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The Root of All Evil

S. A. A. PINTO

IN its size, scope and varied manifestations, corruption in India has assumed surrealist proportions. Witness the Antulay affair and the installation of the Bhajanlal ministry. The description "surrealist" may be questioned on the ground that such events have become so common and universal as to be regarded as the natural order of things.

Mr. Nani Palkhivala has been distinguishing corruption here from that elsewhere by saying that in India it has become an accepted way of life. Today, it is more than that. In many walks of life, people find that it is dangerous to be honest.

There have been many explanations and theories as to how this appalling state of affairs came about, but few have been prepared to point a finger at the real culprit. The truth is, that all that has been happening is the entirely predictable outcome of socialism, its instrument, centralised planning, and the economic system—if it can be called a system—that they have spawned.

Let us first examine what planning has done to us. Development expenditure is admittedly inflationary to the extent of the time lag between investment in assets and production of goods. Such inflation can only be justified and mitigated by the value-added element of the gross national product, ultimately resulting from the investment and its simultaneous distribution as measured by the benefit accruing to the less privileged members of society.

When, however, the expenditure exceeds the country's own resources, i.e. income generated by the state enterprises (including the railways) and that mobilised by government loans, taxation of all kinds and saving schemes, and there is a resort to printing of new currency (deficit financing), inflation is reinforced and prolonged. The duration of that time lag itself makes a qualitative difference.

When that investment is predominantly in capital-

intensive heavy industry, the demand for funds increases, and they need to be supplemented even further from external borrowing and/or printing of new currency. Secondly, the gestation being longer, the delay in the arrival of the goods which would otherwise absorb some of the inflationary pressure is further extended, and the opportunity for preventing the triggering off of the inflationary chain reaction is lost.

Thirdly, and what is most important, by its very definition capital-intensive heavy industry uses technology that is labour-saving. Hence, whatever increase there is in employment potential continues to be outstripped by the rate of accretion to the labour force.

As the increase in the supply and circulation of money arose in our case out of investment in heavy industry, which did not immediately increase the supply of goods, their prices had to shoot up. Vote-sensitive politicians had to impose controls. As controls cannot and did not reduce the shortages, the rewards of evading the controls and indulging in black-marketing became attractive, generating black money.

This made bribery a highly profitable investment generating, in its turn, more black money. It called for further controls, enforcement personnel, an expanding machinery and bureaucracy for administration. Side by side, price maintenance and other subsidies became politically unavoidable.

The tragedy is that planning failed even in its primary objective of promoting the basic industries in the key sector and the consolidation of the industrial infrastructure: power, transport, coal, steel and, until it was recently decontrolled, cement have been in acute short supply.

The problem has been further compounded by the fact that, since controls were concentrated on the prices of essential commodities, the manufacturers were not left with sufficient margins to re-invest in expansion (the black market benefited only the middlemen). Therefore, private investment preferred the manufacture of non-essentials where profits were higher because there were no controls. For several

years now, Mr. Prem Shankar Jha, the eminent economist, has been carrying on a single-handed campaign against this lop-sided policy.

It was in 1951 that The Industries (Development and Regulation) Act (IDRA) was enacted in order to enforce planned priorities, and to ensure the utilisation of scarce physical resources in accordance with the pre-ordained pattern of development. The socialist-ideological foundation was the Industrial Policy Resolution, which carved out the spheres of industrial activity between the state (the public sector) and the individual (the private sector).

It meant that key sectors of activity, "the commanding heights of the economy", were to be reserved for the state and, if they were already in the private sector, were to be nationalised in due course. This applied especially where they involved command over financial resources, i.e. insurance and banking. IDRA implemented the policy, and under it the politicians in power and the bureaucrats decided who produced what, where and in how much quantity.

Anyone who has been to a post office, a ration shop, a police station, a public hospital or a civil or criminal court, will have observed how the well-dressed, well-heeled individual, the person of stature—physical or social—attracts preferential treatment, especially when external appearances are translated into cash.

No research or statistics and no acute sense of observation are required to realise that favours are dispensed and paid for on a far bigger scale at the IDRA level than at the ration-shop and police-station level.

Since IDRA restricted the creation of industrial capacity by licence granted on predetermined criteria and since, moreover, inefficiency and corruption inevitably slowed down the grant of licences, demand has invariably outstripped supply. India is the only country in the world where there is such a thing as "excess" production which is punishable.

The efficient units who could increase their output are limited to stipulated levels, which they observe if they are law-abiding. Consequently, we have had scarcity and monopoly created by law. The Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Practices Act (MRTP) does literally what its name seems to imply.

Elsewhere, the emphasis of the attack is on price fixing cartels or on a producer or a combination of producers monopolising the market by swallowing up competitors or by paralysing them. In India, by preventing increase in industrial capacity on grounds of concentration of economic power, the MRTP Commission has been instrumental in perpetuating scarcity and monopoly and made restrictive trade practices highly lucrative.

