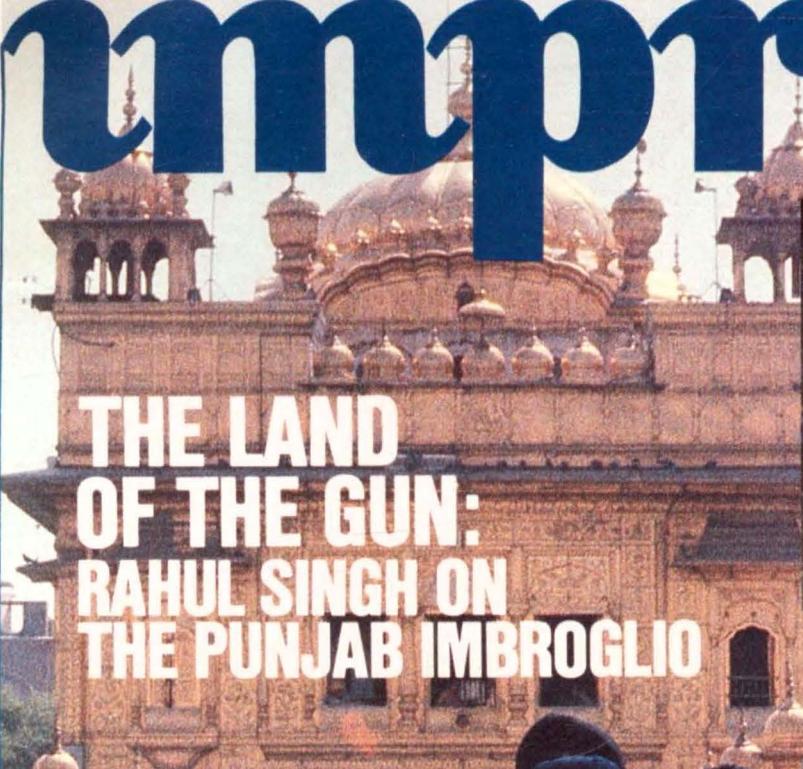


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NOVEMBER 1987 Rs 6

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**THE LAND
OF THE GUN:
RAHUL SINGH ON
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**A HIMALAYAN ODYSSEY:
A LENS-EYE VIEW OF THE COUNTRY'S
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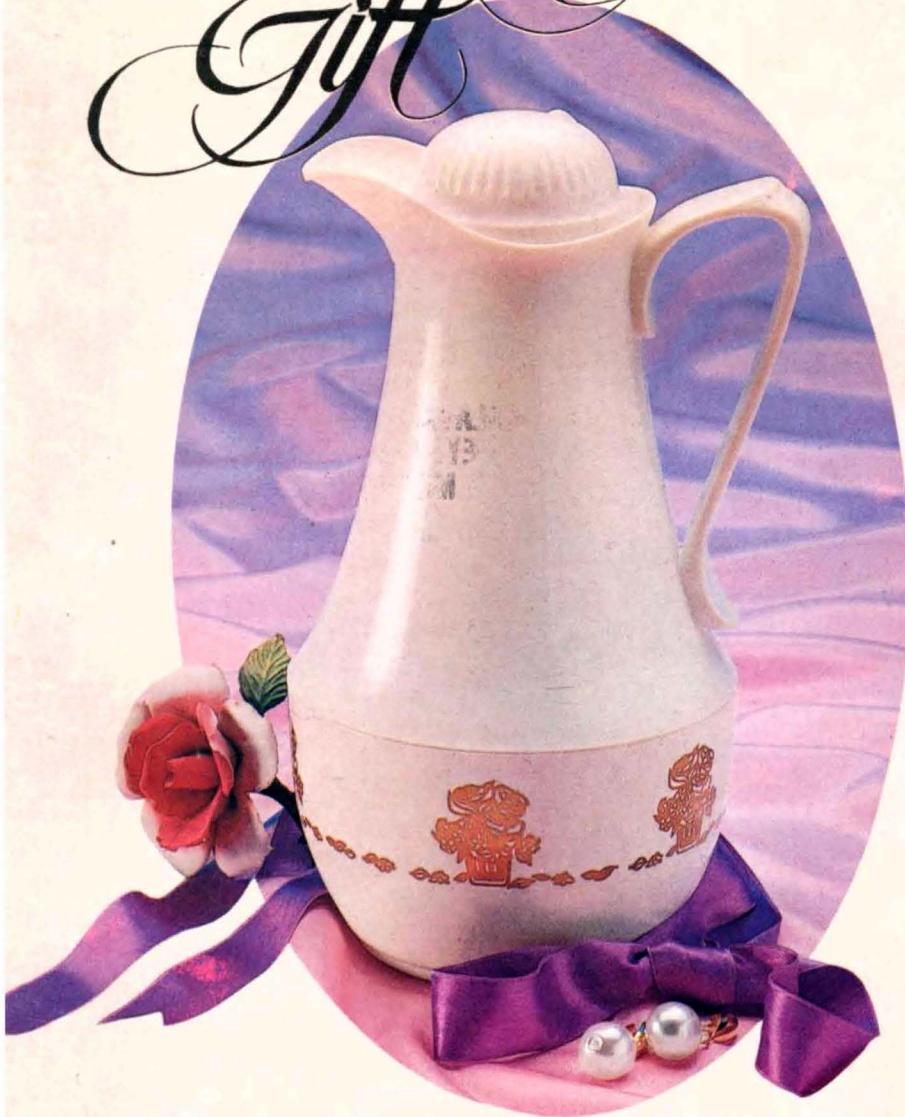


AIR INDIA: JINXED IN OCTOBER!

ON A WINNING STREAK! AN INTERVIEW WITH INDIA'S ACE SPRINTER, P T USHA

INDIAN AIRLINES • MOUNTING ANXIETY CONTINUED

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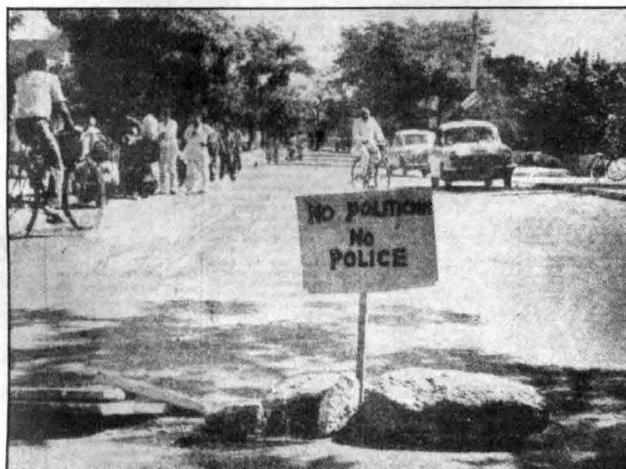
WHO CARES?

I DO NOT KNOW which is responsible, the rarified atmosphere in his aircraft or his naivety, but certain statements that Mr Rajiv Gandhi, the Prime Minister of India, has recently made to journalists, make alarming reading. On October 22, while returning from the recent Commonwealth Summit in Vancouver, he reprimanded the journalists in his entourage for their obsession with Pakistan: "It is unfortunate the press in India is giving undue importance to Pakistan. It is a small country and all your concentration is on them. You should not bother about them. Let them do what they like. We are not bothered about them and will handle them when the time comes."

Soon after this, a week or so later, as the Prime Minister was returning from the SAARC Summit in Kathmandu, he informed the accompanying journalists that if Pakistan attacked defence posts on the frontier, "they will get a bloody nose." Who is obsessed with whom? Whatever next?

*

READERS OF THIS COLUMN will not have been surprised at the reaction of the residents of the Chittaranjan Park Colony in New Delhi on the eve of Diwali. In the wake of the senseless terrorist attack on the South Delhi locality, on October 20, which left 11 dead and 15 wounded, residents erected a sign declaring: "No politicians, no police" and prevented members of both 'species' from entering their colony. To mark the obvious government indifference to their plight, local people observed a black Diwali — not a single lamp was lit.



Ever since Mr Rajiv Gandhi came to power and converted government offices and official residences in New Delhi and various state capitals into armed fortresses, **Imprint** warned of the inevitable consequences of such excessive security precautions on the one hand, and the increasing neglect of affording basic protection to the citizens of this

country, on the other. As all efforts seem to be directed at mounting massive security operations for VVIPs and VIPs, the security of the citizens of this country is being thrown to the winds. But who cares?

* * *

AN EXAMPLE in an altogether different area reinforces this view. Commercial aircraft requisitioned for VVIP flights (see *Jinxed In October*, page 13) are grounded days in advance for thorough and excessive maintenance checks. In sheer contrast are the lax maintenance standards of aircraft used for civilian flights by the domestic carrier, Indian Airlines. Despite reports in newspapers and magazines articulating the numerous violations of safety standards that Indian Airlines is guilty of (see *Mounting Anxiety Continues*, page 37), the company is taking no corrective action. There are increasing delays and recurring dangerous 'incidents'. At this rate, there is bound to be a major catastrophe ahead. But who cares?

* * *

THE FIVE PER CENT SURCHARGE that the government has levied on corporate taxes in order to finance part of its drought-relief operations, looks like being yet another swindle when posited against authentic reports regarding the vast expenditure incurred by Mr Rajiv Gandhi, the Prime Minister of India, on travelling to summits, visits to drought-affected areas and elsewhere for official engagements. At the same time, the government is also giving away sizeable bonanzas to favoured industrialists by way of duty concessions and risky loans. In the meantime, the toll that the 5 per cent surcharge will take on the morale of Indian industry will result in a production loss of no less than 50 times the surcharge levy imposed! But who thinks?

* * * *

THE INDIAN REACTION to the recent detention of an Air India Airbus by the Nigerian authorities has been remarkably strange. On August 25, the civilian aircraft, *Beas*, was impounded in Lagos on the grounds that 32.5 kgs of narcotics had been carried on board. The detention of the aircraft and three of its crew members has cost the airline (read the Indian Exchequer) Rs 9.65 crore. Both Air India and the Government of India have also been blackmailed into providing a bank guarantee of US\$32 million; and the intentions of the Nigerian authorities vis à vis the disposal of the guarantee appear suspicious. The guarantee was actually drawn on The Allied Bank, a joint venture between the Nigerians and the Bank of India, but the Nigerians have obtained an endorsement from the Bank of India on the guarantee. The Indian government's reaction to all this has been degrading and ignominious.

What would have been the reaction of our people, our

Parliament and our government if one of our aircraft had been detained in any of the capital cities of the Western powers? We would never have tolerated such grossly unfair treatment at the hands of the authorities in New York, London, Frankfurt or Paris. After all, neither Air India nor its crew could be held directly responsible for the fact that drugs were smuggled on board one of its aircraft? The government's cowardly handling of this affair has cost us a fortune. Underdeveloped minds to deal with the underdeveloped nations — that seems to be our lot. But who cares?

* * * * *

SOME YEARS AGO, a non-resident Indian obtained a licence to establish a finance company in Hong Kong. The finance company has an exposure of HK\$250 million, 150 million of which is provided by a leading Indian bank that was appointed to manage its affairs (on the basis of a 20 per cent stake in the profits); the remainder constitutes the NRI's own capital of US\$10 million, and deposits from the public. This same finance company has an exposure of HK\$30 million in Nigeria. Because there is a question mark regarding Nigerian debts, the Banking Commissioner of Hong Kong asked the finance company to obtain a performance guarantee to the extent of HK\$30 million from the Indian bank which expedites its affairs. Sensing that the refusal to provide the bank guarantee may jeopardise the finance company's licence to operate in Hong Kong, the Head Office of the Indian bank in Bombay refused, and instructed their branch in Hong Kong to freeze the finance company's accounts. The likely result of this directive is that the Indian bank could stand to lose a substantial portion of their investment of HK\$150 million in the company; so could the NRI his capital of US\$10 million and some depositors their deposits. Why did the Indian bank make this move?

On the advice of the Reserve Bank of India. Presumably because no one wants to take a constructive decision. Nobody at the bank will be blamed if the finance company in Hong Kong loses HK\$150 million of the bank's money. But if the bank does give the performance guarantee and if that is construed to be a 'favour' done to the finance company, then heads may roll. A sound education in how not to take bold decisions. But who cares?

