

Q U E S T

a bi-monthly of arts and ideas

edited by: **NISSIM EZEKIEL**

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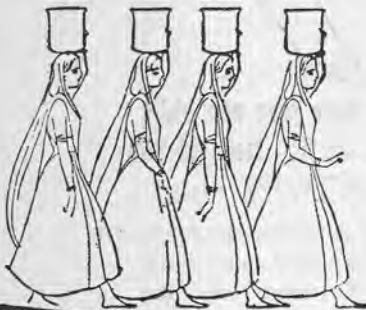
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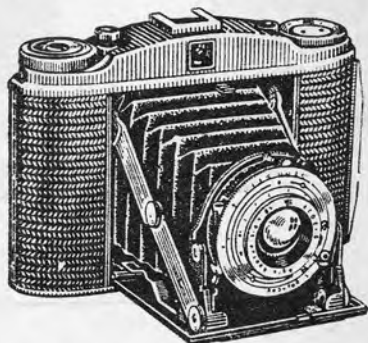
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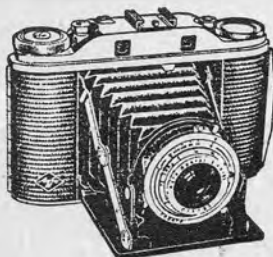
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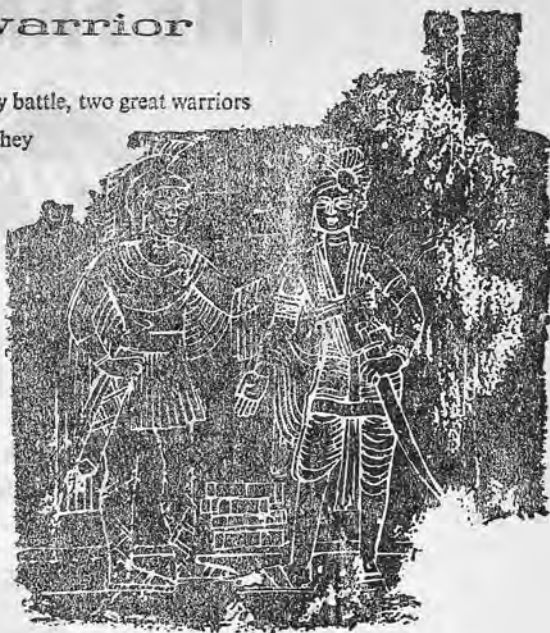
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QUEST

a bi-monthly of arts and ideas

EDITOR: NISSIM EZEKIEL

October - Nov. 56 Vol. II No. 2

contents

ARTICLES

A. B. SHAH	Satyagraha and Democracy	9
SUNIL MUKHERJI	The Suez Canal Crisis	15
WALTER Z. LAQUEUR	Dilemma of the West in Egypt	18
SATINDRA SINGH	Rewriting of Indian History	23
PHILIP SPRATT	The Rebel	27
A. RANGANATHAN	Thoreau's Impact on Gandhi	33
NATWAR SINGH	Tribute to R. K. Narayan	37

SHORT STORY

GANGADHAR GADGIL	The Cage	40
------------------	----------	----

POEMS

HARRY ROSKOLENKO	Areas of Conscience	14
	Portrait in Purple	14
RANJANI RAO	The Lonely Hour	26

BOOKS

PRABHAKAR PADHYE	The Colour Curtain by <i>Richard Wright</i>	47
P. KODANDA RAO	Integration of States by <i>V. P. Menon</i>	48
LOLA CHATTERJI	The Time of the Assassins by <i>Henry Miller</i>	51
S. NATARAJAN	The Republic of Indonesia by <i>Dorothy Woodman</i>	53
A. H. SOMJEE	What the United States Can do About India by <i>E. Seligman</i>	56
S. R. TIKEKAR	The Legacy of the Lokamanya by <i>Theodore L. Shay</i>	58
LAEEQ FUTEHALLY	Battles at the Bar by <i>K. L. Gauba</i>	59
SHIV K. KUMAR	Unprofessional Essays by <i>Middleton Murry</i>	60

CORRESPONDENCE

A. M. GHOSE	The Study of Philosophy in Our Universities	62
D. D. KARVE	Anti-Americanism	63

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editorial

CULTURE may be difficult to define but it is easily recognised. Its sphere is not limited to the arts, though without the arts it would be perilously empty. Concretely, it may be thought of in terms of books and paintings, music and architecture, museums, art galleries and theatres. Its more intangible element is in customs and manners, explicit and implicit attitudes, certain patterns of response to human relationships and to the cosmos, deep-rooted ethical imperatives and conscious choices made in historically new situations. All these are based on, and in varying degrees harmonised, or in conflict with, economic arrangements which are changing, slowly or fast.

In a sense, therefore, culture is all-pervading. It is true that certain specific human activities are spoken of as cultural, distinct from the political or the economic. Nevertheless, these latter are saturated with cultural significances, and in turn act upon and give shape to what is regarded as belonging to the sphere of culture.

These preliminary observations are made in order to suggest a desirable relationship between culture and the State or Government. It is a question on

which India is about to take major decisions, has already perhaps taken major decisions. No contemporary state believes in the dictum which Gandhiji championed that that Government is best which governs the least. Therefore it is unlikely to consider Culture, whether narrowly or broadly defined, as being outside its field of operations. It is also futile to expect it. Governments are considered backward or unprogressive unless they actively assist the arts, through individuals or institutions. They are expected to sponsor schemes for the development of all sorts of cultural activities from the translation of classics to the building of theatres. The only relevant question to be raised is how governments ought to conduct themselves in this matter, the form or formula for state aid to cultural life.

The attitude of governments to cultural problems is determined by their political complexion. A dictatorial government will dictate in the cultural sphere too. A nationalistic government will look with favour only on the artistic expression of its own creed. A religious oligarchy will sooner or later ban publications with critical references to its prophet or faith. Disinterested encouragement of every cultural tendency is possible only in a liberal democracy, and there too on condition that it adopts a machinery for that purpose which guarantees its disinterestedness and impartiality.

The Communist State, with its genius for choosing with unerring logic the precise instruments of its policy, enters the cultural sphere by setting up a Ministry of Culture. Like all other Government departments in their respective fields, the Ministry of Culture exercises a control over artists, authors, journalists, musicians, architects, even cartoonists and quip-writers, which is absolute and unconditional. It is true that an Indian Ministry of Culture need not pattern itself on the Communist example. But then who in India has so far produced a single original idea on how such a Ministry should function? Those who are urging the formation of such a Ministry on the Government of India and attempting to mobilise public opinion in favour of it are supporters of the way in which Communist Ministers of Culture function. To point this out is not 'red-baiting'; it is merely to insist on a fact in connection with a proposal which many people would like to conceal.

It is idle to state that Government participation in the arts need not be repressive or stultifying. There is a clear ideological issue involved which must be openly and candidly resolved. If a Ministry of Culture is set up in India *on the lines proposed by those who are championing the idea, and probably under their influence*, it will inevitably be repressive and stultifying. If some other kind of Government organisation for the encouragement of the arts is proposed it would have to be examined on its merits. The American Works Progress Administration and the British Arts Council are two sources of possible inspiration. There is also the rich experience of UNESCO to draw upon. If, however, we are told to study, for the purpose of knowing what not to do more than what to do, from the Soviet experience as well, there is no reason why we should not also recommend Nazi and fascist cultural institutions for the same negative lessons. If we wish to be virtuous it is hardly necessary to go thoroughly into all the ways of being vicious.

A. B. SHAH

satyagraha and democracy

dangers and possibilities

SOCIAL life is, among other things, an unending essay in mutual adjustment. The problems of adjustment that a particular society has to face are peculiar to the stage of development it has reached. Every stable society has its own type of machinery for resolving conflict—or at least for driving it underground—and the extent to which it can effect adjustment without sacrificing basic human values is an index to the cultural level of that society.

Generally in history the large or more powerful group has demanded and succeeded in getting from the individual or the weaker group submission to what it made out to be the interest of the community as a whole. Nor did the victim always feel that there was anything wrong with the tacit assumption underlying this tradition. Socrates did not object to his trial and condemnation on the ground that it was his inalienable right to pursue truth and

communicate it to whomsoever was willing to listen to him. His contention was that, contrary to what his accusers said, he had neither denied the Athenian gods nor had he corrupted the morals of Athenian youth.

It was only with the Renaissance that the freedom and dignity of the individual came to be recognized as values inviolate even to the state. This is not very surprising. For unless the process of individuation has reached a stage where the individual human being can experience a feeling of distinctness from the group, freedom is bound to remain a blind yearning and the rights of man the idle chatter of anti-social cranks.

Indian philosophical tradition seems to be different in this respect. The supreme end of human endeavour, according to Hindu philosophy, has for ages been the release of the individual soul from the bondage of *karma*; not, as in Christianity,

to obtain grace in the eyes of the Deity. This could not have happened unless the individual was recognized as having a certain value in himself.

A characteristic feature of democracy is that, theoretically at least, it eschews violence in the settlement of social conflicts. It aims to eliminate coercion and to establish in its place persuasion by rational argument as a means of reconciling conflicting interests. It also recognizes that the individual as well as, by extension, a minority group, has certain rights which are immune to encroachment except when the survival of the Community is at stake. These rights are embodied in the Constitution, and so long as the Constitution is generally acceptable, the parliamentary method of settling differences is usually serviceable enough to render unnecessary a resort to extra-parliamentary ones.

However, faith in the parliamentary method has some obvious limitations. A determined majority can, out of prejudice or intolerance, curtail the freedom of an individual or a minority group, while observing the letter of the Constitution. The ingenious device by which the government of a certain State in South India excludes deserving candidates of a particular caste from institutions of higher learning shows that the possibility mentioned above is not altogether hypothetical. Again, it may happen that the majority in power may, for its own narrow ends, decide to commit or connive at offences against accepted standards of rectitude in public life. The Union Home Minister's advice to the Opposition to change the Government if it (i.e. the Opposition) did not approve of his method of dealing with the Jeep scandal is a case in point.

Another source of conflict is found in the aspirations and ambitions of the constituent units of a federation. The requirements of a retarded economy demand a strong Centre; while the cultural backwardness

of the country endows power with a disproportionately large potentiality for corruption. In such a situation it may happen that even the legitimate interests of a regional unit may be sacrificed in the name of the country as a whole. The majority here has an added advantage: it can adopt the holier-than-thou attitude and condemn the regional unit as parochial in this atomic age.

THE controversy over the future of Bombay city illustrates this possibility. Granting that the best solution of this thorny problem would have been a *voluntarily accepted* bilingual State, one cannot help agreeing with Pandit Kunzru that if Gujerat and Maharashtra were to be formed into separate States, Bombay should be included in Maharashtra. It is not merely a question of recognizing Maharashtra's claim over Bombay and playing fair with her. What is equally important is the political and cultural significance of Bombay for Maharashtra as well as for India as a whole. Just as Bombay contributes 33 *per cent* of the country's income-tax, it is also a nerve-centre of much that is progressive in the life of the nation. Bombay can continue playing this role only if it is organically associated with a large political unit. It is suicidal to convert it into a Hongkong or a New Delhi.

And yet the Congress High Command had decided—Parliament's agreement was taken for granted—to make Bombay a Centrally administered area. A majority of legislators from Maharashtra are members of the ruling party and, being subject to its discipline, were prevented from resigning their seats in order to respect the wishes of their constituencies. Here is an instance in which a regional unit's claim was conceded in theory but denied in practice. It is not even the case that a majority of other linguistic groups was against meet-

ing this claim. What has happened is that the *national leadership* was not convinced of the wisdom of conceding Maharashtra's demand. What could the unit do in such a situation?

The liberal advice would be to have patience and to persevere in the effort to carry one's point home by rational argument. This, however, presupposes two conditions: first, that there are agreed criteria for deciding what is the best solution of a given problem; and secondly, that the parties to the dispute are not emotionally committed in advance. If these two conditions are not satisfied, the liberal approach is sterile and one has to look for some other method of resolving the conflict.

The advocates of Satyagraha claim that their's is the only workable approach which, besides, does not go counter to the spirit of democracy. Satyagraha, they say, is like the quality of mercy, which does good both to those who offer it and to those against whom it is directed. Even if it fails to attain its objective, the failure can only be temporary, for sooner or later it is bound to awaken the latent good in the opponent and make him see the iniquity of his ways.

Before examining these claims, let us agree on what Satyagraha means. Etymologically, *Satyagraha* means *insistence on truth*, a firm refusal to bow down to untruth and injustice. Since the insistence is on truth and justice, that is, on principles rather than on power or material advantage, there can be no malice towards the opponent in the heart of a Satyagrahi. His aim is to change the opponent's heart by pointing out the 'truth' to him and, if necessary, by willingly undergoing trials and tribulations to that end. His strength comes from the faith that his own suffering and sincerity will ultimately touch the right chord in the heart of his opponent and make him see the justice of his (the

satyagrahi's) cause. This, roughly, is the Gandhian idea of a Satyagrahi. Naturally, very few human beings would qualify for the appellation. Besides, a society which produced such ideal Satyagrahis in a sufficiently large number would have no need of Satyagraha. However, Gandhiji, like Plato, realised that the world in which he lived was but a poor copy of its ideal prototype. He was therefore prepared to make do with ordinary mortals as Satyagrahis, provided only they were strictly non-violent in word and action, if not in thought and feeling as well.

Again, since in Satyagraha the emphasis is on 'soulforce', it follows that quality is more important than quantity. One honest Satyagrahi, Gandhiji used to assert, with an unshakeable faith in truth and nonviolence, was worth more than a thousand *ersatz* ones who looked upon Satyagraha as a weapon of the weak. In practice, of course, Satyagraha by such ideal individuals has rarely been successful, unless it was accompanied by the threat or possibility of Satyagraha on a mass scale by ordinary men and women. In other words, while considering Satyagraha as an instrument of political action, we may confine ourselves only to its most usual form—namely, that of a civil disobedience movement on a large scale. Anything more subtle than that is likely to be the fad of a visionary or the trick of a demagogue.

LOOKED upon as a civil disobedience movement on a mass scale, Satyagraha has some obvious advantages. The movement being non-violent, the danger of deterrent reprisals by a democratic state is practically nil, and a large number of persons, not always of the stuff of which heroes are made, can respond to its call. This would lead to a wider, though not necessarily better, political education of the

people. Participation in a mass movement also gives the ordinary citizen a thrill of adventure and the spiritual satisfaction of playing a role, however humble, in the shaping of history. Above all, it is a gesture of protest against the helplessness of man in the face of overwhelming evil.

Certain vital considerations are, however, left out in the foregoing statement of the aim and nature of Satyagraha. A civil disobedience movement on a mass scale generally leads to violence by irresponsible elements. With all the precautions that the leadership may take, it is not always possible to keep the movement to the straight and narrow path of truth and non-violence. Recent experience in Bombay, both on the occasion of the Goa liberation demonstrations in August last year and later after the publication of the S.R.C. Report, is only a reminder of the fact that the average Indian woefully lacks tolerance and a sense of responsibility in public life. Even an exceptional leader like Gandhiji could not prevent a violent outburst of frustrated mass passions, once the initial flush of a moral crusade had worn itself out. For lesser men to think that they could outdo the Mahatma would mean a refusal to learn from history.

Even if the movement did not take a violent turn, it would not cease to be a breach of the law in a country where *respect* for law (not *fear* of it) is difficult to find. It is true that the rulers have a greater responsibility in this matter. If the rulers themselves show scant respect for the rule of law, it is futile to expect the ordinary citizen to behave differently. For, as the old Sanskrit aphorism says, 'As the king, so the subjects.' However, it is equally true that a nation gets the government it deserves. In particular, opposition leaders, who claim to look a little further ahead and show a greater concern for democracy than is done by the party in power, have to consider the implications of

a civil disobedience movement not merely from the party point of view but also from the standpoint of creating a political climate conducive to the growth of the democratic tradition in this country. One need not be an Existentialist in order to see that the other man's folly is no excuse for running away from one's own responsibility.

A third consideration which militates against Satyagraha is the quality of its appeal. By its very nature Satyagraha relies on emotion rather than reason for its effectiveness. It is true that Satyagraha is a court of last resort, after every other approach, based on reason and intelligence, is proved to be a blind alley. However, here again it has to be remembered that the old notions of justice and honour need revision today. This has been recognized in the realm of personal relationship—one does not nowadays insist on satisfaction by the sword in order to vindicate one's honour.

THE resort to Satyagraha would appear unreasonable so long as parliamentary methods—elections, constitutional deadlock etc.—are open to aggrieved groups. Unfortunately, in politics, we still hold fast to slogans made popular by the French and Russian Revolutions. It is the business of social philosophers and political leaders in a democracy to evolve criteria by which one can distinguish between values that are fundamental and those which are only incidental for the growth of freedom. While it will be agreed at once that no risk is too great for something that involves the very essence of freedom, it would be unwise to do anything which would, for the sake of transient interests, bring into popular contempt the method of agreement by deliberation. And strength of feeling is not by itself a reliable indicator

of the degree to which an issue is of fundamental significance to democracy.

There is another reason why resort to Satyagraha can only be justified in an exceptional situation. Even granting that an injustice has been done to an individual or to a minority group, it is unrealistic to hope that Satyagraha, by itself, can make a self-righteous majority budge from the position it has once taken up. Not merely prestige, but often the conviction that it stands for something nobler than what the refractory opposition can for the time being appreciate, may lead to a stiffening of its attitude. One need not attribute the self-righteousness of the majority to hypocrisy. It may very well be the result of folly and lack of experience. Besides, moral truths no less than truths in natural science are a matter of probability: except in a few special cases it is not easy to assert categorically what is right and what is wrong. Perhaps that is why authoritative exponents of Gandhism are agreed that it is not open to everyone to offer Satyagraha; and that a pre-condition for offering it is the agreement, may be tacit, among the parties to the dispute that the cause of the Satyagrahi embodies some fundamental ethical principle.

THE considerations adduced above are all theoretical and non-party in character. Opposition parties, many of whom are the offspring of the party in power, may not be expected to attach more weight than does the parent body itself to fine points of political philosophy. But no political

party which believes in its mission can afford to embark on a programme which is likely to undermine its own reputation for leadership.

It is desirable therefore that the limitations of Satyagraha as an instrument of political change should be well understood. The efficacy of Satyagraha has been exaggerated in our country. The only task it can undoubtedly perform is to bring about a popular awakening in regard to the issues at stake. Its usefulness for anything more is highly doubtful. Even in the pre-Independence period, with the unique leadership of Gandhiji, it could do no more than rouse and weld together the masses of different linguistic groups in India in a common front against a *foreign* enemy. The Indian National Congress could, with a clear conscience, extend its appeal to the police force and the army. And yet, when freedom at last came to the country, very few could believe that it was the *direct result of the Satyagraha* carried on by the Indian people off and on for twenty-five years past.

