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The Voice of Separatism

NISSIM EZEKIEL

THE latest threat to the territorial, political, cultural and communal unity of India is from the Akali Dal (Talwandi group). At a so-called "World Sikh Convention" on April 13, at Anandpur Sahib, it passed a resolution demanding political autonomy for all states. It also demanded a separate constitution for Punjab on the pattern of Jammu Kashmir.

Mr. Randhir Singh Cheema, described as the "dictator" of the *morcha* launched by the Dal, gave the Union Government the deadline of August 15 for implementing the proposal. Needless to say, he also declared that if this were not done, the Dal would take such steps as it considered necessary, and "the Centre would be solely responsible for the consequences."

What about the millions, in Punjab and in all the other states, who may be opposed to the Dal's scheme? They are of course responsible for the consequences of their opposition, which means any violence that may erupt from the Dal's actions.

The claims of the organisers regarding "world" representation at the convention were totally false. Newspaper reports mentioned "only a sprinkling of foreign delegates." It is outrageous that a speech sent by Mr. Ganga Singh Dhillon, deported earlier from Palam airport, was read out to the fanatical and short-sighted delegates by Dr. Gurnam Singh Tir, the Dal's legal adviser.

Is it legal or politically valid for a minority group within a minority community to set a deadline to the Union Government for implementing a resolution? Is it democratic to make threats which imply violence and to place all responsibility for the consequences on the other side?

There cannot and must not be Punjab or any other state with a separate constitution on the Jammu and Kashmir pattern. There were overwhelming historical circumstances for that exception. Far from the excep-

tion being extended or made the rule, the desirable development is full integration of Jammu and Kashmir in the Indian Union. The time is not yet ripe for it, but one day it surely will be, and ripeness needs no force.

With Independence came Partition. Later, Pakistan, physically divided from the start, was divided politically too. No one in his senses can now contemplate without horror the further breaking up of Pakistan, or Bangla Desh, or India. The Balkanisation of the sub-continent would be the eventual outcome.

Whatever the difficulties and problems, which need not be minimised, national integration, not disintegration, is the only conceivable future for this part of the world. Denying that Desh Punjab amounts to partition, as Mr. Dhillon does, is futile and suspect.

Making the Akali Dal convention still more deplorable was a speech by the Shahi Imam of Jama Masjid. He presided, and asked Sikhs, Muslims, Christians and other minorities as well as the weaker sections among the Hindus to join hands and come to one platform to fight "the injustices perpetrated on them by the Centre, particularly by the Congress (I) government."

The actual scenario may turn out to be very different from the one proposed by the Imam. The minorities perpetrate their own injustice, on other minorities, on minorities within their ranks, on the weaker sections among the Hindus, and on the Hindu majority which it dubs "communalistic".

Every minority in India is communalistic, and its leaders rarely have a word to say against the moral, social and other injustices it perpetrates. Minorities, incidentally, cannot be all regarded as "down-trodden".

Greater relative autonomy for the states is one thing; separatism in the name of such an autonomy is quite a different matter.

The voice of the Akali Dal at the "World Sikh Convention" was the voice of separatism. Those associated with it are essentially separatist too. Hence the threats, the deadline, the talk about responsibility for consequences.

A VARIETY OF COMMENT

K. S. VENKATESWARAN

1. AGAINST THE JUDICIARY

EVEN before the din and clamour following the Supreme Court's controversial decision in the **Judges' Transfer Case** has subsided, legal circles in India are exercised over the ominous portents of yet another move by Government to clip the wings of the higher judiciary.

This time, though, the Government appears to have been remarkably discerning in its choice of an instrument to achieve its designs. The appointment as Chairman of the recently-reconstituted Law Commission of former Supreme Court judge K. K. Mathew, whose pronounced radical views on the need for judicial reforms have predictably found a sympathetic audience in the ruling party, came, significantly enough, in the wake of a concerted campaign by leading Congress-I spokesmen at running down the courts.

Even as the legitimacy of the higher judiciary's role under the Constitution was being hotly debated upon at the political level, Mathew and his colleagues in the Law Commission had already embarked upon their mission of devising new weapons to radically reconstruct the country's judicial edifice. Their efforts culminated last month in the preparation of a document which is as misleading in its form as it is disquieting in its implications.

Aimed at "evolving a methodology for speedier disposal of matters coming before the Supreme Court and the High Courts", the Commission circulated a 28-page Questionnaire which, in the opinion of many leading members of the Bar, could well sound the death-knell of judicial independence in India.

What constitutes the *pièce de resistance* of the document is the undisguised fervour with which the idea of splitting the Supreme Court into a Court of Appeal and a Constitutional Court, has been advocated. "Should the Supreme Court be replaced?" ask the honourable members of the Commission at the very outset, "by a Constitutional Court dealing exclusively with constitutional matters?" Alternatively, "Are you in favour of the establishment of a Court of Appeal as the final arbiter of disputes of law (other than constitutional law) leaving the Supreme Court to concentrate on only constitutional issues?"

On this crucial question, Mathew has scarcely concealed his own views. Addressing newsmen in the capital sometime back, he felt that "the judges had little time to go into constitutional matters". He went

on to quote an American authority who had opined that a constitutional court judge should be familiar with what all great political philosophers since Aristotle and Plato had stated.

By way of abundant caution, presumably, Mathew added that in his view, the Commission's questionnaire did not impinge upon any of the basic features of the Constitution. According to him, these features were: the separation of powers, independence of the judiciary, and the fundamental rights. "The questionnaire in no way concerned these features", he is reported to have said.

Be that as it may, the implications of the document, which one popular fortnightly described as "Mathew's attempt at bulldozing the judiciary", are bound to be far-reaching. All the more so in view of the learned judge's own admission that "this time the Law Commission means business and wants to bring about absolutely drastic changes."

2. ECONOMISTS DISAGREE

ONE of the less endearing features of John Kenneth Galbraith's utterances while in India recently was the consistency with which the distinguished professor ran down those of his colleagues back home whose views on economic issues did not quite coincide with his own. Galbraith's frequent digs at Milton Friedman and Arthur Laffer in particular often came close to betraying an unbecoming pettiness of mind, although such cracks went down rather well with his Indian audiences.

Admittedly, there is nothing novel about the former Ambassador's critical remarks on Milton Friedman at least; they only typify the attitude of the American liberal establishment towards the Nobel laureate whose relentless advocacy of free-market economics has been seen by many to inform the policies of the Reagan Administration.

