

THE BROADCASTING MONOLITH

Mehra Masani

What a relief it is to be able to write about broadcasting without having to argue the case for autonomy and freedom from the control of the Government. By now it would seem that everybody is agreed that we must fall in line with other democratic societies and devise a system of broadcasting which is independent, yet accountable. The Working Group on Autonomy for Akashvani and Door-darshan which submitted its report early in March has provided a scheme which is as good as any to build on and it is essential that everyone interested in broadcasting should give full support to the recommendation to establish immediately an independent, autonomous, National Broadcast Trust. (NBT)

There are different opinions about some of the suggestions regarding the structure of the future system but the debate on such matters need not hold up the transfer of control from the government to the Trust. As the government is committed to the freedom of all media of information and communication and itself appointed the working group there is no reason to doubt that it will act on the recommendation if the public is sufficiently vociferous in its support. But if the battle for autonomy has been almost won another battle is just beginning, the battle against a broadcasting monopoly. The arguments for autonomy and against state control of broadcasting seemed obvious to many of us but had to be repeated over and over again in diverse forms; so it will have to be with the argument against monopoly. As the working group has, unfortunately, decided in favour of monopoly it is all the more necessary to take up the question in every forum available for discussion.

The objection taken in some quarters to the reported remarks of Mr. Chandra Sekhar at the inauguration on 8th April of the national convention of the Programme Staff Association of All India Radio is, I think, based on a misunderstanding of his meaning. His doubts about whether, in our political and social conditions, the grant of autonomy to the broadcasting services would, in fact, result in any substantial change in the attitude of the Gov-

ernment and the behaviour of the Trustees and staff of the NBT, are shared by many of us. A number of conventions will have to be established over a period of years which would prevent Government and Parliament from interfering in the day to day work of the NBT and which would encourage the Trustees to assert their legal and constitutional rights to run the broadcasting service in the spirit of the Charter.

The recognition that full autonomy can only be ensured in a favourable political, ideological and psychological climate does not mean that such autonomy should not be granted immediately. The sooner we start the process of adjustment and understanding needed for success in this field, the earlier we shall achieve it.

Why should we oppose a broadcasting monopoly? Firstly, there is the question of administrative convenience and efficiency. All organisations become unwieldy beyond a certain point in their development. AIR, in my opinion, based on experience of working in it, passed this point some time ago. Yet, it is suggested by the working group that, for reasons of economy and convenience, the NBT should control all the 780 transmitters, 500 and more operating radio stations, and whatever number of TV stations may come up in the next few years. I

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IN THIS ISSUE

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GEETA DOCTOR

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FRANKLY SPEAKING....

"Operation Blue Mountain"

Well! Well! Well! who would have suspected that our past Prime Ministers particularly such progressives as Pandit Nehru and his daughter had the pragmatism in them to place the country's security before their ideological predilections, and collaborate with that international bogeyman, the Central Intelligence Agency (more affectionately known by its acronym the CIA), to snoop on what our "Chini bhais" were upto in their nuclear games at Lop Nor.

"Operation Blue Mountain" which is how the CBI-CIA joint venture to plant a plutonium device on Nanda Kot was christened, had all the elements of an Alistair Maclean thriller. Just imagine. Right under our very noses, was being enacted a caper which failed twice when Nehru and Sastri were at the helm and became third time successful when Mrs Gandhi was Prime Minister. Nothing wrong with what she did or premitted. It is entirely in keeping with our ancient tradition. After all, did not Chanakya advise Chandragupta that our enemy's enemy is our friend?

As for the holy Ganga turning radio-active, for the last thirteen years millions of Hindus have taken the holy dip without turning into walking reactors. Nor will the report dampen (or should we say dry) the fervour of the religious Hindu to take a dip when he gets the chance. Moreover they can take satisfaction that the matter is well under control. Has not the Government of India resorted to that ultimate solution — the appointment of a Committee to go into the matter.

While the present Prime Minister's penchant for spilling the beans (*a la* Sikkim) is to be welcomed, he cannot be complimented for his self-righteous remark in the Lok Sabha on April 15, "If I had been there I would not have taken it". He was there alright but not as Prime Minister. And amen for that.

It is curious how quickly apprehensions about the potential hazards posed by one of the devices since lost and suspected to be somewhere in Kailas, evaporated when it was revealed that the initiative was India's! And what a wonderful opportunity has been lost by the country's U.S. baiters to launch one of those hysterical campaigns. In fact it had just about begun with a demand for the recall of India's Ambassador, when Mr. Morarji Desai decided to make a clean breast of it.

As for Mrs. Indira Gandhi — will she persist in her charge that the Janata Government's foreign policy has a Western tilt?

SVR

Beachhead at Azamgarh

Azamgarh is where Mrs Gandhi has established her northern beachhead after being wiped out from the north a little over a year ago.

Azamgarh is where the Janata's candidate and now U.P. Chief Minister won in March 1977 by a margin of 1,38,000 votes.

Azamgarh is where the Indira Congress has now recaptured the seat by a margin of 35,385 votes.

Azamgarh is where those opposed to Charan Singh from within his own party gauged up to defeat his candidate.

Azamgarh is where the acute infighting among the constituent units of the Janata Party came into sharp focus.

Azamgarh is not a vote forgiving Indira and her Party for her emergency excesses.

Nor is Azamgarh an expression of the voters' displeasure with the arrest and incarceration of Sanjay Gandhi.

Azamgarh is an expression of the voters' displeasure with the chaotic state of the Janata Party.

Above all Azamgarh is a welcome indication of the coming of age of the Indian voter that he now makes a choice based on parties' performance or the absence of it.

To the Janata Party, Azamgarh is a warning and a lesson. Will they take it? From post-Azamgarh pronouncements by Janata dignitaries, it looks unlikely.

SVR

A vice by any name

Abroad, it is not Janata's first year, or Mrs Gandhi's re-entry into politics, that is causing concern, reports a friend, but the government's insistence on prohibition.

While the press in Delhi have already protested at the lack of such basic amenities at the Press Club and intellectuals are seriously debating whether a ban on liquor, traditionally supposed to help the creative process along, will permanently stunt the national growth of geniuses, few people realise that it will not be the affluent drinker who will suffer as much as the fishermen, dhobies, dockyard coolies and mill workers. Whether drink is an avoidable evil to them or not hardly seems the point. In a survey conducted by the Slum Development Board of Tamil Nadu during its campaign to eradicate slums, it was noted that all these categories of people recorded that they needed the drink to help them keep going. The fisherfolk, for example, who have to weather the seas in frail country crafts, all said that they would not be able to go out at all without being fortified with some liquor. There is reason to believe that the toddy or fermented rice wine that these people drink contains some form of vitamin B, or yeast, which does indeed help them to survive the rigours of their life. To summarily label drink a vice and deny it to them, is hardly a solution to their problems.

We were reminded of this when we stopped at a roadside tea-shop on the way to Nasik the other day. The tea-stall owner, a curly haired Moplah, prepared three fresh cups of sweet mint tea, when a young farmer and his family came and sat next to us. He ordered one sherbet for the whole family and two plates of puffed rice for the two small children who started eating it happily. Since we had ordered

an extra cup of tea, we graciously offered one to the farmer. He looked up in surprise and shook his head violently. "No" he said, "I have never touched tea in my life. It is a terrible vice."

GD

Not Quite True

A Samachar report datelined New Delhi, April 11 affirms that with the President's assent to the Constitution (43rd Amendment) Act, the Janata government has fulfilled one of its election pledges. Not quite. The election manifesto of the Janata Party was unequivocal in its pledge to do away with the obnoxious 42nd Amendment rammed through parliament during the emergency. There were no qualifications to this pledge in the manifesto that some parts will be retained. While the 43rd Amendment is to be welcomed in as much as it restores civil liberties and the rule of law, there are other provisions of the 42nd Amendment still on the statute book. The issue is not their merit or otherwise but the manner in which the amendment was pushed through under conditions of dictatorship.