Hence, vast profits can be made both by obtaining

a new industrial licence for oneself and by preventing the issue of a licence to someone else. (The same applies to licences and permits for a-hundred-and-one other activities). The temptation to offer bribes has thus become irresistible; the size of the bribes has made refusal of bribes recklessly prodigal.

Meanwhile, in order to finance the vast bureaucracy required to administer the array of laws and regulations, and also the subsidies required to blunt the effects of rising prices (because of acute scarcity, deficit financing and the cascading effect of indirect taxes), the vicious circle has been accelerated by higher taxation, direct and indirect, leading to tax evasion, which is both the source and the effect of bribery.

In this situation, favours from politicians in power become indispensable to the businessman, who has to gird up his loins to be competitive in his dishonesty in order merely to remain in business, leave alone optimise its size and profits. He is, therefore, prepared to invest any sum of money to ensure re-election of his favourite politician. He often hedges his bets by financing his rival as well — just in case!

As competition in this has increased, each election has become more expensive than the next. Since all the politicians are socialists, remember, the unrestricted acceptance of donations openly from businessmen was embarrassing. Therefore, initially, they were regulated; ultimately, they were prohibited by law. Hence all donations have had to be in black money. This again has resulted in widespread and blatant generation of black money.

In order to maintain the edge, politicians have had to follow the stick and the carrot methods alternately, by passing restrictive legislation or threatening to do so and by offering exemptions or relaxations, or by plainly conniving at evasion.

Nationalisation of industries is one such method. In one fell swoop, it takes away what private individuals have built up over decades and dumps it in the general government pool. I should say, the cess pool. It also adds enormously to the power and patronage of the ruling politicians. It creates new job opportunities for favoured bureaucrats who may be stuck in a groove. It increases the operation of inefficiency, nepotism and downright corruption.

In short, it widens the area of darkness in which reside the poor and the unemployed. And it places all citizens, even more than before, at the mercy of the ruling politicians.

Is it surprising that politicians in India will stoop to anything to get elected, to become ministers and remain in power? It is said, no Congressman has died poor. It is also said that if he has, then he must have been eccentric, i.e. honest, or stark mad, i.e. he really believed that he had to practise austerity in his private

life. It should be even less surprising that citizens, businessmen in particular, mortgage their self-respect to politicians and bureaucrats.

"What is it", asked my very good friend Mr. George Fernandes rhetorically, "that makes a man a rat?" The answer, in one word, is socialism.

What does the future hold? However powerful the vested interests, they cannot compete in numbers with the growing multitude below the poverty line and the unemployed. Those registered with the Labour Exchanges alone numbered 16.2 million at the end of June, 1981. The actual total number should be of the order of 50 million at least. They are unorganised today and, as all politicians and political parties profess to be socialist (in addition, of course, to being democratic and secular), distinctions amongst them have been blurred and the votes of this class of people have tended to go in the direction of politicians and parties that have had the largest resources for organisation and communication.

Whatever short term benefits these people could manage to extract at or around the time of an election were accepted as good enough reason for bestowing the only favour in their power, namely, the vote. But when even without organisation, they could directly connect any repressive policies such as compulsory sterilisation with any set of politicians, they acted with spontaneous fury, as in 1977. Once the memory of this wore away, the routine was resumed, as has been seen in the 1980 elections.

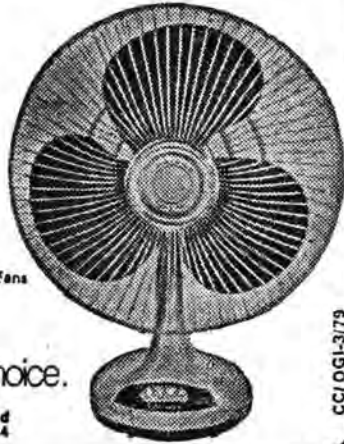
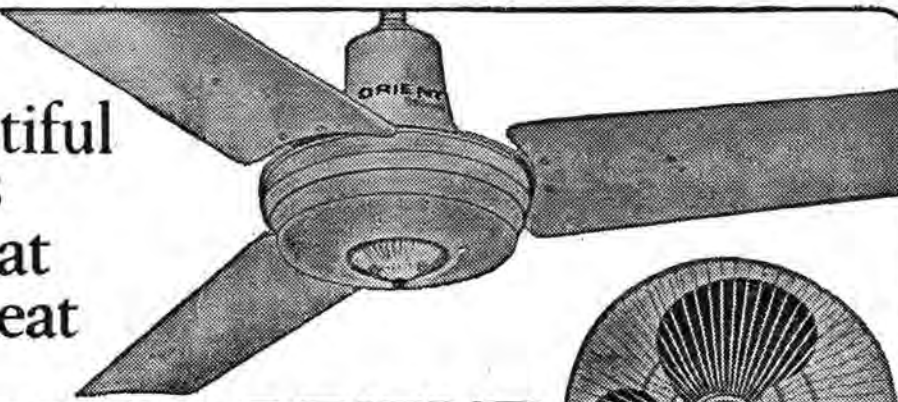
There is this difference, that because of the realisation in 1977 that they had the power to remove an entrenched political party, there is bound to be the recurrence of the urge to re-enact the experience in the future.