What is surprising, however, is the criticism that Friedman has succeeded in attracting from yet another section of the economic fraternity whose influence on the present Administration's thinking has been no less profound and who have, therefore, been viewed by liberals like Galbraith with equal disfavour. Jude Wanniski is a leading spokesman of this relatively new breed of "supply-side" economists, and he is reported to have alleged that Friedman's brand of monetarism has been ruinous to such countries as England and

Israel, a criticism that is shared by numerous anti-market economists the world over.

Friedman himself responded to this charge with characteristic candour in a recent interview. "I take it," he said, "that if Jude Wanniski is ill, his physician prescribes the proper medicine, but if Jude refuses to take it and as a result does not recover, he holds his physician responsible. I am responsible for the advice I gave to Israeli officials on my last visit there more than four years ago. That advice was good then and is good now. I am not responsible for the disastrous inflation that has occurred because they have followed very different policies than those I favoured."

"The same goes for Britain," continued Friedman. "I admire Mrs. Thatcher; her announced policy was and is splendid. However, she has not been able to carry out the policy: Taxes and spending have gone up, not down, there has been little if any decline in government regulation and ownership, and monetary growth, though probably lowered substantially on average, has been highly erratic."

Small wonder, then, that the high-priest of monetarism described the performance of the British economy under Mrs. Thatcher in a recent telecast over the BBC as "terrible". That, anyway, has supplied those on the left in England and elsewhere with a fresh stock of ammunition with which to attempt to blast the establishment.

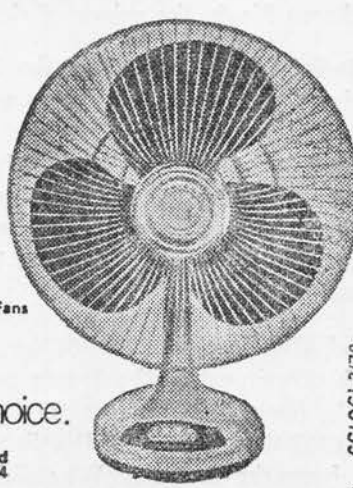
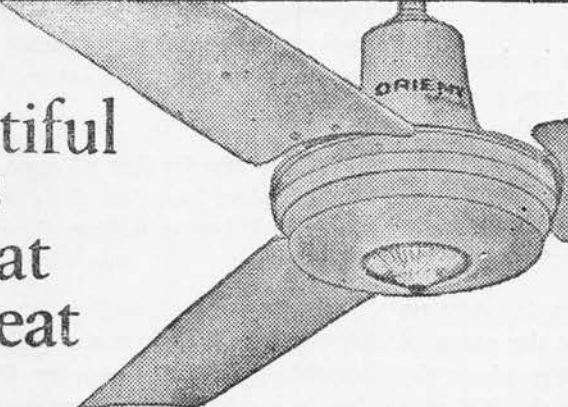
U.K. TOPS AID DONOR LEAGUE TABLE AGAIN IN 1980-81

THE United Kingdom's pre-eminent position among bilateral aid donors to India has been emphasised once again by the "Economic Survey 1981-82" published recently by the Government of India.

According to the "Survey", the U.K. provided in 1980-81 Rs. 196.7 crores, as against Rs. 143.5 crores from the Federal Republic of Germany, Rs. 106.3 crores from the Netherlands, Rs. 90.2 crores from Japan, Rs. 82.4 crores from the U.S.A., Rs. 52.9 crores from Sweden, and Rs. 35.4 crores from the Eastern Bloc as a whole.

The "Survey" goes on to forecast that the U.K. will remain the largest bilateral donor to India in 1981-82. Over the last six financial years (1975-76 to 1980-81) the U.K. has provided more than Rs. 1,000 crores of bilateral assistance to India, as compared with some Rs. 170 crores from the Soviet Union.

The figures quoted by the "Survey" are all the more significant given that since 1975 all British aid commitments to India have been in grant form (no repayments or interest charges), in contrast to aid receipts from most other donors, including Eastern Bloc countries.



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A NATIONAL ALTERNATIVE

S. S. BANKESHWAR

TO talk about Opposition unity and United Fronts to defeat Indiraji's authoritarianism is a big joke indeed. The same old professional party wreckers and party splitters—the demolition squads of all political parties—are now talking about opposition unity!

Their tragedy is that they have not learnt any lesson from their blunders. They are the prisoners of their past and incapable of learning any lesson from it. They have totally lost their credibility. All of them, with a few exceptions, are potential Raj Narains. The difference is only of degree.

The Bharatiya Janata Party is perhaps the only one which has realised belatedly that no party can emerge as a National Alternative unless it establishes its credibility. Its decision to keep its identity, while willing to extend co-operation to other opposition parties on vital national issues, is a wise one.

Few parties in India have ever split on ideological considerations. The three splits in the Janata party, the two in the BLD after defecting from the Janata, the two in Raj Narain's after defecting from the BLD, the two in the original CPI, the half-a-dozen among the Naxalites after defecting from the original CPI, and the several splits in the original Socialist party and the recent two splits in the Congress (U) were never on ideological considerations at all.

When the causes for the various splits in these parties were personal ambitions of their leaders, and continue to be so, is there any point in trying the Janata-type experiment again? The very leaders who had raised the slogan of "Defeat both the Dictator and the Defectors" are now trying to join hands with the party of Shri Charan Singh, the prince of defectors!

Shri Madhu Limaye, who split the Janata party on the RSS issue, now says that it was not the cause of the split! Shri Jagjivan Ram had said throughout the last parliamentary election campaign that the RSS was a non-issue raised by the defectors only to split the Janata. When the election results proved disastrous for the Janata, Shri Ram raised the RSS bogey which he had himself dismissed.

Why did Shri Ram defect from the Janata after the Jan Sangh constituent of the Janata party had left it? Why did he leave the Congress (U) to form his own Congress (J)? Why did the BLD split again twice after defecting from the Janata? Why did Shri Charanjit Yadav's party split twice after defecting from the

BLD? Why did Shri Raj Narain's party split after defecting from the BLD? Why did the Congress (U) split?

Our Socialist party split half a dozen times. "Split, merge, split again, submerge and emerge again" has been the history of our Socialist party. Was the RSS or CIA or KGB responsible for these various splits in our opposition parties?

Shri George Fernandes had once said that whoever left the Janata for whatever reason (this included the RSS bogey) would be acting as an agent of Indiraji. When the "No Confidence" motion was brought before the Parliament, he defended the Janata Government magnificently, listing its glorious achievements, both real and imaginary. It was indeed a glorious, laudable and remarkable performance in defence of his "non-performing" government (to use his own words). He defected from the Janata party the very next morning!