But even this partial fulfilment of an electoral promise which was the result of horsetrading with the Congress opposition in parliament could not be swallowed by the ruling Congress Front in Maharashtra whose members in the Legislature stayed neutral. While the Congress (I) attitude is understandable (witness their leader Stephen's defence of the Emergency during the debate on the No-Confidence motion in the Lok Sabha) what happened to Chavan's Congress? Power continues to be the overriding factor, even now.

And talking of the No-Confidence Motion, no one in the debate seems to have challenged Mr. Stephen's statement that "Parliament is the people." Have members of the ruling party forgotten so soon that it was parliament acting in the name of the people which deprived the people of even the right of Habeas Corpus? The sooner this reactionary doctrine is put to rest, the better for the safety and protection of Indian democracy.

SVR

Ad-men's Agony

Vicco Vajradanti may sound like toothpaste to you, but to advertising executives fighting the last budget's strictures on advertising expenditure, it has been a rallying cry for action. But for the power of the media they say, a new product such as Vicco Vajradanti with its 'desi' name and 'desi' appeal would never have been able to compete against the old familiar brand names in the multinational family carrying the ring of eternity and dependability in their image. Vicco Vajradanti is in fact a living example of one of the favourite clichés in advertising — the rags to riches success story. With the proposed curbs which have recently been slightly alleviated, ad-men feel that while the bigger companies will be able to absorb the new taxes and continue advertising as before, the Vicco Vajradanties will be

left behind as the Cinderellas who never got a chance to show themselves.

One of the earlier fears that small newspapers owned by lone individuals and souvenirs and programmes collected for charitable purposes, would also be adversely affected, has now been removed with the new provision to exempt them from the advertising tax.

Finally, in spite of all that has been written about over paid ad-men, who sport purple ties with pink alligators embroidered on them, and spend their time weeping into their Martinis complaining about their perks, the results of their work exhibited during the annual CAG show recently, reveal that advertising has really come of age in India. Could there be a link between such a uniformly good performance and the expenditure that goes towards producing it?

GD

A 'Cuba' in the Sub-Continent?

The attention being paid by the Janata Government to mend its fences with our immediate neighbours is a development that has been welcomed in this column. But surely there is no need to swing to the other extreme of wanting to fall all over to prove our friendship and bonafides. Was it really necessary to have rushed to recognise the new regime in Afghanistan when not many weeks ago we wine and dined President Daoud Khan.

The Afghan coup was bloody and red. Its new President Mr. Nur Mohammad Tarakki may deny that the new Government is communist but actions speak louder than words. He has attributed reports of over 10,000 dead in the coup to "The reactionary western press."

The coup was mainly directed by the Air Force which is identified as "leftist oriented". The bulk of the officers who took part in the coup were trained in the Soviet Union. On April 17 a leader of the Communist Party was murdered. The funeral procession, according to reports, turned into a violent demonstration both against the government as well as the American embassy. The trouble ended only when Daoud was thrown out and killed.

The present President according to reliable sources in Kabul, reports the Indian Express of May 4, "has led a number of different lives — newspaper reporter, diplomat, US Embassy employee, news agency executive and Communist agitator". Mr. Taraki was the chief of the Democratic Khalq Party (which is the name by which the Communist Party is known in Afghanistan) which was banned by the late Mr. Daoud.

Iran and Pakistan are bound to be affected by the colour of the regime in Afghanistan. Iran took its time to recognise the regime. With the growing closer relations with Iran, did our Foreign Office think of talking things over with their Ambassador and for that matter with Pakistan's High Commissioner? One wonders.

SVR

THE RIGHT TO PROPERTY—WHY THIS CLAMOUR?

K. S. Venkateswaran

WHEN WILL IT END, this ridiculous clamour for the deletion of the right to property from the chapter on Fundamental Rights in the Constitution? Far from decaying in its intensity, the controversy it has ignited seems to be assuming greater proportions with the advance of time, so much so that at the present moment when the national scene is plagued by various other maladies deserving immediate and undivided attention, it has popped its ugly head up with wanton recklessness. It is impossible not to regret on grounds of principle the manifestly hazardous turn which the debate on this issue has taken. Indubitably, it presents problems which are as dangerous as they are disconcerting.

The right to property has often been referred to as an extension of the human personality; it has been recognised since ages as the foundation on which man's various other rights rest. Besides affording him a much-needed status in the society of which he is a member, it is to him a vital organ of expressing his personality. Man labours and earns not only for his momentary sustenance but also to ensure that in his sunset years when he will no longer be able to put in the effort and perseverance which he could when he was hale and hearty, he is protected adequately from the adversities which time brings along with it. There can be no two opinions that this quest of his for comfort and security is wholly justifiable and reasonable. Unfortunately, however, the myth has been propagated from certain quarters that the right to property is a negation of all democratic values and offensive to the rule of law. Even a cursory glance at the arguments pressed for and against the issue will convince one of the fact that this is indeed far from the truth.

It would of course be patently fallacious to aver that the case for the retention of absolute and unrestricted right to property is a reasonable one. After all, one cannot and should not afford to be oblivious to the detrimental effects which would ensue from placing no fetters on the accumulation of property by individuals. As can be readily seen, property can be as much an instrument of destruction and disharmony as it can be of peace and prosperity in society. Instances are not wanting in history where property has been misused by individuals to dominate over and exploit their less-fortunate brethren. It is when such a situation comes to pass that the dark side of the picture is revealed in all its naked offensiveness. The need, therefore, for imposing certain reasonable restrictions in the public interest on the "amount" or "quantum" of property to be held by an individual in a State is imperative.

The founding fathers of our Constitution, in all their wisdom, fully recognised this need and they

applied themselves to the arduous task of devising a satisfactory constitutional apparatus which, while allowing the citizen full scope to fruitfully give expression to his various basic rights, would at the same time prevent a gross imbalance between the citizen and the community such as would ensue from the concentration of wealth in a few hands. The constitutional provisions relating to the right to property in the final draft of the Constitution bears ample testimony to their ingenuity and sagacity. Article 19(1)(f) in Part III of the Constitution guaranteed — and it still does — the citizen the right "to acquire, hold and dispose of property." Article 31 in the same Part laid down the provisions relating to the compulsory acquisition of property by the State for public purposes. The original article ran thus substantially:

"31 (1). No person shall be deprived of his property save by the authority of law.

(2) No property shall be compulsorily acquired or requisitioned save for a public purpose and save by the authority of law which provides for compensation for the property acquired or requisitioned and either fixes the amount of the compensation or specifies the principles on which, and the manner in which, the compensation is to be determined and given; and no such law shall be called in question in any court on the ground that the compensation provided by that law is not adequate."

This article was apparently in consonance with the broad objectives sought to be attained by the State as enshrined in Article 39 in Part IV of the Constitution which lays down the Directive Principles of State Policy. Among others, clauses (b) and (c) of this Article state that the State shall in particular direct its policy towards securing —

- (1) that the ownership and control of the material resources of the community are so distributed as best to subserve the common good; and
- (2) that the operation of the economic system does not result in the concentration of wealth and means of production to the common detriment.

In fact, Parts III & IV, of which Arts. 31 and 39 respectively are constituents, form an integrated scheme and, as Chief Justice Subba Rao observed in his judgment in the "Golak Nath" Case (AIR 1967 SC 1643), "The scheme is made so elastic that all Directive Principles of State Policy can reasonably be enforced without taking away or abridging the Fundamental Rights."