* * * * *

TWO MAHARASHTRA GOVERNMENT finance corporations loaned Rs 85 lakh to an Indo-American venture promoted by a leading business house. This joint venture was recently declared a sick company; the promoters consequently felt morally obliged to repay the loans received from the two financial institutions. So, they arranged for one of their companies to buy the land on which the company's plant is sited, as well as the building in which the plant is located, for an amount equivalent to the loan repayable, but at thrice the market value. The financial institutions have been requested to waive the interest, but nobody is willing to decide, as this involves taking a decision which could be interpreted as a 'favour' done to that promoter company. It has been pointed out that this may endanger the entire loan since nobody will buy the land and the building for anything more than the loan amount, and in this event, the company will have to wind up its affairs and the institutions will stand to lose the full amount of the loan. The institutions seem to have a *laissez-faire* attitude to this situation in which it would appear that those responsible for decision-making feel safer about losing all than taking a decision which could salvage a great deal. Why? How have we managed to trap ourselves in this quagmire? Unless we emerge from this in one piece, we will only become more underdeveloped. Mentally and materially. But who cares? ♦

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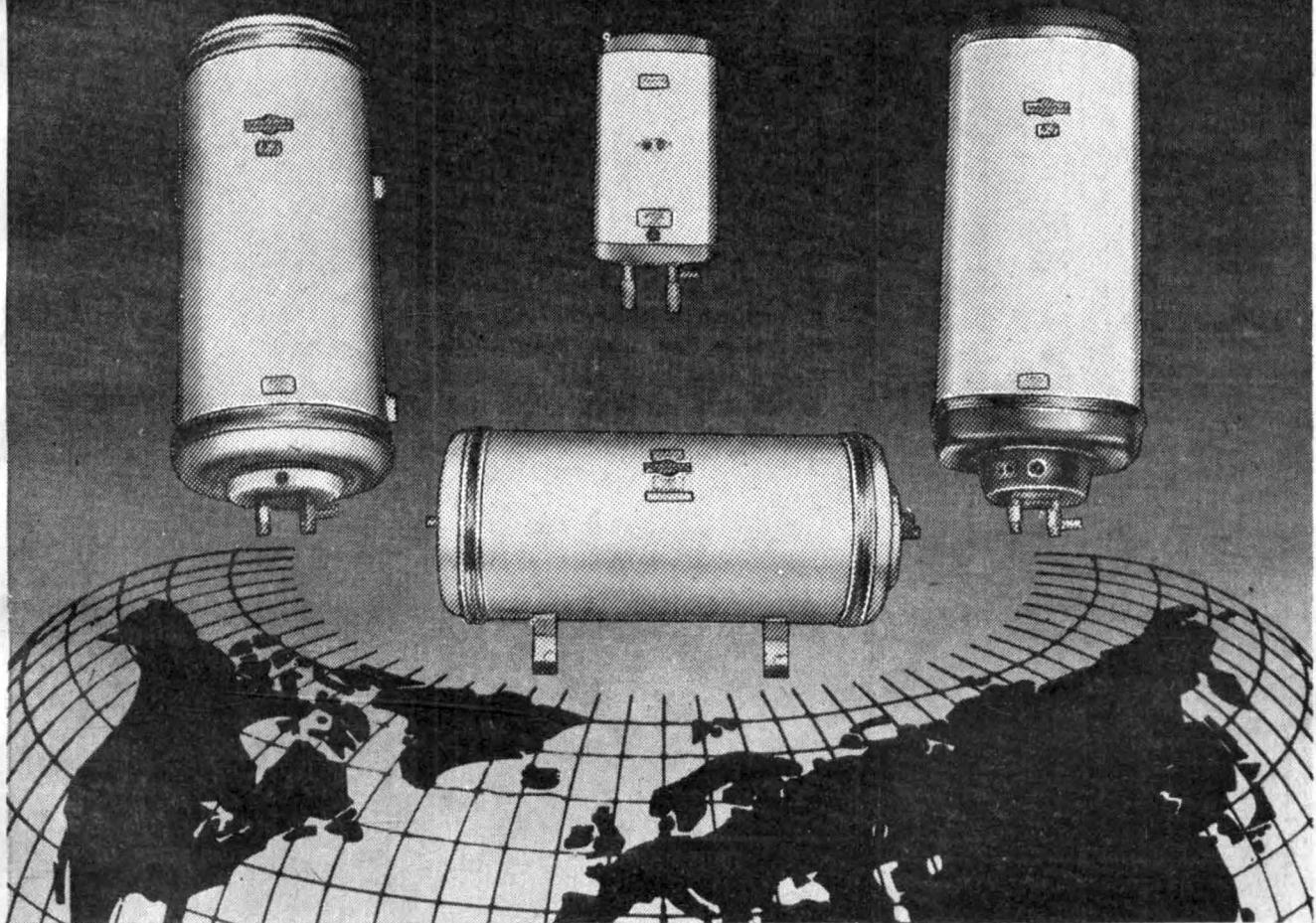
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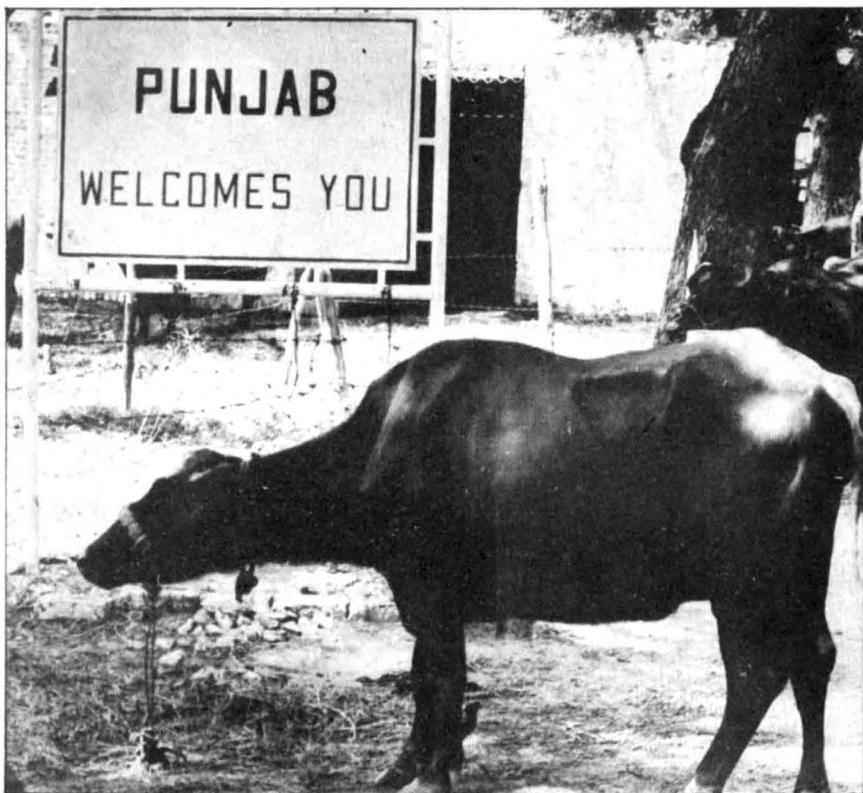
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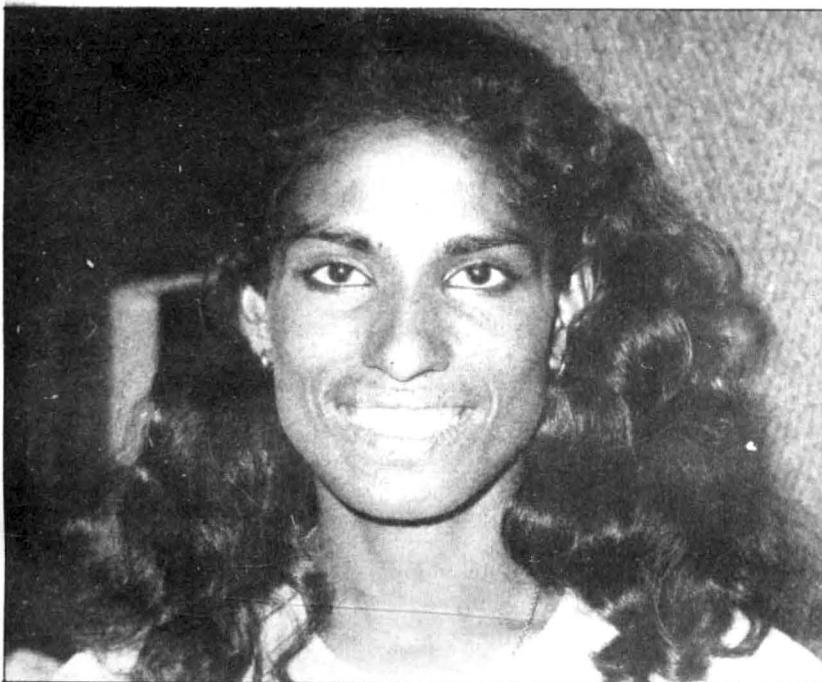
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JINXED! It was a difficult month for the national flag carrier, recently voted one of the world's ten worst airlines, as an unfortunate series of coincidences threw Air India's flight schedules into complete disarray. At considerable cost, not only to its profit margins, but also to its prestige. **SHAILA SHAH** reports.



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LETTERS

India's Vietnam



I fully share the views of R V Pandit in his Marquee — "Get Out! Soonest!!" — on the Sri Lanka problem (**Imprint**, October). The Indian army (IPKF), which went to Sri Lanka under the terms of the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord signed on August 29, 1987, to maintain peace, is now engaged in fighting the very persons whom it was to protect. The Accord, which was hastily signed only to bolster Rajiv Gandhi's sagging image and without any understanding of the situation, has proved to be an intractable disaster. Sri Lanka may well prove to be India's Vietnam.

However, Mr Pandit's conclusion, namely that "it is in the best interests of the Tamils in Sri Lanka to deal directly with Colombo. It is for them and them alone, to learn to live with the reality that Sri Lanka is a Sinhalese nation, and the Sinhalese are as entitled to nationhood, as you and I are, to India," has many implications. In fact, Mr Pandit has oversimplified a complex issue. The Sinhalese are no doubt in the majority in the Island, but so also are the Tamils in the North and Eastern provinces, who, before the arrival of the Portuguese, had an independent kingdom. Even otherwise, the Sinhalese cannot deprive the Tamils of their rights, which have been gradually denied to them since 1948, when Sri Lanka gained independence. If the Tamils cannot have any rights in Sri Lanka, it will set a very bad precedent, and any talk of human rights will be hollow and meaningless.

Notwithstanding the above-mentioned facts, there is no denying the

fact that the Government of India, either under pressure or due to a lack of correct perspectives, has jumped headlong into trouble.

*V Sagar
New Delhi*

A Question of Nationality

I am not too sure as to whether it was accurate to include Mother Teresa in your list of 'Indian Nobel Laureates' (**Imprint**, October). If this was done on the basis of her having acquired Indian citizenship, then neither Hargovind Khorana nor Subramaniam



Chandrashekhar should have been mentioned since they were awarded the Prize only after they became US citizens.

Incidentally, The Random House (US) Dictionary, while listing every Western Nobel Laureate, makes no mention of C V Raman!

*Norma Louis
Bombay*

The Visionary

I read your extract from Pupul Jayakar's *J Krishnamurti: A Biography* (**Imprint**, October) with a certain measure of cynicism and amusement, since, despite the profusion of big names dropped with calculated abandon, there was not a single sentence of any real substance in the 9-



page extract on behalf of the much-made-of messiah, or the authoress.

Being a congenitally irreverent person, I follow my own set of standards for judging individuals. In my teens, I asked a Catholic priest if Jesus Christ had died believing that the earth was flat. He replied that He probably had. And that was the end of Jesus Christ as God! (And I was born to a rigidly devout Catholic family!)

Likewise, I happened to watch a television programme, showing Ms Jayakar, and perhaps Achyut Patwardhan, in conversation with the great seer. I saw that not only had the great man tried, with discernibly meticulous care, to cover his bald pate with his few existing strands of hair, but also that throughout the interview he kept fidgeting with them to ensure that they stayed in place. In the same programme, Krishnamurti — apparently 5 foot nothing — appeared in a three-piece suit looking like a clown. And I thought to myself that any man of vision who is so obsessed with concealing his baldness, or is capable of wearing a three-piece suit under any circumstances whatsoever, must have something greatly lacking in him. I realise this is an extremely controversial view to take and express, but then, I am not at all afraid of being a lone critic.

L A C Mulangunnathukavu
Bombay

With due respect to the late seer and his acolytes, Mr Krishnamurti has always struck me as a person who believed in teaching people how to swim from the safety of dry land without wetting his own feet.

Not many people can claim to have taught swimming this way.

L A Chungath
Bombay

Ramayana — Not So Popular!

You are absolutely mistaken when you say that *Ramayana* is popular all over India (**Imprint**, October).

Here, in Tamil Nadu and Kerala, people do not watch *Ramayana* at all. In the monthly IMRB poll, *Ramayana* has never featured in the top ten TV programmes in Madras. How such a serial, produced in such an amateurish



manner and with garishness galore, could be the favourite of North Indian cities, is anyone's guess. But worse than that, how the Government continues to telecast such an anti-woman serial is perplexing!

It is equally difficult to understand why your magazine wasted so many pages writing about this trash!

