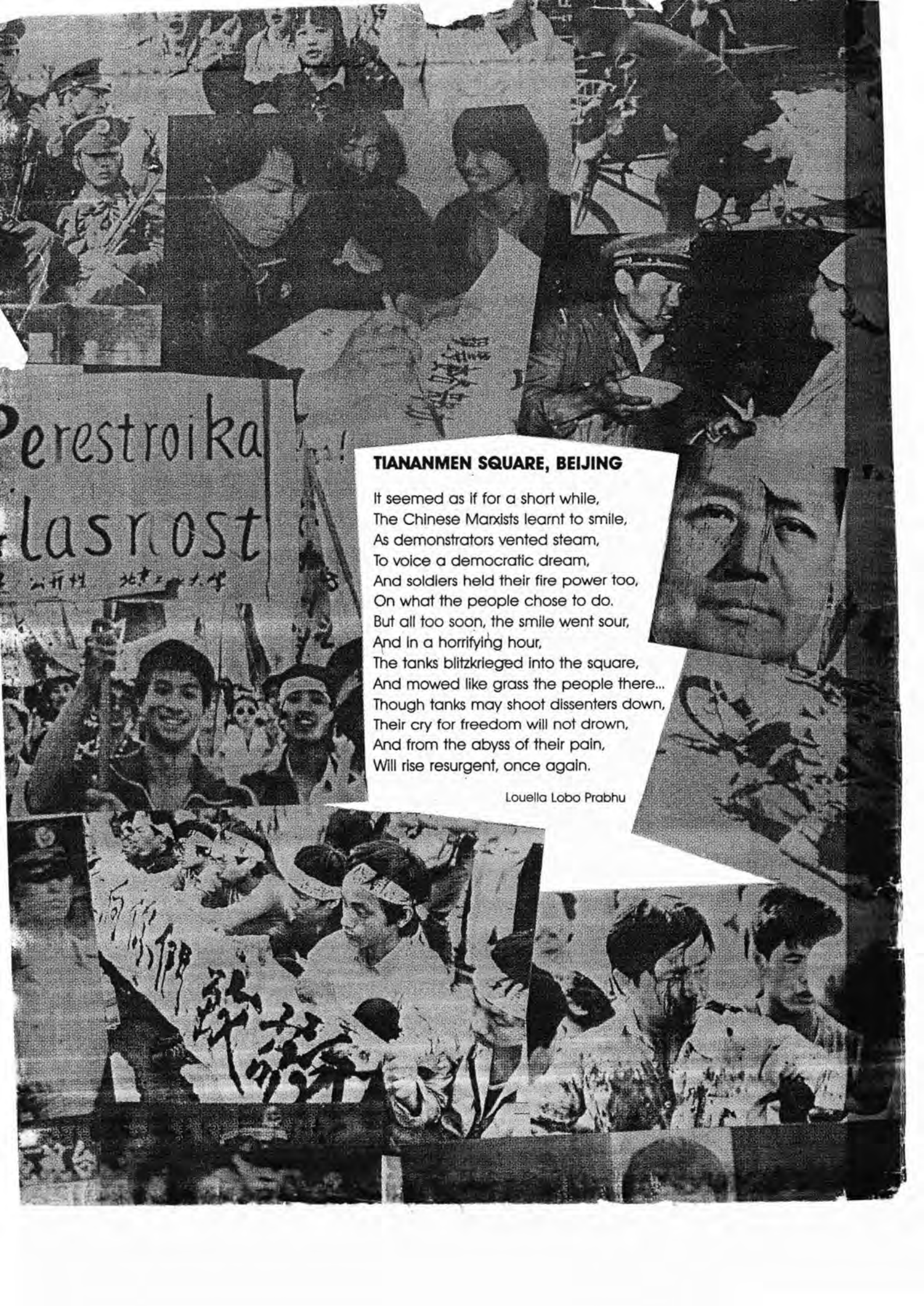
Without some such device and without energy of rhythm, earnestness easily slips into solemnity, and then even a reader who is full of goodwill towards poet and themes can't help taking over and supplying the balance. Which is a pity, for English being now for better or worse part of the world of "Jagdish Tawde/son of a textile employee/...appointed/in a junior college" and even of "our people... the tyrewala,/the vulcanising man,/the tailor", it's good and healthy that this territory should be won for Indo-English poetry. Only the poetry itself must acknowledge, confront and control reactions like, for instance (on reading of Jagdish Tawde's experience of petty mistrust and his father's before him): "Oh but you have to take precautions, people are like that". And must transform them into the right, cleansing force of indignation.

Reviewed by: Ms Elizabeth Reuben
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TIANANMEN SQUARE, BEIJING

It seemed as if for a short while,
The Chinese Marxists learnt to smile,
As demonstrators vented steam,
To voice a democratic dream,
And soldiers held their fire power too,
On what the people chose to do.
But all too soon, the smile went sour,
And in a horrifying hour,
The tanks blitzkrieged into the square,
And mowed like grass the people there...
Though tanks may shoot dissenters down,
Their cry for freedom will not drown,
And from the abyss of their pain,
Will rise resurgent, once again.

Louella Lobo Prabhu