Visualise our economic system as a tent. Today, this shelters about half the population. The other half, especially the unemployed, are outside the tent. There is a limit to which the tent can be stretched, even with aid from abroad. We have to build a bigger and better tent or several new tents to accommodate those outside.

This cannot be done by passing a resolution in the Lok Sabha. People have to be put to work, and the vast material resources of the country have to be exploited. The present system is not only not geared to do this, but those in charge do not seem to be interested. In the meanwhile, those outside the tent are being organised, mainly by groups belonging to the extreme left, who can only prescribe stronger doses of the mixture as before.

This is the psychological moment for a new political party to reorganise the people outside the tent, both in the rural and in the urban areas, by communicating the message that the existing socialist system has failed, and can never succeed in any other form.

The people are not interested in whether it is socialism or any other ism. They are interested in bread, jobs and homes, with freedom if possible; if not, without freedom. The new party must be able to show that there is an alternative, and that bread with freedom is possible.



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A VARIETY OF COMMENT

K. S. VENKATESWARAN

1. MOBUTU'S COURAGE

EVER since Zaire (formerly Congo) took the initiative of resuming diplomatic relations with Israel in May this year, that brave little country has been the victim of a virulent tirade initiated under Arab auspices. However, unlike the spineless wonders who rule most of the other African states, President Mobutu Sese-Seko has displayed an independence of mind that cannot but evoke the admiration of every thinking person.

Reacting to the "crude, inflammatory campaign aimed at misleading opinion in the Third World and in Africa," President Mobutu issued a well-argued statement to the official press agency in Kinshasa on 21 May which deserves to be quoted at some length, if only to expose the shameless hypocrisy of the so-called neutral powers in our neighbourhood.

"Zaire observes with sadness," said President Mobutu, "the childish assurance of all those who yesterday cried 'colonialism' or 'neo-colonialism' whenever the attitude of a Western nation appeared equivocal or betrayed the smallest sign of real or imagined interference—and yet today, faced with massive Arab interference in criticism of a sovereign country, they have no reaction than to follow the slave-caravan with its whips and turbans."

The President went on to characterise the much-flaunted Arab-African solidarity as a "decoy, a trap". "This solidarity is a beautiful policy of a wagon and a locomotive which they wish to impose upon us, the Arab countries being the locomotive and we the wagon. . . . Unfortunately, for those who still had any illusions on this point, Zaire is no wagon. . . . We have proved this sufficiently in the recent past . . . Zaire says aloud what others think but do not have the courage to express."

Well said, President Mobutu.

2. IN DEFENCE OF FREEDOM

LUCID and convincing defences of the freedom philosophy have always been few and far between. If for that reason alone, George Gilder's *Wealth and Poverty*, published last year, deserves to be widely welcomed.

Gilder is a leading spokesman of the relatively new school of "supply-side" economists whose influence on national policy-making under the Reagan Administration is believed to have grown considerably in recent months.

"The most important event in the recent history of ideas," says Gilder, "is the demise of the socialist

dream. Dreams always die when they come true, and fifty years of socialist reality, in every partial and plenary form, leave little room for idealistic reverie. In the United States socialism chiefly rules in auditoria and parish parlours, among encounter groups of leftist intellectuals retreating from the real world outside, where socialist ideals have withered in the shadows of Stalin and Mao, Sweden and Tanzania, gulag and bureaucracy."

And yet, why has capitalism, the only other viable alternative, failed so signally to catch up in its appeal among the masses? Even the most ardent proponents of free enterprise, observes Gilder, have, by and large, preferred to "discuss the nature and future of capitalism in the same dolorous idiom used by some of the chastened but still assured advocates of socialism," with predictable results.

"This negative view," according to the author, "allows to arise, without indignant refutation, something of a consensus among thinkers on both the Left and the Right that, for all its superficial virtues, private enterprise suffers from profound social conflicts and moral contradictions deriving from continuing political failures and lack of transcendental justification."

3. EXECUTIONS IN IRAN

EVEN as the euphoria following the visit to this country of the Iranian Parliament's Speaker continues unabated, there are disturbing reports that the number of people executed in Iran since the fundamentalist revolution in 1979 might well be in the thousands. Apart from the official figure of 4,400 announced by the *mullahs* themselves recently, Amnesty International is of the view that "many more people have been put to death in executions which have not been made public by the authorities."

Indeed, the barbarity of the present regime overshadows even the worst excesses committed during the Shah's rule. Take the case of Omid Gharib, for instance. A former student in France, Gharib was arrested after a letter of his to a friend in France was intercepted by the authorities. According to the official indictment, he had been "Westernised, brought up in a Western family, . . . had been too long in Europe for his studies, . . . smoked Winston cigarettes and displayed a tendency to the left." Although he was sentenced to three years imprisonment at his trial, his parents learned earlier this year that he had been executed on 31 January 1982.