The professional RSS, Jan Sangh and BJP baiters amongst the Opposition parties hardly talk about the RSS now! They say that the BJP is less dangerous than the Congress (I). Earlier, when they split the Janata party on the RSS issue, they had said that the RSS was more dangerous than Indiraji's authoritarianism. Shri Charan Singh wanted to achieve his life's ambition of becoming the Prime Minister of India with the help of Indiraji! During the Emergency, they had said that RSS co-operation was essential to fight Indiraji's dictatorship!

It is no wonder that all opposition parties and opposition leaders have lost their credibility. Let them first establish it before talking about the National Alternative.

The communist parties can never hope to come to power in India without a military coup, which is impossible in a large country like ours. The present Janata is a party of the two weakest constituents of the original party. It is a party of leaders without followers or cadre.

The BLD without the ageing Shri Charan Singh is a zero. The Congress (J) or the Congress (S) is a joke. Shri Bahuguna's or Shri Charanjit's or Shri Raj Narain's party can at best hope only to win two or three seats in municipal or panchayat elections here and there. The Bharatiya Janata is the only party which has the potential to become the National Alternative after Indiraji is out of our political scene.

Our opposition parties are back to Square 1 (1952), and indeed in a worse position now. What our opposition parties then lacked in quantity, they made up at least in quality in 1952 and 1967. And now? Neither quality nor quantity!

Just one of the calibre of the late Dr. Shyama Prasad Mookerji, the late Shri N. C. Chatterjee, the late Shri Nath Pai, the late Shri Mahavir Tyagi, Shri H. V. Kamath, Shri M. R. Masani, Prof. Purshottam Mavalankar, etc., is worth, undoubtedly, more than a multitude of the present deaf and dumb M.P.s.

J.P.'s greatest achievement was in bringing the RSS and the Jan Sangh into the main stream of our national life. The breakers of the Janata, however, successfully sabotaged J.P.'s ambition of creating a National Alternative by isolating the Jan Sangh constituent of the Janata.

As conceived by J.P., the Janata was the real "National Alternative" which its power-hungry, aged leaders destroyed. With their dual personalities, they preached one thing and practised the opposite!

There is no scope for several Congress parties, several Janata parties, several communist parties, several socialist parties, etc. The strongest will survive and the rest will vanish. The voters will ultimately decide which is the real Congress, the real Janata, the real communist, the real socialist party, and so on in our country. The parties which are trying to merge again (to split again?) are parties of leaders without followers and without cadres.

What we, the people of India, are looking forward to is the emergence of an honest, intelligent and patriotic force believing more than anything else in science, technology and hard work. No more "strikes" or "Bandhs" which stop production. No more discrimination on the basis of religion or caste. Let merit alone be the consideration.

Let abolition of our caste system be by legislation so that the vested interest in the caste system will no longer survive. The irony is that the strongest opponents of the caste system are the strongest opponents of any attempt to abolish the caste system by legislation, because they are its beneficiaries! Any private bill brought before Parliament for the abolition of the caste system is doomed to failure because of the selfish and unprincipled ambivalence in the bulk of its very opponents!

A National Alternative now, after destroying it? Our opposition parties are today in search of a non-existent black cat in a dark room!

India, Pakistan and Kashmir

A Simple Solution

ACCORDING to Radio Pakistan (March 28th broadcast), the Kashmir problem still remains to be solved! Indeed, for quite some time, Pakistani leaders have been repeatedly stating that Kashmir is the stumbling block that prevents Indo-Pakistani friendship.

On the other hand, the leaders of India have repeatedly said that the only Kashmir problem that remains is the problem of the Pakistani-occupied portion of Kashmir! This shows that a dialogue about Kashmir seems to be a necessary step, even if we decide merely to tolerate it, at least as a necessary evil.

The Pakistani argument is as old as the difference of opinion between India and Pakistan expressed in the U.N. about Kashmir's accession to India after Partition. It cannot be denied that the Pakistani demand for holding a plebiscite in Kashmir about accession to India or Pakistan cannot stand the test of reality. There have been many elections successfully held in Kashmir. These have never been boycotted by the Kashmiri people.

It seems some nations are secretly supporting the Pakistani argument in order to prevent friendly relations and co-operation between India and Pakistan. So India can afford to plan for a diplomatic turn to the so-called Kashmir problem.

The U.N.O. has the International Court of Justice to help solve the sort of problem that India faces in relation to Kashmir. It seems to be the best course for India to propose that the so-called Kashmir problem be heard by the International Court. If Pakistan agrees, India need not hesitate to take courage in both hands and once for all make it clear to Pakistan that we mean what we say about friendship with the world. For that we are ready to take any reasonable risk, though in the context of national sovereignty we are not bound to do so.

Perhaps this would be a better and more positive course than negatively saying repeatedly that the Simla spirit allows only bilateral dealings in Indo-Pakistani relations, not multi-lateral moves. What is the use of trying to save the spirit of the Simla Agreement if it cannot prevent the erosion of Indo-Pakistani friendship. Both nations may eventually be dragged to the battle-field. That will enable the super-powers to misuse their armaments in this sub-continent. It will be a disastrous development and bring unimaginable destruction on the people of both nations.

S. G. MAMPALLI

The Falkland Islands Crisis

RASHMI TANEJA

IT seems hardly conceivable that the events taking place on a remote British colony, worthy of a comic opera by Gilbert and Sullivan, would result in an international crisis whose resonance is felt around the world.

It all began on March 19 when a group of Argentine merchants looking for scrap metal landed at Leith Harbour in South Georgia, an icy barren British island 1000 miles off the coast of Argentina and 800 miles away from the Falkland Islands. They provoked the local residents, mainly scientists, by raising the Argentine flag and singing the national anthem.

Britain protested, and dispatched her Antarctic ice patrol ship HMS Endurance to look into the matter. A few days later, things began to look less droll. The Argentine Government reacted by sending warships to the Falklands, and on April 2 announced that the Argentine forces had "recovered" the islands through "a successful military operation."

For Mrs. Margaret Thatcher's government, the invasion marked the beginning of a traumatic and testing week, the most serious crisis to date in her three years in office. In the special session of Parliament held on Saturday, April 3, the first since the Suez expedition in 1956, the Conservative government was roundly condemned for failing to pre-empt the crisis. It was blamed for the humiliation suffered by the country. M.P.s on both sides of the House were in a jingoistic, vengeful mood.