Sunder Srinivasan
Madras

Unwarranted Criticism

Those who criticise *Ramayana*, by labelling it as gaudy and slow-moving, do so because they have been unwittingly brain-washed into believing that everything Indian should fit into a Western strait-jacket. Should one apply a colonial frame of reference to an Indian art-form?

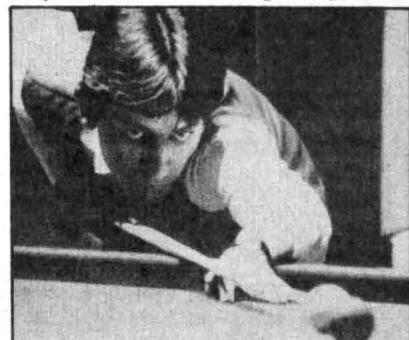
Had these critics read *Ramayana* themselves, they would have realised the importance and relevance of this great epic to not just the Hindus, but the country as a whole. Rama, Sita, Laxman, Hanuman, and Ravana are archetypal role-models etched into the human consciousness. But one has to approach the epic with an unbiased mind to realise that it is an intellectual adventure into the collective unconscious of humankind!

A P Premkumar
Trivandrum.

Three Cheers Geet!

I was happy to read your profile on the world billiards and snooker champion — Geet Sethi — in your October issue.

The achievements of this "master of the green baize" are indeed phenomenal. It is shameful that the press only mentions them in passing, while



it waxes lyrical over each and every run hit by a run-out cricketer!

I wish that you would cover other interesting and important sports. I, and many other fans, wish Geet Sethi the best of luck, and hope that he will beat the Maltese Falcon yet!

V Rodrigues
Goa

THE LAND OF THE GUN

"In a society where bravado is glorified, perhaps needlessly and foolishly, the terrorists have often been seen as heroes, the administration and police as cowards," writes noted columnist, RAHUL SINGH. Fear stalks the cities of Punjab and the state has virtually become an occupied territory. The writer traces the history of the escalating violence and lawlessness, and argues that unless the rule of law is maintained, democracy itself will be in peril.



INDIA IS FULL of paradoxes; some would say hypocrisies. The so-called land of spiritualism is often shown up as materialistic and as grasping as any Western society. Indeed, quite a few of India's leading *gurus*, *swamis* or godmen — call them what you will — are more concerned with making a fast buck than the well-being of their adoring devotees.

But the most striking contradiction between the India of repute and the India of reality is how a nation which gave the rest of the world the uplifting message of peace and non-violence, is today one of the planet's most violent societies. The land of Mahatma Gandhi has become the land of the gun.

I was in China, once quite recen-

tly and also two years ago. Our group — journalists and population control experts from all over the world — covered a distance of 6,000 kms in China, visiting cities, towns, and villages. Although China is a totalitarian society where force, or the threat of force rather than the rule of law, plays a dominant role in state policy, one of our abiding impressions was

the complete absence of guns. Even at sensitive places like airports and the Great Hall of the People in Beijing – where important meetings are held – the security forces carried no weapons. Impressions can, of course, be deceptive, because we all know the level of violence that was unleashed during the decade of the Cultural Revolution. Yet, nowadays at least, China seems remarkably peaceful and free of tension, with not even a hint of that great bane of many societies – terrorism.

The contrast with India could not be greater. Here, the police and the para-military – and there are now half a dozen different forces – bristle with a bewildering array of deadly weapons and anti-terrorist devices. In

pied countries travelled in a similar fashion.

That same eerie feeling, of Punjab being like an occupied land, was brought home forcefully on one occasion while I was covering an election rally in Ludhiana addressed by the Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi, just prior to the September 1985 Punjab poll. The venue was a vast university stadium and Mr Gandhi and his entourage descended literally from the skies in two large helicopters, to the obvious awe of the thousands assembled. The Prime Minister went briskly to the raised platform and took his appointed place behind a sheet of bullet-proof glass. About a dozen 'black cat' commandos, wearing black berets and dungarees, as if straight out of a Costas Gavras film about a South American dictatorship, ranged themselves on either side of the platform, sten-guns at the ready. Meanwhile, two other commandos had taken positions behind elevated machine-guns that were pointed menacingly at the massive, yet clearly intimidated crowd.

"What will they do if somebody tries to take a pot-shot at Rajiv Gan-

dhi?" whispered a journalist mock-seriously, "Mow us all down?" Another journalist, a foreigner who had covered prison riots in the USA, said that the scene reminded him of that of a prison governor addressing the inmates. It was a chilling comparison.

IN CHANDIGARH, the houses of some ministers and senior officials are like mini-fortresses, surrounded by watch-towers, sandbags, and gun emplacements; visitors are frisked or have to go through metal detectors. Hand-bags are checked at cinema entrances, buses do not ply after dark, and at sunset, most shops and establishments close their shutters. As night falls, a deathly silence descends over most of the towns and cities of the state. The streets are largely deserted, except for police patrols, and almost everybody remains indoors.

The only entertainment is the TV, the video – for those rich enough to afford one, and there are quite a few around – and drinking. Musical groups, dancers, and singers give Punjab a wide berth. Anup Jalota, the famous ghazal singer and a Punjabi himself, once cried off from an enga-



Punjab, where I recently spent almost three years as Editor of the *Indian Express* in Chandigarh, whenever the Governor, Siddharth Shankar Ray, or the Director General of Police, Julio Ribeiro, move around, it is with an accompanying jeep on which a machine-gun is mounted. Watching them, one is reminded of World War II movies where Nazi generals in occu-



The gruesome Lalru massacre of July 6, 1987.

COVER STORY

gement in Chandigarh, easily the safest place in Punjab, even though tickets had already been sold in advance for the performance. It was with the utmost difficulty and persuasion that he eventually stuck to his commitment. Whenever an important sports event takes place — a rare occurrence in view of the daunting security precautions that the authorities have to undertake — like the recent World Cup cricket match, there is a huge turn-out, so great is the need of the people to have some kind of outlet for their natural exuberance.

While I was in Punjab, a high-level commission was formed by the Central Government, comprising senior politicians like the present Maharashtra Chief Minister, S B Chavan, the Union Minister for Defence, K C Pant, and the then Governor of Punjab, Arjun Singh. The advice of a number of prominent Punjab citizens was sought on a resolution to the Punjab problem. Realising that most, if not all of them, must have trotted out the same tired answers — more industry and job opportunities, an improved law and order situation, etc — I decided to offer them one small, but at least off-beat suggestion: hold the Davis Cup tennis match in Chandigarh (we were playing against Sweden in an important tie). I went on to explain that Chandigarh had the only real lawn tennis stadium in India — unbelievable but true — and that by staging such an important match in the capital of Punjab, the Government would not only be successfully challenging the terrorists but sending a message to the people of Punjab — that normal life continues despite terrorism and that they would not be allowed to disrupt it. The commission members looked somewhat bemused and I exited, rather embarrassed at not having produced a more weighty solution to the Punjab conundrum.

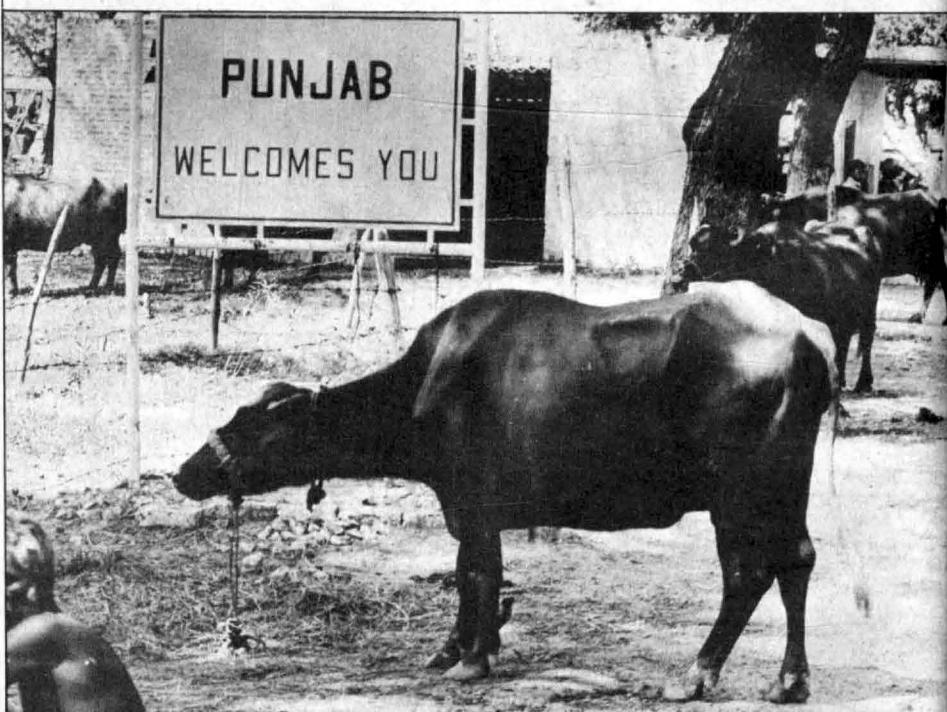
AS IT SO HAPPENED, a little while later there was a chance to speak to the Prime Minister who was, at least then, very concerned about the events

in Punjab. The same suggestion was put to him. He pondered for a moment and then said that the security constraints would be too many — understandable enough, but not, in my view, insurmountable.

It was not flippancy that had prompted my response; it was the conviction that what the militants, the extremists, the fundamentalists, and the terrorists — all of them birds of the same feather — fear most, is normality. They want the disruption of day-to-day life, for educational institutions to be closed, and sporting and cultural functions to be cancel-

taken if the tide of terrorism is to be turned.

In January 1987, along with another journalist, Manwar Sandhu, I toured the two most terrorist-affected districts in Punjab, Amritsar and Gurdaspur. We found that officials and politicians — the communists were an exception — had given a free hand to the militants and the terrorists. There was nobody to counter their mad, fiery speeches in the *gurdwaras*, no one to oppose them when they struck. At two places that we visited where killings had taken place, the security forces had turned up



A grim foreboding: The exodus from the state continues.

led. It gives them a feeling of power and control over the average person's life. Unfortunately, if such a state of affairs is allowed to continue for too long, the people begin to believe that those who are preventing them from leading a normal life do, indeed, control the situation, and that there is no point in resisting. The authorities must therefore do their utmost to maintain normality. There are risks, no doubt, particularly for prominent personalities, but such risks must be

hours later, even though they were posted nearby and could not but have heard the gunfire.

IN A SOCIETY where bravado is glorified, perhaps needlessly and foolishly, the terrorists have often been seen as heroes, the administration and the police as cowards. On the few occasions that important officials and politicians made an appearance in these two districts, they came in force, surrounded by dozens of gun-toting se-

curity men. It is in this context that the present Punjab Governor, dismissed wrongly and unfairly by a leading fortnightly magazine as a "dilettante", is on the right track. He has consciously promoted cultural and sporting events and made a point of making an appearance at them. Minor gestures perhaps, but underlying them is an important point: the terrorists must not be allowed to get the upper hand by paralysing all activity.