A minority group or a regional unit within a federation has to circumscribe the scope of its appeal quite drastically compared to what the Indian National Congress had to do. Under the circumstances the chances of its Satyagraha leading to success are still more meagre. On the other hand, there is a great possibility of its leaving a legacy of frustration and bitterness. A conscientious democrat cannot afford to neglect this danger. He must make it clear to his followers that Satyagraha, like virtue, is its own reward.

TWO POEMS

BY HARRY ROSKOLENKO

AREAS OF CONSCIENCE

And sin was ordinary; and so sinned I
 In all my ways of youth
 I drowned a pale gray cat
 And now I love all things that creep;
 I love in all my ways
 The halting green of growing
 What once was small and I.

And pain is equal; and so I fear
 In all my ways the times
 That drown me as a cat.
 And now I hate all things that weep
 In all my ways of youth,
 The sullen stance of yellow
 What once was green and I.

I fear my being what is to be,
 Though I know my ways of youth;
 The clown that made the poet find
 The moments equal to the mind;
 And all the ways that made me grow
 Now balance in equal perfidy
 The halting knowing that made me I.

PORTRAIT IN PURPLE

I know so many people, their arithmetical ways,
 Their measure, values, radiations of speech,
 What constitutes their spiritual treasure,
 The bald mathematics they equate
 Within their craft, their natural state.

I know so many men in fine careers
 Living within subterranean summaries,
 What disorders their morals espy,
 The tones of treason they undertake,
 The exactness of politics they never anticipate.

I know their amoral kingdoms and their lecheries
 That cluster about their latest reality,
 What their monarchy of mummery can train,
 The moral suicide they create,
 The exact nature of their natural state.

SUNIL MUKHERJI

the Suez canal crisis

role of nationalism

ONE of the significant facts of the decade that has passed since the end of the second World War is certainly the withdrawal of the Western Powers from large tracts of Asia and Africa. Asian statesmen assiduously propagate the idea of what they like to call the resurgence of Asia. The emergence of several important countries of Asia from the status of colonies into the category of sovereign nation-states cannot but produce an unsettling effect on international affairs. The fact that China attained sovereign nationhood under the leadership of the Communists further complicates the situation. The central problem created by the changed set-up is of course the proper re-adjustment of the relations between the newly independent countries of Asia and Africa and the Western Powers which, only a short while ago, could boast of vast colonial empires. It will take some time before a satisfactory solution of this problem evolves; meanwhile the very process of re-adjustment can erupt into serious international crises. As a matter of fact it would have been surprising if the whole process was gone through without a hitch.

The crisis precipitated by the nationalisation of the Suez Canal by President Nasser of Egypt may be regarded as the birth pangs of a new relationship between resurgent Asia and Africa on the one hand and the erstwhile colonial powers on the other. The tragic killing that is going on in Algeria is another symptom. The affair of Goa nearer home is a forceful illustration of the same problem. Without multiplying instances it is useful to concentrate our attention on another significant element in the situation, namely the deadly global struggle for domination and survival that is going on between the Soviet and the Anglo-U.S. blocs of Powers. This struggle is creating almost insuperable difficulties in the way of a readjustment of relations between the Colonial Powers and the newly independent nations.

Take the case of India herself. She started on her career of sovereign nationhood with a large fund of goodwill and friendship for her among the Western Powers. Even with Britain, her erstwhile subjugator, her relations were remarkably good. But inevitably as the Soviet bloc of nations began to woo her for her friend-

ship, complications began to arise. For with China gone, with the rapid progress of Communism in Indo-China, with a Communist rebellion in Malaya, with the Middle East in a disturbed state, the Anglo-U.S. bloc could not look with indifference upon the clever Soviet exploitation of India's policy of non-alignment. The very logic of the cold war compelled them to cast about for allies and they found a steadfast one in Pakistan. And this has lent an edge of bitterness to India's relations with the West. Indian leaders perhaps do not fully understand the real motivations and anxieties of the Western Powers, because they have allowed themselves to be unduly influenced by Soviet propaganda. They also fail to realise that but for the deadly struggle between the power-blocs, much that smacks of reaction and obscurantism in the policies of the Western Powers would have disappeared long ago.

AN analysis of the Suez crisis will reveal the highlights of the world picture as it has been sketched in rough outline in the preceding paragraphs. Let us enumerate the factors involved in the situation. First, there is the Egyptian regime morbidly touchy on the point of her sovereign nationhood and acutely conscious of her dependence on external aid for the economic development of the country. Second, there are the Western Powers with highly important stakes, strategic and economic, in the Middle East, sharply aware not only of Egypt's arms deals with the Communists and of her grim determination to undo the Baghdad pact, but also of the increasing successes of Soviet propaganda in the Middle East. Third, the Soviet machinations themselves in the Middle East and elsewhere in Asia and Africa in the garb of an ardent support of nationalist aspirations. Fourth, the ambition of President Nasser to mobilise all the Arab

countries under Egyptian hegemony and to wield complete control of the natural resources of the Arab world as a weapon with which to secure a dominating position in international politics, a position which will perhaps enable her to arbitrate between the two power blocs. Fifth, the dependence of the Western nations on the oil of the Middle East. Lastly, the desire on the part of the newly independent countries to utilise the cold war as a lever with which to extract material aid from the Western nations.

Even a cursory examination of the factors involved ought to show up some of the methods which *cannot* produce a solution. It ought also to show that the substance of the Suez crisis transcends the borders of this or that state and that it perhaps even transcends the present historical epoch.

An enduring solution of the Suez crisis can never be reached if Egypt allows herself to be influenced by a spirit of revenge and by a desire to turn the tables upon the West. It is of the utmost importance that the newly independent countries of Asia and Africa fully appreciate that they cannot now assume the roles that some of the Western nations have filled during the last four or five hundred years. They ought to realise that if the age of empires and empire building has for ever passed for the nations of the West, it has equally passed for the nations of Asia and Africa. Also it ought to be realised that the heyday of nation-states in which the Western nations, as a side-issue to the central drama of European history, could spread all over the world carving out empires and spheres of influence for themselves, is also gone for ever. The very march of history has created conditions in which attempts on the part of Asian and African nations to resuscitate the empire-building and nation-state phase of European history can only harvest a crop of disasters. Nations new to

the exhilarating consciousness of their independence and importance may well feel themselves to be cheated by history. That is why it is all the more necessary that these nations should temper the heady feeling of nationhood with wisdom and foresight.

Thanks to modern technology and science the globe has shrunk; and as the world has grown smaller, nation-states and national sovereignty have increasingly appeared as anachronistic. As a matter of fact the incompatibility of these anachronisms with the drastically shortened dimensions of the globe has brought forth the disasters of the present century. If Egypt allows the shadow of these anachronisms to linger over the Suez affair, she may be instrumental in bringing forth only another such disaster of far graver import. For whatever the legalistic interpretation of the situation may be, the fact remains that the Suez Canal is an international waterway. Nor should the Western Powers delude themselves that international control and management of the Suez Canal is compatible with Egyptian sovereignty, as the notion of sovereignty has so far been understood and interpreted. The internationalisation of the Suez Canal ought to start a process by which the various nation-states of the world, Eastern and Western, should begin to prepare themselves for abrogating national sovereignty and finally putting an end to power-politics. It is high time the antiquated cult of Nationalism should be more more widely recognised and condemned as such.

IT is this antiquated cult again which stands in the way of an enduring solution of the vexed problem of the proper utilisation of the world's natural resources. This problem, too, can be satisfactorily solved only if the welfare of the peoples

of all parts of the earth becomes the concern of all nations. The desire to thrive and prosper at the expense of others or the desire to use control of vital natural resources like oil as a weapon in the struggle for power cannot bring a solution of the problem nearer. But if the ideas of national sovereignty and power yields place to the urge for a co-operative venture of humanity to live together as one family, the problem at least becomes more amenable to a just solution. For then the resources of the earth can be utilised not for making one country or any group of countries rich and powerful but for making all the peoples of the earth secure and prosperous.

We all know how in the absence of this necessary preliminary of abrogation of national sovereignty, the question of Western and Russian aid in the economic development of the backward countries has become entangled with the exigencies of the cold war, and how the cold war itself has complicated the highly desirable flow of technical aid from the advanced countries to those which are economically backward. The Suez crisis is an opportunity to break this vicious circle, an opportunity of which all nations should have taken the advantage. For after all it was the denial of Western aid to the building of the Aswan Dam which prompted Col. Nasser to nationalise the Suez Canal. It is a matter of deep regret that, inspite of all the professions of internationalism and brotherhood of humanity, Indian leaders could not rise above their addiction to the antiquated cult of nationalism and give a real lead to the rest of the world by urging upon all concerned the supreme necessity of abrogating national sovereignty and power politics between nation-states.

It does appear strange that Indian statesmen are so completely taken in by the crocodile tears of the Soviet Union over the plight of the still dependent

nations and by their apparent concern for the sovereignty and independence of all nations. It is equally strange that they persist in the notion that their withdrawal from large areas of Asia and Africa has produced no change whatsoever in the policies and attitudes of the Western nations. It appears even more strange in view of their experience of getting and using Western aid which certainly has been without any strings whatsoever. It ought to be realised that the nations of the West, because of their dependence on external trade and raw materials located in other countries, may be really keen about the evolution of a genuine international order based upon a rejection of the idea of nation-states and national sovereignty.

Indian statesmen are certainly astute enough to know that the Soviet Union is egging Colonel Nasser on towards the dangerous course of an uncompromising stand on a solution of the Suez crisis on the basis of Egypt's unconditional sovereignty over the Suez area. Ambassador Kisselev has informed Egypt that she will look with disfavour upon any solution of the Suez crisis which will encroach

upon Egypt's sovereignty. It is a broad hint that Egypt should reject all ideas of compromise with the Western Powers which may entail some limitation of Egypt's sovereignty. Mr. Menon's plan for solving the crisis has nicely played into the hands of the Russian leaders.

The Suez Canal crisis has shown clearly how remote is the welfare of ordinary human beings who after all make up the collectivity of nations from the calculations of the statesmen of the world. The teeming millions of Egypt have little reason to feel grateful either to the Western nations who denied their aid to the building of a dam, or to Colonel Nasser who has nationalised the Suez Canal. People's welfare, in the sense of the concrete well-being of individual human beings, cannot be secured by the striving for national glory and power. The recent history of Japan, Germany and even Russia proves this point conclusively. Cannot India blaze a new trail in international affairs by insisting that the welfare of the people should be grounded upon the rock-bottom foundation of free untrammelled co-operation of the peoples of the earth for no other purpose than mutual benefit and prosperity?

Dilemma Of The West In Egypt

This remarkably prophetic article by Walter Z. Laqueur appeared in The New Leader of July 23, 1956, before the nationalisation of the Suez Canal. We reproduce it because we feel that its original and authoritative point of view on the state of affairs in Egypt needs to be considered in any comprehensive assessment of the Suez crisis.

—EDITOR

THE Middle East has been the scene of a rapid succession of events in recent weeks: The British have left Suez, Colonel Gamal Abdel Nasser has been elected President of Egypt with a 99.9 per cent majority, Moshe Sharett has quit his post as Israel's Foreign Minister, and newly invested Soviet Foreign Minister Dmitri

T. Shepilov has just concluded a tour of friendly Arab capitals.

To be sure, unlike an Egyptian-Israeli clash in the Gaza strip, none of these occurrences provides dramatic proof of the latent danger lurking in the area. But neither do they contribute to its reduction. The Arab-Israeli conflict is no closer to

settlement now than it ever was. Any day, too, Cairo may launch a new campaign against Western interests in Libya, Saudi Arabia, Aden, Iraq or the Persian Gulf region. It is therefore discomfiting to note that Western statesmen and Western public opinion now seem to feel that certain Middle Eastern problems have ceased to exist because they have temporarily disappeared from the front pages of newspapers. They obviously lack a clear conception of the 'new force' that has emerged in that part of the world.

This is particularly serious because another major crisis in the area seems fairly certain to rise to the surface late this summer or in the fall. The Security Council will undoubtedly be forced to cope with it, but this body has too often shown itself impotent. In the end, the great powers, however reluctant, will have to step in. And while they are reorienting their present unrealistic view of the situation, something more serious than a local Middle East war may develop. Most observers agree that the new force in the Middle East, now popularly referred to as Nasserism, must expand—the only question is where and when it will strike next. An Arab-Israeli war, they carefully point out, is not the only course it can follow; in fact, Nasser is not expected to attempt to push the Jewish state 'into the sea' in 1956.

AT the moment, the most serious problem facing the West in the Middle East concerns the financing of the Aswan High Dam, long a Nasser dream. The World Bank, along with Britain and the United States, has offered to put up part of the money for the project. This has been complicated by an unconfirmed though detailed report of a more attractive Soviet offer which Shepilov is said to have made while in Cairo (involving more money, easier interest terms and a longer repayment period).

Nevertheless, those close to Egypt's new President took pains to let it be known that he was not inclined to accept the Soviet offer. (This has given rise to two theories: The first is that Nasser fears any further direct involvement with Moscow. The second is that there never was any Soviet offer at all; the whole thing was merely a carefully planted rumour designed to improve Egypt's bargaining position with the West.)

In any event, if Nasser could be persuaded to devote his energies to this vital domestic project, it would indeed be a blessing for his own country and the rest of the world. Without question, the danger of an outbreak in the Middle East would immediately recede. But there is grave doubt as to whether his regime is capable of such an effort, whether it does not need (like all other regimes based on 99.9 per cent majorities) great and shining successes which can only be achieved, if at all, in the foreign-policy arena.

Thus, even if Egypt and the World Bank were to come to terms, many difficulties would remain unsolved. Cairo would undoubtedly make it appear as if the West had been forced to meet its demands because it feared that the Kremlin might step in. This, to say the least, is hardly the political objective of foreign aid. Moreover, once the agreement is in force Egypt can be expected to continue its old game of playing East off against West in an effort to gain further concessions. Finally, a Western loan to Egypt would almost automatically result in a deterioration of relations between the two. Nasser would have to demonstrate to his compatriots that his policy is in no way influenced by the West's economic assistance.

Which brings us to the wider issue now being discussed by Middle Eastern experts: Can the West and Nasserism come to a mutually acceptable working agreement, or at least a *modus vivendi*? The

answer these experts give depends largely on whether they are of the 'conservative' or 'liberal' school of thought.

The conservatives feel that Nasser, 'this phony Pharaoh,' is clearly up to mischief. He wants to establish a great empire reaching from the Atlantic to the Indian Ocean, they contend, under the guise of 'anti-imperialism.' To cope with this situation, they say, we must support the Iranians, Turks and Iraqis, now united under the Baghdad Pact.

There is much evidence to support the conservative analysis, but its remedy fails to stand up under scrutiny. Iran has been in a rather shaky state for many years and is not likely to become more stable in the foreseeable future. Conditions in Turkey have been deteriorating in recent months. What is more, both of these countries are outside the Arab bloc. As for Iraq, it has few friends left in the Arab world and is extremely weak internally. While its economic prospects are brighter than those of any other Arab country, the present regime is doomed to suffer defeat in time at the hands of the 'dynamic forces' supported by Cairo—a curious mixture of Communist and fascist elements.

Some conservatives include Saudi Arabia among the countries that must be supported by the West. What they fail to realize is that it is, *mutatis mutandis*, now where Egypt was under King Farouk in 1950. Since it is a far more primitive country, the process of decomposition and actual overthrow of the King and his family may take longer than it did in Egypt, but hardly anyone in the Middle East doubts that the 'dynamic forces' will triumph here, too.

The liberal school urges the West to recognize that a great revolution has been going on in Asia. Many of the newly emerged national movements have legitimate demands, it points out; the West must sharply alter its attitude toward former colonial peoples and put them on an

equal footing if it hopes to gain their confidence. In the Middle East, according to the liberals, Nasserism is the only force of any significance. This is not bad, though, for the Colonel and his friends are basically pro-Western and one merely has to come to terms with them.

The liberal analysis also has much to recommend it but, like the conservative proposals, the liberals' insistence on coming to terms with Nasserism is wholly unrealistic. The liberals gain fresh hope for their viewpoint every few days, after some interview with the Egyptian President by a Western visitor or the alleged 'tuning down' of anti-Western propaganda in the Cairo press and radio for a day or two. Then some incident occurs which dramatically shows a marked disparity between Nasser's actions and his words, and the liberals disappear from view until a new ray of hope appears on the horizon.

The liberals' basic mistake, of course, is their failure to differentiate between the various national movements in the East. In Burma and Ceylon, for example, the nationalists are chiefly concerned with internal problems, are constructive, and have no desire to create new empires or achieve 'leadership'. In contrast, Nasserism immediately brings to mind Napoleon III and Mussolini. It is incapable of concrete advances on the domestic front and sees the extension of its sphere of influence as its chief aim.

Perhaps the liberals' most dangerous suggestion is that the West ignore what is written in the Egyptian press and broadcast over the Egyptian radio. For the present Cairo regime certainly cannot be accused of a lack of candour: its foreign and domestic policies are fully discussed in the state-controlled press. Editorial writer Sami Daoud meant precisely what he said when he wrote in the April 10 issue of *Al Tahrir*, a weekly sponsored by the then ruling junta: 'Every Egyptian is proud to

be a Goebbels. Britain was able to defeat one Goebbels, but it will not be able to prevail over the innumerable Goebbelses who have now emerged in Egypt.' One can hope that he is wrong so far as the majority of his compatriots are concerned, but one can hardly ignore the fact that Daoud speaks for himself and his colleagues in journalism and politics.

Nor would it be wise to ignore the fact that another leading Cairo weekly, *Rose al Yusuf*, has warned that the fight against the West will continue after the Suez evacuation and even after the last Western bastions in Asia and Africa have been stormed, until Western political and economic strength is finally broken. The same weekly was also reflecting official thinking when it explained in its June 17 issue that the Suez evacuation stemmed from the growth of the 'world peace movement,' the growth of the socialist market, and the declining influence of monopoly capitalism.

One needn't be a close student of world affairs to recognise the inspiration of these comments; there has been no official attempt to correct them. Even more important, they reveal that beneath the top leadership—made up of men who like Colonel Nasser are really innocents in world politics despite their native cunning

—there is already a group of wire-pullers who know very well what they want. It would probably take no more than the replacement of 10 or 20 people to make the present 'left-wing fascist' regime a Communist dictatorship. In reality, therefore, discussions about the future of Communism in Egypt are idle; the present regime is already the first stage of people's democracy, Middle Eastern style.