THE AUTONOMY DEMAND

Some Questions

ARVIND DESHPANDE

Towards a dynamic, open and democratic Indian nation: need for alternative, viable, confederate models.

1. In India today we have a quasi-federal polity with strong unitary overtones. This is a consequence of our historical development. At no time in its long and chequered history has this sub-continental country been controlled by one central authority, not even under Ashoka or Akbar. Large parts and provinces have always enjoyed *de facto* autonomy, under the strongest emperors.

Even under the British, who shrewdly and correctly took the special precaution of **disarming** the states, Indian (native) rulers exercised autonomy and control over their domains. A certain measure of openness, decentralisation, autonomy with accountability to the paramount central power is a must.

The transition from an anarchic polity, through a "national" struggle against the alien rule of the British by a congeries of cultural entities, to a nation-in-the-making was bound to produce a constitution that has strong unitary features. While our proclivity towards extreme individualism, narcissism, parochialism and violence still underscores the need to leave the subjects of defence, foreign affairs, communications, law and order and judiciary to the central/federal Government, we must look back and take into account our experience of the past three decades.

We must find out whether a dynamic and flexible approach to the question of autonomy to states and regions in the fields of economic, financial decision-making, planning, local self-government, industrial, agricultural development and **information** and **broadcasting** etc., in short a greater assertion of cultural identity will in any way, disintegrate or threaten unity or democracy or whether such an approach will make it more live and effective.

2. Would such autonomy really help to widen the horizons of the people of a region towards trans-national, co-operative fraternity/order or make them more parochial, inward-looking, less responsible, intolerant of dissent and

opposition of minority groups, especially where there are dominant majority castes, religious groups or sub-nationalities?

The Great Russians in the USSR, Hindi-speaking Indians, the Prussians in Germany, or Kashmiri Muslims, or Akalis and even Marxists in Kerala and West Bengal are examples. While the special position given to Kashmiris may have proved psychologically satisfactory to sub-nationalists like Mr. Sheikh Abdullah, the regional or cultural assertion has not achieved either economic progress or educational and other enlightenment. It has tended to make them withdraw into a shell of parochialism, intolerance of dissent and administrative corruption.

So what kind of autonomy? Surely it should lead to a people becoming more democratic, responsible and international in outlook rather than immorally asking for the best of both worlds, i.e. protection and reservation-minded policies in one's own state, but freedom elsewhere.

3. To achieve a balance between autonomy and responsibility, cultural identity and economic progress, are there any lessons to be learnt from the experience of Switzerland, Canada, Australia, West Germany and others?
4. Mr. B. K. Nehru recently pleaded for direct elections only at the rural unit level, and four stages of indirect proportional elections from the district level upwards. Can his thesis be examined critically to see if it would lead to greater democratic autonomy and decentralisation? Or is it a mechanistic approach which will ensure autocracy of the local bosses and freedom from accountability to bureaucracy?
5. We must also examine how greater autonomy will affect the all-India or international elite of professionals, entrepreneurs, scientists, literary men speaking English, the only all-India link for higher intellectual life and prospects. Would it be possible to produce an all-India elite without the advantage of higher education under Central Government supervision? Would people from autonomous units lose the tremendous pull that English-knowing people

from India enjoy in international and multinational institutions and companies?

Will the predominant language, caste or religious groups wielding power in "more powerful and autonomous" states be sensitive to minority interests in the state without the over-riding supervision of an Umpire or Governor holding the ring?

6. What then should be the Governor's role and powers in states enjoying greater autonomy than at present?
7. Ours is neither a presidential nor a parliamentary form of Government. It is a democratic, constitutional Republic, where it is the business of the Judiciary to protect an individual citizen (in his freedom) from the tyranny of the state or government and even parliament or president.

What then do we do to ensure such an all-India Judiciary: independent, impartial and zealous of the individual's fundamental rights?

Even assuming that no state or region would be foolish enough to secede and go under the jackboot of tinpot-dictators, or communist or other domination from outside, we must be clear about the parameters of autonomy. They must lead to a more open, civilised polity, ensuring freedom and progress.

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TRIBUTE TO QUADRANT

The Democratic Research Service and its organ **Freedom First** join the international intellectual fraternity in offering congratulations and felicitations to **Quadrant**, which is celebrating its 25th anniversary.

It is indeed gratifying to find that a journal of such high repute and devoted to the cause of freedom has stood its ground for a quarter of a century. **Quadrant** enjoys the same reputation not only in Australia but among freedom-loving people across the world as does **Encounter**. Without vision and a robust spirit of critical inquiry and devotion to truth, no society can survive for long. **Quadrant** has, over the years, appeared in a variety of formats, and has been welcomed and read with interest by the intellectual fraternity for its sustained freshness of spirit, love of liberty and cultural freedom.

It has never been smooth-sailing for journals like **Quadrant** and **Encounter**. It is, therefore, a matter of great vicarious pleasure to find that the Prime Minister of Australia, Mr. Malcolm Fraser, was personally present and offered a tribute to **Quadrant** on the occasion of its 25th anniversary. Furthermore, there were several leading lights from business and industry who had gathered on the occasion.