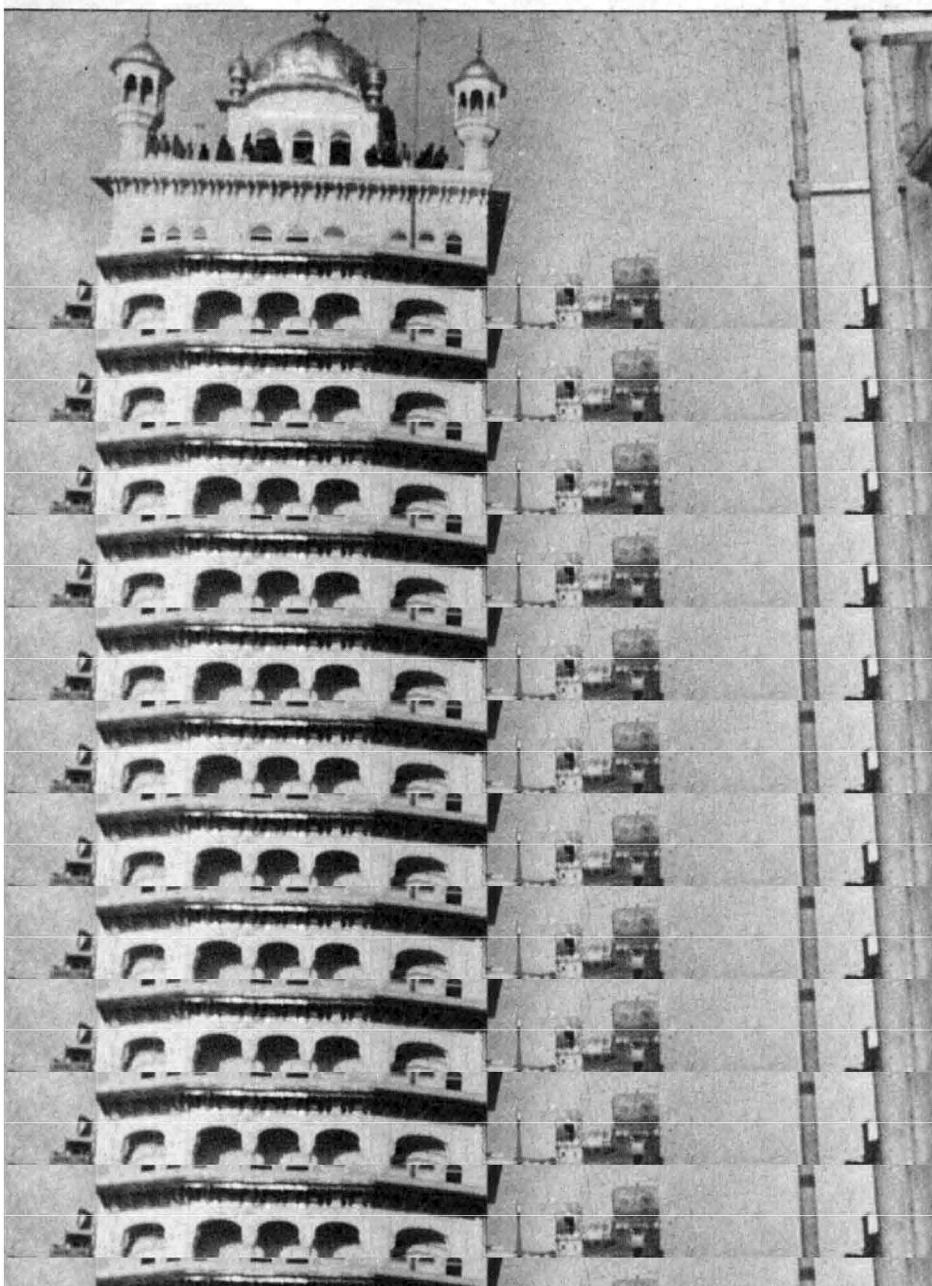
To go one step further, an essential part of democracy is the close interaction between the people and their elected representatives. It is a

that essential bond between the ruler and the ruled in a democratic society, which is exactly what the terrorists are striving for. Just after the Irish Republican Army bombed the hotel in which the British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, was staying, she commented that it was not just herself that the Irish terrorists had tried to kill, but democracy itself. Terrorists everywhere have the same aim.

But one has strayed somewhat from the main theme. Terrorism is a relatively recent phenomenon in India. There was, of course, the Telengana revolt and then later, the

highest murder rate of any state in the country. But these were mainly murders over water, land, or property disputes, or old family feuds.

There was certainly violence earlier in Punjab, but it was sporadic and the law and order authorities usually came out on top, with the culprits almost invariably being apprehended. However, the ground was being prepared for the politics of violence, for terrorism.



COVER STORY

Meanwhile, a deadly feud was going on between Zail Singh, the then Union Home Minister, and Darbara Singh, the then Punjab Chief Minister, in which both used the fundamentalists to strengthen their own positions. The losers, of course, were the people of Punjab, watching helplessly as events built up to the tragic crescendo of 'Operation Bluestar'.

There is little doubt now that 'Bluestar' was a badly botched-up job in which hundreds of innocent pilgrims were needlessly killed. Even those who felt that army entry into the Golden Temple had become necessary — although why this was not done much earlier will always remain a mystery — could not but have been shocked at the carnage that took place. It traumatised the Sikh community as never before. The foundations of terrorism had already been laid by the earlier politics of violence and corruption. They would now bear their evil fruit.

THE REST, as they say, is history: the assassination of Indira Gandhi, the horrific anti-Sikh riots that followed, and the succession of acts of terrorism in 'revenge'. But during this dark period there has been some light. There was the Punjab Accord, which has admittedly now virtually collapsed, but in July 1985, it was an important psychological breakthrough. There was also the brave example of Harchand Singh Longowal, the gentle Gandhi-like figure, who, like the Mahatma, fell to the bullets of fanatics, a martyr to Hindu-Sikh amity. And we must not forget the September 1985 state poll that followed, in which there was a record turnout, despite the boycott call by the extremists. The Sikh community had, in overwhelming numbers, turned its back on terrorism.

Indeed, perhaps most remarkable of all, and something which has not received the attention it deserves, is the fact that despite the provocation of the November 1984 anti-Sikh riots in the capital and elsewhere, there was no communal retaliation in Pun-



J F Ribeiro: The no-nonsense DGP.

jab. There has, of course, been Hindu-Sikh tension and some families have migrated from both sides. But that this has not taken place on a large scale speaks well of the abiding ties. The dastardly ploy of the terrorists to provoke a backlash by killing passengers on buses and the random massacres that have been taking place in Delhi, in which women and children are not spared, has not succeeded.

If one was to generalise, quite a few Sikhs had a sneaking sympathy for the terrorists immediately after the November 1984 riots, particularly since the authorities were doing nothing to apprehend and take action against at least some of those respon-

sible for the killings, despite the findings of two human rights organisations, which pinpointed the guilty. This does not mean that all these sympathisers were Khalistanis, although a few might have been.

OVER THE LAST TWO YEARS, however, despite the feeling of hurt which still remains, there has been a sea-change in the sentiments of the Sikh community. There is widespread recognition that the militants and the terrorists — the two are interchangeable — are playing their own game, which has nothing to do with the interests of the community. Many of these so-called terrorists are old-style criminals and drug-smugglers who have donned a militant garb to make themselves more romantic and acceptable. Those who dare to oppose them — the moderate Sikhs — have been ruthlessly eliminated. The latest figures of terrorist killings in Punjab show that more Sikhs are now being killed than Hindus.

The induction of the no-nonsense Director General of Police, Julio Ribeiro, with his 'bullet for a bullet' philosophy, has also bolstered the morale of the security forces. A number of hard-core terrorists have either been apprehended or eliminated since he came on the scene. Unfortunately, however, the rule of law has taken a beating. Although it is officially denied, it is well-known that the Punjab police have been using torture — as do the police in many other states — and shooting their victims in fake 'encounters'. Inevitably, some innocent people have suffered.

The public seems to have accepted such police brutality and the violation of law as a lesser evil. Some countries in Western Europe also faced a serious terrorist threat some years ago. But they maintained the rule of law while countering the threat, even though it took a long time. They did not meet terrorism with state terrorism, as we seem to be doing. Democracy must remain true to itself, otherwise democracy itself could be in peril. ♦

AIR INDIA: JINXED IN OCTOBER!

It was a difficult month for the national flag-carrier, recently voted one of the world's ten worst airlines, as an unfortunate series of coincidences threw Air India's flight schedules into complete disarray. At considerable cost, not only to its profit margins, but also to its prestige.

SHAILA SHAH reports.

WHO ELSE WILL WEAR a feather in his cap?" wondered the Air India Maharajah as he, too, succumbed to Reliance fever in October. Certainly not the Maharajah himself, as results of an international survey conducted by a Geneva-based organisation — The Airline Passengers' Association — would confirm. The national flag-carrier was voted one of the world's ten worst airlines, sharing this dubious distinction with Nigeria Airways, Iberia Airways, Egyptair and Pan Am, amongst others. The verdict comes as no surprise to those who have watched the continuing decline of this public sector undertaking. Undue interference from the Ministry of Civil Aviation, which, in recent years, has virtually been treating the company as an appendage of the Ministry, has been identified as the chief culprit. Political appointments, hostilities between those at the top, and strike action amongst its employees have all played their part in establishing a downward curve in performance levels.

To confound matters further, Air India was recently the unfortunate victim of a series of coincidences that crippled its flight schedules. It was almost as if the carrier was jinxed

through the month of October, as it suddenly found itself remarkably short of aircraft, and the consequent target of irate passengers and travel agents who were forced to grapple with resultant cancellations, delays, and rescheduling of flights.

Four of Air India's 19 aircraft were effectively non-operational. Of these, one had been grounded due to technical problems and one Airbus, *Beas*, had been detained at Lagos' Muratala Muhammed Airport, following a seizure of drugs on board. Two others — Boeing 747s — were at the disposal of the Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi, for his trip to the Commonwealth Summit in Vancouver. Inevitably, chaos reigned as Air India found itself in an embarrassing situation, the unwitting victim of a series of ill-timed coincidences.

One aircraft from Air India's modest fleet was grounded due to technical snags. A go-slow in Air India's engineering department in Bombay resulted in aircraft VT EDU, christened *Akbar*, being sent to London on September 30 for major checks and repairs. It returned on October 13 and was back in service two days later. Such problems, however, although a drain on the coffers, are an inevitable occupational hazard, and the tempor-

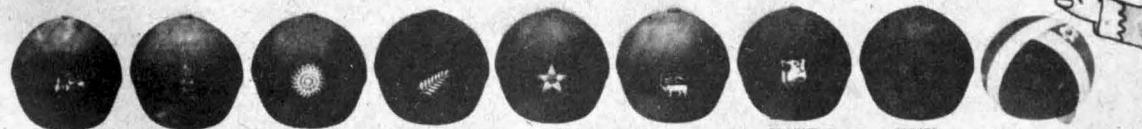
ary loss of one aircraft could be fairly easily absorbed.

Air India's problems really began with the impounding of its aircraft, an Airbus 310 on flight AI 203, in Lagos.

ON AUGUST 25, when the *Airous* left Bombay for its weekly, scheduled flight to Lagos, its crew had no inkling that their halt in Lagos would be such a long one. After the 150-odd passengers had disembarked in Lagos, the flight purser, N Kalidasan, noticed some bags strewn on the floor at the rear of the aircraft. He alerted local security and customs officials and duly handed over the packages; the relevant details were recorded and Mr Kalidasan was allowed to go. The Air India Airport Manager was then summoned, informed of the events that had transpired, and asked to identify the brown substance contained in the packages. Any thoughts that the matter was concluded were rudely shattered.

As preparations to leave on the return flight to Bombay were underway, all 17 crew members were detained, interrogated, and their passports confiscated. The Nigerian authorities were clearly pursuing the matter relentlessly. Three crew members — Flight Pur-

Who else will wear a feather in his cap?



Reliance Cup '87. May the best team win.

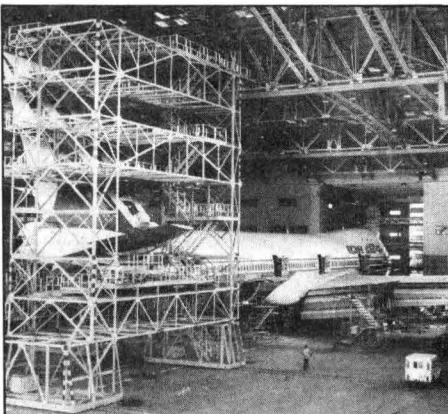
SPECIAL REPORT

ser N Kalidasan, In-flight Supervisor A K Chakravorty and In-flight Engineer N K Chakravorty were served with a summons to appear before the Miscellaneous Offences Tribunal — a sure misnomer, as the MOT is the most powerful court in the country. The three accused were charged with possession of 32.5 kg of narcotics, and arrested. News of their arrest and consequent incarceration sparked off much speculation about their role in the sordid sequence of events, but to all appearances, their 'crime' was merely that they happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time.

And then, an extraordinary event occurred. Invoking a Nigerian law which permits the authorities to detain any vehicle suspected of carrying contraband or illegal drugs, the Airbus was impounded, on the basis of its being "a material witness to the case". Diplomats made frantic representations to secure the release of the aircraft and crew, but to no avail, and an intervention by the Indian High Commission yielded no results.

Apparently, an offer to release both aircraft and crew for a sum of Rs 50 lakh was then made. An official from the Indian diplomatic corps refused to pay what he identified as a bribe, and decided to move the courts instead, confident of a victory. On September 14, the Nigerian Federal High Court ruled that the impounded aircraft be released. It also ruled that the fine of US\$43 million (approximately Rs 56 crore) that was being imposed by the Nigerian authorities was illegal. On September 16, the Nigerian Customs appealed against the ruling. Simultaneously, Air India attempted to move the High Court to charge the Customs with contempt of court for refusing to release the aircraft.

The Nigerian Customs won the round — their appeal was successful: the three detainees, held in a prison designated for criminals, were not granted bail, and Air India was not allowed access to its Airbus which continued to clock up an enormous 'parking fine'. On October 19, a Nige-



One of Air India's Boeing 747s in the maintenance hangar.

rian TV news broadcaster finally announced that the Airbus was to be released following an amicable out-of-court settlement. In a statement to the press, Jagdish Tytler, Minister for Civil Aviation, disclosed that a bank guarantee of US\$32 million (Rs 41.6 crore) had been given. Apparently, a payment of US\$500,000 (Rs 65 lakh) has also been made. It remains slightly unclear as to what the guarantee was given against, as ostensibly, no case is officially pending against Air India. Still, negotiations are taking place and the matter will presumably be heard, and settled, by a Nigerian court or tribunal. The outcome is open to conjecture, and Air India could find itself poorer by US\$32 million as well as the money lost on account of the long detention of the aircraft in Lagos.