Arabic is a difficult language. Few Western diplomats or correspondents know it. They live in a world of great hotels, international bars, and private informants. They have to depend on official translators who give them selected texts and official spokesmen who reveal only what they want them to hear. Even so, there can be no excuse for the almost systematic manner in which Egyptian press and radio revelations about the Cairo regime are ignored. Any realistic appraisal of Nasserism must be based on facts, not wishful thinking or canned information. At present, unfortunately, only those very few Westerners who read the Egyptian press and monitor Cairo Radio know the facts. Unless these facts are given wider circulation and brought to the attention of the public, it will remain impossible for the West to shape a realistic Middle Eastern policy.

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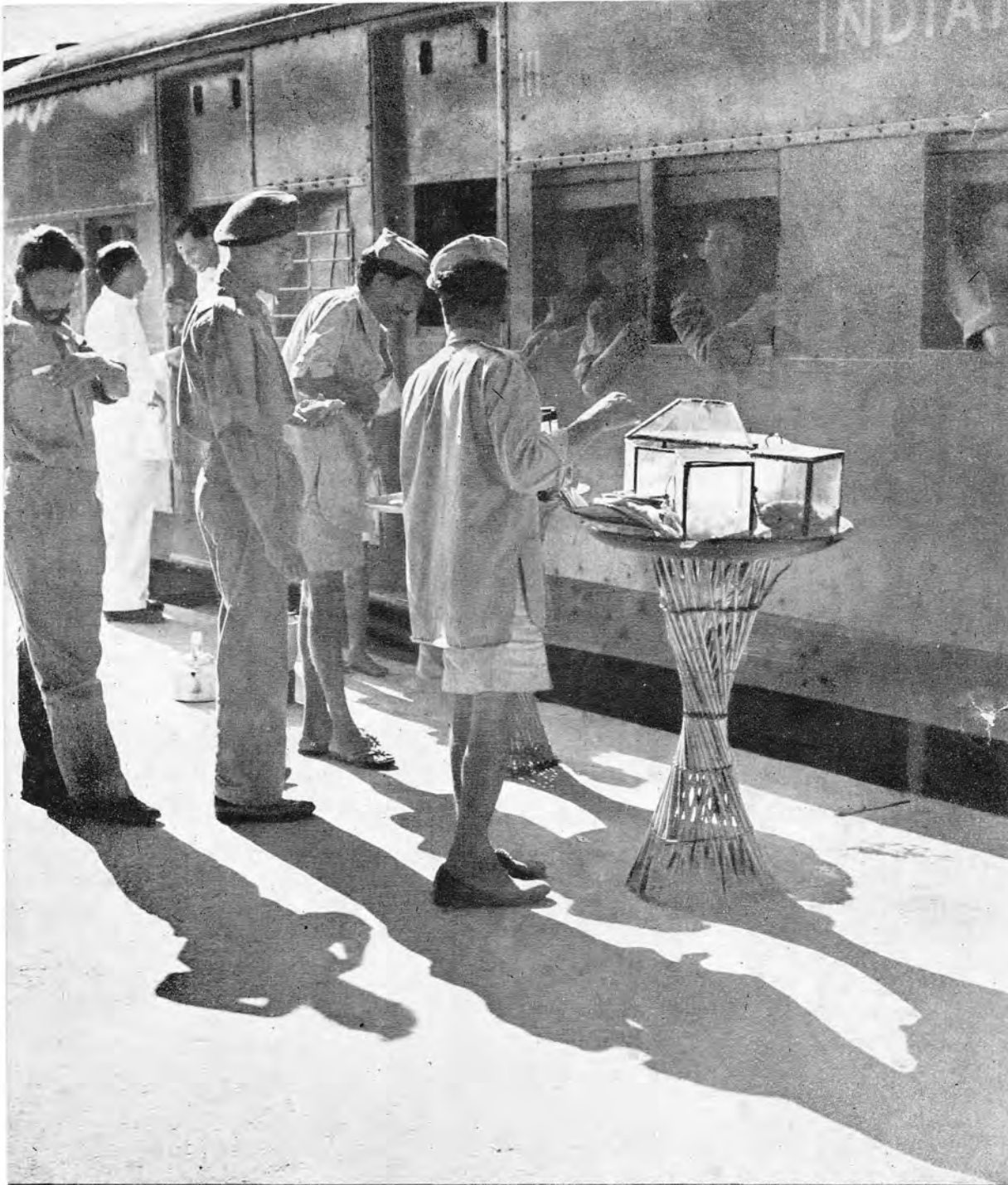
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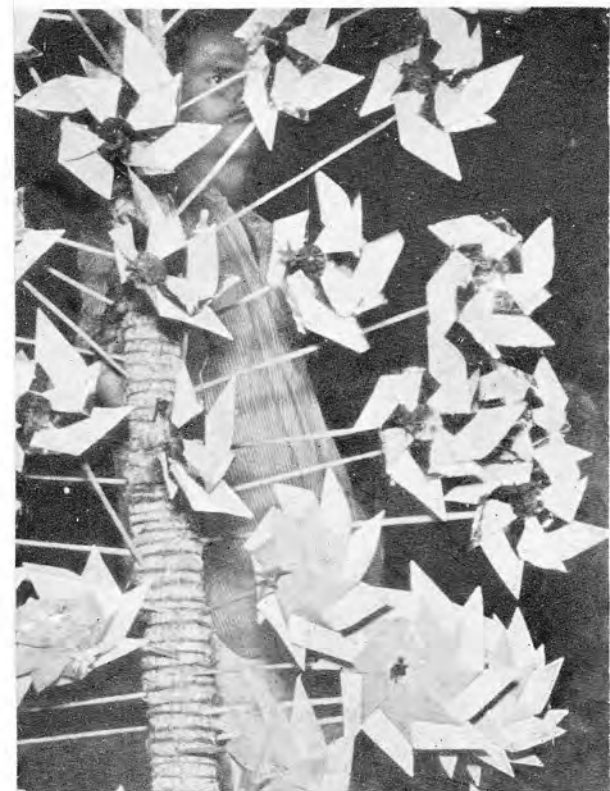
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(Photograph on Agfa film)



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ABOVE: The Banana Vendor
 BELOW LEFT: Paper Wheels
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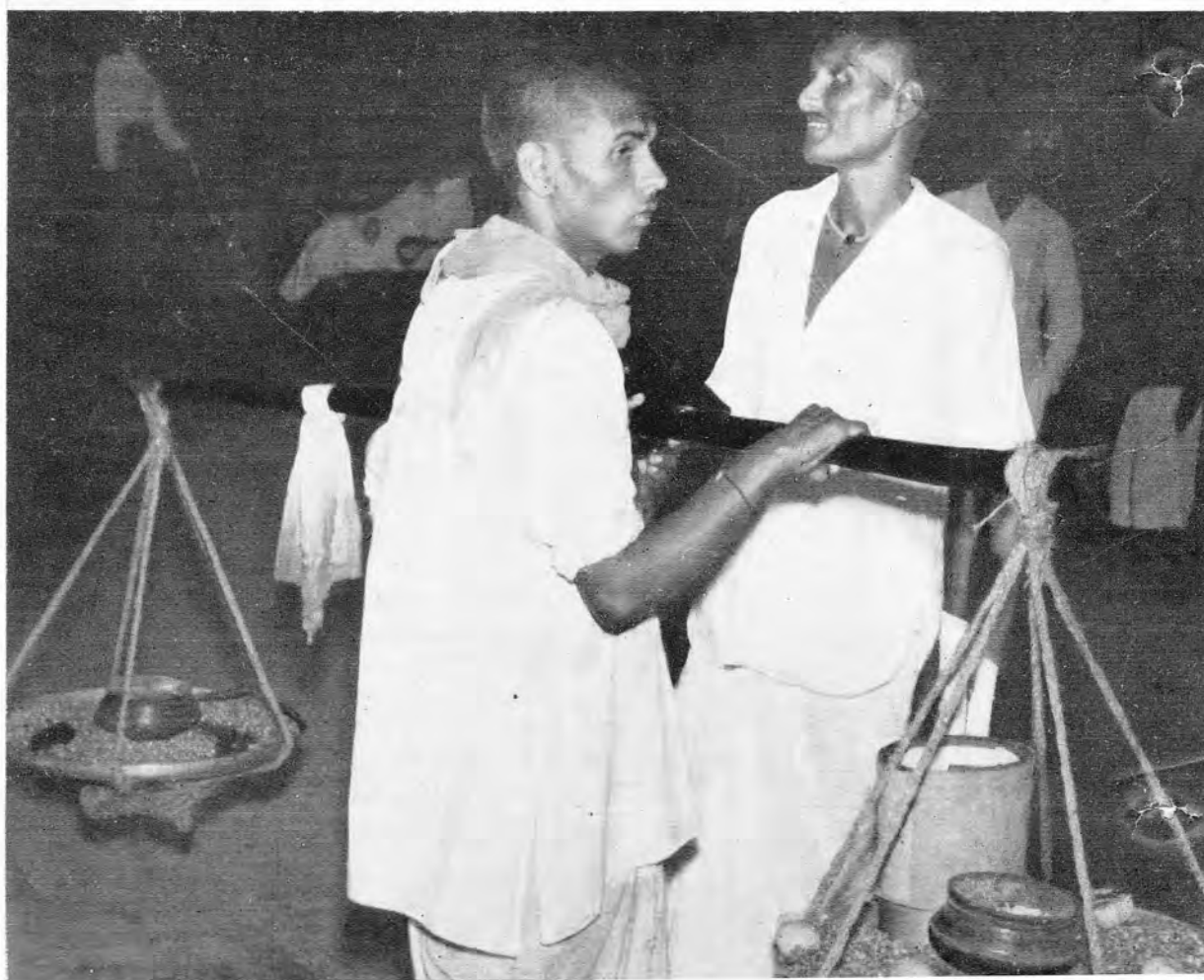




KITE SELLER



GRAM AND NUTS



SATINDRA SINGH

rewriting of Indian history

some unanswered questions

IN the wake of Independence there has come into vogue a desire for the 'true' history of India. The Government has been the first to make a move in this direction and has appointed a committee comprising eminent historians to write the history of the Freedom Movement. Various other independent organizations have also evinced deep interest in the matter. The Bharatiya Itihasa Samiti, for instance, has already published three volumes on the ancient period of this country's history. The Indian Communists, too, have started publishing a series of booklets on the subject.

This interest in the rewriting of Indian history is to be welcomed. It would not, however, be impertinent to ask if the well-meaning bodies sponsoring such histories are likely to achieve any worthwhile results. The writing of history, and of Indian history in particular, is no ordinary

task. It is doubtful if the various committees and organizations which have interested themselves in this matter have even the ability, leave alone the equipment, to disentangle and organise the confused facts of India's past and produce an impartial narrative.

Not only are these historians too near their 'subject' to treat it with cold objectivity; it would be rash to expect them to be immune from self-praise and self-glorification (the accepted basic constituents of patriotism) which naturally followed the struggle for independence. The danger, therefore, of having a highly adulatory version of our history presented to us is real. The result of these 'command performances', if one may employ the phrase, will be purposive historiography—a 20th century prototype of the *Shahnamas* written by court-versifiers of the feudal age.

Indian history, already a riddle, will only become more obscure.

This should not, however, be taken to mean that there is nothing wrong with the existing versions of Indian history. These are a mystery to the credulous and an incoherent myth to the critical because, before independence, historiography was used as a politico-ideological weapon by foreign as well as Indian historians. While the former, in their effort to justify foreign rule, vilified our past, the latter glorified it to inspire the people to intensify the freedom struggle.

The interpretations of foreign historians, though they professed different political ideologies, have invariably been almost identical. Notions of *real politik* have always tended to suppress the sympathetic stirrings of their conscience and reconciled them to the idea of Indian slavery and inferiority. Their purpose always seems to have been to convince Indians that they were an inferior people and to demoralize them to the belief that they were destined to be slaves of some foreign power or the other. With consummate artistry they floodlit the dark spots, and either ignored or understated the achievements of Indian civilization.

Indian historians have erred on the other side. In their efforts to refute the mischievous conclusions of the foreign historians, they have unnecessarily glorified the past, and often read modern ideas into ancient writings. They have not gone or could not go into the causes of the rise and decline of Indian civilization, and answer certain pertinent questions such as: what caused a slackening in the outlook on life in Indian thought? Why did the Indian sages continually preach the eternal unreality and falsity of the world, and the concept of *maya*, or 'world worthlessness' (to borrow a phrase from T. E. Lawrence?). Why did technology remain in a state of suspended animation in India?

Why was contentment cherished as an ideal? What was the reason for the apathy of the Indian people to the conditions stemming from their stratified caste system? Why did natural philosophy sink low and become arid? Why did Buddhism see the apex of wisdom in the self-mutilation of man's creative powers? And what else was the theory of *Karma* if not an admission of failure to solve the problems of social life? No satisfactory answer to these questions has so far been forthcoming.

INDIAN historians have also tended to gloss over the fact of India's degeneration which made her an easy victim of several foreign invaders. Thus, instead of providing concrete data to support their theories, they confine themselves to futile generalities and speculation.

This method of historiography helped us no doubt to fight the foreigner's onslaught on our cultural heritage. It may even have had a certain amount of justification under the prevailing circumstances. The pity is that the rather dubious conclusions of Indian historians have in course of time come to acquire the sanctity and character of self-evident truth and have passed into the general consciousness of the Indian people.

Mention may be made here of another category of Indian historians—politicians who have dabbled in historiography as a means to solve the tedium of jail life. It has to be politely pointed out that such persons are by no means fit for the job. Politicians, as they are, their aim is invariably to find a purpose in historical development supporting their causes: it is 'unity of India' in the case of Prime Minister Nehru, (*Discovery of India*, 1946); a 'socialist society' in the case of Mr. S. A. Dange (*India: From Primitive Communism to Slavery*, 1949) and Mr. E.

M. S. Namboodripad (*The National Question in Kerala*, 1952). The politician-historians usually hold documentation in dread and condemn it as 'bookish' because they have little evidence to summon to their support.

Dange and Namboodripad have used the materialist conception of history in their writings, disregarding the basically different development of Indian civilization from that of the West. Their application of the Marxist methodology is, therefore, unwarranted. They display a tendency to explain away developments that run counter to their cherished view of historical movement as being due to the 'evil influence of the propertied classes.' In their attempt to cut the fabric of Indian history to fit the effigy of Marx, they have disfigured both.

The orthodox method of historiography—the writing of history chronologically—has also contributed in some ways to the distortion of India's past. Though precise and handy, this method suffers from an inherent superficiality of approach. It can tabulate events chronologically, but there is hardly any continuity of treatment. Only the oases of Indian history have been repeatedly explored by a legion of historians; dark deserts remain unknown. Important questions remain. While the civilizations of Egypt, Syria, Crete, Greece and Babylon perished leaving behind nothing but a fragrance of memory, why did India's subsist despite the ravages committed by her innumerable conquerors? Why did India not develop into an industrial country even after the growth of a commercial-urban civilization of a very high order? Why, while in other countries the historical movements have moved spirally, did they move in a circle in India? Why did the glorious periods of Indian history follow in the wake of her foreign conquerors, in turn to be followed by periods of compa-

rative oblivion? Why did India fall an easy victim to her numerous invaders in spite of the vastness and magnitude of her population? And why were all her conquerors—barring the British—absorbed by her?

SOME orthodox historians with whom I discussed these questions doubted the possibility of success in such an attempt. They argued that in the first place much valuable material has been lost to us due, among other things, to the numerous defeats which prevented the Indian side of the story being preserved for posterity. The records that did exist were mutilated by the caprice and vandalism of foreign conquerors. Whatever papers survived were hidden away in family archives, and were not published for fear of the consequence. Such papers remained dispersed and unknown and have by now probably perished altogether. Secondly, education in India has always been the monopoly of the upper classes, with the result that the common people never left any account of their conditions of living. In the writings of the upper classes, the life of the people is seldom reflected. True, we have Brahminical and Buddhist versions of the Indian polity, the latter written mostly by the dissident Kshatriyas. But these are largely polemical, and are quite inadequate for dispassionate historical research. They are usually lost in the controversies of the Beyond, and their spiritual concepts warp their version of the social and political events of their times. Similarly, in the accounts of foreign travellers, which increase in number and volume as we approach the end of India's medieval period, we have, no doubt, some glimpse of the life of the Indian people. But these accounts demand cautious treatment; they are liable to be superficial and biased.

Again, there is hardly any statistical material available for factual study. As regards the modern period, however, we do have abundant material, but here we are faced with the difficulty already discussed, the use of historiography as a politico-ideological weapon both by foreign and Indian writers.

Facts, cannot, however, vanish because they are ignored. What is needed is a sustained effort to unravel objectively the elements which form the puzzling, seemingly contradictory, pattern of events. Researches into the agrarian economy of India through the ages, for example, should prove of great help in this. Agriculture was then, as it is largely now, almost the only source of revenue of the State and the income of the nobility and the people. It was the most natural link between them all. Thus, facts concerning the system of land revenue, the mode of collection, the willingness or reluctance with which these demands were met, may provide us with material which may be

helpful in arriving at unbiased answers to the questions posed.

A study of the effects of the growth of towns and cottage industries on the self-sufficient economy, the nature of the articles of export and import, the extent and the nature of the markets, the archaeological ruins and remains of ancient buildings and roads, the ways in which people used their wealth and utilized their leisure, their tastes in art and literature—all these would surely throw abundant light on social life. Similarly, the method of working iron and coal mines, and the extent of the use to which these products were put, would be of considerable assistance.

We can also draw on the works of several Western scholars who have carried on extensive researches into the origin and development of various civilizations. This could be done with profit because the social history of the human race, in spite of its textural differences and multi-coloured designs, tends to unfold in a single pattern.

THE LONELY HOUR

I cannot say who planted
those shadows in the sun.
Whence, tempest-wild, upon the fine
torrid gaze of summer-day,
this sullen fist; silent mist
coughing up a starry spray.

Those dark hooves of bodiless air
seem to crate suddenly
from that razor-sleek sparrow-way
where sea and sky are one.

There is grief in twilight's undoing,
grief of an ignorant tale;
of loneliness that may never end
and tomorrow always far away.

RANJANI RAO

PHILIP SPRATT

the rebel

a note on Subhas Chandra Bose

WHEN Japan surrendered in August, 1945, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, retreating from Burma at the head of the Indian National Army, had reached Singapore, whence he left by plane for Japan. His aircraft crashed in Taiwan, he was badly burnt and died in a few hours. An Indian friend was with him and has given an account of what happened. The Government of India have set going several inquiries, and have always concluded that this is the truth of the matter: Netaji died in August, 1945.

There does not seem to have been any solid ground for doubt, but there was a very widespread belief that the story was false and that Netaji was still alive and would return at some critical moment to save India. It is probable that for several years millions of people held this belief with some degree of conviction. The number has, of course, decreased, but believ-

ers are still to be found in South India and, I am told, in Bengal, Netaji's home province and the centre of his cult.