Mrs. Thatcher announced their government's intention to regain sovereignty of the islands by diplomatic means. If these failed, she announced, Britain would not hesitate to use force.

As half the navy steamed out of Portsmouth harbour for its two-week voyage to the South Atlantic, the debacle claimed its first casualties; Lord Carrington, the able Foreign Secretary, and his two deputies announced their resignations.

Amid cries for revenge from the press, the Parliament and the public, the British Prime Minister was propelled into responding with the only political card that she had—military retaliation. For the British public, the loss of the remote islands symbolised wounded national pride, a loss of face. It jogged

visions of the days of Francis Drake and Lord Nelson when Britannia ruled the waves.

The mass media's portrayal of the invasion as the gravest crisis since Suez was certainly exaggerated. It was only an instance of gross ineptitude and bungling by the Ministers concerned. In the pervading bellicose mood, the long term consequences of Britain's counter-invasion were not considered or were hastily brushed aside.

Meanwhile, in Argentina itself, the military adventure provided the country's leaders a welcome distraction from its urgent internal problems. A week before the invasion, thousands of people had demonstrated against the government in the streets of Buenos Aires and Mendoza.

Since the coup of 1976, the military regime of Argentina has had a long history of repression and holds an appalling record on human rights. An estimated 20,000 people are known to have "disappeared" with several members of the junta implicated in the murders. The large crowds were also demonstrating against the depressed state of the economy.

With inflation running at 143%, unemployment at 13% and growing criticism at home, President Galtieri sought to exploit the one issue that would unite all Argentines. The news of the successful macho invasion was greeted with jubilation. The same streets of the capital Buenos Aires, which were filled with anti-government protestors, now had euphoric crowds proclaiming General Galtieri a national hero.

The Falklands or the Malvinas as they are called in Argentina are declared by General Galtieri to be "part of our national patrimony." The dispute between Britain and Argentina goes back to 1833 when the Argentine garrison was thrown out by the Royal Navy. Since then, the Falkland islands and their dependencies have been continuously held by Britain. The Argentines claim they were ceded to Britain with the collapse of the Spanish Empire in South America.

Today, the archipelago boasts a population of 1800 people and 600,000 sheep. The Welsh and Scottish-descended inhabitants have declared their intention to have no truck with the mainland. For the past two decades, negotiations between Britain and Argentina have produced no results, with the British government maintaining that no changes will be made without the consent of the islanders.

In the meantime as Argentina finds herself isolated with several countries, particularly the members of the EEC imposing trade sanctions against her, the two super powers have stepped into the conflict. Initially, the Soviet Union maintained a cautious neutrality by abstaining in the Security Council vote. As the crisis unfolded, it placed the blame squarely on Great Britain, declaring that the crisis was a natural result of British colonialism.

A substantial trading partner of Argentina, the Soviet Union would derive considerable satisfaction from the fall of their ideological adversary and vehement critic, Mrs. Margaret Thatcher, even though this would mean propping up a right-wing dictatorship!

The United States finds itself placed in a difficult and embarrassing situation. The U.S. administration finds itself caught between Argentina's rulers with whom it enjoys close links, and Mrs. Margaret Thatcher, President Reagan's staunchest ally. Mrs. Thatcher has consistently backed American defence and economic policies. The United States, already in grave trouble with most of her Latin American neighbours, can ill afford to alienate President Galtieri, thereby precipitating another crisis in her own backyard.

The United States has assumed the role of an "honest broker" with Secretary of State Alexander Haig shuttling between the two capitals in a bid to head off a shooting war in the South Atlantic. The first round of negotiations were inconclusive. The chief sticking point has been Argentina's insistence on her sovereignty over the islands being recognised, as a precondition to her withdrawal of an estimated 9,000 troops stationed on the Falklands.

The American proposal of a tripartite administration with Britain, U.S. and Argentina sharing the administration for an interim period before negotiations on a long-term solution have also been rejected.

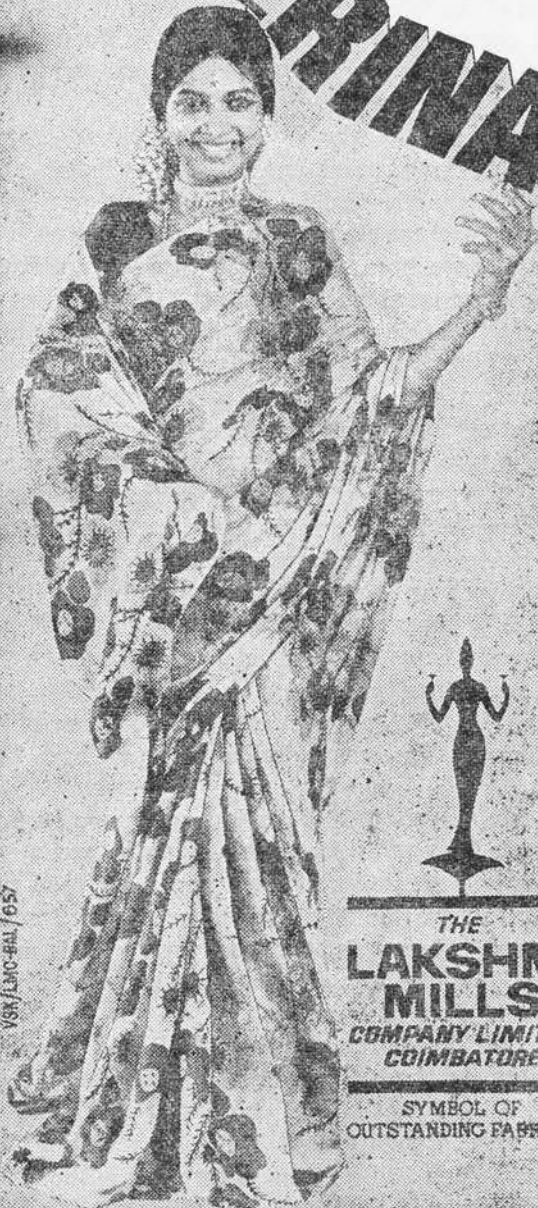
As the protagonists gird themselves for battle, they are also pondering over other possible solutions—the leaseback or the Hongkong formula, under which Argentina retains sovereignty, and Britain runs the administration. Another idea to be considered is bringing the islands under United Nations Supervision along with the British and Argentine presence, until such time as both sides reach agreement.