However, a need was felt almost immediately after the coming into force of the Constitution to amend Article 31 with a view to expedite certain agrarian reforms. Consequently, Article 31A was

added which, *inter alia*, provided that no law making provision for the acquisition by the State of any estate or of any right therein, or the taking over of the management of any property by the State for a limited period in the public interest or certain other similar acts "shall be deemed to be void on the ground that it is inconsistent with, or takes away, or abridges, any of the rights conferred by Articles 14, 19 or 31", notwithstanding anything contained in Article 13. Also, the Constitution (First Amendment) Act, 1951, added Article 31B which empowered the State to place any law in the newly created Ninth Schedule to the Constitution whereafter such law becomes immune from challenge on the ground that it is violative of any or all of the Fundamental Rights. One commentator rightly described this amendment as having tolled the death-knell of the Constitution. "Unfortunately, its ominous chimes were unheard, or worse still, unheeded," he lamented.

As if it were not enough, the Constitution (Twenty fifth Amendment) Act, 1971, went a step further when it provided for the addition of yet another appendage to Article 31 in the form of Article 31C. This new provision ran as follows:

"31C. Notwithstanding anything contained in article 13, no law giving effect to the policy of the State towards securing the principles specified in clause (b) or clause (c) of Article 39 shall be deemed to be void on the ground that it is inconsistent with, or takes away, or abridges, any right conferred by Article 14, Article 19 or Article 31."

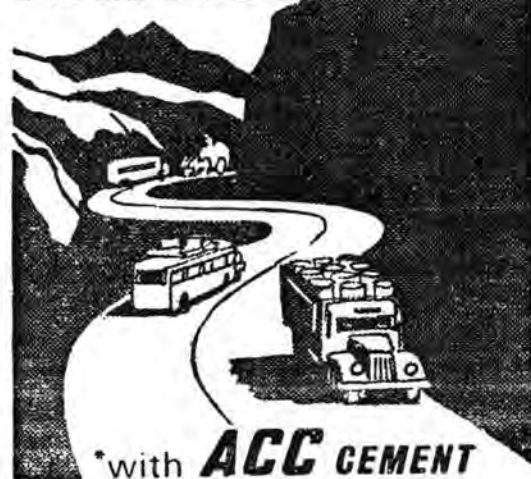
This article, which has been viewed by all right-thinking citizens as singularly ill-conceived and destructive of democratic values, sought to subvert many basic features of the Constitution. Describing the effect of this Article, one eminent constitutional expert remarked, "In the entire history of liberty, never were so many hundreds of millions deprived of so many fundamental rights at one fell swoop as by the insertion of Article 31C." He viewed it as "a monstrous outrage on the Constitution" and as damaging the very heart of the Constitution. It is worth noting that the validity of this amendment, which was challenged subsequently, was upheld by the Supreme Court in the famous "Kesavanda Bharati" case (AIR 1973 SC 1461).

All in all, a candid and dispassionate examination of the constitutional provisions and the trend of legislation in the matter of the right to property in this country will doubtlessly convince one of the fact that presently what remains of this right, which most of the rest of the world have viewed as inalienable, is only the skeleton, after the body has been badly mauled and its organs mutilated mercilessly by the endless process of constitutional amendments. Sadly enough, it has become commonplace for our politicians and men in power to still make snide references to property rights, most often unwarrantedly and irrelevantly. Regrettably, the continued persistence of such unsavoury comments over the past few years has led many eminent lawyers and experts in the field of

constitutional law to advocate, in a vein of hopeless resignation, the abolition of the right to property as a fundamental right. Mr. Nani A. Palkhivala, the most celebrated Indian lawyer today and an authority on constitutional law, observed in a recent article, "... it may be better for the future of India if the remnant of the right to property is wholly removed from the chapter on Fundamental Rights so as to put an end to the perpetual and deliberate distortion of the issue of the basic human freedoms." This, coming as it does from a person who, not very long ago, held that "this right (to property) is of the essence of a sound body politic and of a democracy which aims at marching forward economically" and that its abrogation would spell disaster, only gives an indication as to the intensity of the clamour observed in our country today. How sad it is indeed that we have allowed such a situation to come to pass when a little reflection would be enough to show that, in the ultimate analysis, the abolition of the right to property would only gravely impair the quality of life. The move, therefore, for the deletion of this right from the chapter on Fundamental Rights is an altogether retrograde one. The truth of this will be borne out more clearly when one examines the various other aspects of the issue, as the moral, social and economic considerations, which have been deliberately left out due to limitations on space.

In conclusion, there is a sure need in our time and land to recall the wise words of Joseph Story, perhaps the greatest of American jurists, who said: "That government can scarcely be deemed to be free where the rights of property are left solely dependent upon the will of a legislative body without restraint."

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THE CHARGE OF THE DAWOODI BOHRAS

By Geeta Doctor

People who are familiar with the exploits of Frederick Forsyth, the British author who financed a group of mercenaries to stir up trouble in Africa and then retired to his study to write about it, may be forgiven for imagining that it was for such reasons that I became, for a few brief seconds, a leader in the revolt of the Dawoodi Bohra community in Bombay. People who know me, will know better. They will know for instance that my relations with the community so far have hung on a thread. For the only Dawoodi Bohra I have known has been a kindly old man who sells me embroidery threads in a tantalizing array of colours. My relationship with him though friendly, has not been without a certain exquisite tension, caused by his habit of pulling out a drawerful of an entirely new range of colours and shutting it in just the time that he deems it necessary for me to make up my mind. In short it was not the sort of friendship for which I would consider risking my life and yet last Sunday I very nearly did just that.

I did not even think of him as we drove down Bhandi Bazaar that fateful morning reading for want of something better to do, the quaint slogans put up every twenty feet along the road, demanding the right of the Dawoodi Bohras to pursue their religious duties without interference, upholding their rights as a minority in a secular country and denouncing something known as the Nathwani Commission for threatening these rights. Vague questions as to who the Dawoodi Bohras were, and why the Nathwani Commission should bother about them, surfaced in my mind, the first being answered quite soon as we noticed that suddenly the streets were filled with Dawoodi Bohras. Small, slight, men, in white, with white skull caps embroidered in gold thread round the rims, were making their way in twos and threes towards the sea front at Chowpatty. As we crossed the main road, an old man with one leg missing was propelling himself with startling urgency towards the hot sands. It was nearing twelve and the entire Chowpatty area was ablaze with Dawoodi Bohras, all in white, all standing and conferring in a dignified manner. If only all protests were so peaceful I remarked.

As we moved up to Malabar Hill we noticed the inevitable blue-black line of the Police cordon guarding the exits from Chowpatty. Even as we passed a small group of young Dawoodi Bohras started racing up the hill. They still seemed to be in a picnic mood though why anyone should want to run about in the sun was a mystery.

As the traffic first inched up the hill, then stalled and finally ground to a halt, it became obvious that there was going to be no picnic. The boys were running to some trouble spot ahead, possibly at the entrance to the Governor's residence. Soon it seemed likely that the entire community would come charging up from Chowpatty.

It was at this point that I began my little act of unpremeditated heroics. Feeling the utter helplessness

of being caught in a four lane traffic jam in the burning sun and waiting for a tidal wave of humanity to wash up from the back, I resolved to get out of the car and out of the situation by walking home, a feat which was within the realm of probability, since home was 'just round the corner'. My husband, whom I had somehow failed to inform of my intentions, remembers a feeling of extreme astonishment to see me striding ahead through the traffic, followed by this time, by a police van complete with wailing sirens and riot police. Such details of course escaped my attention, so intense was my pre-occupation to get home. I only remember bumping into a huge white limousine that effectively blocked up the only lane of traffic moving downwards and in the process the Police van which was trying to use the last available access route on its way up. Just as I passed the car, I recall seeing the owner, a Parsi wearing a Pugree come down dressed like a bridegroom and literally lift the car out of the way on to the pavement, to allow the Police van to pass, but even that did not stop me in my determination to get on.

It was only five minutes later when I found myself walking straight into a waving mass of arms and legs fleeing before a cordon of Police, who for some reason seemed to be practising a lathi charge, that I realised to my horror that I had walked into the very sort of situation that all my life I have dreaded.