Soon after his death coloured prints of him began to appear, and they are still to be seen in large numbers, especially in cheap barber-shops and the like. Netaji was a hero to the masses as well as to the educated. Nearly all these pictures stress the aggressive face and the uniform, but I have seen a number of different designs which show him, not necessarily in uniform, against a landscape background, with the rising sun behind him, a youthful figure in a defiant attitude, marching forward, sometimes alone, sometimes accompanied by the Mahatma.

When I began to see these pictures something stirred in me. I had known Subhas Babu slightly and, like everybody else, admired his uncommon dash, but had never thought him specially interesting or

agreed with him, and certainly had no strong sentiment about him. Then one day, confronted with one of these pictures, I grasped what had been at the back of my mind. These crude prints presented Netaji in the character of the youthful hero of mythology, the sun god, vegetation god or divine king, who is ritually killed but, like the rising sun or Spring after Winter, always comes back.

At first I thought it just a coincidence that this passionate belief that he would come back had fixed upon Netaji, and that these admirers had pictured him so appropriately. But he fits the part remarkably well. Though in fact no longer young, he still looked young: he was at any rate 28 years younger than the Mahatma and eight years younger than Nehru. He had led an austere and pious life, and was reputed to be a brahmachari—some versions of the protean figure of the sacrificed god are virgin. He had encountered temptation by the evil one, in the form of a desire to enter the I.C.S., but had been providentially saved. He had been the most militant Congress leader of his day, had consorted with the terrorists, and had shown a unique liking for military uniform, which he had worn as officer commanding the volunteers at a Congress session.

Whereas most other leaders were imprisoned only when they 'asked for it', he had been treated far more rigorously, and had repeatedly gone on hunger-strike against what he considered unjust imprisonment. He had undergone what can be called burial alive in a remote jail, and had gone underground to Germany, and under water to Japan, the two enemies of the national enemy. Within the national family, too, he had been a rebel, and had revolted successfully against the Father of the Nation. His personality seemed, like that of a figure of myth, to be made up of a few abstr-

act characteristics—rebelliousness, courage, patriotism, piety, and little else.

Is it just a coincidence that, despite quite adequate evidence that he was dead, multitudes of people should for years believe that he would come back? Or were they moved by a dim reminiscence of the old myth about the slain and resurrected god? It would be surprising if people still remembered this myth, for though it is to be traced to an early period in Indian history, it was later eclipsed and remained for millennia superseded by myths of quite different tendency.

TO discover an Indian version of the myth in a fairly clear form we have to go as far back as the Rigveda. Indra killed Vritra and released the waters everywhere: the ritual meaning of this is suggested by Indra striking Vritra 'upon his mountain-like shoulder, like one emasculated who pretends to virility; then Vritra, mutilated of many members, slept,' (Rv. I. 7.2.7.), or 'making his mother a widow, slaying his father, having seized him by the foot' (Rv. IV. 2.8.12). A friend who is learned in the classics assures me that there is somewhere a reference to Indra being replaced by a new Indra every twelve years.

By the time the Oedipus story appears in the Brahmanas the aggressiveness of the participants is being toned down. 'Prajapati cast his eyes upon his own daughter... Rudra aimed at and pierced him. Half of his seed fell to the ground... When the anger of the gods had passed away, they applied remedies to Prajapati and cut out of him the arrow' (Sat. Br. I. 7.4.). At the same time the conflict is being given a psychological twist. Coomaraswami, quoting the Brahmanas, sums it up thus:

'In this eternal beginning there is only the supreme identity of "that One"... the first principle, which may be spoken of as the Person, Progenitor, Mountain, Tree, Dragon or Endless Serpent. Related to this

principle by filiation or younger brotherhood, and alter ego rather than another principle, is the Dragon-slayer, born to supplant the Father and take possession of the Kingdom, distributing its treasures to his followers.... Now the positions are reversed, for the Fiery Dragon will not and cannot be destroyed, but would enter into the Hero.... The Dragon-slayer devours his victim, swallows him up and drinks him dry, and by this Eucharistic meal he takes possession of the first-born Dragon's treasure and powers and becomes what he was.... Our composite soul is called the "mountain of God" and we are told that the comprehensor of this doctrine shall in like manner swallow up his own evil, hateful adversary. This "adversary" is, of course, none but our self.... We who were at war with ourselves are now reintegrated and self-composed: the rebel has been tamed and pacified.... the reconciliation of conflicting powers for which the sacrifice continually provides is also their marriage. There are more ways than one of "killing" a Dragon; and the Dragon-slayer's bolt, being in fact a shaft of light, and "light the progenitive power", its signification is not only military, but also phallic. It is the battle of love that has been won when the Dragon "expires." (A. K. Coomaraswami: *Hinduism and Buddhism*, pp. 6-23) This is a remarkable parallel to the Freudian doctrine of the formation of the conscience, if Coomaraswami is to be accepted.

After the age of the Brahmanas, the Oedipus conflict appears even more toned down, and in fact turned into something like its opposite. A mediaeval version runs thus. Brahma exhorted his son Narada to marry and people the earth. Narada became angry and denounced his father as an unworthy instructor. Brahma cursed Narada, dooming him to a life of sensuality and subjection to women. Narada in reply cursed his father: 'Wretch, become

no object of adoration: how shall anyone be devoted to the forms of thy worship? Thou shalt without doubt lust after her who is no fit object of thy desires.' As a result, Brahma ceased to be worshipped. Seeing the beauty of his own daughter, he ran after her. Afterwards, being reproached by Sanaka and others, he abandoned his bodily form. He became ashamed, being a slave to lust. Narada, having made obeisance to his lotus-born father, forsook his Brahmanical body and became a Gandharva. (*Narada Pancharatra*, X. 30).

Instead of a competition in sexuality, we have a competition in which each incites the other to demean himself through sexuality. The image of the virile young god who rebels against his father is replaced by the image of the *sanyasin* whose main preoccupation is the suppression of his sexuality. The conflict between the generations remains, but its outcome is greatly altered. While in a few puranic stories of such conflicts the son is victorious—Bhabhruvahana, Prahlada, Satyavrata—more usually the outcome is a victory for the father—Varuna and Bhrigu, Rijvasva, Yayati, Jalpa, Kshanitra, Jamadagni; and most commonly there is a compromise. I once counted through a standard text-book of Indian history to find how many instances of rebellion against kings by son, nephew or younger brother were mentioned. I found that the frequency of such rebellions in Hindu and Buddhist dynasties was about one third of the frequency in Muslim dynasties.

IT almost looks as if the image of the rebel has been deliberately purged from Hindu mythology. Indra and Rudra are no longer living figures. The myth of the rebellious god survives only in forms which have been twisted out of recognition. According to the late A. M. Hocart, the original form of all these myths about the

rebellious god was a creation ritual, which he reconstructs in considerable detail. Whether his theory is valid or not, it happens to fit some of the Indian facts remarkably well. Thus the story of the Churning of the Ocean of Milk seems to be a fairly complete account of this creation ritual, but so distorted that neither Hocart nor anybody else has recognised it.

Indra inadvertently displeases the aged and irascible Durvasa: this is all that remains of the Oedipus conflict. He is condemned to 'weakness'. The simulated death and revival of the victim appear in the swallowing of the poison by Shiva, and his survival. The substitute human or animal sacrifice and the division of the corpse to form earth and sky appear as the slaying of the Asura and his transformation into Rahu and Ketu. The sacred marriage between the hero and his sister or mother is the Shiva-Mohini episode. The sacred meal is the partaking of the *amrita*. The ritual battle is the tug-of-war between the Devas, Asuras with Vasuki as the rope. The monster or dragon of course is Vasuki. The holy hill surrounded by water, the scene of the ritual, is Mandara. The motley procession which formed part of the ritual is the assortment of persons, animals and objects which emerge from the ocean. Finally Indra regains his strength and his throne. There can be scarcely any doubt that this is the story of Hocart's reconstructed creation ritual, but the order of events and their meanings have been greatly changed. All the *amrit-manthan* story provokes nowadays is sententious reflections on the contradictory psychological and social results of stirring up the depths.

Later elaborations of the story centred mainly round the slaying by the hero of his predecessor-father and his marriage with his mother, the prophesying of this dire event, and the vain precautions taken by the father against it. Krishna was undoubtedly one of these heroes. His con-

flict with his uncle Kamsa is prophesied, he is transferred to a foster-mother some distance away soon after birth, the tyrant slays innocents in his place, he performs miraculous feats as a baby, he goes to the nether regions on an adventure, he overthrows and kills Kamsa and reigns in his stead, and is finally killed by a wound in the foot. Clearly Krishna partakes of the nature of the rebellious slain god, but this is not the picture of him that is now remembered. To the mediaeval as to the modern age he is the mischievous child, the sage politician, or the expounder of the Gita, that classical source of the old man's philosophy of achievement without passion.

PROBABLY Rama also was one of the rebellious slain gods. In some versions of the story he is Sita's brother, and in some Sita is Ravana's daughter. It is prophesied at her birth that she will cause Ravana's death, and he tries to kill her. These variants suggest that originally Rama was Ravana's rebellious son. Rama's killing of a monster, the island, the battle, the reunion of Rama and Sita, and his defeat in his turn by his sons, are other incidents remaining from the original myth. The Vali-Sugriva episode also outlines the story. King Vali, pursuing a monster, goes underground and seems to be lost. His younger brother Sugriva usurps his throne. After a year Vali returns and ousts Sugriva, who takes refuge in an enchanted mountain. With Rama's help he slays Vali, takes the throne and marries Vali's queen. This episode embodied in the epic seems to confirm the view that Rama was originally one of the rebellious slain gods. But far from exemplifying the spirit of rebellion, Rama is now a model of filial piety, and the supreme model of paternalism: he stands unequivocally for the old man's philosophy.

Traditional Hindu symbolism has, of

course, a place for aggressiveness. Hanuman is a fighting figure, but he is even more definitely a symbol of fidelity to his overlord, Rama. The Marathas invoked Mahadeva, but though destructive he is the supreme god, in no sense a rebel. For most Hindus, and even for the Sikhs, the outstanding symbol of warlike feeling and prowess has been Bhavani, again a supreme ruler, and indeed less likely than a male god to provoke rebellious sentiments: she can inspire only a stoical acceptance of death in battle if that should be one's fate. All these symbols support the frame of mind of the faithful soldier, not of the rebel.

Likewise, from Ram Mohan Roy onwards, almost all the heroes of the resurgent nation and later of the organised national movement have been pictured as elderly men, and several of them are cross-legged ascetics. Netaji was the great exception. He was of course an admirer of Vivekananda, the only one of these figures who resembles him at all. Before the war while in India he rose to the highest position despite a prolonged rebellion against the Mahatma, culminating in his forced resignation from the Presidentship of the Congress. During the war he achieved miraculous feats. From the Indian resident community in Burma and the Far East he is declared to have collected 25 crores of rupees; seeing the trouble Mahatma Gandhi had to collect one crore from 300 million people, this is completely amazing.

With the I.N.A. he showed great gifts of leadership, and imbued his men, in rather difficult conditions, with fighting spirit and a remarkable freedom from provincialism and communalism, though a large proportion of the Muslim prisoners of war refused to join him. Since 1857 no independent Indian leader had attempted to cope with the stern realities of war. Netaji had done so, and had passed this supreme test.

Netaji's character and achievements thus fitted the model of the rebellious slain god. So also did the occasion fit the circumstances in which these rituals were performed. The ritual was a rehearsal of the creation of the world and was performed annually after or during an intercalated period of a few days between the regular months of the old year and of the new, a period of license and chaos, a *pralaya*.

The period of British rule ought to have ended in a *pralaya*, and Independence to have reestablished order. Instead, the early years of independence were more disorderly than the last years of the British period. This was rationally to be expected, but it does not satisfy the symmetrical requirements of ritual and myth. Hence, perhaps, a feeling that Independence was not genuine, it was still the interval of *pralaya*, and the authentic New Era would begin only with the Return of the Hero.

IN reality, therefore, as well as symbolically, Netaji was a new departure. He defied all the precedents, mediaeval and modern. He did stir up a certain amount of rebelliousness, a spirit which, in different applications, India sorely needs. She could do with much more of the irreverence of the rebel in social arrangements, in local and provincial affairs, in economics, and in all departments of thought. But Netaji's rebelliousness was not of these kinds. He reminds us rather of the revival in Germany of the cult of another embodiment of the rebellious slain god, Siegfried. India's development of this myth has been in some ways unfortunate, but it is of no use merely to go back to the source.

Some people maintain that Subhas Bose made a substantial contribution to the attainment of independence. I do not agree. Independence was implicit in the constitution of 1935, and still more clearly in the offers made by Amery in 1940 and by

Cripps in 1942. These were a complete recognition that India refused to submit to further subjection: the point required no more proof.

At any rate, nothing of value other than a demonstration of this point has come of Netaji's adventures. He aroused a new spirit, but he did nothing to provoke new thought. His own ideas were entirely conventional. He stood for orthodox nationalism, and the orthodox religion of the educated man of his day. In political affairs he frankly admired the uncompromising militancy and the one-party dictatorship of the contemporary fascists and communists, but even there he made no contribution of his own. His writings are wholly lacking in new ideas. M. N. Roy, who got to know him well in the later 1930s, told me that Subhas had no intellectual interests.

The mere rebel is only too likely to turn authoritarian. Indeed, what else can he do? If he has no programme but to upset the existing system, he can only put himself in its place, and thereafter act as the whim

seizes him. When Netaji's admirers proclaimed their belief that he would come back they showed that they truly grasped the character of the rebellious hero, who can only be a saviour.

So far as can be judged, then, the affair has passed, leaving nothing of any significance behind. Netaji failed to impress the intellectuals, and he aroused only dislike among those who wield power. The pathetic belief that he is alive and will return has ended in provoking ridicule. The affair is sliding back into the national unconscious.

But while it lasted it had an intense emotional impact. It seemed to revive long-dead memories, and to open glimpses of unexpected possibilities in the national mind. The young rebel is politically sterile, but he is the central figure of much of the world's romance, and of much of its religion. In our time we have seen a man who can stand beside Socrates and the Buddha: we have also seen one who is of the company of Karna, Parsifal and Robin Hood.

A. RANGANATHAN

Thoreau's impact on Gandhi

a study in kinship

A CLEAR example of how thoughts and actions of all men interact,' proclaimed President Sukarno of Indonesia, 'was to be seen in the relationship between one remote and lofty mind which functioned more than a hundred years ago in Massachusetts and today's revolution in Asia and Africa'. That remote and lofty mind was Thoreau, whose message, at once visionary and inspiring, made a great impact on the sensitive mind of Gandhi. Dr. Sukarno explained that Henry David Thoreau and Gandhiji were responsible to some extent for the current Afro-Asian Movement. Gandhi constitutes the bridge between America and India, Thoreau and the present political awakening, ancient Indian thought and modern political theories of the West. The Gandhian ideology is essentially grounded in Indian tradition. The quest for perfection, illuminated by the ideals of the Buddha,

inspired by the *Gita* and stimulated by ideas of philosophers from America, England and Russia, helped to form the Gandhian political and spiritual outlook.

In some respects, it is impossible to imagine two men more unlike each other—Thoreau, a poet and a sceptic who rebelled against the easy-going Puritan mode of life in New England, Gandhi, the young barrister who had left India for South Africa in pursuit of a legal career. And yet, Thoreau and Gandhi shared a spiritual kinship of ideas. Son of the local pencil-maker in Concord, a Harvard graduate and a Yankee non-conformist, Thoreau is remembered chiefly for his celebrated essay on *Civil Disobedience*, which influenced the course of Gandhian thought. In his time, during the mid-nineteenth century, Concord was a hub of literary activity and agitation against slavery. Thoreau, Emerson, Whitman and many others lived in

Concord during this period, and the influence of their ideas, *which owed not a little to Asian thought*, became increasingly felt throughout the civilized world.

Thoreau, who was greatly influenced by the Indian classics, spoke of Concord as a place where 'the pure Walden water is mingled with the sacred water of the Ganges.' Since Indian philosophy was the spiritual fountainhead of Thoreau's ideas, it is not surprising that Gandhi was easily impressed by them. Gandhi called Thoreau's effort, 'a masterly essay', which 'left a deep impression' on him. In 1907, a copy of Thoreau's *Civil Disobedience* fell into his hands, while he was in South Africa. Thoreau was an outspoken opponent of slavery and refused to pay poll-tax to a government which supported it; he was naturally clapped into jail for defying the authorities. The issue for which Thoreau fought was based on a moral principle. He differentiated, however, between one tax and another, and did not mind paying the highway tax or a school tax.

GANDHI'S fight against the 'apartheid' movement made a great impression on the world's conscience, and was analogous to Thoreau's crusade against slavery. In both these cases it was a struggle between the conscience of an individual and brute force, ultimately vindicating the power of the individual spirit. Prime Minister Smuts granted every important demand of the Indian population ranging from abolition of finger-print legislation to the removal of restrictions on the immigration of educated Indians. It is true that the situation later worsened, making civilized life impossible for Indians in South Africa. But the spirit that Gandhi awakened can never be destroyed. Thoreau made an effective statement against government and emphasized the right of the individual to obey the dictates of conscience rather than the

arbitrary orders of the State. Thoreau rebelled against his own government to satisfy spiritual convictions, Gandhi protested against the injustices of a foreign government based on racial superiority which denied elementary rights of citizenship to coloured peoples.

In 1915, the scene shifted to India. Gandhi, who had returned home, tested his technique before he adopted it on a national scale. He took up the problem of the grievances of the workers against the Indigo planters in Champaran and his success attracted the attention of the leaders of the Home Rule movement. Taking stock of the country's political situation, Gandhi decided to apply his technique on a bigger scale. Tilak had laid the foundations of the nation's political endeavour, and Gandhi accepted it to a point as the basis for his struggle. He developed some of Thoreau's ideas and gave them his own personal flavour. By identifying himself with the masses of India in his epic struggle against the forces of imperialism he put new life into those who were already stirred by Tilak's gospel of Swaraj. Gandhi applied Thoreau's ideas but not without adapting them to suit the Indian ethos. Thoreau wrote: if one thousand, if one hundred, if ten men whom I could name—if ten honest men only—if one *honest* man in this state of Massachusetts, ceasing to hold slaves, were actually to withdraw from co-partnership (with the government) and be locked up in the country jail, then it would be the abolition of slavery in America'. As Vincent Sheean says, 'some of the aspects of non-violence as a technique he (Gandhi) owed to Henry Thoreau in the form of civil disobedience.'