An exercise in brinkmanship certainly for General Galtieri and Mrs. Thatcher. At stake lie the future of both governments. The British prime minister may perhaps be reflecting on the verity and poignancy of a maxim of her old adversary, Sir Harold Wilson: "A week in politics is a long time."

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Soviet Media Sensitivity on Foreign Aid

RAM SWARUP

SOVIET citizens have long grumbled that the USSR's foreign-aid program imposes a heavy burden on the Soviet economy, and is a major cause of the chronic shortages of food products in Soviet shops. Of late, the granting of credits and the reported diversion of supplies to Poland seem to have strengthened the popular belief that Soviet sacrifices are being made in the interest of other countries. Several items in the Soviet media have recently broached this sensitive subject, which is not usually discussed in the press.

In fact, Soviet foreign aid to the developing world is not, according to Western estimates, at all high. In 1979, for example, it amounted to no more than 0.12 per cent of the GNP. Since the Soviet authorities never release comprehensive overall totals on foreign aid, however, Soviet citizens often tend to exaggerate the size of the program.

In recent months, the USSR's exports to Poland seem to have increased appreciably, including shipments of many commodities in short supply at home. For example, there are reports that shipments of meat to Poland have been considerably stepped up. Radio Warsaw announced on December 29 that since the second half of November, the USSR had supplied Poland 32,000 tons of meat and that further shipments were expected shortly. Radio Moscow also carried the announcement, *but in Polish, for external consumption only*. The failure of the domestic media of the USSR to report this news gives an indication of the sensitivity of the subject, and means that many Soviet citizens may not have heard about it.

Had they heard about it, they might have felt that the USSR's largess with meat shipments for Poland could hardly have come at a worse time. Overall Soviet agricultural production, it has officially been disclosed, fell by 2 per cent in 1981 from that of the previous year. The actual decline may well have been greater.

The fact that the USSR has just undergone its third poor grain harvest in succession virtually guarantees that domestic shortages of meat and other food products will plague the Soviet consumer for the foreseeable future. No wonder then that the domestic media of the USSR has chosen to keep silent about meat supplies to Poland.

In an article that coincided with Radio Warsaw's announcement about Soviet meat supplies for Poland, the Soviet newspaper *Trud* tried to explain to its readers why, despite official statistics revealing that meat production had gone up, meat sales in the USSR had gone down:

"In the past decade, (meat) production has gradually increased . . . during the Ninth Five-Year Plan, the average per capita meat consumption was (in slaughter weight) 56 kilograms, while in the past (Tenth) Five-Year Plan period it was 58 kilograms. In the present Five-Year Plan period the planned figure is 62 kilograms. The sale of meat and meat products through state and co-operative trade has, however, declined slightly in the last decade, from 40 to 30 kilograms per capita."

Trud goes on to say that this decline has come about because some meat is distributed through cafeterias, sanatoriums, and children's establishments; some lost in transport; and so on. The newspaper does not, however, provide exact figures demonstrating how this has led to a fall in per capita consumption. At the same time, it is evident that *Trud* is anxious to prevent rumors about the shortfall being caused by foreign exports:

"Incidentally, rumors sometimes heard to the effect that we are supposed to be selling too much meat abroad are unfounded: the import of these products over the past decade has risen from 165,000 to 611,000 tons, while exports have, on the other hand, decreased in this period from 55,000 to 34,000 tons."

This passage strongly suggests that domestic grumbling about food aid—possibly to Poland, and almost certainly aggravated by the lack of hard information—may be on the rise. Similarly, a reader wrote last month to the newspaper *Komsomol 'skaya pravda'* to ask whether or not all the aid that the USSR was giving to the developing and other countries was not having a deleterious effect on the Soviet domestic economy.

The newspaper's reply assured readers that, on the contrary, Soviet aid to other countries was only undertaken if it was mutually beneficial to **both** sides. The publication of the letter and the reply to it again suggest that discontent may be becoming troublesome to the authorities.

Taken together, these bits and pieces of information cannot help leaving the impression that domestic grumbling about the burdens of aid to fraternal countries is gathering momentum inside the USSR. The situation is not likely to improve, since there can be little immediate hope that food and consumer goods supplies will improve in Soviet shops in the near future.

Politics and Literature

IN Bombay, there is the Asthik Samaj and the Bhajana Samaj; there are also two Sangeeth Sabhas belonging to rival groups. Therefore there is no reason why there should not be two Marathi Sahitya Sammelans.

We are living in an age of politics, and politics has entered all spheres of activity including literature. The rebel writers held their conference in Bombay and the Government abetted conference, the Marathi Sahitya Sammelan, in Raipur. Both groups have their own views and desire liberty to conduct their Sammelans in their own way.

Almost everyone these days wants to be a writer. Such a person is interested only in seeing his name in print. Most people seem to forget that the life of a writer is a hard struggle against heavy odds, and that only a few survive to become famous.

The pen is a formidable weapon. It has killed more writers than other people. The nobility of a writer's calling consists in his refusal to lie about what he knows to be the truth, and his resistance to oppression, wherever it may be found. A writer is not concerned with moral cosmetics. He is concerned with the truth wherever he may find it.

That there is rivalry among writers cannot be denied. They have their groups and their manifestoes. The ink from the pen of a writer should be more sacred than the parasitic blood of a defecting politician.

The writer who has nothing to say can be bought by a politician or by the Government machinery. A writer who has something to say will never fall into the clutches of a politician. Government awards to writers will not tempt him to become a propagandist for its policies.

Politicians know that most writers are vulnerable and that it is easy to tempt them. Writers who take to propaganda claim to be realists, to be concerned with the welfare of our society. They forget that realism and pragmatism are two different things. Truth is neither simple nor easily digestible. It is not a multivitamin pill to be given to an anaemic society.

The propagandist gives something to the people which they can easily swallow. With his half-truths and distortions, he is concerned with doping society

to serve his own ends. A serious writer will not accept this prostitution of his art.

An artist's life is essentially a lonely one. In course of time he learns to live with his loneliness. He does not seek public support. But this is hard on young writers, who love to move in groups and issue high-sounding manifestoes. This impulse often takes a political turn, and the politician gives the writer the delicious feeling of being wanted for a cause.

The politician says: "We want someone like you with a passion for justice and a passion for words." And the bait is usually swallowed. Politics has become a big business game. Politicians know that the welfare of the people or the ending of poverty is something only to be talked about. They are mainly concerned with their own welfare.