ON THE EVE OF DIWALI, the three detained crew members arrived at Sahar International Airport to a hero's welcome, considerably bewildered and shattered by their experiences. In the meantime, an alarming and dangerous precedent had been set in the history of civil aviation against a sinister *mise en scène* of political machinations in which the Nigerian Judiciary appeared to be at odds with the ruling military *junta*.

The trip to Lagos — one of the more popular runs on an otherwise notoriously unremunerative Africa sector, maintained only on account

of political considerations — had turned out to be a costly affair. Sources say that trouble could have been avoided if initially, the bag containing the narcotics had been handed over to Air India ground staff rather than to Nigerian customs officials. Others claim that the Rs 50 lakh fine that was originally demanded, should have been paid. More recently, accusations are being hurled at the Commander of the aircraft for having left his crew in the lurch and not assumed charge of the situation. In amongst all the charges and counter-charges, and the fall-out created by the nightmarish events in Nigeria, a central question remains unanswered.

HOW DID NARCOTICS worth US\$8 million (Rs 10.4 crore) find itself on board? Primarily described as heroin or cocaine, the drug had been concealed in biscuit packets, which in turn had been placed in 14 shopping bags. During their interrogation at the airport, Air India officials had noticed a Nigerian national who had been on board the Airbus, in police custody, with a similar bag (the fifteenth?) beside him. Identified as one Munwe, it seemed obvious that the handcuffed passenger had a major part to play in the drama. But to date, his part in the entire debacle remains shrouded in mystery.

Although Air India found itself the victim of a bizarre series of circumstances, can it be totally absolved of any responsibility for the events that transpired? Only a very grave lapse in security arrangements could have permitted such a large consignment of drugs to be smuggled on board. All the more alarming when one considers that in the interests of security, passengers at Sahar International Airport are being subjected to physical searches of their hand luggage in addition to the mandatory X-ray scans. The traffic in narcotics (out of India) and gold (into India) appears to have reached unprecedented proportions as innumerable press notices confirm. Drugs are often smuggled with the active collusion of airlines and cus-

toms personnel; was this another 'routine incident' that unfortunately backfired?

Air India claims its crew members are innocent and that anybody could have placed the bags on the aircraft. Various rumours are doing the rounds about the reasons for the Nigerian actions, hitherto unprecedented. One story claims that the Head of State's son had recently been held on a drugs smuggling charge in India, and the Nigerians retaliated in revenge. Another alleges that Nigeria was looking for a quick way out of repaying a colossal debt owed to Air India for a number of years. Yet another cites the recent incident when a Nigerian aircraft was impounded — only for an hour — at JFK Airport in New York when its Commander was caught red handed in the possession of drugs. The detaining of *Beas* was, apparently, an exercise to show that the Nigerians were not the only ones in the smuggling business! Whatever the reasons, the grounding of the Airbus for a total of 60 days cost Air India a fortune. At the rate of approximately Rs 15 lakh per day, a total of Rs 9 crore was lost, about one-eighth the price of the aircraft itself. A figure which will certainly be augmented if the bank guarantee is not recovered.

THE DETENTION OF THE AIRBUS at Lagos should serve as an eye-opener not only to Air India, but to all major international airlines. The incident has thrown up several questions; prominent among these is that of insurance cover. In this instance, Air India insurers incur no liability for the detention in Lagos, as there was no cover in the insurance policy for such an eventuality. Now, insurance companies throughout the world will have no choice but to introduce a scheme to cover such possibilities in the future. The premium promises to be colossal. And as a precautionary measure, the International Air Transport Association (IATA) will have to formulate a set of procedures to deal with such instances in case they recur.

CANCELLATIONS

The grounding of three of Air India's aircraft in October played havoc with flight schedules. A go-slow in Air India's engineering department contributed to the ensuing chaos which resulted in as many as 86 scheduled flights being cancelled (see below). As many as 37 were rescheduled in a period of just 12 days and several flights were operated by Middle East Airlines (MEA). Worst affected were flights to the Middle East and Singapore, where delays of upto 31 hours were recorded.

Date	Flight No:	Destination
3 Oct	408/415	Singapore
4 Oct	875/872	Muscat
	845/842	Dubai
	895/892	Delhi
5 Oct	812/132	Delhi
6 Oct	803/802	Kuwait
	316/307	Tokyo
	203/204	Lagos
7 Oct	402/407	Singapore
	203/204	Lagos
8 Oct	827/826	Kuwait
	817/816	Muscat
9 Oct	829/828	Damascus
	879/878	Sharjah
10 Oct	408/415	Singapore
	208/811	Srinagar
11 Oct	875/872	Muscat
	845/842	Dubai
	895/892	Delhi
12 Oct	820/853	Hyderabad
	452/823	Srinagar
	812/132	Delhi
13 Oct	803/802	Kuwait
	853/854	Jeddah
	203/204	Lagos
14 Oct	203/204	Lagos
15 Oct	827/826	Kuwait
	817/816	Muscat
16 Oct	879/878	Sharjah
17 Oct	208/811	Srinagar
	428/455	Singapore
18 Oct	845/842	Dubai
	895/892	Delhi
19 Oct	820/853	Hyderabad
	452/823	Srinagar
	812/132	Delhi
20 Oct	203/204	Lagos
21 Oct	203/204	Lagos
22 Oct	827/826	Kuwait
	817/816	Muscat
23 Oct	869/868	Dubai
24 Oct	208/811	Srinagar
	428/455	Singapore

SPECIAL REPORT

The payment for the recovery of *Beas* was not the only bill that Air India had to foot. The Prime Minister's trip to Vancouver also proved to be expensive and contributed significantly to the ensuing chaos. In fact, regular travellers on Air India and those who choose to fly the national flag-carrier for reasons of patriotism, familiarity, and comfort should be grateful that the Prime Minister does not go abroad very often. While it is imperative that the Prime Minister needs to have a long-haul aircraft at his disposal, should Air India, and its clientele, be penalised for the Government's failure to acquire one? Because that is effectively what happened when two Air India Boeing 747s were pulled out from commercial use in October.

A record number of flights were cancelled and delayed (see box), and complaints deluged Air India offices and travel agencies. Telex machines rattled away and computers worked overtime as agents desperately struggled to find other aircraft to take the load — a near to impossible task in peak season. Ms A Dewan from the Travel Corporation of India (TCI) which books 60-65 per cent of its passengers on Air India flights, complained that not only did they have to contend with the total disarray that the schedules were thrown into but that they were kept in the dark about the delays and cancellations, and were left to discover the facts for themselves. Passengers holding tickets that had been confirmed weeks prior to their departure, suddenly found, once they had actually reached the airport, that their flights had been cancelled!

Ravi Shankar, Marketing Manager of SOTC, an agency which almost exclusively uses Air India, ruefully recalls the sorry predicament that his company found itself in. "Air India cancelled many flights, including some which had, in fact, been overbooked to start with. Our package tours suffered — departures were considerably delayed and there was much confusion." SITA Travels, which specialises



Emperor Akbar: sent to London for major checks.

in handling tours to European trade fairs, also found their passengers badly affected. "It all boils down to the fact there were no seats," complained a senior sales executive. "And too many delays. Punctuality is crucial for passengers attending business conferences. Also, if you don't check in on time at European hotels, they often cancel reservations. You just have to be on time. If not, there are problems all along the line. Undoubtedly the Prime Minister needs, and should have, a long-haul aircraft. But that is not the point of contention. The point is that Air India, which doesn't have a large enough fleet to begin with, cannot afford to take any of its aircraft out of circulation. When you take away two Jumbo jets, you take away almost 700 seats."

A well-placed source avers, "When an airline changes schedules too often, business is certainly affected. The airline is rarely in a position to inform all its passengers of impending delays, and passengers are checked in as per schedule. And then, Air India is obliged to pick up the tab. Apart from the immediate expenses, which include food and hotel bills, 200 irate passengers are a strain on airport facilities! Unfortunately, Air India's punctuality record is poor all over the world. As a result, there have been all too many instances of businessmen having missed important meetings and passengers having missed onward connections." Regrettably, Air India's lamentable record has earned it the distinction of being one of the world's most disappointing airlines.

OTHER AIRLINES, OF COURSE, benefited from the fall-out in October. An Air Canada sales executive was cheerful: "We're not grumbling. Of course we picked up customers as a result. Let the Prime Minister go away three times a month!" Other airlines operating on parallel sectors also helped carry the load. Although it is too early to surmise whether Air India suffered a severe blow because of the disruption of its schedule and whether the impact will be a lasting one, there is no doubt that some disgruntled passengers and tour operators will be reluctant to risk a booking on Air India again.

So much for the passengers. What of the costs? The average cost of grounding a Jumbo jet is reportedly around Rs 12 lakh per day. The cost of grounding two aircraft for 30 days, is about Rs 7.2 crore. During the Prime Minister's recent visit, aircraft VT EGA *Samudragupta*, and aircraft VT EGC *Harshvardhan*, were kept at his disposal, one as a standby.

Not only were both aircraft pulled out of the fleet for the duration of his tour, October 11-21, but both were grounded 15 days in advance for major overhauls. Changes in the configuration of the aircraft that flew the Prime Minister to Canada were also carried out. On its return, the VVIP aircraft was grounded for a further 10 days as installations were removed and seats replaced.

Approximately Rs 20-25 lakh is spent on altering the configuration of the aircraft to suit the Prime Minister's requirements. Sources in Air India claim that around 300 persons work overtime on preparing the aircraft and each person's overtime wage averages to around Rs 100 per day. Much planning precedes the interior design of the aircraft. Once redesigned, the aircraft supposedly resembles a suite in a five-star hotel, complete with a dining room, a conference room, a bedroom, and a shower unit. The aircraft is equipped not just with home comforts, but also the latest in computer technology. A telecommunications system, connected by satel-

lite to the Prime Minister's office in Delhi, is also installed. Both facilities are rarely used.

THE PRIME MINISTER certainly flies in style. And with an enormous entourage. All at government cost. But not all Prime Ministers have demanded, or enjoyed, such luxury. During his tenure, Morarji Desai preferred to travel on a scheduled flight and curtains would enclose his seat; Lal Bahadur Shastri used an Indian Air Force aircraft. Further afield, the British royal family invariably uses a Royal Air Force aircraft, and Ronald Reagan has a five-aircraft fleet at his disposal, operated by the American Air Force. The President of Ireland has even travelled on an Air India scheduled flight to Delhi! So what is it that has prevented the Indian Government from following suit and acquiring an aircraft that can be permanently at the Prime Minister's disposal?

There was once a move to acquire two of the five Boeing 707s phased out by Air India, last December, for VVIP flights. While two of the five aircraft were purchased by the Indian Air Force, Air India remains in possession of the other three. If the Prime Minister's office were to purchase two of these, Air India passengers would not have to face the hardships which follow cancellation of flights. Needless to mention, the lakhs of rupees spent on changing the configuration of the aircraft to suit the Prime Minister's requirements, and the considerable financial losses incurred as a result of the grounding of aircraft for VVIP flights, could be avoided.

THE AVIATION INDUSTRY, worldwide, is in a state of flux. Several carriers have been rendered inoperational and new ones, offering competitive discounts, have mushroomed everywhere. As tourism booms and the rivalry between airline companies reaches unprecedented levels, Air India has found itself unable to maintain a sure footing in this competitive jungle.

Complaints that the Ministry of Civil Aviation has assumed a degree of control over operations and makes key decisions vis à vis the company's management, are rife. Will the airline be allowed to function autonomously of the Ministry? Or will the Government continue to wreak havoc with its schedules?

To compete effectively, Air India needs to focus attention on its product and its profitability. One of its major problems, as stated by Ratan Tata, has been the limited expansion of its fleet over the last two decades, although remedial measures are now being instituted. Also, for almost a decade, Air India relied on its routes to the Gulf to line its coffers, but the Gulf boom has come to an end, and today, most Air India sectors report marginal profits or heavy losses. Meanwhile, as other carriers offer more comfortable schedules and shorter non-stop flights, Air India seems to insist on flying against the winds of change. It is ironic that during the very period (1981-86) that Air India's share price reportedly fell from 39 to 27 per cent, foreign carriers increased their capacity into India by 100 per cent! When Qantas and British Airways first introduced a non-stop Bombay-London flight, most others quickly followed suit. But not Air India. Its Bombay-London flight inexplicably calls in at Delhi and Dubai, thereby taking an additional four hours to arrive at its destination.