We should like to pay our tribute to Mr. Richard Krygier whose story is really the story of **Quadrant**. That a man migrating from Poland and making Australia his home should prove to be the mainstay of a journal like this speaks volumes for the indomitable spirit and love of freedom of people from Poland as also the international outlook in Australia. As Mr. Clyde Packer said at the dinner on the happy occasion:

"This dinner is not only **Quadrant's** twenty-fifth Anniversary but Richard Krygier's twenty-fifth Anniversary with **Quadrant**, and I can only describe it as twenty-five years of honourable service in the cause of human dignity."

Those who have fought for the preservation of cultural freedom in India, like the late Jayaprakash Narayan and Minoo Masani, looked forward to receiving **Quadrant**, and commend it to others.

On this happy occasion, we wish **Quadrant** many more years of service with economic viability and ever-increasing readership.

Editorial Board, FREEDOM FIRST

FREEDOM FIRST

SPEAKING OUT OF TURN IN KENYA

(We carry below the full text of a very reasonable and constructive editorial article which appeared in the STANDARD in Kenya written by its Editor, Mr. George Githii. It is the kind of article that any one of us could have written during the Emergency in India during 1975-1977.)

Kenya has been one of the few states in Black Africa which has avoided so far a one-party dictatorship but, as I mentioned in an earlier column, it has now joined the ranks of the typical Black African States. Not only did the management of the STANDARD, which is owned by the London Company Lonhro, with its "unacceptable face", disown the editorial as "provocative" and sack Mr. Githii, but there is a sporting chance, if Ministers and Members of Parliament have their way, of his being arrested for what has been absurdly described as "treason". His passport has already been impounded.

It is not without interest to note that Mr. Githii was once Private Secretary to Mr. Jomo Kenyatta and has been known as a friend of at least one Cabinet Minister. Mr. M. R. Masani.)

THE OFFENDING ARTICLE

IN THE past six months, this country has been increasingly gripped with fear, the fear of detention of individuals without trial.

It does not require much argument to verify this proposition. At the time of writing, at least one person who has been teaching political science at the University has tendered his resignation. Some lecturers are finding it difficult to teach because of the fear that they will be picked up for views they may express in the course of their lectures.

This state of fear and trepidation in our highest seat of learning comes at a time when the government has banned some plays, thus giving the impression that it intends to control opinion.

Yet scholarship and learning thrive in freedom, and our citadel of learning should be the last place in which the state should interfere.

There are also instances in which editors of our national newspapers have been told in no uncertain terms that they can publish certain things at their peril, and there have been instances where they have been humiliated in public.

Yet this kind of intimidation against people who are trained to handle ideas can have no other effect except to move this country from an open to a closed society.

And although not many people dare say it, there is some concern in the legal profession that the executive arm of the government has become over-sensitive about lawyers who express what is perceived to be disagreeable views in the eyes of the powers that be.

This is a most damaging development to the cause of the rule of law. Thus rightly or wrongly, there are widespread rumours that John Khaminwa (a lawyer who had represented several government opponents) was locked up because of what he said in the course of discharging his professional duties.

It is said he was found drafting a constitution. That is not a crime under our laws. It is said he was defending dissidents. That is not a crime under our laws. It is said he questioned the powers of the executive. That is not a crime either.

Others say Mr. Khaminwa was detained because he was acting in a case against the Attorney-General. Coupled with the Attorney-General's recent warning that he could use his wide powers against his critics, this situation is most damaging to the good name of this country.

Part of the fears, apprehensions and misgivings which one perceives at all levels of society arise because preventive detention allows the state to arrest people, lock them up, thus denying them their freedom without having to go through the due process of the law, or even to give satisfactory explanation for their arrests.

In such situations, guess-work encompasses the entire universe of ideas: no single reason is left out in the process of speculation about detentions. Thus the sort of speculation which is spreading about Mr. Khaminwa is also spreading about the lecturers and others.

It is an important lesson of history that a society which is full of gossip and hearsay and fear about the fate of some of its people soon becomes responsive to undemocratic ideas.

If the due process of the law had been followed, the state would have had ample opportunity to state its case in open court. Likewise, the accused—all of them—would have a chance to defend themselves. The public would have been exposed to the whole discourse and there would be no speculation, because all the cards would have been laid on the table. There would have been judgements, and those found to have committed punishable offences would have been jailed in accordance with our laws.

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Now about the Constitution. The drafters of our present Constitution very wisely included a bill of rights in chapter five. The bill of rights takes care of inalienable, indefeasible and imprescriptable human rights.

The Constitution has safeguards for the protection of the rights to life, personal liberty, property, arbitrary search, conscience and expression: it has provisions for the protection of the right of assembly and association and movement, among others. To the extent to which these sections secure inalienable human rights of individuals, they are to be commended.

But clause 85 of the Constitution, and therefore the preservation of public security act section III, to the extent to which they exist side by side with the bill of rights, are contradictory.