My reactions need hardly be described. I have never considered courage to be the noble trait that it is generally made out to be, genetically for instance it is useless, as it does not help to preserve the species. I turned and fled, followed by a small contingent of Dawoodi Bohras, injured, bleeding and as surprised I am sure, as me, by the sudden turn of events. Shopkeepers pulled down their shutters as we passed, closing all avenues of escape. It was an utter rout with my big worry being what I would do when the main body of Bohras came up to meet us from Chowpatty. Though I was definitely leading the Malabar Hill detachment of Bohras, it seemed unlikely that anybody would mistake me for one.

It was in this state of mind that I noticed a solitary gentleman wearing what I observed even in my agitated state, was a well starched white bushirt, washed no doubt in Surf, and thus reassured, I opened the door of his Ambassador and got in. For a person who had never met me before, I must admit that he behaved with exceptional courtesy, asking me merely where I wanted eventually to get off. By the time we passed Chowpatty, where the Police were still performing their holding action, we had got friendly enough to have a mild argument on whether the Janata government was keeping the price line or not. Not once did we discuss the Dawoodi Bohras or what I happened to be doing in his car. Such, I can say now with feeling, is what chivalry is all about.

FEAR NOT, THIS IS A WONDER THAT REALLY DOES STIR THE SPIRIT

Bernard Levin

The Taj Mahal has a great deal to live up to. So much, indeed, that there can be few thoughtful visitors today who, knowing something of its reputation, do not fear the betrayal of expectation. How can anything justify the rhapsodies, the descriptions, the history, the legends, the very photographs?

I confirm that it was in such a spirit, almost with fingers crossed behind my back, that I paid my two rupees, passed through the outer arch, and approached the inner, which serves, when you have advanced to the right point, as a frame for the picture before you. Fear nothing; the sight that there swims into view surpasses everything you have heard or seen or read or imagined, and almost the only intense emotion you will not experience as the frame fills is disappointment.

They told me that the Taj Mahal is beautiful, and they were right. They also told me that it is white, though here they were wrong, for white is almost the only colour it is not, except for a few minutes immediately after the sun goes down; at that point all the delicate blues and greys and yellows and pinks are drawn from it and leave it like a ghost, until it takes on its evening life and becomes as rich as the moon.

They were right about the beauty, and wrong about the colour. What they altogether omitted to mention was the fact that it is perfectly symmetrical. Apart from the flight of steps in the front, leading up to the marble platform on which the whole building rests, it is completely symmetrical in two senses. Each of the four sides is identical with the other three, not only in shape and size but in the last details of decoration; and each side could be folded over on the central perpendicular, when the two halves would be found to match exactly. The Taj Mahal, in short, is God Almighty's Rohrschach blot, and says much for the attractiveness of the patient's subconscious.

There has been much argument over the identity of the architect; I gather that modern scholarship generally suggests that Shah Jahan designed it himself. If so, Plato's philosopher-king was surely embodied in him, for although I have the liveliest respect for the wide variety of accomplishments displayed by our Heir Apparent, I take leave to doubt if he is quite up to creation of this order. (And on this scale: the other thing they didn't tell me was how enormous it is).

It floats. And this is not an allusion to the way in which it is reflected in the long watercourse that runs from the entrance to the very foot of the building, though that is indeed a miracle within a miracle, particularly when, at evening, the fountains, evenly spaced down the centre of the channel, are turned on, so that the shimmering reflection of the building turns into a snowstorm, a Seurat, a kaleido-

scope, a dancing mosaic. But even without the water, the Taj Mahal would still float.

It sits, as I say, on a square platform, and the huge central cupola, guarded by the four minarets (which draw the eye inward, not out to the corners where they stand) is of enormous mass; the facade, too, is a mighty wall of marble, and the arched door and windows, together with the pierced screens and the coloured inlays beneath the dome, ought logically to appear as supporters for the stupendous mass and weight above. Instead, they act as tethers to what otherwise would soar into the sky. It is not just that the architecture is delicate, the weight run off like rainwater or lightning; it really does seem lighter than air, and the dome, as you watch, seems to be made of egg-shell.

Actually, the image we have from the pictures (and even at first glance) of a hemisphere cupola, is an optical illusion; the curve continues well below the circumference, into, and almost to the lower edge of, the decorated "collar" in which it rests, which must presumably have made the construction even more difficult. There is another optical illusion built into it; the verses from the Koran that surround the central arch on each side are inscribed in lettering which grows large towards the top, so that from the ground it looks of uniform size, instead of appearing to shrink as it would if it were all the same size. This is like the famous "bulge" in the platform of the Parthenon, which would otherwise look as though it was sagging towards the middle. (I was on the Acropolis at Christmas, shocked to find that you can no longer go inside the Parthenon, and it occurs to me that I do not often see two of the seven wonders of the world within a month. Who first worked out the need for these two devices? And who, incidentally, first noticed that they had been employed?).

The Taj Mahal provokes more questions than those. Every block in the mighty dome, for instance, must be curved to a particular formula, and no curve in any one layer will be exactly the same as in the layers above and below. (The image of the dome is of almost incredible smoothness and regularity.) How was the appallingly complex problem that this posed solved without a computer and other modern tools? Mind you, every imaginable scientific aid is available to architects today, and the result can be seen in Juxon House, the Hayward Gallery, the north and west sides of George Square, Edinburgh, and the building in which these words were typed and printed. They had Shah Jahan and the Taj Mahal, and we have Victoria Street: Allah Akbar.

I found my own reactions extraordinary; at any rate extraordinary enough for me to spend a lot of

(Continued on page 15)

BACK TO 1967?

M. R. Masani

Despite some superficial differences, the country is back in the situation in which it found itself after the General Elections of 1967.

Now, as then, the hold of the Congress monolith has been shattered and governments of various colours have taken office in different States. Now, as then, there were widespread jubilation and high expectations about what was to come. But unfortunately now, as then, there has been cruel disappointment and disillusionment at the performance of those in office. Now, as then, defectors have been rewarded with the fruits of office.

The "Indira Wave" of 1971 was clearly the popular reaction to the failure of the S.V.D. governments to deliver the goods all the way from Punjab to Bengal. All these faction-ridden coalitions were chased out of office within a couple of years. The pendulum had then swung all the way from the near anarchic conditions created by the S.V.D. governments to the authoritarian take over in June 1975.

How can the pendulum be prevented from once again swinging all the way from the permissive political society of today with its alarming breakdown of law and order to yet another authoritarian regime? That is the question which democrats and lovers of freedom will have to answer in the coming months.

The backlash is already developing. The erosion in the Janata vote from the Elections of March 1977 to the State Assembly Elections in June 1977 was marked. There is further deterioration shown by the State Assembly Elections in February 1978 and the drop in the Janata majority in Karnal from 276,000 in March 1977 to a mere 19,000 a year later.

The President of the Republic has drawn attention to the failure to maintain law and order. Leading members of the ruling party have publicly expressed their unhappiness with the squabbles inside their party. Recent statements by Mr. Vajpayee and

Mr. Nanaji Deshmukh show that at least some of those involved have seen the writing on the wall and are making their dispositions accordingly.

Diagnosis is easy but a cure is hard to devise, because it is not so much the wickedness of a particular individual or the ineptitude of some others that are responsible for the malaise as the backwardness of the country and the fragility of its democratic roots.

In such a situation, to make heavy demands on the Government is to endanger democracy. There is too much concentration of political and economic power in the hands of the politicians and the bureaucrats. Every control adds to corruption. It is perhaps too much to expect the "New Class" in New Delhi to follow the Gandhian path of decontrol and disgorge the power that has accumulated in their hands.

The remedy lies in educating public opinion to an awareness that there is too much politics and too little citizenship in our national life, that the power of the State must be beaten back and the people liberated from the Statist straitjacket. There is little hope of progress or prosperity unless India goes in for such a "U-turn."