Gandhi felt that it is not numerical strength which counts for success; he believed in the purity of political suffering. Gandhi declared that men like Thoreau brought about the abolition of slavery by their personal example. Gandhi gave a new

content and significance to the broad outlines of Thoreau's thought. Thoreau's criticism of the brute force of an unjust government is the supreme moral basis upon which Gandhi has challenged the mighty forces of Imperialism in our day. Thoreau and Gandhi believed in the dignity of the individual as an end in himself, in order to achieve a new social order based on ethics, which is essentially a frame of mind, a form of society, a compendium of human relationships reflecting the permanent value of civilization.

Louis Fischer remarks that there was an Indian imprint on Thoreau, who used to read the sacred scriptures of the Hindus along with Emerson, and significantly adds: 'Thoreau in Massachussets borrowed from Gandhi's India and repaid the debt with words that reached Gandhi in a South African cell.' Count Leo Tolstoy with whom Gandhi corresponded shared the same faith in the moral strength of the individual and in civil disobedience. Through renunciation of property and pursuing a life of rigorous austerity, Tolstoy tried to evolve a philosophy linking everyday life with the cardinal tenets of religion. Ruskin had attempted in his life and work to bring about a harmony between man's aims and man's achievements. A thread of unity runs through the philosophical systems of Tolstoy and Ruskin, Thoreau and Gandhi. Gandhi's philosophy, which can be summed up as a synthesis of Indian traditional concepts and Thoreau's political views, is also delicately leavened with Ruskin's naturalism and Tolstoy's idealism.

Thoreau's way of living at Walden was different from Gandhi's. Thoreau's self-constructed hut at Walden helped him to commune with Nature. Thoreau was keenly alive to the beauty of wild scenery, to the mellow sunsets of Concord and the calm waters of Walden, to Nature in the visual sense; but the 'Nature' of Gandhi

was merely a setting for a Sarvodaya Pattern of Society on the lines of Sabarmati and Wardha. Thoreau was a naturalist philosopher who found in his 'Walden' an image of the Universe. He took pride in having 'travelled much in Concord.' As Emerson wrote, 'Thoreau was bred to no profession; he never married; he lived alone; he never went to church; he never voted; he refused to pay a tax to the state; he ate no flesh, he drank no wine, he never knew the use of tobacco; and though a naturalist, he used neither trap nor gun. He chose, wisely no doubt for himself, to be the bachelor of thought and Nature. He chose to be rich by making his wants few, and supplying them himself.'

Gandhi was a deeply religious Indian, who combined political genius with saintly qualities of the highest order. Thoreau was a philosophic rebel, a keen observer of Nature and an intellectual who was not religious in the conventional sense of the term.

THE Gandhian struggle has not only contributed to the opening of a new era in the development of the Indian nation, but has also given a tremendous impetus to the epoch-making upheaval which is taking place in Asia and Africa. The Gold Coast, Sudan and Nigeria are gradually becoming politically independent without much violence, due to the spread of Gandhian ideas. Moses Kotano representing the African National Congress had adopted the Gandhian way. In Nigeria and the Gold Coast, the slogan 'we must go to Gandhi' has gained wide currency. Even in Tunisia, Habib Bourgiba of the Nationalist Neo-Destour Party has adopted the Gandhian form of struggle and negotiated with the French Premier, as Gandhi negotiated with Irwin. The recent boycott of buses by the Alabama Negroes derives its inspiration from a Gandhian political

source. Negro Ministers asked the residents of Montgomery at a mass meeting to base their movement on 'passive resistance' and to eschew violence. Just at present it is remarkable that the wheel of political evolution has turned full circle; a trickle of Thoreau's ideas distilled from ancient Indian thought and European humanism, starting from Concord, flowing through Africa, inundating the whole of Asia and once again overflowing to America. It is interesting to note that Faulkner recently advised Negroes to adopt Gandhian methods.

Thoreau was a poet among naturalists, and as inspirer of Gandhi has become patron saint of the revolutionary movements of Asia and Africa. Just as Wordsworth's pamphlet entitled *Tract on the convention of Cintra* (an incident of the peninsular war) where he argued that Napoleon can be vanquished only by rousing the dormant impulses of nationalism among the conquered peoples, anticipated the spiritual basis of Mazzini's philosophy of nationalism, the basic doctrines of

Thoreau's philosophy were transformed into a philosophy of Indian nationalism by Gandhi. Revolutions are made in the minds of men. John Locke was the spokesman of the Glorious Revolution of 1688 in England; Voltaire and Rousseau influenced the course of the French Revolution. James Harrington and John Locke, through Thomas Jefferson inspired the American Revolution; Marx through Lenin helped to foment the Russian Revolution; Thoreau and Gandhi had their impact on the Indian Revolution from which has stemmed the contemporary Afro-Asian awakening. President Sukarno said, 'We all know the sequel to this cultural exchange between Gandhi and Thoreau and how the strength of civil disobedience moved a whole great nation out of a long interregnum of silence into a prominent position in the world.' This mutual interchange of ideas is not only a classic example of what may be termed the cross-fertilization of ideas resulting in a new East-West synthesis, but also reflects the fundamental unity of mankind.

Tribute To R. K. Narayan

BY NATWAR SINGH

TO-DAY, almost a decade after Independence, more Indians than ever before are writing in the English language. It is also true to say that the centre of gravity of the Indian writer (one might almost say of the Indian intellectual) still remains in the West. One of the reasons for this is that the majority of our writers have their reading public outside India, all of them without exception have their books published in England or America, and this state of affairs will continue so long as our publishers fail to inspire confidence in our authors.

Indian writers (I am speaking only of those writing in English) have almost without exception been discovered by the West—Tagore, Sarojini Naidu, Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, R. K. Narayan, Kamala Markandaya, Shanta Rama Rao, Khushwant Singh, Arthur Lal, amongst the fiction writers and the list is almost as long for non-fiction writers: R. C. Dutt, Radhakrishnan, Jawaharlal Nehru, K. M. Panikkar, D. F. Karaka, M. R. Masani, Nirad C. Chaudhuri—and once they have been accepted in London, New York and Paris we embrace them and, like our Test Cricketers, it is difficult to dislodge them from their elevated position, regardless of the quality of their output.

R. K. Narayan is unique in that he is the only Indian writer who has not left the shores of India. This is an important fact to remember. I think the chastity and purity and Indianness of his writing is mainly due to this. Mr. Narayan is very much an Indian, very much a South Indian; he writes of people and places about whom he knows, and amongst whom he lives. He is by no means a spectacular

writer, nor a sensational one. His writings are natural, simple, moving and invariably sincere and full of native wit. Because he is so simple, therefore it is difficult to write about him. He himself says, 'If one pauses to think one realizes that there is so little one could say about oneself.' It is a typical remark by a man who is humility personified. When I met him he was in a shirt, a South Indian lungi and without any footwear—looking like one of the endearing Malgudi characters.

Mr. Graham Greene will no doubt go down as one of the outstanding mid-twentieth century writers, but we in India shall always be grateful to him for his discovery of Mr. R. K. Narayan. Graham Greene in his introduction to *The Bachelor of Arts* says: 'It was Mr. Narayan with his *Swami and Friends* who first brought India, in the sense of the Indian population and the Indian way of life, alive to me... His novels increase our knowledge of the Indian character, certainly, but I prefer to think of them as contributions to English literature, contributions of remarkable maturity.'

When *Swami and Friends* appeared in 1935, it was universally applauded. It was a departure from the conventional Indian novel and Malgudi, a little town in Mysore, was born. This charming little place has been the scene of nearly 200 short stories, sketches and seven novels. I am sure future generations will look for Malgudi in atlases just as I, in my childhood, used to look for the name of Sherlock Holmes in *Who's Who*. It speaks greatly of R. K. Narayan's craftsmanship to have created in our minds a picture of an imaginary town so vivid that we could almost find

our way blindfold in it. The miniature world of Malgudi is always alive but it is the characters that make it vibrate with life all the time. The characters of Narayan whether they be adolescent college boys, eccentric professors, smart money lenders, impious astrologers, miserly landlords, doubtful financial experts, energetic newspaper editors, or charlatans like Mr. Sampath are in the final analysis all endearing folk in their own way. They are not vicious and they have not been spoilt by 'civilisation'.

R. K. NARAYAN is not what one would call a progressive or ideological writer. The great social, economic and political changes that have taken place in the last ten years or so have, it seems, left him untouched. He has not denounced or upheld any cause and neither has he taken any sides. Mr. Narayan's writings are refreshingly free from all 'isms'. He does not preach or moralise, he observes and records life as he sees it in his little town of Malgudi. He writes about ordinary people and their problems. A writer with a lesser power of narration would not have held our attention as does Mr. Narayan. Almost all his comedies have an undertone of sadness, but there is a rare and fine quality about this sadness; it is mellow and soft. What appeals to me is the total absence of any kind of violence in his books. His men and women are God-fearing folk, they have no desire to shake the world nor to break each others' heads. They do love and hate, but as human beings and not as murderers. Sex they have too, but it is generally not allowed to get out of hand and the author never uses it as a prop to add spice to his narrative. Too many writers introduce the sexual act in an effort to make their story appear more interesting. In this they are ill-advised. A truly creative writer would avoid such a pitfall. Mr. Narayan does.

Chandran the hero of *A Bachelor of Arts* runs for his life when he is within fifty yards of a prostitute's house. His drunken companion goes into the house and we never hear of him again.

The Bachelor of Arts and *The English Teacher* are perhaps Narayan's most popular books. Each time I read the former a cloud of nostalgia envelops me, a nostalgia for the undergraduate world, and trysts in coffee houses, memories of friends who no longer write, of loveable professors and hateful examinations. Yes, *A Bachelor of Arts* is evocative writing of a high quality. I cannot help thinking that the first half of *The English Teacher* is to a great extent autobiographical, it is written with unusual intensity and feeling. But the second half of this book with its mysticism and communication with the dead wife left me dissatisfied and baffled. In *The Dark Room* Narayan has drawn a very honest picture of a middle class family, the wife and husband are faithfully drawn and so is the young lady who nearly wrecks a happy marriage; but in the end all is sorted out, the erring but pleasant husband comes back to his loving, kind and true wife. The next novel, *Mr. Sampath*, was published in 1949 and soon made into a very satisfactory film. I think the creation of Sampath, the bogus busy body, is a triumph of which Mr. Narayan should be proud. Sampath is a typical representative of that army of men who have nothing in them except enterprise and a gift of the gab, and who seem somehow never to be found out. In modern India they grow like mushrooms and surprisingly enough find their way to the highest circles. Narayan has rightly debunked this type.

The Financial Expert was published in 1952. This is perhaps the least pleasing of Narayan's novels. It somehow does not satisfy; the writing is uniformly good, Margayya the financial expert and his wife and their son are true Malgudi figures

and we like them. But the novel lacks unity and one feels that Dr. Pal, 'journalist, correspondent and author' is somewhat forceably introduced into the book, nevertheless he is a very engaging and shrewd man. When selling his book *Bed Life* to Margayya (who is horrified by the title) he says, 'If I wrote a book, say of poems or philosophy, nobody would touch it—but a book like *Bed Life* is a thing that everyone would like to read.' Dr. Pal knows that the average man has a weakness for pornographic literature and that most of us at one time or another have gone in for this rather vulgar form of escape. Margayya buys the manuscript and amasses a fortune, but in the end Dr. Pal ruins him and his son Balu, and nobody is the wiser for it.

R. K. Narayan's latest novel *Waiting for the Mahatma* was published last year. It is an important work in that it is a departure from the Malgudi tradition in some ways. Politics and love intrude a Narayan book as never before and a considerable amount of 'action' takes place outside Malgudi. This I think is done designedly. The author may now feel that the material in Malgudi is getting exhausted and so he may have decided to venture out. If this is so then it has a very important bearing on the future development of Narayan as a novelist. For the past twenty years he has written about a little corner of India. That facet of Indian life must inevitably disappear in this changing India of ours.

It is yet to be seen whether R. K. Narayan will venture forth into the wide world and write about things which involve a deeper and stronger display of human emotions and conflicts, or will prefer to sail on the placid and tranquil waters of the Sarayu River in Malgudi! In *Waiting for the Mahatma* there is much that is new, but the genuine Malgudi landmarks and characters are all there and so is Mr. Narayan's inimitable humour;

Granny really brings the house down when she comes back to life on the funeral pyre. Bharati is without doubt the finest female character Narayan has so far created. (All his previous women characters have been rather flat and passive). Bharati is a live wire and, one feels, a bit too good for Sriram who is a non-effectual, muddled sort of young man. The Mahatma himself is lovingly and admirably portrayed.

IT would be doing Mr. Narayan an injustice if we were to ignore his very frequent contributions to the *Hindu* of Madras. These essays and sketches have now been published in book form and make very interesting reading. Narayan has at times been accused of being a negative writer—what this really means I fail to understand—but here is something very concrete and positive. These miscellaneous essays could be called 'Thoughts on the decay of morals and manners in modern India'. Here you have an alert, sensitive, sympathetic and understanding mind giving you his views on everyday matters that concern us all: one week it is on the problems of getting a Radio Licence that Mr. Narayan writes, another time it is on Bridegroom bargains, followed by his views on the Public Works department. Another time it is a request to the Hindi enthusiast not to try and impose his language on others in such a hurry, but to let it grow. The insincere politicians and their pompous and hypocritical speeches come under steady fire and so does upstartism. Then we have delightful write-ups on the pleasures of gardening, on Trains and Travellers.... Here is humour, sense and sensibility in plenty. Mr. R. K. Narayan is not only a delightful and charming writer, he is also a completely delightful and genial person. I eagerly await each Sunday's *Hindu* to see what he has up his sleeve this time,

THE CAGE

BY GANGADHAR GADGIL

Translated from the Marathi BY PADMA S. RAO

RAVINDRA PHATAK was a lecturer in a Bombay college. Thin and bespectacled, he was sitting and examining papers at the only table in his two-room home. On that small table, the bundles of papers were heaped one over the other untidily. And Ravindra Phatak was huddled up most uncomfortably on the only folding chair in the house. He had tried every possible position and having failed to be comfortable, was trying unsuccessfully to forget his aches and pains. He had removed his shirt because of the excessive April heat. This revealed the bony cage of his chest. With a ragged old towel, he was energetically wiping away the perspiration collecting on his chin and trickling down his neck. It looked as if he was trying to wipe away all his worries. But the perspiration continued to trickle down his body.

Ravindra Phatak's younger school-going sister was studying uncomfortably on the floor. Ravindra Phatak was using the only table in the house, so she had to study sitting on the floor. She did not even think of blaming Ravindra for this. She was used to all the minor discomforts which poverty had brought her. But it hurt Ravindra to see her sitting there on the floor in front of him. He therefore looked very worried and sat more uncomfortable than ever.

His two children had just returned from school. Sitting on the one cot in the room they were counting the silver cigarette foils they had collected. Near them, his mother sat huddled up groaning because of asthma. She had been an asthmatic for years. Everybody had got used to it and nobody worried about her. But Ravindra Phatak had not become completely accustomed to the sound. That sound was a

source of continuous irritation to him and made him more uncomfortable than ever.

And yet, Ravindra Phatak, lecturer, examined the papers, weighing each answer carefully. There was no need to be so careful. He could have easily run through the papers. That was the only way he could examine 1200 papers. Isn't there a limit to the burdens the human mind can bear? But though harassed by circumstances, Ravindra Phatak still retained a peculiar unbusinesslike attitude to life. Usually he followed the common path, but when this happened too often, suddenly he would break away and do what he liked. In such cases he was most obstinate and would not follow anybody's advice.

Ravindra Phatak had become a lecturer for the usual reasons. He had obtained a first class throughout college. To obtain it he had studied hard and neglected both his body and his eyes. Then he had got through the I.A.S. examination. In this school teacher's home, a new hope had arisen of seeing better days. But the medical examination had given him away. Misfortune prevented him from entering the portals of Government service, reserved for the chosen few! Then a couple of applications, a little rushing and running about, and at last Ravindra Phatak started work as a college lecturer on two hundred rupees a month. Carefully looking after his two suits and being very strict with his students, he started lecturing on Hardy's tragic novels.

Later, he went through all the stages that a person belonging to the middle class usually experiences. His father passed away. On his death bed, he requested his son to look after his mother and brothers. And Ravindra Phatak promised to do so

with tearful eyes. And then Ravindra Phatak did something very courageous for one belonging to the middle class. He fell in love and married a girl outside the community. His mother was shocked. But she also regained her balance earlier than expected. Poor Ravindra Phatak felt grateful to his mother and looked after her still more conscientiously.

In the thoughtlessness after marriage, Ravindra Phatak got a baby daughter. Then because his mother wanted a grandson, another pregnancy was planned. But this time, too, a daughter was born. Then Ravindra Phatak revolted. He talked to his wife and persuaded her to use contraceptives. He thus upset the divine plan of imposing a big family on Phatak.

But there were still his two children and his father's dependants. Poor Ravindra had to manage on the pay scale of Rs. 200-15-350. Another young man's life wasted!

Ravindra Phatak was completely broken down trying to shoulder all these responsibilities. His ambitions faded. His playfulness with wife and sister were forgotten. He lost interest in world affairs. The only important subject in his life was now domestic economy. And he spoke less enthusiastically of Hardy's despair or on Hamlet's character.

But a peculiar type of hotheadedness still existed in this young professor. Even now he would forget himself while teaching his students. Reading books by great authors and poets would still make him drunk. A newspaper headline would strike him and make him thoughtful. Cruelly, he felt like throwing all his dependants on the streets and living a life of his own. Instead of all of them just existing and wasting his life, he felt it would be better for one person to live well. These and many such thoughts often disturbed him.

Ravindra Phatak thus became a very peculiar person. Occasionally, he was even

rude to his superiors. Sometimes he would sit on the reclamation parapet for hours upto midnight. Sometimes he would suddenly buy an expensive present for his wife, or he would kiss and embrace in front of everybody. She would be overcome with shyness but his exhibition of love would continue. Sometimes he would beat the children as though he wished to kill them. His family were never sure what he would do next. So they were always afraid of him. And if you didn't take count of his two or three good friends, the rest of the people always kept away from him.

Ravindra Phatak found he couldn't bear to listen to his mother's moaning any more. 'Look here, Malti,' he shouted. 'Can't you hear my mother groaning? Why don't you do something about it. Give her some medicines or take her to the doctor?'

'I shall just make some nice hot coffee for her. She will feel better then,' his wife answered.

For a second, Ravindra Phatak felt relieved. He bent down to look at the paper closely and then suddenly he lost his temper. He was angry because his wife did not look as pretty as before. Her very expressive eyes now expressed only worry. He suddenly felt she was trying to hide something from him.

He clenched his teeth and said, 'How is coffee going to help her, I ask you? Why don't you take her to the doctor?'