They are contradictory because, whereas the Constitution correctly protects inalienable human rights and stipulates that they should not be taken away without the due process of the law, section 85 and particularly section III of the preservation of public security act provides for the suspension of these rights without the due process of the law.

It has been argued in some quarters that the situation in Africa is such that it is necessary to detain people without trial. However, this argument is both spurious and untenable. It has also been argued that this piece of legislation is justified to prevent rebellion, mutiny, violence, disorder and crime, among other things. Yet there is no clear and imminent danger of any of these situations. In any case, the law is itself sufficient to handle all these eventualities.

There are, of course, situations when the use of these measures is justified, as in the event of war. Yet we are not at war with any nation and certainly not with ourselves. The act that enables the state to deny people of their basic human rights should be removed from our Constitution, and if it remains, there should be a clear stipulation that some of these freedoms can only be curtailed in the event of war, but not in peacetime.

In the meantime, the government should take steps to put an end to the prevailing fear and insecurity in the body politic, for a timid, diffident, suspicious and apathetic nation cannot thrive.

Three measures will restore confidence. One is for the government to release those who have been detained without trial, if there is no evidence against them which could stand in open court. The other is to put them on trial. The third is either to repeal the legislation or qualify it by saying it can become operative only in wartime.

The Elusive Sino-Soviet Detente

RAMA SWARUP

IN a major speech delivered in Tashkent on March 24 this year, the General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee Leonid Brezhnev proposed a resumption, "without prior conditions", of the dialogue between the USSR and the People's Republic of China aimed at "improving Sino-Soviet relations on the basis of mutual respect for each other's interests". The tone of Brezhnev's speech was generally conciliatory, and he went as far as could be expected in stating that almost any issue dividing the two countries was negotiable.

The proposal made by the General Secretary in Tashkent was the culmination of a series of Soviet moves aimed at letting Peking know that Moscow would look favourably both on a resumption of the dialogue and on an overall improvement in relations. Nevertheless, the timing of the proposals was clearly intended to exploit the difficulties that had arisen in US-Communist Chinese relations in connection with US arms sales to Taiwan.

Communist China's initial response to Brezhnev's speech was negative. On March 26, Qian Qichen, a spokesman for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, stated:

"We have noted the remarks on Sino-Soviet relations made by President Brezhnev in Tashkent on March 24. We firmly reject the attacks on Communist China contained in the remarks. What we attach importance to are actual deeds of the Soviet Union in Sino-Soviet relations and international affairs."

This has as yet been China's only known official response to Brezhnev's offer. The fact that the Chinese did not mention Brezhnev's proposal for a resumption of negotiations is worthy of note. Brezhnev had only briefly criticized the People's Republic for its alliance with "the policy of imperialism" (i.e. the US-Chinese relationship), but a Xinhua commentary on the Brezhnev speech referred to "a series of accusations" levelled against China by Brezhnev.

The commentary also pointed out that massive Soviet forces are stationed along the Sino-Soviet border, citing this as evidence to refute Brezhnev's assertion that the USSR constitutes no threat to China. Xinhua noted that no "substantive actions" had yet been taken by the USSR to improve relations.

Predictably, Brezhnev's proposals received far more coverage in the Soviet media. Since March 24, the Novosti news agency has repeatedly emphasized the goodwill and positive intentions that lay behind them.

The Soviet initiative is portrayed as a real contribution to stability in Asia, and Peking's rejection of the offer is called irresponsible:

"And how did they react to the new Soviet proposals in Peking? Instead of carefully studying the content, they hurried to pounce upon them with attacks, attempting to belittle the significance of constructive Soviet actions and discredit the course of the USSR as a whole."

Soviet broadcasts to Communist China have likewise expressed regret at the haste with which the Brezhnev offer was rejected. It is cited as evidence that Peking is unwilling to take "concrete measures" to improve relations and is out of touch with the desire of the Chinese people for better relations with Moscow.

As far as Moscow is concerned, it is claimed, there is "no obstacle at all to the promotion of overall cooperation with the People's Republic of Communist China". Yet, in the weeks since Brezhnev's speech, the Soviet media have for the most part been conciliatory: aside from expressing disappointment over Communist China's response, they have largely avoided strident anti-Red Chinese polemics.

On April 16, both Xinhua and Tass reported the signing of the annual trade agreement between the

USSR and Communist China, though neither agency disclosed the anticipated trade volume. Relying on "diplomatic sources in Peking", Western agencies have put the figure at 300 million dollars, an increase of about 50 per cent over last year.

While the increase may appear significant, it would in fact only bring trade back to the level of 1980. Aside from this, there has been little movement towards an improvement in relations between the two countries since Brezhnev's speech.

There are many reasons for this. In spite of what appeared to be conciliatory words from Brezhnev, the Chinese presumably feel that the USSR is not prepared to make concessions far-reaching enough to warrant a genuine improvement in Sino-Soviet relations. Additionally, the dispute between the United States and China over Taiwan could be resolved. Even if it is not, China may still be more wary of a Soviet embrace than of a flawed link with Washington.