Not only its profits but Air India's reputation, too, has plummeted. Its previous standing as an airline of distinction, while under the stewardship

of J R D Tata, has been supplanted by a new-found notoriety. Today, Air India ranks high on the list of latecomers; not only that, it is neither distinguished by the quality of its in-flight services, its ground service, its punctuality nor its corporate image.

WHY THIS SHARP DECLINE? According to some officials, the deleterious effect that New Delhi has on the smooth functioning of the airline has been paramount. Complaints that the Ministry of Civil Aviation, under the leadership of Jagdish Tytler, has assumed a degree of control over operations and makes key decisions vis à vis the company's management, are rife. Not surprising, as, unlike other Ministries, the Ministry of Civil Aviation has little work to do, having charge of mainly two airline companies, Indian Airlines and Air India. The complex task of managing an international carrier has also apparently been thrown to the winds as hostilities between the men at the top have taken precedence and top officials vie with each other to curry favour with Rajiv Gandhi.

Several months ago, Ratan Tata was made Chairman of a revamped board; a few months later, Rajan Jetley was appointed Managing Director. Proposals for radical changes have come in thick and fast: a change in services, new and effective management systems, an examination of potential markets, and a new image-building exercise are all on the agenda. The reservations systems will also soon link up with travel agents, and the management is making attempts to improve relations with staff.

Air India has a long-haul ahead. But will the airline be allowed to function autonomously of the Ministry? Or will the Government continue to wreak havoc with its schedules? Today, as Air India's services limp back to normal, all does not augur well. The Prime Minister is due to visit Stockholm and Madrid in December. Can Air India stand another upheaval? ♦

PROFILE

WHEN A SECOND daughter was born to Lakshmi, wife of Paithal, a cloth merchant who plied his trade in an obscure little village in North Kerala, little did they realise that their daughter would one day become the cynosure of world attention on account of her spectacular sports achievements. Then, it seemed inconceivable that in a matter of only two decades, this little slip of a girl – Pilavullakandi Thekkeparambil Usha – would not only receive international acclaim, but also become a *Lakshathipati* (millionairess).

P T Usha's sports career began early. Within a fortnight of her having enrolled in the eighth standard of Payoli Government High School, she was awarded a scholarship and selected by the Cannanore Sports Division to join the sports school in Badagara. That was in 1977. It was here that the lanky thirteen-year old was spotted by ex-serviceman O M Nambiar, who was to play a crucial role in shaping her sports career and himself win international recognition as the star athlete's coach. The P T Usha-Nambiar alliance proved to be fruitful from the very outset. Dedicated to developing the teenager's obvious prowess on the tracks, he instilled in her a single-mindedness which was to stand her in good stead in the years to come. Her training on the field commenced.

P T Usha's sporting career progressed in leaps and bounds and the accolades started pouring in almost immediately. In 1977 itself, P T Usha won her first gold medal in a state athletics meet at Kottayam. Although she was participating in the junior girls' event, she completed the 100-metre sprint in 13 seconds, breaking the senior girls' record for the same event in the process. At the National Athletics Meet in 1978, she won four Golds, including one for the high jump event in which she cleared a height of 1.35 metres. It was in that year that she was awarded her first cash prize of Rs 2,000 by the Kerala Government, in appreciation of her contri-



On a Winning Streak!

At 23, Pilavullakandi Thekkeparambil Usha has already achieved, in the span of a decade, what others have achieved in a lifetime. One of the few Indian athletes to win world-wide acclaim, the 'Golden Girl' has reaped a rich harvest of gold and silver medals; set new records, and received several accolades. GITA ARAVAMUDAN profiles the extraordinary sportswoman and talks to her about her phenomenal success on the tracks.

bution in helping the state win the team title. Also in the same year, in a state school athletics meet, P T Usha completed the 100-metre hurdles race in 15.4 seconds, thus setting a new national record and beating that of the winner of a similar event in the boys' race.

Her achievements did not go un-

stan. But much to her own disappointment and that of her sponsors, she returned empty-handed — she had not won a single event.

UNDETERRED BY THIS, her first defeat on the international circuit, P T Usha participated in the Moscow Olympics later in the year. In his

home to her starkly.

For the village girl from Payoli whose training ground had been the sandy beaches near her home, the synthetic track in Moscow proved to be her first hurdle. In the 100-metre sprint, she got off with a bad start and finished 31st out of 39 participants. In the 200-metre sprint she was defeated by the curve and finished 27th out of 35 participants. Needless to say, she did not make it to the finals in either event. In fact, her poor performance in the first event had psychologically paralysed her to such an extent that she had to be coaxed by the Indian coaches before she consented to run in the second race.

P T Usha's dismal performance in Pakistan and at Moscow succeeded in strengthening her resolve. She returned to India more determined than ever to attain world class stature and prove her mettle in the next Asiad, scheduled to be held in Delhi, in 1982.

But in mid-1981, P T Usha's health failed. The doctor's diagnosis — a minor heart problem — was almost instantly dismissed by both the athlete and her coach: P T Usha was quick to declare that the problem was 'a created one'. But wishes could not belie the facts. Soon after, while running in a 400-metre event at Bangalore, P T Usha collapsed for the very first time. Nambiar attributed this to different reasons: "They suddenly made a child who had been trained for 100 and 200-metre races run in a 400-metre event." However, the medical team thought otherwise. Doctors at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences prescribed rest; the Chitra Medical Centre of Trivandrum, which specialises in heart diseases, advised Usha to refrain from participating in athletics.

But both P T Usha and Nambiar were not prepared to heed such advice at this stage in her career, and decided to go ahead with their training schedule. By 1982, P T Usha was back in top form, ready to participate in the forthcoming Asiad Games. But sadly, once again the glory was



noticed. Soon enough, she was selected to compete in her first international event. For the 16-year old Usha, by then a college student, the trip to Pakistan for the 1980 Pakistan Games was an exciting prospect. And it would be her first trip abroad. But it was not all smooth sailing. It was a while before the Kerala Government would be convinced of her virtuosity and be persuaded to foot the bill for her travel expenses.

P T Usha finally made it to Paki-

book, *Oraioru Usha* (The One and Only Usha) its author, *Matrubhoomi* Sports Correspondent, V Rajgopal, assesses the very deep impact that the Olympics made on the teenage athlete. Accustomed to toppling national records with consummate ease and walking away with Golds in each event, her trip to Moscow was an eye-opener. For the first time, the sheer hard work she would have to put in in order to come up to international standards, was brought

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At the National Institute of Sports, Bangalore, far away from the city limits, P T Usha relentlessly trains under the close supervision of her coach, O M Nambiar. Clad in a red and white track suit, her tall, athletic frame is easily visible from a distance as she performs her exercises, stretches gracefully, and sprints at lightning speed along the asphalt track.

She has little time to pursue other interests — she likes to watch Malayalam films when she can — but tries to spend as much time as she can with her family, despite her hectic schedule. She is single-minded about her career — athletics is her life and has been so ever since she spent her first school holiday training at a camp. Today, she is in training for several forthcoming events — on home ground, the European circuit, and then, the Seoul Olympics.

The country's hopes for a medal, or several, will be pinned on P T Usha — one of the country's few outstanding athletes — who, at the age of 23, ranks as a sportswoman of international repute. An achievement that she modestly credits to the efforts of her coach, O M Nambiar, without whom she is even reluctant to speak about herself. 'Sir', she says, knows everything about her and can answer questions better than she can!

Excerpts from the interview:

Imprint: How has your participation in major international events helped you? Have your failures on the international circuit eroded your self-confidence?

P T Usha: Participating in major international events has always given me confidence, because it makes me feel that even by world standards, I am not that bad! A touch of nerves before a major event is natural, but I have never lost my confidence just because I did not win in some event.

What kind of training are you undergoing for the Seoul Olympics in September 1988?

Participating in competitions on the European circuit prepares me suffi-

"Even by world standards, I am not bad!"

P T Usha talks to Geeta Aravamudan.



ciently. Next year, before the Seoul Olympics, I will be participating in some European meets in June, July, and August. This will mean a good three months in training and enough exposure to some tough competition.

Before one such European meet in Rome, you had trained in London at Crystal Palace. But the training did not appear to have helped you to get into the finals. .

I trained in London for just 20 days. What can one achieve in 20 days? It is just too short a period to be able to train sufficiently well in. But, despite the limited training, my best timing — 55.73 seconds — was achieved at Rome. I stood 11th in the race, but in terms of timing, I was sixth. It was unfortunate that I couldn't get into the finals. The woman who came eighth had a timing of 56 seconds.

Did that disappoint or discourage you?

Why should it? Isn't it good to know that you stood 11th in the world?

What have you gained from this experience in Rome?

While training in London, I took part in a number of local events. But my experience in Rome made me realise that participating in those kinds of events was not enough.

If participation in competitions on the international circuit helps you, why don't you do so this year as well? The Sports Federation has to propose me. This year, my name was not on the list. But in 1985, when I competed in six races with 85 other participants, I won four of my races and was selected to go to Rome to run with the eight best in my event. Unfortunately, I could not go because I had to be in Djakarta. As you know, in Djakarta, I won four Golds!

And at the Singapore Meet you won three Golds and two Silvers . . .

That was easy — there was no real competition at all.

Would performance levels improve if India was to invite the world's best athletes to participate in international meets here?

Our performance would undoubtedly be helped if we were able to compete against strong athletes. But international meets need to be organised efficiently and not like the Permit Meet that we had in Delhi. Who bothered to participate in it? It did not even measure up to the standards of our national meets!

Why didn't the best athletes come?
I had personally invited Judy Browne, the American hurdler. She was keen on participating, but could not get her visa in time. When I go abroad, I have to manage these technicalities myself. But in other countries, this is not so.

What events are you best at?
The 100 and 200-metre sprints are my speciality. But I am often forced to participate in several events. This means that I am not able to concentrate on my 'special' events, which naturally hampers my performance. Of course, I can refuse to participate in more than one event. But what

happens when there just isn't anyone else to take part?

When I was training in London, I was not available to train for the 4 x 100-metre relay. When Carl Lewis was in a similar position in the USA, he was dropped from the team. Everyone kept quoting this as an example. But finally, when they did run in the relay without him, they could not even achieve a state-level timing, let alone national or international ones.

Have you let adverse publicity from the press affect you?

I don't let the press bother me, despite the fact that it has sometimes misquoted me. Some papers said that I had made a fuss about my room in Singapore. Before I left for Rome, some papers had stated that I didn't even rank 36th in the world. But I have not let all this affect me. In fact, I am glad that the spotlight is not on me.

You were quoted in some papers as having described Singapore as a police state...

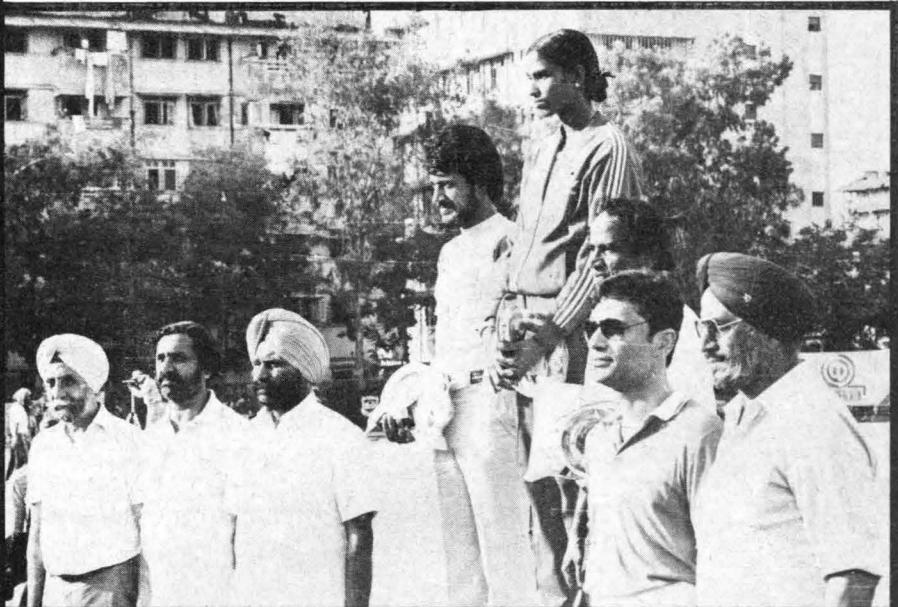
(Surprised) Was I? I am unaware of this. In fact, the only thing that I said about Singapore was a word of appreciation for its cleanliness.

Is it true that a beautician taught you the art of make-up and helped to alter your appearance? And that some other organisation provided you with special material for your clothes?

(Laughing) They all do it in order to publicise their own products. Frankly, I never use make-up and never bother about my clothes.

What are your future plans? Which games will you be participating in?

At present, I am training in Bangalore and then I shall continue training in Calcutta. I will be participating in the SAARC Games to be held there, and then the National Meet at Trivandrum. If the synthetic track is ready by early next year, and if we are assured of good accommodation and a nutritious diet, we may move to Trivandrum for a while.