His wife did not answer. She just put her head down and walked away.

This insult maddened him. He threw the papers on the floor, banged the chair and shouted, 'What is the meaning of this? Tell me, what do you mean by this?'

His mother sat up, 'Why do you shout at her?' she said, 'There is nothing wrong with me. I am quite well'.

But he refused to listen to this and stamped into the next room. He glared at her, but his wife pretended to be engrossed in her work and did not look up. This

enraged him more and he shouted, 'What do you mean by this? What do you think of yourself?'

His wife stopped cutting the vegetables and looked audaciously at him. 'I will not go to the doctor. You go yourself and bring the medicine.'

Ravindra Phatak was surprised. 'But why?' he said astonished. She looked down and continued her work.

'Tell me the reason,' he shouted again, unable to bear the strain any more.

Then his usually patient wife was terribly upset. 'Go and ask the compounder,' she shouted back at him. 'Last time I went there he asked me about our bill. He insisted that we pay it up completely. I am not prepared to listen to such rude talk. I have suffered a lot because of you. But I shall not suffer this.' She burst into tears. Ravindra Phatak felt helpless and a complete failure. He had to admit silently that he could not protect his wife from such insults.

He felt as if he had been slapped. Then to protect his honour, he said, 'Thinks himself clever, does he? Why weren't you rude to him in turn? Or you could have told the doctor. We have been going to him for so long. He must have earned hundreds of rupees from us. And how much do we owe him really? A paltry sum of sixty-seven rupees.'

And it was at this point that *he* arrived. He knocked on the door, then slowly peeped in, partly in fear, partly, in playfulness.

Ravindra Phatak looked at him short-sightedly. 'Who's that?' he said.

Then hurriedly he put on a shirt and opened the door.

'Good evening, Sir,' the boy said confusedly and kept quiet.

The children in the room had one look at him and ran inside. His mother tidied her sari and wrapped it more closely about her.

'Good evening! What brings you here?' said Phatak, pulling the only chair towards him.

He was angry that his student should see his poverty. For a minute he leaned against the door and then sat uncomfortably on the cot. The student sat down stylishly. This style came naturally to him because of his money. Looking at him, Phatak became more uncomfortable.

The boy's face was round and plump. His face had still not been lined by bad experiences. He surveyed the poverty in the room eagerly, without contempt. Absent-mindedly.

Ravindra Phatak felt offended. 'What do you want?' he said testily.

This startled the boy. He looked at the papers on the table and said, 'Sir, my father wants to meet you.'

'Why?'

'I do not know,' he faltered. He had not yet got used to telling a lie.

'Then let him come here. Have you come to ask for an appointment?'

Ravindra Phatak felt proud that a rich man had asked for an appointment with him and immediately felt ashamed for priding himself on such a trivial matter.

'He is sitting in the car. He has asked me to bring you down'. The boy interrupted his thoughts. 'Really?' and Ravindra Phatak stepped forward and looked out of the window.

A limousine was standing below and the people in the chawl were talking about it. A few women even looked askance at Ravindra Phatak; and though he did not wish it, he was thrilled at his own importance.

'Do come,' the boy said impatiently.

'Where? To the car?'

'Yes. He is waiting for you.'

'Shall I come?' he hesitated.

And then he suddenly felt that it was not quite right. He felt he was being insulted. Immediately he gnashed his teeth and

shouted, 'I won't come down. If he wants to meet me let him come up. I don't care. I won't come down.'

The boy was shocked. He turned round and looked at Ravindra Phatak 'But....' he stammered.

'I won't come, I tell you, I won't come down', he shouted at the top of his voice.

The boy was flabbergasted. 'I'll tell my father so,' and he quickly ran out of the room.

Ravindra Phatak walked up and down the room with his chest forward. He was thrilled that the boy was frightened of him. He looked round his poverty-stricken home with pride. And he thought what a wonderful story he could make to tell his friends.

He thought that the owner of the car would surely have offered him two or three hundred rupees. Three hundred rupees! He uttered the words with contempt.

Just then somebody knocked on the door again. Ravindra Phatak was taken aback—he was even a little frightened. Absent-mindedly he touched his shirt to see whether it was neatly buttoned. He then opened the door.

A stout man was standing outside. He had a stylish suit on. A couple of gold-top pens were seen in his left pocket. He had diamond rings on. His spectacles also looked different, expensive. He had spent money on himself lavishly, freely, as a man may blow cigarette smoke.

These things were not bound to have much effect on Ravindra Phatak. But still they did influence him a little. But what affected him most was the expression on this man's face. He had taken it for granted that people would always obey him. He did not even find it necessary to convince anyone of his importance. And all this could be read on his face, so that even Ravindra Phatak took it for granted. He was a bit worried about the way he had behaved a few minutes ago. That is why

he looked more bewildered than ever.

But the gentleman gave no indication of having seen this bewildered look. A smile spread on his smooth face and he spoke in a soft flattering voice. 'Wanted to talk to you about this son of mine. I was wondering whether we could go somewhere. We shall talk about it over a cup of tea. Hope you don't mind?'

He shook hands with Ravindra Phatak and again put on his ingratiating smile. That smile was very peculiar. It not only made Phatak feel important, it also suggested that the gentleman was more important than him.

'No, I don't mind at all,' he said simply, and ran up to his room to put on suitable clothes.

'Easy. Take it easy. Don't be in such a hurry.' The gentleman smiled again. That sentence irritated him but the smile cooled him down. Why should he suspect such a nice smiling man? He had made the gentleman come to his door. Wasn't that his victory?

Getting into the car he could feel several eyes on him—they seemed to pierce through his back and he was ashamed. But that was not his fault. That was the price he had to pay for belonging to the middle classes. He could not cast it away so easily. Even a better man would have found it difficult. But now this singular man was disturbed. He felt like getting out of the car and walking away. Meanwhile the gentleman coolly took out a cigarette case from his pocket and offered a cigarette to Ravindra Phatak. He was once again made aware of his own importance and of the greater importance of this gentleman. And that is why he calmed down.

The gentleman coolly spoke about how badly his son had fared in the examination. He wasn't saying anything out of the way. It looked as if two old friends were talking on a subject close to their hearts.

Ravindra Phatak got completely entangled in this net. Not that he was a fool. But like every middle class person he had asked for it. Innocently he took the cigarette case in his hand and with equal innocence he told the gentleman that he liked it.

The gentleman gave him a quick sharp look and said, 'Why don't you keep it, if you like it. I can easily buy another. Come on. Don't refuse it. Once an article is liked by somebody else, there is great satisfaction in giving it immediately,' and he pushed the cigarette case into his pocket. Ravindra Phatak smiled innocently, and soon was engrossed in the talk. But ever so often his hand went to his pocket.

And then something happened. That man's tone was no longer conciliatory. And Ravindra Phatak thought of his sharp, quick look and saw his student sitting there in front of him. He was sitting calmly, as if he was not even concerned with what was going on behind him.

Ravindra Phatak was a weak man. He was bruised by circumstances. But he was different from the others. He could act obstinately when necessary. And that is exactly what happened. He suddenly saw red. He pulled the cigarette case out of his pocket and hurled it at the gentleman.

'Damn you. You can't buy me with a cigarette case. Stop the car,' he shouted. He then got out of the car and walked away.

Ravindra Phatak reached home dead tired. The courage that he had shown had drained all his strength away. At times his chest would fill out with pride. He felt as if he had touched the skies. At times, he called himself an utter fool. At other times he felt afraid of becoming an enemy of this very rich and important person.

Sullenly he sat in a corner. Sullenly he ate his food and suffered in silence in bed. He could hear his mother groaning and he felt he had been extremely foolish.

'What people one meets,' he said turning to his wife who was lying near him. 'That damn fool wanted to buy me with a cigarette case.'

His wife did not utter a word. She stared at the ceiling.

'There's no point in people like us keeping to the straight path. It merely makes us worry more—that's all. Those who have money and power do not maintain a list of these things'.

His wife did not answer. She still stared at the ceiling.

He waited. Then said angrily, 'What do you think? Should I take bribes? Take as much as I can and carry on?'

He waited again for an answer and then shouted angrily, 'Come on, talk, say something at least. Or has your speech become priceless?'

His wife remarked, 'What am I to say? You cannot make up your mind. And you do not like what anybody says. You do what you like. I do not wish to have a say in the matter'.

'Look at the way you talk. Here I feel as if my head would burst and . . . ' like an obstinate child he banged his feet on the cot.

For a minute his wife looked at him as if he were a stranger. Then she took pity on him. And she pulled him near her.

'Go quietly to sleep. You have a bad habit of thinking endlessly'.

He was very pleased that she had taken him close to her and talked to him. Obediently he closed his eyes and after a long time fell fast asleep.

He got up next morning to find that the previous night's question had decreased in importance. He started examining the papers carefully. Mechanically, the work was going on and rapidly too.

This continued till afternoon. Then the college peon came and informed him that he was wanted by the Principal. 'Come and see him immediately,' he said.

Ravindra Phatak was worried. He

thought of all his past mistakes and of all those he was likely to make in the future. 'Do you know why he has called me, what's the business?' he cautiously questioned the peon.

'I do not know,' the peon answered contemptuously. Ravindra Phatak sensed the contempt in the peon's tone.

'Tell him I'm coming,' he answered stiffly.

Ravindra Phatak did not have the guts to finish his work and then go to see the Principal. As soon as the peon was out of sight, he dressed up hurriedly and went to the Principal's office.

The Principal continued to be engrossed in his work. Then he looked up and as if he had just noticed Phatak smiled at him. 'Have a seat. Do sit down,' he said. Phatak waited foolishly for him to finish his work.

After some time, the Principal looked up again, put on his best smile and completely won him over. This bewildered Ravindra Phatak. Usually the Principal's best smile was reserved for important people. He thought once again of all his mistakes.

The Principal first told him the good news, that the college library had obtained a bigger grant. He then inquired with great concern about his research. 'If you work so fast, we shall soon have to promote you, make you a professor,' he laughed easily.

Then he suddenly became serious. 'Well, to tell you the truth, I have to recommend somebody to the governing body. I am going to have it out with them. I do not approve of their miserliness. Don't tell anybody, but I have you in mind. It's not definite of course. But . . . I suppose you understand'.

Ravindra Phatak hesitated. A sudden promotion of fifty to sixty rupees meant an end to his poverty. He started dreaming about it. This unexpected hope made him restless. He tried to look as grateful as he possibly could. 'Thank you, Sir. I do not know how to thank you. You have done so much for me.'

The Principal smiled understandingly. He tried to make Ravindra Phatak comfortable by talking about other matters. He kept on insisting that he could not promise anything. Told him with great detail how 'difficult' were the members of the governing body. And then, as if he had just remembered it, he said, 'That student who has appeared for the Inter . . . how has he fared in the examination? One of the members of the governing body is very interested in him. Not that I am suggesting anything. But sometimes, you know how students fail by a few marks.'

Suddenly, everything was clear to Phatak. He realised how easily he had been fooled and he felt thoroughly ashamed of himself. He remembered what had happened the day before and he blushed with shame.

'But Sir, how can we do this? Are'n't we being unjust to the others? What if he is rich? What will the other students think of the professor?'

He spoke haltingly but heedlessly.

The Principal concentrated on his work, as if nobody was sitting in front of him. Nothing was wrong, he had forgotten he had just spoken. He had not promised Phatak anything. He looked at his pencil with a peculiar concentration.

Ravindra Phatak stopped speaking, but the Principal continued to look at the pencil. And then Ravindra Phatak lost his nerve. Softly he asked his pardon. He should never have spoken thus, he muttered sadly to himself. 'We are just paid servants who follow your orders. I shall do just as you wish.' Then he realised that that was not the right way to put it. Hurriedly he said, 'Oh, he'll get through. He is quite a good student, nothing to worry about.'

The Principal put down his pencil and said impatiently. 'You are quite sure of that? Do you say there's no reason to worry? I shall immediately phone his father and tell him so just now.'

He cracked a few jokes on the phone and casually passed the information on. Then put the receiver down.

He turned round to Ravindra Phatak and said seriously, 'I quite agree with you. I am definitely against corruption. You know what a strict disciplinarian I am. What will happen to our country if there is corruption even in the field of education? You see, the members of the governing body have to be handled carefully. Not that they can do anything, but they have to decide so many issues. Oh! You'll soon experience it

The Principal suddenly realised he had talked too much. He stopped talking and smiled at him. Ravindra Phatak knew that it was the signal for him to go.

He got up and walked out. His head was in a whirl. As soon as the flap door flew back, he felt like turning round and shouting at the Principal, 'I feel like spitting on people like you. I don't want this job. I can work anywhere and get enough for myself. But I shall never do these disgraceful things.'

But Ravindra Phatak did not say a word. Though he was hot tempered he was a poor needy man from the middle class. He did not have the courage to bear any more poverty. So quickly he left the college and walked towards home.

And gradually he returned to normal once again. He smiled to himself and muttered, 'All right, I am an idiot. A slave to my job. A sheep belonging to the middle class, so, what do you have to say? What are you going to do to me.'

Nobody answered. Nobody wanted to do anything. There was no problem at all. Everything was so simple.

Ravindra Phatak smiled to himself and walked home. Quickly he examined all the papers and sent the mark list to the college.

Many days went by after this incident.

Ravindra Phatak had virtually forgotten it. He was living quite happily in the usual way. He had given up all his foolish ideas about himself. He now rarely felt elated.

One day he was resting on his cot. He was reading a friend's letter who was asking him to return his loan. He was trying his best not to get excited.

Just then there was a knock on the door. Ravindra Phatak hurriedly put on a shirt and opened the door. The same student was standing outside. He smiled broadly and shook hands with Phatak familiarly.

'My father has sent you this,' he said handing a parcel to him. 'He was going to come himself, but he is terribly busy.'

Ravindra Phatak took the parcel not realising what he was doing.

'I did not write anything in my papers. I was so worried. I just bluffed my way through!' The student laughed. Ravindra Phatak was a poor man completely harassed by circumstances. But his hotheadedness had not disappeared. He saw red when the boy laughed.

'Get out of here,' he shouted, throwing the parcel at the boy. 'I don't want your presents. Get out, I say.'

The student was shocked to hear this. His hand quickly went to the spot where the parcel had hurt him. And then he looked at his professor and ran away. He was sure his professor was insane. He thought of how he would tell his friends of the professor's insanity. He smiled at himself and said, 'I have got through, why should I worry now?'

His stylish car drove away leaving a bluish smoke behind it.

Standing in the gallery and watching the car drive past, Ravindra Phatak felt weak in the legs. He supported himself by the railings and just looked in front of him. Then carefully he wiped his spectacles over and over again and walked into his home as if nothing had happened.

book reviews

THE COLOUR CURTAIN

by Richard Wright

THE STORY OF THE INTEGRATION OF THE INDIAN STATES

by V. P. Menon

THE TIME OF THE ASSASSINS

by Henry Miller

THE REPUBLIC OF INDONESIA

by Dorothy Woodman

WHAT THE UNITED STATES CAN DO ABOUT INDIA

by Eustace Seligman

THE LEGACY OF THE LOKAMANYA

by Theodore L. Shay

BATTLES AT THE BAR

by K. L. Gauba

UNPROFESSIONAL ESSAYS

by J. Middleton Murry

THE COLOUR CURTAIN by Richard Wright. (Dennis Dobson, London, 12s. 6d.)

OBSESSION, it has been well observed, is destructive both of art and argument. Mr. Richard Wright's book, *The Colour Curtain*, is a good illustration of this. I approached this book with an eagerness born of the exquisite experience of Mr. Wright's previous writings, especially of the tantalising delicacy of his chapter in *The God That Failed* and of the luminous perspicacity of his *Black Boy*, and finished it with a curious feeling of distractedness, if not of disappointment.

This book certainly displays some of the qualities for which Mr. Wright is famous: artistic reportage, glimpses into a human situation and, above all, love of justice. And yet it lacks the organic quality of an artistic piece or the rationality of a logical whole. The reason, to my mind, is that

the author cannot throw off the weight of his obsessions. He is like a man who is talking while his hand is pressing his chest to suppress a pain! The Indonesian writer, Mr. Mochtar Lubis, after reading Mr. Wright's *Indonesian Notebook* (made up of extracts from this book) in *Encounter* observed that while Mr. Wright was in Indonesia he had been looking through 'coloured glasses' and that he had sought behind every attitude he met for colour and racial feelings. Mr. Wright replied by requesting Mr. Lubis to read the full and definitive account of his Bandung experiences, which is what this book is. I am afraid this fuller report leaves Mr. Lubis' charge unanswered. Of course, it is not all colour and race here. Religion and anti-colonialism also play their part and it is a big part. But one cannot help feeling that Mr. Wright tends to see the reflection of his own racial anti-Westernism in the

colonial anti-Westernism of the Bandung delegates.

This appears to have prompted him to play down the more liberal and rational aspects of the Bandung meeting as reflected in Mr. Nehru's impatience with the racial and religious outpourings of many of the delegates, and also to play down some of the ambivalent or even contorted attitudes, reflected again in Mr. Nehru's stand towards the problem of Communist colonialism.

The Conference appeared to be a phenomenal success precisely because it was actuated by an over-all anti-Westernism and this served to cover up many a contradiction and many an awkward situation. But it also served to cover up an essential weakness which might mean the futility of this grand endeavour. The Bandung Conference has not produced much economic or cultural co-operation—not at least in a conspicuous measure. On the contrary, many are intrigued by what appears to be an attitude of unconcern towards the recent violation of the Burmese border by Chinese troops.

True, Mr. Wright refers to the risk involved in an alliance with Red China, but he has sought to minimise the risk by stating the argument that 'a multi-nationed agreement with China would, perhaps, give the other non-Communist nations a chance of standing together against China if she were caught cheating.' In actual fact, not one Bandung power, let alone a combination, has come forth to protest against the Red Chinese betrayal. Of course, this dispute will, in due course, be patched up, but in terms of the unity of faith and purpose that so impressively animated the 29-nations' conference, the patch-up would be no more than the darning of a tattered cloth, which might most awkwardly show up at the most inconvenient occasion—because 'the decision to omit from the agenda all those controversial issues on which there

was likely to be disagreement' really covered up the scar of cancer.

Mr. Wright, with his live experience of the perfidy and mendacity of the Communists, should have been expected to spot it immediately, but surprisingly, in his chapter on 'Communism at Bundung' he makes no reference to the controversy over Communist colonialism that did rage there. Mr. Nehru dismissed Sir John Kotelawala's charge by stating that the East European nations were (technically speaking) free. This was perfectly true. But what about the Baltic nations which were victims of naked aggression and which have been wiped off the map? There was an ambivalence here which was not quite worthy of the noble motives which inspired the policies of some of the Bandung powers and which expressed themselves in the doctrine of 'panchsheel'. That an experienced commentator like Richard Wright should be so carried away by the magnificent spectacle of the inter-continental unity of so many millions of people as to forget this obvious fact is surprising.