Grass roots initiative and vigilance is needed. It is a tragedy that Jayaprakash is prevented by his health from leading the people away from Rajniti to Lokniti.

I speak as a student of history and a friendly critic of the Janata Government. Any hesitation in speaking up would only help in canalising all the discontent into Congress (I) and C.P.I. channels. This is the time for courage, this is the time for truth.

(Summarised from a talk in the Spring Lecture Series, Vasant (Vyakyanmala) delivered in Poona on May 2, 1978.)

World,

Take my son by the hand — he starts school to-day. It's all going to be strange and new for a while and I wish you would sort of treat him gently. This morning he is going to walk down the front steps, wave his hand and start on a great adventure that will probably include wars and tragedy and sorrow.

To live in this world will require courage. So World, I wish you sort of take him by the hand and teach him the things he will have to know.

Teach him, but gently, if you can.

He will have to learn I know that all men are not just, that all men are not true. Teach him that for every scoundrel there is a hero, that for every crooked politician there is a dedicated leader. Teach him that for every enemy there is a friend.

Let him learn early that the bullies are the easiest people to lick. Teach him the wonder of books. Give him quiet time to ponder the eternal mystery of the birds in the sky, the bees in the sun, the flowers on a green hill. Teach him to have faith in his own ideas if every one tells him that they are wrong. Try to give my son the strength not to follow the crowd when every one is getting on the band wagon. Teach him to filter all he hears on a screen of truth and to take only the good that comes through. Teach him to sell his brawn and brain to the highest bidder, but never to put a tag on his heart and soul. Teach him to close his ears off a howling mob and stand and fight if he thinks he is right. Teach him gently, World, but don't coddle him, because only the test of fire makes fine steel.

— Abraham Lincoln

Reviews

SOCIALIST OPPOSITION IN EASTERN EUROPE

by Jiri Pelikan,

Allison and Busby, London, 1976

Price £ 5.25.

The invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968 by the Soviet Union and the four Warsaw Pact allies put an end to all democratizing elements in the society and the effort to create "socialism with a human face." Then began the process which has euphemistically been described by the Russians as "normalization" or, if we may use our Indian expression, "consolidating the gains" of the invasion. It affected every aspect of life in Czechoslovakia; the party, organizations and movements were purged of obstinate liberals and dangerous reformers. Official documents sought to "sterilize" the atmosphere by creating the impression that no military intervention of the country took place. But dissent could not be altogether snuffed out any more than in the other countries of Eastern Europe and in the Soviet Union itself. There developed a *socialist opposition* which has generated policy statements, leaflets, newspapers and other forms of literature which have percolated to other countries.

By a remarkable coincidence, Jiri Pelikan's book which contains many of these important documents, came to India during the high noon of the Emergency when an Indian version of the *samisdhat* was taking shape on no insignificant a scale. It was then that I first read this book nursing the hope that someday the shadow on the land would pass away. Although almost a year and a half has elapsed since this book was made available to readers in English, it still merits attention in view of our own recent experience. Unfortunately, not many people still know the full story of the resistance movement in this country.

Every dissent against a regime of tyranny is generally denounced as the voice of vested interests, of a small group of intellectuals who wish to preserve their privileges. This was Mrs Gandhi's trump card. What is the importance, she asked, of the freedom of a few in the face of the poverty of millions for whom liberty has no meaning? Jiri Pelikan argues that when artists and writers fight for freedom it is not out of a desire to multiply their privileges which they can get by remaining apolitical. On the contrary, they run the risk of losing whatever privileges they have and of being reduced to silence. They are prompted by their desire to express the wishes and aspirations of the people, and more so when the normal political channels are closed.

It is interesting to note another parallel between the Czechoslovakian situation and our own experience during the Emergency. Political prisoners were detained and sentenced for "economic offences". Hlavsa, an expert on trade matters, was sentenced for alleged embezzlement when he was Director of the aviation industry but the real reason was that he had protested against the invasion in August 1968 and had expressed his indignation in the presence

of Soviet diplomats. Karel Bocek, Director of the Czechoslovak uranium industry, was arrested in 1970 on the charge of sabotaging the economy. The real reason was that the workers had gone on strike and had refused to deliver uranium to the aggressor.

Another mean device was to accuse the opposition of establishing links with foreign countries, not only with socialist opposition groups there but also with reactionary groups. Those arrested and sentenced were denounced by the official propaganda machinery as "reactionaries", "offenders" and "adventurers" who hated socialism and were working for its destruction in order to restore capitalism.

The leaders of the socialist opposition make it clear that they are not adopting a liberal position. They reject liberalism in all its forms. They regard themselves as genuine socialists: "our disagreement and our criticisms do not concern the essence of socialism, but the concrete forms and methods of governmental and political administration, which have long since been deeply infected by the bureaucratic disease. In this we see the barrier to the full and free unfolding of all the potentialities and advantages of socialism; here, too, we see the true inner cause of the crisis we experienced at the close of the 1960s."

The socialist opposition is not to be seen as a negative movement; they seek to provide an alternative, but not of the Western type. They wish to maintain the nationalization of the means of production but transfer them to popular ownership with a variety of forms ranging from State ownership for large industries to group ownership for medium-sized and small establishments. They would like to see cooperative ownership in the case of services, crafts, agriculture and trade. On one thing they are united with the Soviet Union, *viz.*, collective ownership of the means of production; and they totally reject private ownership. On this broad-based collective ownership they would like to rest their socialist political system which they believe would make possible wider political participation in the running of the country. Whether all this is a mirage, and how genuine participation can be in such a system are questions on which many outside the Iron Curtain may entertain their doubts.

There is one aspect of this story of dissent on which the book does not throw light. Edward Taborsky has described how the "normalization" of Czechoslovakia was attained at a heavy price, that price being the drain of talent from the communications media. Few prominent figures showed any inclination to cooperate with the regime. Most preferred to suffer rather than to compromise with their principles. I was interested in this aspect specially in view of the similar experience we had during the Emergency. Readers will remember the famous insertion in The Times (London) entitled "Don't let the Light go out on Indian Democracy" which was signed by some five hundred persons in Britain. Indira Gandhi's regime initiated a counter signature campaign but failed to secure many people to support it. The government in Czechoslovakia succeeded in getting just 130 people to sign a sycophan-

tic proregime manifesto and most of these were non-entities. (Edward Taborsky, "Czechoslovakia: The Return to Normalcy", *Problems of Communism*, November-December, 1970). The book is of interest to us not only for the light it throws on one kind of dissent in Eastern Europe but also for its relevance in understanding what happens in other tyrannical systems, including the one we had during the Emergency.

S. P. AIYAR.

THE CRASH OF '79. By Paul E. Erdman, First published in '76, Pocket Book Edn., published by Simon & Schuster, Nov. '77, Pages 428.

Trouble is endemic in certain regions. One such is West Asia, or, the Middle East as the Westerners prefer to call it. From time immemorial wars have been fought to gain control over parts of West Asia. When, at the turn of the century, oil was discovered in Iran, an explosive ingredient was added to the many elements which contribute to make the region a danger-spot.

Oil is the subject-matter of this best seller. Also, High Finance. In fact, one's mind boggles at the billions of dollars which figure in the transactions described in this absorbing narrative. As long as the oil was being extracted and distributed by Western countries everything was nice and cosy — except for the Arabs and Iranians, the majority of whom remained below the poverty line. The Second World War put an end to all that. First Iran, thanks to Mossadeq, and then the various Arab potentates, proceeded to nationalise their oil fields. The crunch came in 1973, when the Arabs, angered by the Israeli attack on Egypt, put an embargo on the oil export to the West and hiked the price of oil to an unimaginable height — "the most successful blackmail attempt in the history of the world".