Shri P. L. Deshpande is a serious humorist. He is an ex-President of the Marathi Sahitya Sammelan. During the rebel session at Bombay, he declared: "It is high time writers told ministers not to show their faces at literary conferences where they have no right to come and pollute the literary arena."

I think it is not the fault of the politicians but of the Sammelans who invite such politicians. Shri Deshpande continued: "I have never come across any book written by the Union Information Minister, Shri Vasant Sathe, but it leaves me gasping for breath when I imagine him and Shri Antulay delivering discourses to literateurs at Sammelans."

P.L. also said that he agreed with the President, Smt. Malati Bedekar, that the ruling politicians were trying to convert self-respecting human beings into tame domestic animals, and added that protest should be registered "against those who invited ministers for literary conferences."

It is true that as far as possible, politicians should not be invited for such Sammelans, except where they happen to be eminent writers also, like Radhakrishnan or K. M. Munshi.

The protest Sammelan was a healthy one. But there will always be writers who, like defecting politicians, will go over to the side which gives them bread, butter and awards. These dual Sammelans will continue until writers realise that they cannot be bought into the committee room or the parade ground, that only in the sphere of art does humanity rise above its failures and inadequacies.

C. RAJU

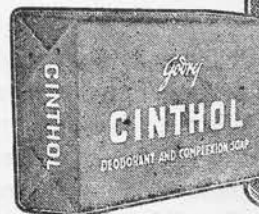
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Middle-Income Miseries

THE economic policies of our Government seem to be directed towards crushing or eliminating the middle-income group, and dividing the people of the country into only two classes—the very rich and the very poor. The latest budget is further proof to that effect. It gives no relief to the middle class. The rate of tax on the lowest taxable slab is 33%. This means that a person has to part with one-third of whatever he earns above Rs. 15,000 and almost 40% above Rs. 25,000 upto Rs. 30,000.

It has become difficult for persons in the middle-income group to afford a telephone or to travel by first class in trains. The difference between the first and second class suburban train fares in Bombay is almost twenty times. From V.T. to Dadar the second class fare is Re. 0.50, for first class it is Rs. 10. From V.T. to Thana the second class fare is Rs. 1.60, for first class it is Rs. 19. For long distance trains the difference is about five times. For Bombay-Pune it is Rs. 15 and Rs. 75. The conditions and services on the trains are deplorable.

For the middle-income group owning a flat, buying and maintaining a car, or travelling by air even in India is out of the question.

There is perhaps a method in this madness! It is persons from the middle-income group who are an irritant to our rulers. They represent the educated, the politically aware and alert. They insist on individual freedom and civil liberties. They protest most against mal-administration and exploitation, and expose corrupt politicians and ministers. The best way to silence them is to suppress them economically so that they have no time, money or energy left for such activities, beyond fighting for survival.

Better still, eliminate this class altogether, then we shall have the very rich from whom one can get the money to buy the votes from the very poor in order to remain in power for ever.

Our ministers, politicians, and bureaucrats are very fond of accusing the people of having a craze for buying foreign-made articles even when similar articles made in India are available much cheaper—the so-called “phoren craze”. This is a figment of their imagination and, in addition, an insult to the intelligence of ordinary people.

The people in India are not so stupid as to pay twice or three times the price for an article just because it is made in Europe, U.S.A. or Japan, if an equally

good one made in India is available. They do so for sound economic reasons. The fact is that as compared to articles made abroad, those made in India are often shoddy, unreliable, and of poor quality, and cost more than they are worth, because of lack of competition, and a protected and captive market.

Not that India cannot manufacture quality goods. It can, and does so, but the government forces the manufacturers to export these so-called “export quality” goods. Medium-class transistor radios and tape-recorders, and kitchen gadgets made in Europe, U.S.A., and Japan, which can now hardly be called luxury items, are better in quality, durability and performance, and in fact cheaper there, than similar ones made and available in India. Hence people are prepared to pay even the exorbitant customs duty or black-market price for them.

It is only the very rich who pay fabulous prices for foreign-made articles, but then these are usually luxury items of a class and quality not available in India.

Besides, one would like to know why these very ministers, politicians, and bureaucrats who accuse the people of having a “phoren craze”, themselves when returning from their junkets abroad come loaded with foreign-made articles, to pass through customs unchecked because of their position or diplomatic passports.

A. SOLOMON

OK Calcutta

THE writer and playwright David Selbourne is swimming against the Festival of India tide. A play he was commissioned to write for the People's Theatre of West Bengal has just had a successful premiere in Calcutta. It is the first time a British playwright has been commissioned to write a play to be performed in Bengali.

Selbourne wrote the piece under the title **The Trial of Mrs Gandhi**. That has necessarily been changed by the translator, director and principal actor, Utpal Dutt, since such overt references are not permitted to an episode that India's all-powerful premier would rather forget.

Nonetheless the woman in the dock is played by an actress with a distinctive white streak in the front of her hair, and is quite unmistakable to the audience.

(The Times, London)

THE WORLD OF BOOKS

THE RIGHT TO STRIKE. L. J. Macfarlane: Penguin Books, 1981.

IT is not uncommon for people in power and those around them to decry strikes by industrial workers as anti-social, anti-development and unpatriotic. Since strikes have the potential for disorganising at least some aspects of economic and social life, and hurting some or all sections of society, this view gains wide sympathy with the general public, even among those who are otherwise quite sceptical of the good intentions of the powers that be. The voices of condemnation become even more strident when service-oriented, non-industrial workers like doctors, nurses and teachers resort to strikes.

The right to strike has always been a controversial one. It is therefore important to examine it not merely as a legal right but which is, or can be, morally justified. This is precisely what Leslie J. Macfarlane attempts in his closely-argued analysis of the right to strike, the inspiration or provocation for which has been the British Conservative party's attempt to restrict that right by altering the law related to "closed shop" and "picketing."

Far more serious and distinctly anti-labour is the Indian government's Maintenance of Essential Services Act by which the union government has assumed sweeping powers to ban strikes in a wide range of industries. On February 8, 1982, as a reaction to a Supreme Court judgement, government defined essential services as covering all modes of transport, government services, defence establishments, banking and basic industries as well as "any service in connection with the affairs of the union or a state, not being a service specified in any of the foregoing categories."

Disruption of these essential services would invite detention without trial under the National Security Act.