Nevertheless the book is full of illuminating glimpses and finely written passages, like the interviews with persons on whom the author tries his questionnaire, and the stories like the one of the black negress stealthily trying to straighten her kinky hair. The book is therefore eminently readable though not equally rewarding.

PRABHAKAR PADHYE

THE STORY OF THE INTEGRATION OF THE INDIAN STATES by V. P. Menon (Orient Longmans, Rs. 25.)

MANY are the services that the late Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel rendered India in his time, but perhaps his greatest service was the integration of the Princely States. In this task he had on the whole a free hand, and was assisted by lieutenants who served him and his policies with remarkable energy, devotion and diplomacy. His right-hand man was Mr. V. P.

Menon, who has recently published the fascinating story of the integration. About the Sardar as his leader and his relationship with him, Mr. Menon says:

'Leadership is of two kinds. A leader like Napoleon, who was master of both policy and detail, wanted merely the instruments to carry out his orders. Sardar's leadership was of the second category. Having selected his men, he trusted them entirely to implement his policy. Sardar never assumed that he knew everything and he never adopted a policy without full and frank consultation. Whenever we entered into any discussion, we did so as personal friends rather than as Minister and Secretary.'

Having chosen Mr. Menon as his man, and having indicated his policy of maximum integration in the minimum time and with minimum unpleasantness, the Sardar gave him a comparatively free hand to implement the policy. He had selected wisely and was well served. With marvellous and even ruthless daring and incredible speed, reminiscent in some ways of Napoleon, Bismark, Dalhousie and Chankya, Mr. Menon achieved the complete integration of Princely India with the democratic, independent Republic of India. If the Sardar and Mr. Menon had had an equally free hand with Kashmir...

The problem that faced the Sardar on the eve of Independence was rendered even more difficult by the policy of the British Government and the Political Department of the Government of India and of the Princes themselves. The Princes, who enjoyed ruling over their subjects with autocratic irresponsibility, resented the same treatment being applied to them by the Government of India and its Political Officers. They wanted the paramountcy of the Paramount Power to be restricted, while their own power to misrule their subjects would be unrestricted either by the Paramount Power or by

"Dons Know Best . . ."

Not always, perhaps, but at any rate where the government of Universities is concerned.

This may seem an obvious principle but recent events in such widely separated places as Göttingen and Tasmania have shown that academic freedom is by no means secure, even in democratic countries.

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Note: *Dons Know Best* is the title of an editorial article in the Times Educational Supplement, dealing with the recent crisis in Tasmania University, as reported in issue No. 4 of *Science and Freedom*.

their subjects. In trying to escape the latter, they strengthened the former. Neither the Paramount Power nor the Princes gave much thought to the subjects of the Princes. The attitude of the Political Department towards the Princes was to overlook their misrule as long as they were loyal to the British and hospitable to the Political Officers. In his book, *The Twilight of the Maharaja*, Sir Kenneth Fitze said of a Prince:

For over thirty years he had persisted stubbornly in a course of maladministration. He was by nature incorrigible, lacking in education and entirely impervious to advice. Nevertheless, there was something subtly attractive in his good-humoured rascality and unvarying old-world courtesy so that it was not without feelings of sympathy and regret that I found myself compelled to take action which terminated his capacity for evil.'

This may be an extreme case, but it was not far from the average. The Princes and the Paramount Power formed an unholy trade union of autocracy to stem the tide of democracy. But the partners were unequal; the Princes were the weaker.

If the British Government had been sincere in its profession of promoting democracy and unity in India, it would have transferred power from London to Delhi and along with it its commitments to the Indian Princes. But it chose to put a spoke in the wheel and maximise the difficulties in the way of a free, democratic and united India. It invented the convenient theory that the relations of the Princes were with the Crown, as distinguished from the Government of India, and could not be transferred to the Dominion of India. When it became inevitable that *Dominion* status would have to be granted to British India, the Paramount Power granted separate and individual *independence* to each of the Princes! Every Prince and Princeling suddenly became a

sovereign and independent ruler. If the British Government wished to reduce India to chaos before it left, it could not have done worse. India, united in subjection to British Imperialism, suddenly burst into two sovereign Dominions, India and Pakistan, and over six hundred sovereign Princely States! That was independence with a vengeance!

Even the British Government saw the absurdity of the gift, and recommended that the Princely States should join one of the two Dominions of India and Pakistan, if only because of geographical compulsion. Abandoned by the Paramount Power and lacking the support of their own subjects, the Princes were exposed to the full flood of democracy in the erstwhile British India and practically invited their own elimination. With uncanny foresight and consummate diplomacy the Sardar and Mr. Menon assessed the situation, seized the initiative and embarked on the policy of limited accession and gradually enlarged it to embrace complete integration, leaving the Princes with a diminishing tenure of pensions and palaces.

Geographical compulsion, if nothing else, forced most of the Princes to submit to integration. But it was not smooth sailing. Independence was much too tempting to some Princes. For instance, Travancore and Hyderabad declared their independence promptly. Hyderabad sought an outlet to the sea through Goa. If the latter had succeeded, Hyderabad's independence would have gained much strength; it could have imported arms and ammunition from foreign countries and become a permanent headache to India. If even limited accession had not been achieved before the 15th August 1947, when Paramountcy lapsed over the Princely States and British rule over British India, the task of dealing with the Princely States after they had tasted independence, would have been even more difficult, if not impossible. Indeed, both

Mr. Nehru and the Sardar were not very optimistic that the accession of the States could be achieved within the two months that remained before Independence Day. But the impossible was achieved, and the unity of India was saved.

Kashmir alone remained an intriguing problem. Though pressed to do so by Lord Mountbatten, the Maharaja took no decision before Independence. Both Mr. Menon and Mr. Campbell Johnson, the author of *Mission with Mountbatten*, blamed the Maharaja for it. There were, however, rumours at the time that Mountbatten did not stop with advising the Maharaja to accede to one or other of the two Dominions, but advised him *positively to accede to Pakistan*. What truth there was in it will not be known until the Maharaja or Mountbatten or both take the public into their confidence. It is an open secret that Mr. Menon's book was screened by the present Government of India before publication.

It would appear from Campbell Johnson's account that Nehru was opposed to every one of these steps when proposed by Mountbatten, but ultimately and even reluctantly gave in. When the United Nations was invoked, the Kashmir problem was taken out of the jurisdiction of the Ministry of States, led by Sardar Patel and Mr. Menon, and transferred to the External Affairs Ministry, under Pandit Nehru, with the result that Kashmir is now a part of India and yet out of it, and a bone of contention between India and Pakistan which even the United Nations has not yet been able to resolve. It was a pity that Patel and Menon were not allowed to see it through.

P. KODANDA RAO

THE TIME OF THE ASSASSINS by Henry Miller (New Directions, U.S.A. \$3—Agents in India, Rupa and Co. Calcutta)

THE Time of the Assassins styles itself a study of Arthur Rimbaud and is a reprint, presumably brought out to mark

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Published by Secker & Warburg, London.
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the occasion of the hundredth anniversary of his birth in October, 1854. The book is rather cleverly got up with a black and yellow cover in which are two little peep-holes giving the prospective reader a glimpse of two pairs of eyes. Unfortunately it is with the cover, excellent paper and print that the attraction of the book ends.

Henry Miller's qualification for undertaking the life of the celebrated young poet seems to lie in the supposed resemblance between the two men, a resemblance which Miller endeavours to press home with tiresome loquacity. It is wellknown that Arthur Rimbaud came from a narrow provincial French home, matured surprisingly early and wrote the bulk of his poetry before reaching the age of twenty. He then underwent a kind of spiritual rebellion, turned his back on both society and literature and spent the rest of his short life as a restless vagabond. Henry Miller, born two generations later in a poor Brooklyn district, saw the Wall Street collapse and the general failure of values that went with it. He also ran away from home and lived years of appalling hardship and poverty in Paris.

Readers today, so many years after the event, are more interested in Rimbaud as thinker and poet than as lonely rebel. And as a matter of fact, Rimbaud was not alone in this spirit of rebellion. Verlaine and Baudelaire in France represent one side of the general movement of nihilism which was developed in England by the group of aesthetes, symbolists and revivalists who contributed to the *Yellow Book*. Viewed historically the movement was nothing but a necessary revulsion from Victorianism and its insistence on outworn codes. But the poems which astonished a conventional society have continued to be appreciated to this day and have influenced later poetry to a large extent not only for their intrinsic literary merit but also for the uncomfortable way in which they described

the spiritual and moral degradation of the society of Rimbaud's time.

Unfortunately Miller's book does not examine Rimbaud's work either from a technical or historical point of view. He indulges himself in a lot of vague denunciations against the 'thugs' of society, the 'assassins' of today. His interpretation of Arthur Rimbaud's revolt would be welcomed with a certain amount of sympathy if he did not seem to insist that it is only the disreputable roué of genius who has any claims to be a poet at all. He also makes large claims for the poet 'who is the lord of the imagination and the unacknowledged ruler of the world.' This unacknowledged ruler of the world, however, cannot face life. He refuses to interpret it, and loses himself in a maze of brutalising experience. He owes no allegiances, and is therefore cut off from what he is trying to achieve—in Rimbaud's words, 'A Christmas on earth, to which the key is charity.' I own that I may be unfair to Mr. Miller, but the book is so confused, and the language so 'sonorous,' that the meaning is difficult to come by.

I feel that the root of the trouble with these 'interpretations' (which are not intended to be psychological studies) is that the hypnotised admirer loses his sense of perspective. In appreciating the artistic product whatever form it may take, the personal characteristics of the artist are largely irrelevant. Certain biographical and historical facts may be of interest in explaining tendencies in the artist's work. But it is unnecessary to apologise for faults and shortcomings, and attempt to justify them just because we happen to like the poetry, painting, musical composition or whatever it is. It is obvious that the lives of artists can form no copy-book of good behaviour; rather the contrary.

A poet must be judged by his handiwork in the same way as a craftsman is. He is like a specially sensitivised surface that can

catch and interpret innuendoes and nuances of feeling as well as the essential truth of events and situations. He also has the gift of song. Naturally these qualities give him an unusual place in society and the tragedy occurs when he is ignored, or this interpretation is too personal to be understood. Again, each poet has his own field which is limited and so there is no point in making out that any particular one has been sent with a special message to correct an erring world. Rimbaud had his faults. No doubt his mother was unsympathetic. He was unable to stick to any one line of development and so he gave up writing. And one feels like saying, 'So what?' He has given us some excellent poetry and that should be the end of the matter. Cer-

tainly not 163 pages from the pen of Mr. Henry Miller. LOLA CHATTERJI

THE REPUBLIC OF INDONESIA by Dorothy Woodman. (The Cresset Press, London, 30s.)

IN her study of contemporary Indonesia, Miss Woodman gives the historical background as one of sustained resistance to Dutch domination, with intervals of submission. As a result, there is a continuity which would otherwise have been lacking. At any rate, for the period of the Second World War and after, it is a working hypothesis which explains more than it complicates.

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nese, the Dutch overlords having given in very early. The Japanese, amid the new responsibilities and new dangers, were never able to establish themselves and, as a consequence, the Indonesians had plenty of opportunities which were fully utilized. There was complete understanding between the Resistance and the Collaborators, because the common faith was national independence. Miss Woodman remarks that the Japanese were cruder than the Dutch in asserting their superiority; at the same time, she points out that in their eagerness to wipe out Dutch and British influence, the Japanese encouraged Indonesian national sentiment.

The Republic, says Miss Woodman, was proclaimed in August 1945, after six months in which the Indonesians had won concession after concession from the Japanese. And the only stage at which she shows some sympathy for the Dutch is where she writes that most of them failed to see the basic difference between Holland's liberation from Nazi domination and Indonesia's liberation from the Japanese. They succeeded in prejudicing American and British opinion against the Republic, until four years of resolute fighting forced recognition. Miss Woodman makes the point that because of the mistakes of Western politicians and military leaders the break with the past was not complete and the future was encumbered with commitments to the Dutch. It was also why the administration of Indonesia was not taken over as a going concern. The scorched earth policy of the nationalists and the political rearguard action of the Dutch added to the difficulties of the new administration. And it explains too why among Asian leaders Indonesians have won a name for being staunch anti-colonialists, rejecting all suggestions of compromise.

The Republic adopted the unitary form of administration for the 3,000 islands, a

decision that was inspired by a desire to eliminate possible reactionary pockets. It has in one way made Indonesian development easier politically than Indian progress under federation. The assumption of power and responsibility by the Centre is natural for colonial peoples on coming to power, and it provides the necessary stabilising factor. In India, as we have just seen for ourselves, the unifying force lies outside the Constitution in the Congress Party and is subject to all the shifts of political manoeuvring.

Miss Woodman's analysis of the language problem in Indonesia reveals many parallels with the position in India. But there is one difference, that Dutch, unlike English, has a limited utility. The Indonesians, therefore, had no difficulty in adopting Bahasa Indonesia which is based on Malaya, differing from the Malaya of the Malayan Peninsula in that it has more words from the Chinese, English, Dutch and the Indian languages. English itself has been accepted as the first foreign language.

Miss Woodman's chapter on Education is a revealing and inspiring account of what the young Republic proposes and has already achieved in a field completely neglected in the Dutch period. Indians who are inclined to argue that the British were only interested in turning out clerks in India, might with profit read what took place in Indonesia. 'Until the twenties,' writes Miss Woodman, 'Dutch official policy assumed that Indonesians desiring University education should go to the Netherlands, where they would receive exactly the same training as Dutch students. A change of policy then led to the opening of a Technical School in Bandung and a Law college in Djakarta. In 1940, a liberal arts college was opened in Djakarta, and on the eve of the Japanese invasion the Volksraad had just approved a bill to provide for a college of agriculture and to unite the five existing colleges into a

single university... 'In 1938-39' writes Amry Vandenbosch, 'the three professional colleges had 81 graduates: 12 in engineering, 30 in law, and 39 in medicine.'

After Independence, six universities have been established, six academies for specialized courses not catered for in the universities, and any number of vocational schools. The problems of securing teachers can be well understood from the statement that in a country of nearly 80 million people, there were less than 1,000 who had received a university education; and they had learnt in Dutch and had to teach in Bahasa Indonesia. 'Enthusiasm,' remarks Miss Woodman, 'is a powerful incentive, and many professors lectured at several faculties and academies on three or four different subjects.'

Miss Woodman mentions that, apart from these state-run institutions, there are private-sponsored schools and colleges, and that the enthusiasm for education is

strong in all the districts she has visited. In medicine and social health, there is a similar awakening. Yet she remarks that neither in Indonesia nor in India is there that feeling for village work that exists in the Chinese Republic. It seems that she is not able to distinguish between the different systems. For instance, in the sphere of community development in India, much more could have been accomplished had the Government not placed before it the objective of stimulating public effort rather than getting things officially done. The democratic way of life does not allow of spectacular short-cuts because it expects more enduring results. It is also unfortunate that she has devoted practically no space to the adoption by the Indonesian leader of the secular ideal for the Republic.

The chapters on Indonesian politics, on the strength of radical Trade Unions which are influenced by political parties, on the economics of the Republic and on

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the play of religious ideas provide excellent background material for the student of current affairs. To the Indian student of contemporary history, the book, for all its omissions, is essential reading. And it will surprise many readers to learn how prominent a part Indonesian women are playing in evolving the new, free life of Indonesia. Even where the inspiration is Indian, there is a freshness about the approach which makes it different.

S. NATARAJAN

WHAT THE UNITED STATES CAN DO ABOUT INDIA by Eustace Seligman (New York University Press, \$2.95)

DURING the last few years the gulf between India and America has steadily widened. Neither of these two countries is happy about it. Both have too much at stake in each other. To America, India is an Asian democracy on trial, the success or failure of which is vitally going to affect the former's great effort to combat the forces of world communism. To India, America can become a reliever of her hardships which she might have to undergo as a result of an austerity drive so as to reach her intended economic targets. Why then have these two countries drifted away from each other? Mr. Seligman has attempted to provide an answer to this question.

The author is a lawyer by profession and has held many important posts in American public life including the chairmanship of the Board of the Foreign Policy Association. He has also been a colleague of Mr. John Foster Dulles at the famous New York law firm of Sullivan and Cromwell. During the last summer, Mr. Seligman spent six weeks in this country interviewing publicmen, journalists, academicians, artists etc. He has written this book with tremendous good will and a keen sense of urgency. He believes that at present the American Congress is lukewarm towards India and before long it

might become hostile. He therefore wants an informed and effective public opinion in America to bring about the necessary changes in the Congressional attitude. In plain language he appears to tell his countrymen as follows: China has been lost to the communists and in the near future India too might be lost to them unless the United States changes her policy and acts immediately.

The principal thesis of Mr. Seligman's little book is that although India has been neutral in the cold war and a bitter critic of the western (not communist) military alliances and also 'partial' to the communists in international conferences, she is, both by conviction and national policy, with democracy rather than communism. She has her own definite reasons supporting her standpoint, however unconvincing they might be to the Americans. The fact that India is with democracy and against communism necessitates a re-examination of American foreign policy in the light of Indian criticism.

While Mr. Seligman concentrates on the main centres of Indo-American disagreements, such as communist expansion and the American military efforts to contain it, colonial status quo, military aid to Pakistan, attitude towards the Kashmir problem etc., he does not ask himself the question whether the *Indians* consider America to be for democracy or not. Like many other European and American writers he too appears to be content with the observation that the educated Indian middle class which looks after the country's political affairs is steeped in western liberal ideals and institutions. Although he rightly points out that such a class will continue to enjoy power as long as India keeps up and accelerates her present pace of economic development, he nevertheless denies to it a capacity to discriminate between democratic form and democratic substance. In recent years, with the exception

of Chester Bowles and Gardner Murphy, I have not come across any other European or American writer whose observations about India are not coloured with western political superciliousness. What the Indians consider to be the form and substance of democracy—this is in fact crucial to the understanding of the pathology of Indo-American relationship.

The whole difficulty with Mr. Seligman's well-meaning thesis is that it unfolds itself by trying to locate India on an ideological map which is well-nigh obsolete. To pinpoint the ideological location of contemporary India is certainly a difficult if not an impossible undertaking. At present conflicting western social and political ideas are interacting with our own. While nothing definite has yet emerged in this country which can be stated in a neat theory, one thing is certain, that no one of the existing political creeds has been totally accepted. Mr. Seligman seems to be aware of it. Having located India on a map where countries are either democratic or communistic, he feels obliged to add something more, since two-thirds of the Indian economic development is to be covered by means of state enterprise. He therefore hastily adds a chapter on 'Indian Socialism' only in order to re-locate India on a slightly different though nevertheless obsolete map. Indian Socialism is, he declares, similar to British Socialism.