The events unfolded in this book are said to have started in the autumn of 1978, when Bill Hitchcock, a banker from California who had just retired on very comfortable terms was appointed Financial Adviser to the Saudi Arabian Government. His name was recommended by his friend Reggie Hamilton, another American, who was Oil Adviser to the Saudi Government.

Hitchcock found that for the Saudis the problem was not in not obtaining money; it was in the spending of it — quickly and effectively. They had 300 billion dollars to spend! So, a grand scheme was worked out with the blessing of the U.S. Military Attache in Riyadh and a top American Banker. Under this scheme: (a) Saudi Arabia will opt out of the OPEC and have an alliance with the U.S. to supply oil at a guaranteed low price; (b) Saudi Arabia will move under the U.S. umbrella, politically, economically and militarily; and (c) there will be a massive shift of funds from about every financial centre in the world to New York. It was expected that once the Saudi funds started rolling in, the "happy recipients" would collectively form a pro-Arab lobby in the U.S.; then, "half the Jewish popu-

lation in New York would probably start to face Mecca when they prayed!"

These manoeuvres naturally greatly upset the Shah of Iran, the other mighty Oil Power in the region. Though he did not join the Arab boycott in 1973, he had jumped on the OPEC band-wagon when he found the going was good for all the oil producing countries. He was always for a progressive hike in the oil price. He suspected that the Saudis, particularly Shaik Yamani, the Petroleum Minister, would upset the apple cart. His objective was to build up an invincible war machine and acquire eventually the entire oil wealth of the Persian Gulf area. With this end in view, he was secretly building an atomic arsenal with the help of a Swiss Professor.

Hitchcock is able to get his package deal through without any difficulty. It is hailed by the American Press in glowing terms and he and his associates are feted by the highest in the land, including the President of the U.S. But the euphoria does not last long. An un-identified Arab gun-man takes a pot-shot at him and the Saudi Defence Minister, when they were visiting Houston in Texas, and Hitchcock decides to take a short holiday. He rings up his girl-friend, (a Swiss girl with whom he had "an affair" while in Rome a few months ago and who turns out to be the daughter of the Professor making bombs for the Shah) to meet him in St. Moritz — the play-ground of the rich and mighty in the Swiss Alps. And whom do they find as their next door neighbour? None other than the Shah of Iran, who was perfecting his "nefarious" plans to take over the Persian Gulf.

Suddenly the new order of things which Hitchcock had planned goes to pieces. Riyadh is cut off from the rest of the world. There are disquieting rumours of a coup in the Saudi capital with an anti-Khalid faction in control. As a result, the flow of petro-dollars from Saudi Arabia to the U.S. stops and the U.S. is faced with the worst financial crisis in history. The rest of the world reacts instinctively to protect its interests. The only person who seems to be in the know of things is the Shah of Iran who proceeds to carry out the pre-planned strategy. Hitchcock gets an inkling of these plans from his girl friend, but neither he nor she can avert the crisis which inexorably moves to its climax.

By all accounts, the book is a first-class thriller. The author has taken meticulous care in marshalling his facts in order to give a realistic back-ground for the scenario he builds up. He uses effectively a new technique in presenting a future contingency as a current crisis. When others who had attempted to present similar Doomsday books had invariably created fictitious characters, Mr Erdman has used living personalities in his fantasy — an artifice of dubious propriety, to say the least. This shows how far we have travelled since the days when authors diligently refrained from giving offence to living or even dead persons!

K. V. PADMANABHAN

WORLD NEWS

ONE MILLION SOVIET TROOPS

China and the Soviet Union are agreed on one thing: that the Soviet Union has recently made a new attempt to improve relations between the two countries. The Chinese admit that they have rejected the attempt — for the good reason that the Soviet Union keeps one million troops on the frontier between the two countries.

Deeds speak louder than words, say the Chinese; what can the Soviets possibly mean by talking about peace in these circumstances. The Chinese are a proud people, and there is no way in which they are prepared to negotiate under threat. And what could be more of a threat than one million soldiers on the frontier?

"A joint statement on the principles of mutual relations" is mentioned by the Soviet Union as the document the two countries ought to aim at in any negotiations which might be held between the two countries. But, for the Chinese if there is any principle which ought to be upheld it is refraining from threatening military manoeuvres in the frontier region. Real deeds are required by the Chinese, "not hollow statements".

In any case, they add for good measure, war between the Soviet Union and China is inevitable no matter what they do. And the Soviet Union will lose.

—Swiss Press Reviews Newspaper

WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME

According to a report by the United Nations Information Service, a total of 52 countries have pledged the equivalent of \$ 30,825,721 for 1979-1980 at the eighth pledging Conference of the World Food Programme. In a closing statement, the Programme's Executive Director, Garson N. Vogel, observed that this was "the highest amount ever achieved at a Pledging Conference." Contributions were made in terms of commodities, cash and services. What is interesting to note is that in the alphabetical list of 52 countries which includes even those like little Bhutan with a contribution in cash of \$ 1000 and giants like Australia pouring in 9.4 million in cash and commodities, the Soviet Union and Communist China are conspicuous by their absence. The United Kingdom has pledged £ 8 million and the United States a massive \$ 220 million, subject to Parliamentary approval. India's contribution will be \$ 1,250,000.

ON MEXICAN LAND REFORMS

After just a year of office President Jose Lopez Portillo, in reversing the controversial agrarian policies of his predecessor, has begun stressing increased food production over expropriation of private estates.

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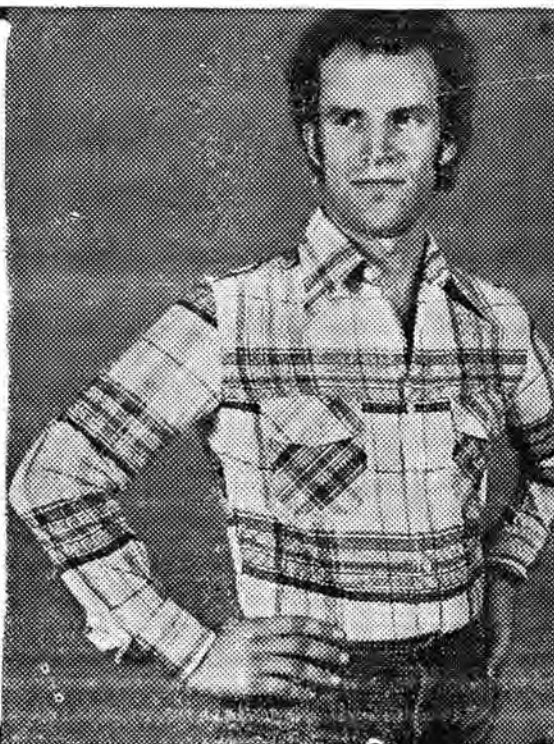
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Rather than wooing the 4 million impoverished landless peasants with promises of tiny plots, Mr. Lopez Portillo has cautioned them against illegal occupations of private property and has bluntly informed them that there is little land left to be distributed.

"The solution is not to divide up the land but to multiply production", the President said recently. "To bring justice to the peasant is not to give him land nor to divide it up, but rather to create new units of production, to increase efficiency and to generate wealth".

When Mr. Lopez Portillo took over, not only were angry peasants squatting illegally on hundreds of thousands of acres of farmland but the private farmers who produce most of the food for domestic consumption and export were refusing to invest because of uncertainty. The new government, therefore, gave priority to evicting the squatters and to restoring confidence among private farmers.

At the heart of the problem, is the Mexican system of land tenure, under which backward communal farms known as *ejidos* exist side by side with modern private estates of up to 250 acres. The system was conceived after the 1910 revolution to give plots to a maximum number of farmers while preventing the re-emergence of haciendas.

Though poor peasants received their plots, the communes rarely had access to the credit, seeds, fertilizer and machinery necessary to make their land productive. As a result, 80 per cent of the 28,000 communes cannot support themselves. ...