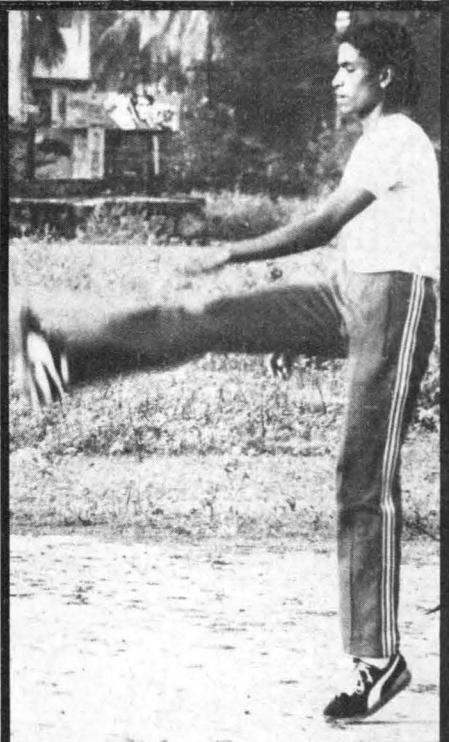
Standing tall: The best woman athlete of Asia.

not to be hers. The much coveted Gold for the 100-metre sprint went to Lydia de Vega, the glamorous sprinter from the Philippines. P T Usha, who won the Silver in what was a photo-finish final, broke down in front of the TV cameras. Neither that nor the other Silver that she won in the Games could compensate for her loss.

The defeats continued to contribute to her overall experience, giving her the determination and drive that she would require in order to attain victory at international meets. And the training became more intense. After all, the gold medals could not elude her forever.

HER FIRST BREAKTHROUGH on the international circuit came in 1983 when she won both a gold and a silver medal at the Asian Track and Field Meet in Kuwait. Although she once again lost her Gold in the 100-metre event to Lydia de Vega, she set a new world record when she clocked up 54.20 seconds; the previous record, held by a Japanese, had been 54.40 seconds.

Then came the Los Angeles Olympics. P T Usha was in excellent form



and was all set to win the 400-metre hurdles. Judy Browne, an American participant who was later defeated by P T Usha in the semi-finals, expressed surprise at the fact that India, a country that could not boast even male athletes of international repute, was represented at the Olympics by a woman! Indeed, P T Usha was the

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Othayoth Madhavan Nambiar, an ex-IAF man with a diploma in athletic coaching from Patiala, is stockily built, self-confident, and rather aggressive. A hard taskmaster and perfectionist, he has played a tremendous part in earning P T Usha the title of 'Golden Girl'. An achievement that he candidly takes credit for.

Unlike his protégé who is shy and reticent, 'sir', as he is addressed by P T Usha, is tough. And scathing in his views about most women athletes and foreign coaches: the former, according to Nambiar, enter the sports arena only to get married or take advantage of their positions to secure enrollment for professional courses; the latter are condemned by Nambiar as useless.

That he himself ranks as one of the top athletics coaches in the country today, is undisputable. But for P T Usha, Nambiar is not just a coach, but also her guardian. He has been by her side through her successes and failures on the tracks, ever since he took her under his wing. Nambiar attributes his excellent rapport with P T Usha to the fact that both pupil and master speak the same language, enjoy the same food, and think alike.

Excerpts from the interview:

Imprint: You first met P T Usha when she was thirteen. Did you select her for training because you felt she had extraordinary potential in her?

Nambiar: Usha was just one of 29 students chosen for athletic coaching from her class. All the children were very talented. Seven of them were recipients of national awards. In fact, in the beginning, Usha was not among the best students. But gradually, after a year, she improved.

How did Usha manage to outpace the others?

The important thing about Usha has always been her total dedication and a very earnest approach. She has always worked hard. Besides, she lived in Payoli, close to the school and close to my home and hence was able to

"In the beginning, Usha was not the best..."

O M Nambiar meets Geeta Aravamudan



have continuous training. The other children would go home during the vacations and forget about sports for two months. But not Usha.

Would you say that this kind of dedication and earnestness among women accounts for the fact that in India we have more top class women athletes than men?

How many top class women athletes do we have, apart from Usha, Shiny Abraham, Vandana Rao and Vandana Shanbag? The main issue here is that just sporting talent at an early age is not enough. It is more important to see that the talent is properly encouraged. There has to be total dedication on the part of both athlete and the coach, and consistent training. Both coaches as well as athletes face a lot of problems. Our job involves odd working hours and we are required to spend months together at coaching camps. Then, there are problems of accommodation, bad food, etc, all of which discourage athletes from attending coaching camps. If some of these problems are tackled properly, I can assure you, there would be many more Ushas and Shiny.

We have such talented young women on the relay team. But why haven't

they been able to measure up to international standards?

Once again, this can be attributed to the lack of sufficient practice together, as a relay team. It is of no use to practise only as an individual athlete. At this camp, for instance, only Usha and Shiny are currently in training.

Usha has won several gold and silver medals at national and Asian sports events, where it almost seemed as if she had no competition. But the same has not been true for international meets...

There are several reasons for this. The main one, however, is that she does not get the opportunity to participate in enough international competitions before she goes in for major events. It is very apparent that Usha comes up with her best timings when she faces the toughest competition. But if she has to improve in her performance in major international sports events, she will have to compete with top athletes in many more races, for instance, she should participate in all the competitions on the European circuit.

How do you propose to train her for the Olympics?

It would be very beneficial if she was able to train for at least three months at an American university that provides good facilities.

But do you think that three months of training would be enough?

It would be enough, provided Usha is exposed to international competition immediately after the training. She could, for instance, participate in the competitions on the American circuit.

Other than the lack of sufficient participation in international competitions, what else do you think hampers her performance on the tracks?

Usha is often forced to participate in several events. This means that she is

not able to concentrate on the one event in which she excels. This affects her performance adversely.

Surely she can refuse to participate in more than one event?

Yes, she can, but Usha is not running for her own personal glory. She is running for her country. She is therefore often forced to run in several events, especially when there is no one else who can. But now she will be concentrating only on the 400-metre hurdles.

Where are the best training facilities located?

Delhi and Patiala have good synthetic tracks and good facilities, but they have their own problems. In the heat, it is impossible to train at either place. Besides, in Delhi, there are problems as far as the food is concerned. The food, supplied on a contract basis, does not fulfil our dietary requirements. Athletes need hard physical training, proper food, and good living quarters. This is totally lacking in Delhi and to a certain extent in Patiala. The food, the hostel, and the weather are excellent in Bangalore, but they do not yet have a synthetic track.

Could you tell us something about the book on P T Usha that will be published by Penguin Books next month?

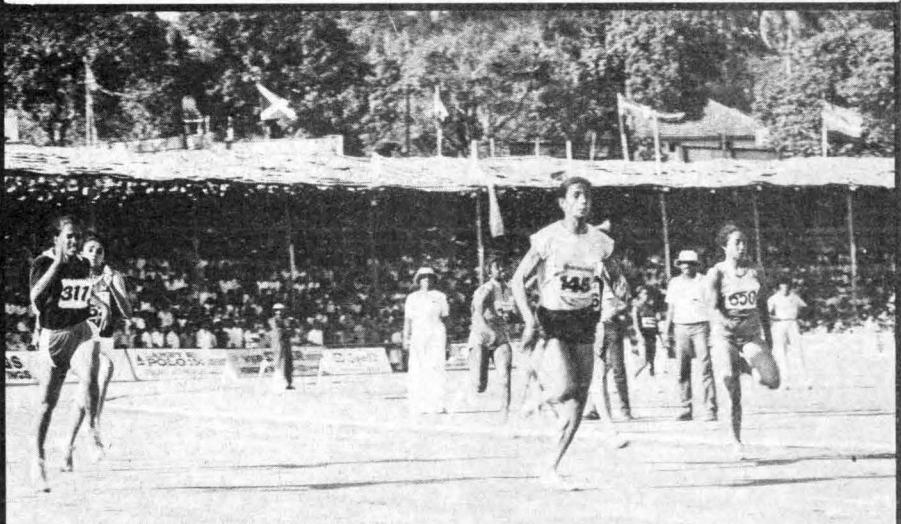
It is really Usha's story, as told to Lokesh Sharma, but we haven't seen it as yet.

Will you receive royalties from the book?

We haven't discussed this aspect. Two other books have been written on Usha — one in Malayalam and the other in English. When anyone conducts an interview with us we never discuss money matters, we just answer the questions.

Has Usha been asked to endorse any products?

Many people have approached us directly, but we have always asked them to do so through the Sports Federation. Otherwise, she would lose her status as an amateur.



A Sprinter extraordinaire!

first Indian woman athlete to have reached the finals in a track event at the Olympic Games. Judy Browne was later to become one of P T Usha's close companions on the field.

The race itself was the most dramatic performance that P T Usha ever gave. She lost by one hundredth of a second to a Rumanian hurdler, thus narrowly missing any chance of winning even a bronze medal. The response was shattering — it was as if tragedy had struck. A reporter from *The Gulf Times*, himself a Keralite, wept. The Indians amongst the spectators stood stunned. Then spontaneously, they urged the Indian athletics coach, Saini, to lodge a protest. He handed over the requisite ten dollar fee and joined the others in their twenty-minute wait while the jury deliberated on the matter. When the verdict was announced, the disappointment was even greater: P T Usha had lost. On meeting his protégé as she left the field, Nambiar hugged her and burst into tears. Not many eyes remained dry as spectators witnessed the touching spectacle of the brave young girl consoling her coach. It was the bleakest moment in her career.

But things would not remain that way for long. And sure enough, the tide turned. Within a few months,



P T Usha had not just recovered but once again displayed her excellence on the track. She won five Golds and a Bronze in the Sixth Asian Track and Field Championships held in Djakarta in 1985. In the same year, she was made captain of the Indian team that participated in the Canberra World Cup Championships. But once more the pendulum swung the other way: she had no wins to her credit.

THE 1986 ASIAD GAMES in Seoul were an unforgettable experience for P T Usha, and for India. A record number of participants — 4,800 athletes from 27 different countries — had gathered to participate in a fortnight of sporting events. India, who had finished fifth in the Asiad Games in Delhi, did worse than previously

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and nothing could be done to improve on this miserable state of affairs.

Except for P T Usha's performance. She ran in six races on six consecutive days — two sprints, one middle distance run, one hurdles race, and two relays. For these, she won four Golds and a Silver. Some pointed out that they saw little logic in her running in all six races, but for the country, it was the only way in which to win some gold! She was the only woman in all of Asia to win three Golds with records, and was adjudged the best Asian woman athlete. It was her stupendous performance at this meet that earned her the title of 'Golden Girl'. Her success appeared all the more luminous compared to the rather dismal performance of the rest



India's only hope for the Olympics?

P T USHA'S TRACK RECORD

P T USHA GOT OFF on the right foot, literally. At 23, her track record is already impressive. The long-legged athlete has consistently broken records, both national and international, has been a gold medallist many times over, and has a string of accolades to her credit. A list that she certainly means to augment.

Presenting some of the highlights of her career:

1977: State Athletics Meet at Kottayam.

Won a Gold for the 100-metre sprint (13 seconds).

1978: National Athletics Meet at Quilon.

Won a Gold in each of the following — 100-metre race (13.1 seconds), 60-metre race (10.3 seconds), 200-metre sprint, and the high jump event (1.35 metres).

1978: State School Athletics Meet. Won a Gold for the 100-metre hurdles (15.4 seconds) and set a new national record.

1982: Asiad Games, New Delhi. Won two Silvers for the 100 and 200-

metre sprints.

1983: Kuwait Asian Track and Field Meet.

Won a Silver in the 100-metre race and a Gold for the 400-metre hurdles (54.20 seconds), setting a new Asian record in hurdles.

1985: Djakarta Asian Track and Field Meet.

A Gold in each of the following — 100-metre race, 200-metre race, 400-metre race, and 400-metre hurdles. Won a Bronze in the relay event.

1986: Asiad Games, Seoul.

Won a Gold in each of the following — 200-metre race (23.44 seconds), 400-metre race (52.16 seconds), 400-metre hurdles (56.8 seconds), and the 4 x 400 relay event (3:34.58), all new Asian records. Won a Silver in the 100-metre sprint.

Declared the best woman athlete in Asia.

1987: Singapore Asian Championships.

Won a Gold in each of the following — 400-metre hurdles and the 400-metre race.

of the Indian contingent.

On her return, she was presented with the 1986 Arjuna Award, her second national award — she had already received the *Padmashri* in 1984.