On this score, the *Far Eastern Economic Review* commented that China cannot at this time respond positively to the Soviet initiative:

"Soviet President Leonid Brezhnev's recent proposal to reopen the border talks and seek a general improvement in relations was crude and disingenuous, so obviously seeking to take

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advantage of Sino-American discord over Taiwan. Communist China will not want to enter talks with the Soviets without at least the symbol of continued security ties with the US."

The initial fervour that marked the Soviet Union's attitude towards China has once again yielded place to scepticism and hostility. Within three days of the Pravda article which was conciliatory in tone, a TASS commentary struck a different role. TASS blamed Communist China for the lack of progress at the New Delhi round of New Delhi-Peking talks on normalisation of relations. It claimed that Peking usually put forth obviously unacceptable demands and reservations as a condition for the beginning of talks.

Significantly, for the first time since the New Delhi-Peking dispute began, the Soviet Union demanded that Red China return to India the territory it had occupied. Predictably, Peking reacted strongly against this.

There is enough evidence to indicate that the Soviet Union did not cherish the idea of rapprochement between India and Red China. Perhaps it fears that India might slip out of its influence. On the eve of the New Delhi-Peking talks, the Soviet media had discerned ominous shadows over India. It had even warned India of Peking designs.

Evidently, neither Red China nor the Soviet Union trusts the other. Each views the other's moves with suspicion. Red China, perhaps, saw questionable motives in the Soviet peace offer. The timing of the Soviet peace moves are quite significant. Brezhnev's offer to Red China came at a time when India and Red China were preparing for talks on normalisation of relations. Yet another move of the Soviet Union which has raised many eye-brows is its invitation to Pakistan for talks.

Obviously, things are not well for the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. It may be trying to get a breather so that it can reshape its strategy. No wonder Peking sees ulterior motives in Soviet moves, and feels that Moscow is trying to drive a wedge between neighbours.

Obviously, neither the Soviet Union nor Red China is genuinely interested in *detente*. Each is interested in making the best out of the other's difficulties. What both are aiming at is a diplomatic advantage over the other. World peace is just a cover. *Detente*, if achieved, should serve the ends of both.

Although it cannot be ruled out that more subtle inquiries by Moscow might find some response in Peking, no breakthrough in Sino-Soviet relations appears likely in the foreseeable future. The lack of a meaningful communist Chinese response to Brezhnev's speech is evidence of this.

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A SUGGESTION

I am confident that many others like me must have enjoyed the instructive play **WHOSE LIFE IS IT ANYWAY?** sponsored by the Society for the Right to Die with Dignity. Mr. Minoo Masani, the Chairman of the Society, is also its Founder. This association prompts me to write to you about the programme published for the play.

The programme is indeed different from the others because of the relevant and thought-provoking reading matter of lasting interest, such as "Introducing the Society: its aims & objects," Mr. Masani's article on "Freedom of Choice" and Khushwant Singh's column, "Dignified Exit."

It occurs to me that the fifteen full-page and ten half-page advertisers, "With Best Compliments", would have responded to the suggestion of a good citation to inspire and even help some readers. Visualise any programme with twenty-five good citations!

It is true that very few advertisers have the time and the inclination to hunt up suitable citations. It is up to the promoters of the programme to provide this service. Once this trend of prestige advertising in programmes is started, perhaps firms extending their patronage may favour and support the idea. The programme would then be more meaningful, instead of the current waste.

To illustrate, would the following not have adorned a full page more purposefully than "With Best Compliments"?

Charlotte Perkins Gilman, author and lecturer, left this note when she killed herself rather than endure the pain of cancer:

"Human life consists in mutual service. No grief, pain, misfortune or broken heart is excuse for cutting off one's life while any power of service remains. But when all usefulness is over, when one is assured of an unavoidable and imminent death, it is the simplest of human rights to choose a quick and easy death in place of a slow and horrible one.

Public opinion is changing on this subject. The time is approaching when we shall consider it abhorrent to our civilisation to allow a human being to lie in prolonged agony which we should mercifully end in any other creature.

Believing this choice to be of social service in promoting wiser views on this question, I have preferred chloroform to cancer."

P. S. DAVER

Mr. Masani comments: Mr. Daver's idea is a good one and I commend it to those who bring out souvenir programmes in future.

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BOOK REVIEW

THE AGED AND SOCIETY

REPORT OF A SEMINAR

The year 1982 has been declared as "The year of the Aged". To focus attention on the various problems faced by the aged in the modern world, a symposium was organised on April 7, 1982, World Health Day. Its aim was to work out strategies to prevent problems and seek solutions to the unique problems of the aged.

The Department of Continuing and Adult Education, SNDT Women's University, and the Tata Institute of Social Sciences collaborated and organised the symposium as a preamble to a workshop to identify the main issues. The experts in attendance included Dr. M. S. Gore, Director, T.I.S.S., Dr. K. G. Desai, Professor, T.I.S.S., Dr. J. D. Pathak, Head, Medical Research Centre, Bombay Hospital, Dr. (Mrs.) Neera Desai, Honorary Director, Research Unit on Women's Studies & Head, Department of Sociology, SNDT Women's University, Mrs. Leela Moolgaonkar, Social Worker, and Prof. A. N. Kothare, Honorary Director, H.S.P.T. College of Science, SNDT Women's University.