In 1976, with peasant unrest again on the rise, Mr. Echeveria chose to defuse tensions by turning once more against the landowners rather than directly attacking the problem of the inefficiency of the communal farms. The economic price of this policy was that per-capita food production fell steadily and that food imports this year will cost over \$600 million.

Mr. Lopez Portillo's strategy is to reassure farmers while tackling the ejido problem by collectivizing tiny plots to establish larger units of production. Though many peasants resist surrendering their land to collectives, promising results have come from new communes formed from land expropriated last year in the Yaqui Valley outside Ciudad Obregon. Although the living conditions of these collective farmers are still inadequate, productivity has not dropped since the expropriation.

To slow the exodus of underemployed peasants to urban areas, the government is trying to encourage private farmers to invest their profits in agro-industry to increase the value of exports and create more rural jobs.

—*International Herald Tribune*, December 17-18, 1977

YOUTH CLUBS TO GET POLITICAL EDUCATION GRANT

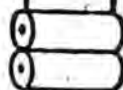
The Government has agreed to pay for the provision of political education in 5,000 youth clubs throughout Britain. The National Association of Youth Clubs will announce tomorrow that it is being given a grant of £18,000 a year for the purpose.

A similar sum has been offered by the Department of Education and Science to the British Youth Council, which is financed by the Foreign Office and represents Britain's youth organizations internationally, so that it can produce material and information on politics for the use of its member associations.

These include the youth wings of the established parties, among them the Young Communist League, as well as such traditionally apolitical movements as the Scouts and Girl Guides and the Boys' Brigade.

Although it will have access to the council's material, the National Association of Youth Clubs is to spend a large part of its grant on producing its own. But Mr Thomas Shebbeare, the council's secretary-general, says: "I am sure that whatever the NAYC and ourselves do will be complementary."

By Mark Jackson, of *The Times Educational Supplement*.



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THE BROADCASTING MONOLITH

(Continued from page 1)

do not think that the managerial skills available to the NBT can cope with such an assignment. Smaller units would ensure greater autonomy and initiative. Some management studies are necessary to decide whether one monolithic organisation would, in fact, be more economical than two or three smaller ones.

Secondly, there would be about 350 local community stations among those to be administered by the NBT. These are intended to serve the rural community. Because of their distinctive nature they cannot flourish unless they are allowed to develop separately and not as adjuncts to powerful regional and national services. While accepting the argument that such stations must be organised and staffed quite differently from the other radio stations the working group has, nonetheless, suggested that they should be a part of Akashvani. For educational programmes it has suggested enfranchising some small low-power local station but these would not be permitted to broadcast news; indeed they must relay news from Akashvani and Doordarshan and work under their supervision. Thus even these so-called independent stations would have no personality of their own. No explanation has been provided. Even in a small country like Britain the Report on the Future of Broadcasting, released last year, has recommended that local radio must be under a separate authority.

Then there is the question of quality of service. The present staff of Akashvani and Doordarshan will continue to serve for several years. Knowing them as we do it is impossible to expect any improvement in the quality of the programmes, even after the grant of autonomy unless there is some stimulus provided by competition. This would serve two purposes. Broadcasting would attract fresh, creative talent which will continue to keep away unless some mobility is possible from one competing broadcasting unit to another. A monolith can provide no opportunities for bright young people to better their prospects. Competition would also allow the audience a choice without which the complacency which mars the present output will continue. The vitality of broadcasting lies in diversity; it cannot be achieved if all development is forced into the NBT. The BBC's monopoly of broadcasting was broken because it was widely believed that competition would stimulate broadcasters to give their best. Now, even the staff of the BBC acknowledge that it was the right thing to do in the interest of the public. Aware of this problem the working group has conceded the need to encourage private radio and TV production agencies to contribute programmes to Akashvani and Doordarshan. This is a good suggestion but it can be only a minute contribution, confined to a few big cities, that such independent producers can make if they have to work within the constraints of Akashvani and Doordarshan and be dependent on their studios and facilities. I cannot agree that these

producers would provide "an element of competition".

Even when a government grants autonomy to a broadcasting service the temptation to interfere with it is ever present. Such a well established and respected organisation as the BBC has to resist the government's attempts to curb its freedom of action. Other autonomous organisations in Australia, in Western Europe, and other places face even greater problems in this respect. The chances of such interference are much greater when there is a monopoly than under competitive conditions. Take the example of Air India and the Indian Airlines which the working group itself has given in the report. Because the latter has no competition government has always interfered a great deal more in its working than it could in the operation of Air India which has to compete with other international airlines.

Finally, is it consistent with the freedom of information to place in the hands of *one* body, however well selected, the power to decide what should be broadcast and by whom? Let it not be forgotten that the Trustees of the NBT will not be elected by the people but appointed by the government. Consider the tremendous power of employment and engagement which they would command. Staff and outside contributors must conform to the Trust's ideas of what is good broadcasting or else they would cease to be seen or heard on TV and radio. The best talent in the country cannot be expected to serve under such conditions.

Let it also be remembered that in India the radio is far more widely diffused than the printed word and monopoly of what goes out on the sound waves is far more dangerous than the real or imaginary monopoly of the press. Even if those in authority are well intentioned a uniform approach to news and comment is undesirable. Radio and TV have a subtle influence even on the thinking of educated citizens. The uncritical acceptance of certain attitudes can lead to uniformity of society and pave the way to totalitarianism. The only safeguard of liberty of the press lies in its diversity. A variety of sources of editorial judgment is essential in a free broadcasting system. Since the method of appointing Trustees can never be totally satisfactory the need for more than one Board of Trustees or Directors is all the greater. The working group's answer to this point, given at some seminars held recently in Delhi, is unconvincing because it is based on the belief that the Trustees of the NBT would ensure that it would serve as a forum in which all points of view would be reflected. This may or may not occur and therefore alternative sources of news and information are essential.

The case against monopoly is strong and would, I believe, be accepted by all those who want a free broadcasting service. The ways in which competition should be introduced into the system are open to discussion. Several different methods can be considered.

(Continued on page 14)

FACTS ABOUT THE VERGHESE GROUP

The election manifesto of the Janata Party promised to convert AIR and TV into autonomous corporations. As a step towards the implementation of this pledge, the Government of India set up in August 1977 a 12-member Working Group headed by the eminent journalist Mr. B. G. Verghese. The other members of the Group were: Mr. V. G. Rajadhyaksha, Dr. Malcolm Adiseshiah, Mr. Chanchal Sarkar, Mr. P. L. Deshpande, Mr. Umashanker Joshi, Mr. A. G. Noorani, Prof. J. D. Sethi, Mr. P. J. Fernandes, Mr. C. R. Subramanian, Mrs. Nayantara Sahgal and Dr. Ishwar Dass as Member-Secretary. Mrs. Sahgal was actually appointed to the Group in November.

The Working Group submitted its report (406 pages in two volumes) in February this year.

A Single Trust

The Working Group has recommended the setting up of a single autonomous corporation to be called Akash Bharati — the National Broadcasting Trust. The NBT will be directly responsible to Parliament.

Charter of the Trust

An 18-point Charter has been recommended. Among them are the following: Upholding the unity of India and the democratic values enshrined in the Constitution; upholding the fundamental right to freedom of speech and expression guaranteed under Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution; safeguarding the citizen's right to be informed freely, truthfully and objectively; promoting social justice and to combat exploitation; upholding the secular ideal and presenting a fair and balanced flow of information, without advocating any opinion or ideology of its own.

Board of Trustees

There will be between 12 and 21 Trustees, who should be men and women of eminence and national stature one third of whom will retire every two years. There will be three full-time Trustees and not less than eight part-time Trustees. The Chairman and Trustees will be appointed by the President on the advice of the Prime Minister from a list of names provided by a Nominating Committee consisting of the Chief Justice of India, the Lok Pal, and the Chairman of the UPSC, who will co-opt two more persons from the world of Science, Culture and the Arts.