These drastic measures, reminiscent of the dark days of the Emergency, are unprovoked and uncalled for. On the government's own claim, the industrial situation had vastly improved in 1980 and 1981, the total figure of man-days lost on account of labour-management disputes being only 13 million in 1980, less than a third for 1979. Industrial production too had shown a higher rate of growth than before.

On the other hand, it may be recalled that during 1975-76, when repressive measures were in force, there was an astonishing increase in man-days lost not due to strikes but to lock-outs, lay-offs and retrenchment. Yet, the Essential Services Act does not cover lock-outs by employers.

Perhaps the real reason behind this draconian measure is government's inability to tackle effectively the basic economic problems of inflation, black money and corruption. In desperation, it has sought to hit out at the workers.

In view of these developments it is vitally important to clarify some of the fundamental issues involved in the right to strike. Is it fundamental? Is it universal? Can it be morally justified? What about justified strikes? Are there some categories of workers who should never resort to strikes in any circumstances?

Although the right to strike does not appear in the U.N. Declaration of Human Rights, under Art. 8, 1d of the Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Covenant (1976), member-states undertake to ensure that right provided it is exercised in conformity with the laws of the particular country. Further, the Covenant stresses that not only states forbidding strikes but states whose laws do not provide for a collective stoppage of work, are in contravention of the Covenant.

Yet, the mere absence of a formal ban on stoppage of work does not guarantee freedom to strike, unless certain trade union and political conditions are present. Among the latter, Macfarlane mentions the attitude of government towards the trade unions. Trade unions must not be controlled by the government and not be subject to police interference or surveillance. Trade unions and workers must have the legal right to advocate strike action, call strike meetings, appeal for public support and picket peacefully. Police and security services must not be instructed to prevent unions from taking strike action and intimidate striking workers.

Government's intervention in any strike must be directed towards bringing about a settlement, not breaking the strike. Trade unions must have the right to protest against government's policies, and publicly criticise government's attitude and intervention in any dispute.

Amongst the important trade union conditions, it needs to be stressed that trade unions ought to be independent, not employer-controlled. Unions must have rules and procedures providing for the authorisation and calling of strikes, and for the provision of strike pay. It is also preferable to have unions whose internal organisation and procedure is democratic.

Even if trade unions are not democratically organised, this is no reason to deprive the workers of the right to strike, for it is the right of workers as workers and not just union members. In the last resort

it can be exercised even in the face of union hostility or lethargy.

As a fundamental right, this has several distinctive as well as controversial features. It is not universal but a "class" right, working class against employing class. Again, like the right to vote, the right to strike is an "instrumental" right — a means to an end rather than an end in itself.

Much turns on the nature of the end sought to be secured. This is true even of the traditional rights of freedom of speech and publication, which can be misused and have objectionable consequences. Yet, no democratic society would justify the abrogation of these rights.

Moreover, the right to strike can only be exercised "collectively", unlike other fundamental rights which inhere in the individual. It is also a "coercive" right. As seen by the trade unionists, the right to strike is the right to require fellow-workers to comply with a strike decision as well as to prevent other workers from taking over their jobs.

Finally, the right to strike is political. Human rights are not generally guaranteed by paper declarations but depend solely on whether the political system in the country permits and protects their exercise. The effectiveness of the right to strike therefore depends on the existence of independent trade unions which are free to take action without being subject to political interference. Where these conditions are lacking, the right is either not recognised at all or recognised purely as a nominal one.

Strikes are anathema to all totalitarian states, where workers undertake strikes only at high personal risk. Even a "working-class" Communist state cannot meet the challenges of an independent trade-union movement, as is proved by the fate of Solidarity in Poland. The strike is a collective weapon of attack and, unlike the right to vote, it cannot be easily manipulated and made into a tool of authoritarian rule. Hence, in totalitarian countries, strikes are generally suppressed.

In the developing countries of Asia and Africa, it has been said that the organised workers are a relatively privileged group, the right to strike is a luxury which poor countries cannot afford. This conclusion is unwarranted. In reality, the economic gulf between the labour aristocracy and the poor is much less than that between the labour aristocracy and the élite — the rich businessmen, politicians and professionals.

Industrial action by skilled workers in support of their economic interests need not be in conflict with the interests of the poor, nor need it be against the over-all goals of development. It may be recalled that during the Emergency in India, the marginal increase in production was achieved entirely at the cost of workers, who were prevented from striking and whose

additional wages and D.A. were impounded. Significantly, during the same period, the number of man-days lost due to lockouts rose dramatically from 24% in 1975 to 70% in 1976.

Like other rights, the right to strike has no absolute moral validity. Macfarlane makes no attempt to brush aside the moral dilemmas arising out of the right to strike. He faces them squarely and in the end reasserts his faith in it as a basic democratic one.

As a class right it is not at all evident how the right to strike in order to secure one's own advantage has any claim to be moral. Marxism tries to overcome this difficulty by associating the right to strike with the liberation of the entire working-class from the shackles of capitalist exploitation.

Again, it can be argued that as an instrumental right, if the right to strike is nothing more than a means of advancing the selfish interests of a particular group of workers, it lacks positive moral value. Yet, self-interest in itself is not immoral, unless it is pursued at the expense of the valid interests of others or if it fails to contribute to the general good of society.

It is also true that in most industries, workers are not given the choice to join or not to join the union. If membership is obligatory, it is not clear in what sense forced-choice union members have a moral obligation to obey a union strike-call. However, where there is free-choice trade-unionism, the right to strike becomes meaningful because the strike-call proceeds from a strike-meeting, and the individual worker can participate in the strike-decision. As such, it has strong moral claims to be accepted as a democratic, collective right.

What about the right not to strike? Are there any moral grounds on which the strikers have the right to force non-strikers to quit work? Unions often feel that non-strikers have no right to thwart the union's purpose, as they too benefit from the success of the strike. This claim has very doubtful moral validity. Certainly, unions have no moral basis at all in forcing workers from outside to support their strike.

With regard to strikes in essential supplies and services, Macfarlane asserts that government has the right even to use troops to maintain essential services like food-supply, which may be cut off by dockers' or road haulers' strikes. However, there is no reason why transport and communication workers including post and telegraph workers should not strike. While Macfarlane has no objection to strikes by the lowly-paid, non-medical staff of hospitals, provided they maintain minimum emergency cover, he insists that doctors, surgeons and nurses have a moral duty never to strike, "no matter how deep or bitter their sense of grievance".