India's programme of social and economic reconstruction is not based on any rigid political doctrine. To a considerable extent the India of today may be said to be seething with the spirit of experimentalism. For this, one has only to look at her simultaneous adherence to public and private enterprises in her economy, her unwillingness to give up small-scale industries in the face of the pressing demands of the large-scale industries, her anxiety to carry out her nation-wide planning activities within the framework of her demo-

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cracy, etc. While no theoretical statement can yet be made about her interest in diverse social and economic ideals, what is evident is that she is bent upon following her own *independent* line of approach. A corresponding *independent* line of approach is too well reflected in her foreign policy to require any mention.

India's obsession to keep up her *independent* line of approach in her national as well as international politics, together with the factors which give rise to it should have occupied a central position in Mr. Seligman's book; because merely to tell the people of America that India is 'with democracy' is to prepare them for a further disillusionment.

Mr. Seligman admits that his book is not meant to be a scholarly treatise but one that is addressed to the average American. The complicated nature of his theme makes his attempts at simplification no less misleading.

A. H. SOMJEE

THE LEGACY OF THE LOKAMANYA by Theodore L. Shay (Oxford University Press, Bombay, Rs. 8).

HERE is fresh light on the political philosophy of Lokamanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak, whose centenary of birth was recently celebrated on a national scale. In his own times, Tilak was misunderstood by the moderates and it was the official fashion to describe him as the Father of Indian Unrest. Some of his contemporaries criticised him for his opposition to social reform and charged him with aiming at cheap popularity. Dr Shay's appreciation of such a political leader, coming as it does from the antipodes, is welcome and timely.

Being a stranger to India as also to the language in which most of Tilak's writings are available was actually an advantage to Dr Shay. His aloofness gave him the clarity to evaluate the achievements of the Lokamanya. Most of the Marathi material was translated for him, and Dr Shay has shown great power of understanding even of such sources.

In the world of today, there are, according to Dr Shay, only three major political philosophies: i) the Western ii) the Marxist-Soviet and iii) the Indian. Tilak and other nationalists pleaded for the third as in their opinion it was best suited to this country. Dr Shay however thinks that the Indian political philosophy may serve the entire world as a great, meaningful, integrated philosophy for the right ordering of man in the political community.

That, in the main, is the essence of Dr Shay's thesis. He had to devote a considerable part of his book to describing the implications and connotations of that philosophy. Tilak came to sponsor it while struggling for his country's freedom. That struggle, as is well known, assumed the form of a long-drawn conflict with the British-Indian authorities.

Swadharma, Rashtradharma, Sanatana-dharma are terms freely used in explain-

ing *The Legacy of the Lokamanya*. But *dharma* as understood in India cannot adequately be rendered into English. Duty, Religion, Faith, Moral precept ... are but poor expressions for it. It actually means righteousness, religious ordinances, moral rules of conduct, duties of the individual—all combined into one. It has been shown that Tilak's Swaraj (ya) meant—establishment of *Dharmarajya* in which *swadharma* would be followed by one and all.

This underlining of *dharmic* dominance over Tilak's thinking is Dr Shay's contribution to the understanding of the Father of Indian Unrest. That a stranger to Indian conditions had to volunteer to point this out to us is indeed very strange.

To social reform as such, the Lokamanya was not at all opposed. His differences with Agarkar, Bhandarkar, Ranade, Gokhale and others were about the way in which to bring about the reforms. Tilak had accepted a 6-point programme and it showed how far ahead of his contemporaries he was in this respect. He was opposed to social reform *by legislation*; his greater objection was to *an alien government* enacting that legislation.

It was inevitable that in a book of this type, a comparative study of the Lokamanya and the Mahatma should be attempted. Dr Shay covers that subject and it is the most interesting part of his book. In spite of their differences, the two leaders stood on a common ground: a political philosophy based on the classical message of life.

Dr Shay has tried to peep into an imaginary world: how would Tilak have drafted the Constitution of the Indian Republic? At present the Constitution does not, according to Dr Shay, reflect any Indian precepts or political philosophy. Its makers relied completely on Western political history and practice. Tilak surely would not have been so blind a follower of everything Western. Steeped as he was in

ancient (Sanskrit) learning, he would have brought in references to Indian conceptions of individual and collective rights.

In our times it is fashionable to decry religion and to keep aloof from it. This young American student who travelled a long way to study at first hand the teachings of a departed Indian leader, has given us a pleasant surprise. Not many will be able to appreciate Dr Shay's achievement, as the conception of *dharma* cannot be easily understood. Fewer still will be those who will find it worthwhile as a practical philosophy for the world at large. Dr Shay's attempt in interpreting *The Legacy of the Lokamanya* to the public is all the more striking for these reasons.

S. R. TIKEKAR

BATTLES AT THE BAR by K. L. Gauba
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ONE has heard that in the United States the profession of 'ghost writing' is not only an accepted, but a flourishing business. 'Give me three writers', Sam Goldwyn is supposed to have said when confronted with the superior script of a rival filmmaker, 'and I could write it myself.' It speaks for the practical commonsense of the American people as well as their lack of literary prudery that they realise the art of writing does not necessarily require one integrated talent. It can be broken up into two parts. The first part is to have something to say, and the other part is to know how to say it. And so a man who possesses only one part of the necessary requirements can hire the other half and proceed to become a writer.

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gives Mr. Gauba the benefit of the doubt and assumes that he has interesting tales; for he so confuses us by his manner of telling that we cannot be sure whether what he had to say *was* interesting or not. Add to his style the fact that the author has a delicacy about mentioning the names of or inventing pseudonyms for his more influential clients. Thus, when we embark on the story of the case of D-d-D or V-v-V-, it will be seen that we need to keep all our wits about us. And, too often, all that we can confidently say at the end of it is that 'It was a famous victory'—for Mr. Gauba.

Unfortunately, though, if Mr. Gauba's style can convince us of nothing else, it does convince us that, even if he were surrounded by a galaxy of ghost writers, he would not avail himself of their services. For in his accounts of the criminal cases in which he has taken part are all the signs by which a man shows that he considers himself, besides everything else, rather a devil with the pen. The facetious asides, the deeply philosophical interjections, the ironical or sentimental summings up—all these show that the author believes he is enhancing, by his elegant style, the fascination of his exciting stories.

And yet, so far as his material went, Mr. Gauba held a good hand. The title page shows that the chapters include some of the more notorious criminal cases in Lahore and Bombay. The Kishori case, The Colaba Trunk Murder, etc., all find a place. It needed only the minimum ability to relate a story, sequence by sequence, in order to make the book as exciting as a detective novel. The 'pièce de resistance' (I feel that such phrases are very suitable in a review of this book) is the now historic duel with Sir Douglas Young, Chief Judge of Lahore High Court, in the Magna Carta case which eventually led to the resignation of three judges of the High Court including the Chief Judge. We are quite willing to believe that this was a blow from

which the British Empire reeled again. But still, it is not easy to disentangle the facts from the prose; and much as we would have liked to understand and admire his brave stand, we shall have to content ourselves by applauding only his fiery spirit.

LAEEQ FUTEHALLY

UNPROFESSIONAL ESSAYS by J. Middleton Murry (Jonathan Cape, 15s.)

TWO distinct trends have become increasingly predominant in contemporary literary criticism—one towards formalism, specialisation and antiquarianism (as represented by Richards, Leavis, Hoffman, etc.) and the other towards 'unprofessionalism' whose leading exponent was Virginia Woolf. Middleton Murry, who has for over three decades been a doyen of the 'professionals'—particularly in the realm of criticism pertaining to Keats, Shakespeare, Blake, Swift and Lawrence—has in this small book chosen to treat informally a few literary subjects 'wholly to please myself at a time when I am no longer dependent on literary criticism for my livelihood.' This casual attitude lends a new dimension to his critical perceptions and enables him to make his assessments with an uncompromising integrity and lucidity of exposition.

In his essay 'In Defence of Fielding' Murry sets out to examine the body of critical commentary that has prevented many a reader from making an unbiased evaluation of this eighteenth-century novelist, who should have been recognised as a landmark in 'The Great Tradition'. But in spite of Murry's spirited defence of Fielding against the 'wrong-headed' attacks of Dr. Leavis and others, one does not feel quite convinced when he tries to invest the novelist with 'a deep well of moral conviction.' Even a casual reading of *Tom Jones*, *Joseph Andrews* and *Amelia* will show that the so-called 'ethical thinking' of Fielding

is nothing but a kind of sexual ethics, an eulogy of the 'consummation of physical passion between a man and a woman of good nature as the supreme felicity attainable on earth.'

Another essay 'Clare Revisited' although antiquarian in many respects, establishes the identity of John Clare, an obscure contemporary of Keats, who ultimately found refuge from the tribulations and humiliations of life in insanity. An examination of his pre-asylum poetry reveals a mind with a unique mystic vision, seeking perpetual communion with God through nature and love.

Walt Whitman must have a great appeal for Murry, since he was himself much influenced by the American 'Poet-Prophet of Democracy' in formulating some of his own concepts of the 'free society' in his famous non-literary work in *Defence of Democracy*. Whereas Whitman's contribution to democratic thinking in *Democratic Vistas* (and some of the poems in the *Song of Myself*) cannot be overemphasized, he certainly does not impress one as a poet with an integrated vision. Critics like Richard Chase, Jean Cartel and Mathiessen have rightly suggested an element of messiness in his mental processes and a streak of 'quirky transcendentalism' in his poetry. In spite of all Murry's attempts to prove a consistent system of 'divine egoism' in *Leaves of Grass*, the ultimate impression on the reader's mind is that of unrelated identities and unrealized potentialities. Most of his poems degenerate into mere verbal algebra:

'O for you whoever you are your correlative body! O it, more than all else, you delighting...'

No wonder that, as Chase says, Whitman's reputation today 'is really not very high.'

Perhaps the most outstanding essay in this collection is the one entitled 'The Plays of T. S. Eliot' in which Murry displays shrewd insight on the thematic in-

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consistencies and vagaries of Eliot's plays. In the course of a chronological survey of Eliot's dramatic works Murry suggests how his obsession with unnecessary elaboration of material persists in his plot-construction. In terms of normal plausibility these plays seem to have feet of clay. The warping of motivation in *Family Reunion*, the piling up of artificial complications in *The Confidential Clerk*, and the inability to make relationships emotionally real—these are some of the fundamental shortcomings of Eliot as a dramatic artist. Murry attributes his weaknesses both as poet and dramatist to his 'almost inhuman detachment from the most exalted experience that falls to the lot of man'—the love between man and woman.

Essentially humanistic in tone, bold and often provocative in critical assessments, unequivocally lucid in exposition, *Unprofessional Essays* will certainly strike a new note in contemporary criticism.

SHIV K. KUMAR

correspondence

The Study of Philosophy in our Universities

To the Editor, QUEST

Sir,

Since independence the problems centring round the study of Philosophy in our universities have not drawn the careful attention they deserve. If steps are not taken in time to make our syllabuses up-to-date and the standards of teaching higher, these problems will become increasingly complex.

Generally a student begins his study of Philosophy at the Degree stage with such subjects as Psychology, Ethics and Metaphysics. Indian Philosophy or Indian and Islamic Philosophies are, however, taught in the Degree course in many of the universities. At the Post-Graduate level syllabuses of the different universities have a greater variety. In some universities, Metaphysics and Epistemology, for example, are not compulsory papers, while at other universities Ethics and Psychology are included only as what are called Special Papers. Many of the special papers are not taught either because there are not adequate number of students, or because there are not teachers qualified to teach them. The subjects taught in the lower stages are often repeated in the higher stages, not particularly in an advanced manner. Again, the subjects taught in the lower stages are taught as though only to be forgotten later.

Certain omissions along with wrong emphasis and the elementary nature of the teaching account for the comparatively poor standard of scholarship in Philosophy in our universities. The two or three philosophical systems of ancient India, as they are taught in most of our universities, have dubious philosophical value. Indian philo-

sophical systems should be evaluated afresh in the light of contemporary science and thought, so that their study becomes significant. This, unfortunately, is not possible till modern philosophies are taught and learned seriously along with the ancient systems. Unfortunately, again, the standards of scholarship in Indian philosophical studies are still unimposing. Philosophical clarity suffers because of leanings toward mysticism. The studies of Sanskrit and Pali have been usually neglected by the teachers of Philosophy in our universities. Even the study of such well known systems as associated with the names of Kant and Hegel, for example, are not taught in as advanced a manner as desirable. The reason is that we have approached these and many other thinkers through their English exponents and critics. The other reason is our indifference to the languages in which these thinkers wrote and were criticised.

The inadequate emphasis laid on the contemporary European and American philosophies is by no means negligible. Logical Positivism, Phenomenalism and Existentialism, to mention a few, are not considered important. In so far as these and kindred tendencies are concerned our curricula are old-fashioned. The emphasis is, as it should be, on the western philosophies. But when we come to the contemporary thinkers and systems we are faced with another difficulty. The rigid compartmentalisation of branches of knowledge into Arts and Science, though convenient in certain respects, is ultimately untenable in the field of advanced scholarship. Three new and remarkable changes must be taken into account when we think of revising our curricula. First, the increasing awareness of modern philosophers of the importance of physics and mathematics; secondly, the leanings of scientists to the problems hitherto considered speculative; lastly, the growing awareness of philosop-

hers as well as scientists of problems concerning method, language and communication.

To my mind there are two important omissions: medieval European Philosophy and Chinese Philosophy. Islamic Philosophy too has not drawn our sympathetic attention.

The results have been deplorable. The students of today—and teachers of tomorrow—are far removed from the main currents of contemporary thought. The consequences are evident in most of the research work done in our universities and the difficulties our students face when they go abroad for higher studies.

Our entire curricula desperately need revision. Some chapters of higher mathematics and modern physics are the most important topics to be introduced. An increased emphasis on the study of languages is another desideratum. To be effective, a revision of this kind can only be done from below upwards. All this requires careful and unremitting attention of the experts. If necessary, we should not hesitate to invite scholars from abroad.

Head of the
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Government College, Ajmer.

A. M. GHOSE

Anti-Americanism

To the Editor, QUEST

Sir,

Mr. Farrell's letter on Anti-Americanism is certainly thought-provoking. He is quite right in his general conclusion and also regarding the factors which have contributed to the anti-American feeling. In my recent travels in Australia, where probably the general atmosphere and way of life is most similar to the U.S., I found many people denouncing America either for too much interference in Pacific affairs or too little.

Mr. Farrell has however not touched

upon two important factors which make the U.S. unpopular among people of the world. To Indians and probably to other Asians and Africans, the phenomenon of the U.S. standing on the side of Totalitarian, Imperialistic and Racist powers like Spain, Portugal, South Africa and, to some extent, France, presents a vivid contrast to the U.S.S.R. in the Assembly of Nations. Very few then think of Russian imperialism in the East European countries; very few also think that the U.S. friendship with and support to the governments of these countries is probably a choice of a lesser evil. The coloured people cannot possibly be expected to harbour feelings of friendliness to a power which, for whatever reasons, is helping to consolidate the undemocratic regimes and racist policies of countries like Spain and South Africa.

The second, although very much less important, factor is the jealousy caused by Americans in other countries, because of the very high value of the Dollar as compared with most local currencies and the consequent ease with which any U.S. citizen can live much more luxuriously. This is particularly obvious in Europe.

I have met many Americans during the last few years and have admired their friendly ways and unassuming manners. Some of my close relatives have spent happy years in U.S. Universities and have made many friends, and it is with a genuine desire to destroy Anti-Americanism if possible that I have written this. Most Americans take it for granted that their scale of priorities about the evils in this world that have to be destroyed are identical with the priorities of everybody else. For the Asians and Africans at least, racial equality is a long way ahead of anti-communism.

Yours etc.

D. D. KARVE

Principal, Fergusson College,
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Philip Spratt is Associate Editor of *Mysindia* (Bangalore). He was involved in the Meerut Conspiracy Case after coming to India as an envoy of the British Communist Party. Spent several years in jail and thereafter repudiated communism. Recently published a fragment of autobiography, *Blowing up India*.

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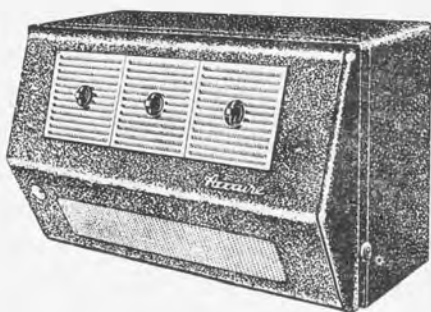
Harry Roskolenko is an American author who has published several novels and volumes of verse. He visited India recently.

Contributions are invited and will be paid for. A stamped addressed envelope must be enclosed for the return of unaccepted manuscripts.

The views expressed by QUEST'S contributors are their own and not necessarily those of the Indian Committee for Cultural Freedom. The Editor does not consciously exclude any point of view. He is hospitable to a variety of beliefs provided they meet his requirements of style and thought.



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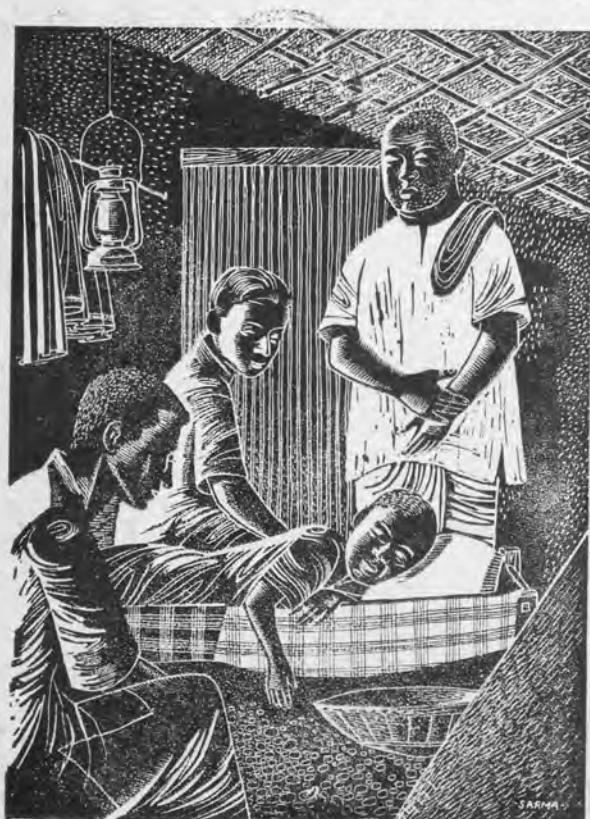
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