Dr. J. D. Pathak, while acquainting the group with the health aspects of the aged, brought out the fact that *in India people do age faster*. But due to reduction in the rate of infant mortality, control of

contagious and communicable diseases, and better understanding of health and hygiene, there was an increase in population of senior citizens in India.

Dr. K. G. Desai, while discussing the socio-psychological problems of the aged, said that in the West, most of the aged live alone or with their elderly spouses. Hence they have lower mental health status, and very often a considerable part of the population of Mental Hospitals comprises old persons. He pointed out that Indians were moving in the same direction, and the elderly, specially in urban areas, faced loneliness, helplessness and hopelessness.

Over and above this, there was a very definite feeling of being alienated from the mainstream of life. Society often reciprocated by ignoring the old and leaving them to fend for themselves.

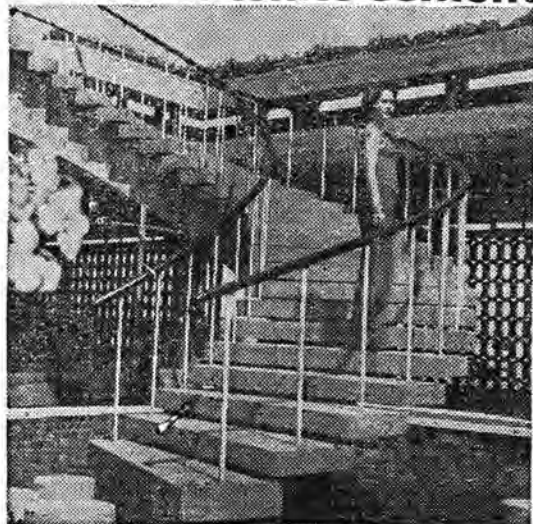
Dr. Neera Desai remarked that though the joint family structure was ostensibly the same, its equation was today different. In earlier times, the elderly were the decision-makers of the family but today this position seems to be reversed. With a rapid advancement in society, the experiences of the aged get easily outmoded. In earlier times the sons and their families were staying with the parents *but today the parents live with the children*. This has resulted in basic changes at the intrapersonal levels of families.

Smt. Leela Moolgaonkar brought to light another dimension of the present societal situation of working parents: elderly persons prove very helpful in looking after their grandchildren and in supervision of homes. But with rising costs, the economic conditions in a given family create many problems for the aged. Hence there is a felt need for the setting up of good Social Security and Health Insurance Schemes for the retired. She also highlighted the very important role of the traditional involvement of the aged in religious groups such as *bhajans*, *kirtan mandals*, etc. They played a very important role in bringing about personal tranquility.

Prof. A. N. Kothare felt that the best way to solve the problems of old age was to have "children who are attached to parents". Indirectly, he stressed the importance of a good family life. To keep active after retirement was very important. A major avenue towards employment during old age was through the pursuit of the unfulfilled desires of youth. He quoted a number of examples of people who had become famous after retirement.

Dr. M. S. Gore said that aging is a serious problem in every society, and the programmes in our country should take into account our cultural context. We should take some strong steps to identify the unique problems of our aged. Strategies to solve such problems should be the focus of the "Year of the Aged".

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WITH MANY VOICES

Leaders of Britain's railway unions are living in the age of steam trains. The rest of the country is not.

—*The Economist*, July 3.

* * *

Where are you, Arabs?

—Soviet Radio Station, Radio Peace and Progress, broadcasting in Arabic on June 15.

* * *

Peace as an ultimate objective simply means communist world control.

—Lenin.

* * *

India's next president was described by the **Indian Express** this week as Caligula's horse. Others say that he is more like the humble creature on which Jesus rode into Jerusalem.

—*The Economist*, June 26.

* * *

The British, as every schoolboy knows, gave the world cricket, parliaments, sun hats, boundary commissions, legal systems, roads, mission schools and the English language.

—Salman Rushdie in *The Times* (London) July 3.

* * *

Were he (Zia ul-Haq) to be judged by charm alone he might give dictatorship a good name.

—Trevor Fishlock in *The Times* (London), July 5.

* * *

There are no feminist Prime Ministers. A token woman at the top will uphold the status quo even more than a man.

—Janet Watts in *The Observer*, July 25.

* * *

Peace is a means of gathering together your forces.

—Lenin.

* * *

Where other political organisations might hold a press conference, the IRA explodes a bomb or two.

—Editorial in *The Times*, July 21.

* * *

It is a vulgar error to assume that something important cannot also be hilarious.

—Frank Johnson in *The Times*, July 21.

* * *

To get rich together is our goal. However, it is inevitable that some people will go faster and others go slower in getting rich.

—*People's Daily*, Beijing.

* * *