It is interesting to note that Macfarlane does not

withhold the right to strike from teachers although he admits that such a strike can easily erode the relationship of trust between the teacher and the taught. A strike should not be used by teachers simply as a weapon to secure their demands but only as a last resort to protest against the refusal of authorities to submit their claims to arbitration, or to draw attention to long-standing, unattended grievances or as a protest against policies which undermine the education system itself.

In this context it may be noted that the present examination boycott by college teachers in Maharashtra fulfils these criteria and may therefore be said to be morally justified. Despite pleas and warnings over a long period of time, government has persistently refused even to talk or negotiate with the teachers. It also needs to be stressed that union-membership for college teachers is not compulsory, and teachers have not been coerced to join the boycott. Moreover, the strike-call was given at democratically organised staff-meetings in various colleges. This strike therefore represents a genuinely spontaneous teachers' action against an insensitive and autocratic administration both at government and university level.

In most strikes, some section of society or the other is adversely affected, and strikers cannot at all times claim to fight out their disputes without regard to the impact on the lives of other members of the community. The striker may claim that his family suffers as much as the families of non-strikers. Here, it is only logical to point out that whereas the striker has brought these burdens on himself of his own free-will in the hope of later benefits, the others have the burdens imposed on them with no expectation of compensating gains. The weighing and balancing of the overall gains and disadvantages of a strike to society is indeed difficult, but it has to be undertaken if a strike is to have moral validity.

All said and done, it needs to be pointed out that in the very practical game of politics, industrial conflict is not seen in terms of justice but of power, and most strikes, lockouts, etc., are sought to be justified only in terms of "moral realism".

Despite the moral hazards involved in the right to strike, we may conclude with Macfarlane that the political case for accepting the right to strike is an overriding one. Strikes are a weapon of mass-protest, and governments cannot easily manipulate them to their own advantage. The strike is therefore a good barometer of the actual conditions of democratic and human rights in a country. Wherever this right is proscribed by an authoritarian government, the ban may be defied and a struggle conducted to defend human rights as is now being witnessed in Poland.

ALOO DALAL

THE SIKKIM CONNECTION

BRAHMANAND MISHRA

WITH the cremation of Palden Namgyal, the ex-Chogyal of Sikkim, on February 19 one chapter of little Sikkim's history came to an end. Another began, for while the late Chogyal's funeral pyre was still blazing away atop the hill, the palace ground was sprawling with thousands of Nepalese, Bhutias, Lepchas and Tsongs. They insisted on doing homage to Tobgyal Namgyal, the eldest surviving son as the 13th consecrated Chogyal of Sikkim.

Led by monks from Sikkim's Premier Buddhist monastery, Pemayantse Lamas from other establishments chanted a benediction; streams of villagers presented ceremonial **Khadas** (white scarves), students sang the old Sikkimese national anthem and paraded round the palace yelling "Long live Denzong Chogyal".

New Delhi was, however, prepared to overlook the flamboyant demonstration as an innocent and spontaneous outcome of grief, if it had not been for the more ominous intervention of ten legislators. Towards the end of the long-drawn-out ritual of obeisance, Mr. Bhim Bahadur Gurung, leader of the opposition Congress (Revolutionary) party, handed Prince Wangchuck a memorandum typed out on a sheet of court paper with a one-rupee stamp. It read:

"On the 19th day of February, year nineteen hundred and eightytwo, Tibetan Calendar Chaya-Jya and Chu-Khy, the People of Sikkim have decided to offer traditional Scarf to the 13th consecrated Chogyal of Sikkim, Tobgyal Wangchuck Tenzing Namgyal at the Tsuk-la-Khang of Gangtok at 3 p.m."

Since the throne was abolished in 1975, following a special poll of May that year, Sikkim's protectorate status was withdrawn and the Kingdom merged with India. New Delhi thinks she cannot ignore what amounts to an act of sedition.

New Delhi believes that the politicians who drew up the document acclaiming Prince Wangchuck as Sikkim's 13th Chogyal are exploiting Sikkim's sense of loss and using Wangchuck, 29-year-old Prince who went to Harrow and took an honours degree in Business Management from the Ealing School of Business in London.

Though Prince Wangchuck refuses to be drawn into talk of a "Coronation" which he says would be a state function, he does seem convinced that "the succession is automatic". According to palace sources, though the Prince admits that he cannot have any temporal role because of the changed political situation in today's Sikkim, he takes his religious functions as the late Chogyal's heir very seriously.

While the hour-long palace ceremony went on, the people of the capital town of little Gangtok were reminded of a similar anti-Indian demonstration staged on December 15, 1968. Hundreds of school children were then made to line up along the main road leading towards the Indian political office with placards "Indians go back", "Down with Indian Imperialism", "Down with the Indian Army".

Ever since May 1975, when this strategically vulnerable state was merged with India, it is run by a galaxy of top officials with a full-fledged Governor and a Chief Secretary at the top. The Governor has his own Secretariat at Rajbhavan, previously known as Bada Kothi or Indian political office. He is assisted by a Military Secretary and an IAS Secretary in civil matters. Other departments such as finance, transport, agriculture, health, forests, etc. are controlled by 23 I.A.S. Officers nominated from Sikkim Government Officials recruited by the former Chogyal.

Besides, there are 3 I.A.S. from the I.A.S. Cadres and 5 IPS officers on deputation from the Centre. Then there are two Secretaries on deputation from the Ministry of Home Affairs to assist this strategically significant tiny state bordering Tibet.

There are nine thousand state employees to help run this top-heavy administration, which pretends to look after the interests of less than three lacs of inhabitants. Earlier, when this state was under the former Chogyal, there was only one Private Secretary, one Chief Secretary and one Principal Administrative Officer, five Departmental Secretaries, 110 police personnel, and four Deputy Superintendents of Police.

To enable little Sikkim to bear this heavy burden, New Delhi provides Sikkim with around 80 crores of rupees every five years. Sikkim's contribution comes to barely 4 crores per year. The police administration is headed by one Inspector-General and assisted by one Deputy Inspector-General, one IAC, and scores of SP's and Dy. SP's. The police officers now total one thousand. There is a huge establishment of Intelligence personnel. There is also a Special Service Bureau meant to train the local populace to maintain a vigil in this vulnerable area. Still, the administration is considered loose.

The state Chief Minister, Mr. Nar Bahadur Bhandari, had announced that he was considering bringing sedition charges against the 10 legislators for acclaiming Prince Wangchuck Namgyal as the new Chogyal. Hectic consultations are reported to be in progress among senior Government officials both in New Delhi and Gangtok on the action to be taken against the members of the Sikkim Assembly. (SPS Feature)

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