A Trustee can only be removed in the same manner as a Supreme Court judge.

Relations with Government

In regard to the NBT's relations with the Government, the Government can order the NBT to refrain from broadcasting any matter provided the NBT has the right to announce that such an order has been issued by the Government.

Complaints Board

To deal with public charges or unjust or unfair treatment a Complaints Board will be set up, consisting of a Chairman and two other members. The Complaints Board will be appointed by the Chief Justice of India.

Licensing Board

A Licensing Board will be set up to grant franchise to Stations/Kendras other than those operated by the Trust. Applications for such franchise will be considered only from Universities and other educational institutions to establish low power radio or television transmitters. The restrictions on these non-Trust stations include only the broadcasting of education and extension broadcasts; no broadcasting of news bulletins of their own and no commercial broadcasting.

THE BROADCASTING MONOLITH

(Continued from page 13)

We can have competition between two or more autonomous public bodies; or we can have it between an autonomous public body and a number of private commercial stations as in Australia, Japan, Canada and other countries; or there can be competition between one autonomous public corporation and another which controls commercial stations as in Britain, or there can be competition between the commercial and non-commercial services of the same public autonomous body as in New Zealand.

I would suggest that we should distinguish between services for educated urban audiences and those for the mass of our uneducated people who need instruction and education through the media. The former should not be financed from public funds. I agree with the working group that all our resources should be concentrated on services for those who need them most in our cities and villages. But because they do not need education the needs of our educated listeners and viewers for information and entertainment cannot be ignored. Radio and TV services for them should be financed solely from such commercial revenue as they can generate through advertising. The services for the rest of the population should be financed from licence revenue and from payments by the Union and State governments, cooperatives, and other institutions which want to use radio and TV for their educational and instructional projects and programmes.

Whatever scheme we adopt should break up the monolith into more compact and manageable units, it should make each unit responsible for a certain function and it should provide competition and alternative sources of news and views. It would incidentally also provide professional broadcasters with some choice of employment so sadly lacking today. Competition can be introduced into the system in stages. The working group has recommended that the entire broadcasting system should be reviewed at the end of seven years. Proposals for competition can therefore be discussed and im-

plemented even after the NBT is established.

It is possible that proposals for a competitive system may not immediately be acceptable. They go against the prevailing philosophy in public administration which favours public monopolies while decrying private ones and centralisation of control while upholding the ideal of devolution and decentralisation. But whether acceptable or not, while wholly endorsing the working group's proposals for autonomy, the anti-monopoly point of view must be stated and propagated until it becomes acceptable in the years to come.

THE TAJ MAHAL (Continued from page 7)

time thinking about them. The comparison that came to mind was with the Wieskirche, that baroque masterpiece near Munich which I have on occasion gone several hundred miles out of my way to visit. Zimmerman's Christian church seems to be made entirely of light; I dream of one day hearing a performance of The Creation within its walls, and its effect on me—not just at my first sight of it but every time since—is a great burst of sunlit joy inside the brain, which illuminates the universe from within.

The Taj Mahal, on the other hand, seems to be made of air, and the effect it had on me was to induce a kind of cosmic sadness, which grew in intensity through the hours I spent there every day (I stayed three days in the vicinity), until I began to feel it would kill me; on the last evening, when I turned to leave, with no more time in hand than was necessary to get to the airport, I did not dare to look back through the arch at the framed view as I left, for the fear of being turned into a pillar of marble and for the certainty that I would weep.

This laceration of the heart I also feel when I hear the main theme of the adagio of the Ninth Symphony, when I stand before one of the late Rembrandt self-portraits, and every time I go down the Grand Canal. The obvious conclusion is that those are the things that enable me to hear the secret harmonies of the universe, and the obvious conclusion is probably the right one. If so, I presume the sadness comes from my inability to hear them all the time and at full strength, and if that is so then I can say that I can never have felt the inability so keenly as I did before the Taj Mahal.

On that last day, I sat till the sun went down; as it did, a huge flight of birds flapped slowly before the dome, "making their course to the rooky wood". They made a quivering black ribbon for it, gently pulled across by an invisible hand, and when they were gone the building donned its evening garb, the colours more delicate than ever, the lightness more pronounced; and it was time to go. For the next 10 days I kept making impossible plans, involving air time-tables of ferocious complexity, to get back for a final glimpse before leaving India. It could not, in fact, be done, so instead of impossible plans I made a possible vow: to return.

Times Newspapers Ltd, 1978

A CHARM FOR THE CHARMER

Lakshmi's
BALLERINA voile sarees
Enchanting. Wear for work.
Wear for fun. Around the town.
Around the picnic spots.
Any where-and BELLERINA
will please you every wear.
Made from 90s & 100s
pure imported cotton.



WITH MANY VOICES

"The deep

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

—Tennyson

"That man's a true conservative," said Tennyson, "who lops the mouldered branch away."

—*National Review*, January 21, 1977

The Soviets seem at last to have realised the Czarist ambition of dominating Afghanistan.

— Letter in *Times of India*, 15th May 1978

President Carter claims that the policies of Mr. Menahem Begin add up to six noes; Mr. Begin claims that, on the contrary, they consist of five yeses.

— *The Economist*, April 1, 1978

There have been weeks of leaks and contradictions, and after an orgy of weakness and vacillation, the wrong decision has finally been reached. (On the neutron bomb).

— *Time*, May 1, 1978

You can always put it down as a general rule in this town that presidents often invite "honest criticism" from their aides, but seldom get it, and usually don't follow it when they do.

—James Reston

— *Herald Tribune*, April 17, 1978

Reporters are a little like doctors: They hear mainly from people who have a pain, and get a lot of news from "losers" who have a grievance.

—James Reston

— *Herald Tribune*, April 13, 1978

An enormously important and totally briefed Soviet Foreign Ministry mandarin, who is also the personal friend of Mr. Gromyko, wishes to stay in the United States. It is as if the Foreign Ministry itself had walked off into Manhattan.

—From *The Daily Express* (London)

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The failure of capitalism is that it has no doctrine of man's dignity; the failure of Marxism is that it has no doctrine of man's limitations.

—Dr. Mervyn Stockwood, Bishop of Southwark.

The trouble with attacking the Establishment is that only a member of the Establishment knows how it really works.

— *Time*, May 1, 1978

"The trouble with Carter is he's listening only to God—and God doesn't pay taxes."

—Barber B. Conable Jr. of New York, ranking Republican on the Ways and Means Committee.

Liberals should stick to their guns. Coalition means making partners do what they would not do by themselves.

— *The Economist*, April 1, 1978

An Indian woman said yesterday that people in Britain confused the class system with the caste system. But a class system involved mobility. The caste system was closed. "It is like a tall building without a ladder or a lift, or even a window," she said.

— *The Guardian*, 28th April 1978

"War makes rattling good history" so wrote Thomas Hardy, "but peace makes poor reading."

— *The Times* 7th May 1978

"Hitler and Genghis Khan were not drunkards" Mr Jethmalani said, "Shah Jehan drank, he gave us the Taj Mahal. Aurangzeb did not, he destroyed an empire."

— *The Statesman*, 11th May 1978

The greasy pole of politics in the country has become more and more slippery and those who get dizzy with success as they climb to the top have to be prepared to come slithering down with equal speed.

—Sham Lal, in *The Times of India*, 13th May 1978

The new government in Afghanistan was recognised by, in quick succession, Russia, Bulgaria, Cuba and India.

— *The Economist*, May 6, 1978

Fraud and elections, like bacon and eggs, go together.

— *National Review*, January 21, 1977

"You know the difference between leaking and briefing", he said "leaking is what you do, briefing is what I do".

—Mr. Callaghan, Quoted in
— *The Sunday Times*, April 30, 1978