With a string of accolades and prizes to her credit, what is P T Usha's worth today? Her national and international victories have earned her fame, and also given her plenty of wealth. Although it is easy to believe P T Usha when she claims, "I have always run to win a medal and not for the money," the fact remains that P T Usha is a millionairess. Her first substantial cash prize followed the Delhi Asiad, when she was awarded Rs 50,000 by the Kerala Government. The Moscow Olympics fetched Rs 1 lakh; the figure doubled following the Djakarta Games and was accompanied by a house. Her dazzling performance at the Seoul Asiad prompted the Kerala Government to give her Rs 3 lakh and a brand new car. The Central Government and her employers, the Southern Railways, keen to ensure that they not be left out from the list of sponsors, also presented large cash awards to her. The Punjab Government, too, added its name to the list but P T Usha claims to have returned the Rs 50,000 given to her.

Always a rather shy and reticent person, P T Usha has remained unruffled by the flush of victory, the cash prizes, and the international recognition that she has been deluged with. With the modesty so typical of her, she humbly gives credit for her stupendous achievements to the efforts of her coach and mentor, O M Nambiar, who has undoubtedly played a central role in building P T Usha into the star athlete she is today.

And it is with her coach that she continues to spend most of her time — exercising, training, and trying to better her own past records. For ultimately, it is her own hard work, perseverance, and dedication, which have propelled her into the position she occupies today — that of India's Golden Girl. ♦

GREAT IDEAS HAVE humble beginnings. Consider for a moment Gandhiji's momentous idea of marching along the Dandi coast and harvesting salt. Almost banal in its simplicity and yet, as a supreme gesture of challenge to the revenue-gathering might of the British Raj, tremendous in its impact.

The ecological regeneration of this great country has similarly gripped the imaginations of nationalists. Baba Amte, who has thrown himself headlong into a struggle against the building of two irrigation and hydel projects at the tri-junction of Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, and Andhra Pradesh, has dreamed of mobilising people from across the length of the nation to build a Green Wall — a row of trees — from Kashmir to Kanyakumari. At a time when the nation is riven with strife, symbolic gestures such as these — like Amte's own *Bharat Jodo* march — can apply the healing touch.

It is in this light that one can view the ongoing march across the Western Ghats, which began on November 1. One group of marchers left Nawapur, where the ghats begin, just south of the Gujarat border; the other contingent set off from near Trivandrum, and both will converge in Panaji, Goa, in the first week of February 1988.

According to Jagdish Godbole, the Regional Co-ordinator for the Northern sector of the 'Save the Western Ghats March', some 300 people have already signed up for the gruelling feat. "At any one time, there will probably not be more than 50 marchers, and there will be a core of 30," Godbole told this writer over the phone from Pune, where he lives. In Bombay, one of the organisers is the well-known naturalist, Ulhas Rane.

Perhaps the person who has really taken the initiative in getting people to voice their demands with their feet, as it were, is Kumar Kalanand Mani, the Central Co-ordinator, who heads an organisation called the Peaceful Society in Ponda, Goa. Happily, Goa is not only roughly halfway down the Western Ghats but also, till recently, a largely unspoiled environment, now threatened by rampant industrialisation, mining, and international tourism itself. In many ways, therefore, Goa is a kind of microcosm of what happens when so-called development plans run amuck.

ONE MIGHT WELL ASK, why choose to demonstrate on the Western Ghats? It may not be all that well-known that these mountains, the western boundary of the Deccan pe-

ninsula, to the south of the Vindhyas, form the oldest part of the country. This plateau once belonged to the land mass of Gondwanaland, before the continental drift carved out the separate continents of Africa and Australia and pushed up the relatively "new" mountain chain, the Himalayas. Great outpourings of lava descended over this period on the plateau. This is why it is known as the Deccan "trap" — from a Swedish word meaning 'step' — since over the years, the lava deposits have become serrated. As Dr M S Randhawa points out in his monumental *A History of Indian Agriculture*, the Deccan was a "solid stable block of the earth's crust, largely composed of some of the most ancient rocks, which the denudation of ages has carved into mountain ranges, plateaux, valleys, and plains."

Professor Madhav Gadgil, who heads an ecology centre at the Indian Institute of Science in Bangalore, describes the "setting" of the 'Save the Western Ghats March' as follows: "The hill chain of the Western Ghats runs parallel to the west coast from the river Tapi in the north, to Kanyakumari in the south. The ghats descend steeply to coastal plains on the west, but merge rather gently through a series of hills with the Deccan pla-

OPERATION WESTERN GHATS

A unique walkathon was launched on November 1 to save the Western Ghats. This once green belt, a treasure trove of plant and animal life, has been virtually turned into a wasteland. Voicing their demands on their feet, the trekkers will seek to mobilise people.

Their slogan: development without destruction.

Eminent environmentalist DARRYL D'MONTE describes the ravages caused by development plans which have run amuck and stresses the urgent need to conserve the country's ecological bounty.

teau. Geologically, the ghats fall into two sections: north of the river Kali (in Karnataka) is the Deccan trap country of relatively fragile rocks and flat hill tops. The hills do not rise much beyond 1,500 metres in this tract. South of the Kali is the region of precambrian archean crystalline rocks which are much harder. The hills tend to be rounded and rise to 2,000 metres or more."

Much of the northern stretch of the Western Ghats has been very severely denuded of trees. Indeed, this part of the Konkan, the narrow strip lying between the ghats and the hills, has been heavily industrialised in the Maharashtra region and all but rendered unfit for agriculture where it meets Goa and Karnataka. Areas such as Tarapur, which housed a fishing and farming community till it was chosen as the site for India's first atomic power station (with obsolete and unsafe General Electric technology, but that is another environmental story!) are the hub of an industrial estate. Further south, the entire Thane-Belapur petrochemical belt presages the heavy engineering and chemical industries of Bombay, tapering off into yet more petrochemical plants in Raigad district.

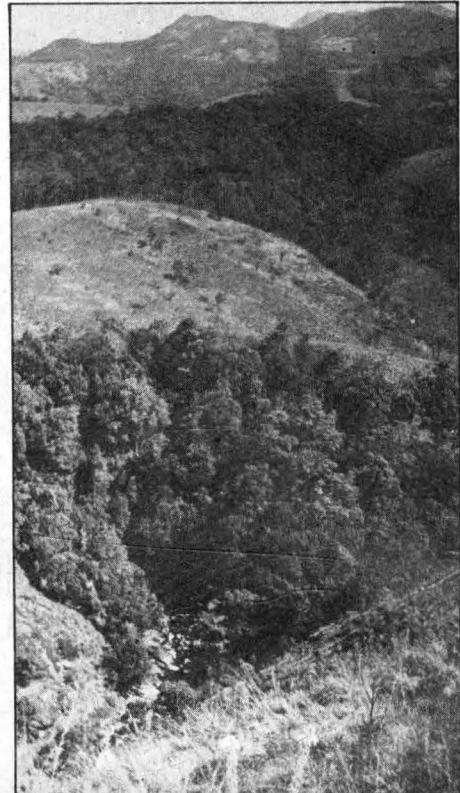
THESE INDUSTRIES have spelt a huge urbanisation boom in this strip of the Konkan, and the resident population requires tree wood for home *chullahs*. This has set in motion a virtual decimation of the tree cover on this stretch of the ghats, rendering them almost bald. Further south, down the Maharashtra coast, lies Ratnagiri: it has become almost a password to describe "underdevelopment" caused by mass migration (to Bombay) in search of jobs to stave off hunger in the villages. What is not so well perceived is that underlying this "Money Order Economy" is an environmental tragedy.

Successive powers through the ages used to fell the forests of the hills near Ratnagiri. The Marathas, under the naval wizard Angre, used to selec-

tively fell trees for timber to build ships. But the British, when their oak forests could no longer sustain their ship building, turned to this and other forests for wood. "The safety of the empire depended on its wooden walls" and India teak, the most durable of ship building timbers, saved England during the war with Napoleon.

With the hills bare, the "run off rate" of rain increases and water is no longer retained in the hills and gently released through the year through streams; on the contrary, it rushes down to the sea during the monsoon, and the Konkan is dry for the rest of the year. This explains why agricultural productivity is so low in areas like Ratnagiri, forcing people off the land. In the 1961 census, around one-fifth of Bombay's residents mentioned this district as their place of origin; however, many left their native place decades ago.

It is when the ghats cross into Goa and Karnataka that we realise what they must have once been like further up the coast. While areas like Ratnagiri have become what environmentalists term "unsustainable" for human life, triggering off mass migration (unlike the rest of the country, this region has a very low birth rate because of the sheer shortage of males), the hills in Goa and Karnataka are still covered with a profusion of flowering and fruit trees. Even so, mining projects in Goa have destroyed wide swathes of the ghats. The Kudremukh iron ore mines in the hills of Mangalore have rendered the area into almost a moonscape. Despite efforts by the public sector company to afforest and restore the mined hills, it will obviously never achieve its former floral status. And the crowning irony (pardon the pun for this ore!) is that the slurry, after being rejected by Iran, still does not have ready buyers. This ore, incidentally, forms part of a vein which runs across the plateau and then meets the Bailadilla mines in Bastar, Madhya Pradesh, which have the highest ferrous content of any ore in the world. It is interesting that such



A view of the long stretch of shola forests.

areas retain their tribal names: Kudremukh means 'Horse Face' and Bailadilla, 'Hump of a Bull'.

While the most fiercely fought environmental conflict in India has been over Silent Valley in Kerala — indeed, it is by far the most significant such case in the entire Third World — not everybody is aware that there was a similar case in Karnataka where a hydroelectric project was halted on environmental grounds at Bedthi. It falls in the Uttara Kannada Ghats and the, 210-MW scheme, at present aborted, was christened "Gangavali". Father Cecil Saldanha, a noted botanist from Bangalore, who has authored the authoritative three-volume *Flora of Karnataka*, grumbles that "Silent Valley has done a disservice in certain ways to other areas on the Western Ghats with equally good forests." Dams across the Kali and Varahi rivers have destroyed stretches of rain forests or, perhaps more appropriately,

monsoon forests, since it doesn't rain here for quite a few months in the year, unlike the Amazon.

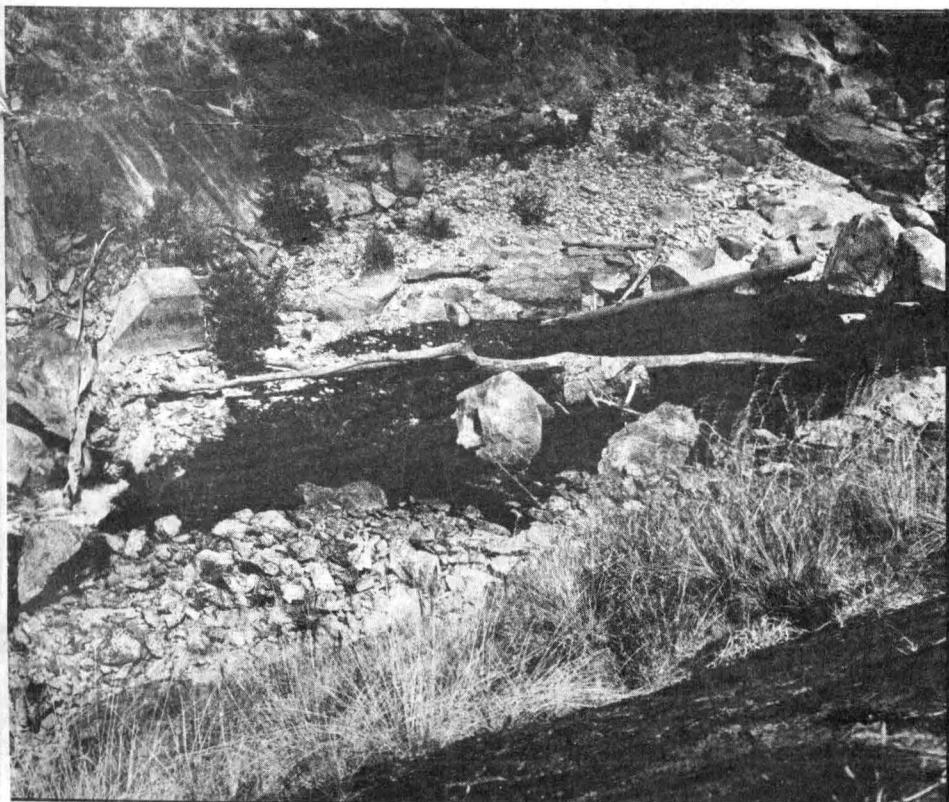
"Bedthi is different from Silent Valley," continues Saldanha. "Around 10,000 hectares of prime forest will be inundated (ten times more than Silent Valley). The Karnataka Power Corporation is given a mandate to improve the power position. Given its narrow vision, it has looked at every source of hydel power and all other issues are secondary." Work on the first stage of the Rs 140 crore Bedthi project had already commenced in 1977 when environmentalists, backed by the powerful *totgars* or rich cultivators (Ramakrishna Hegde has connections with them), halted the project. They organised an impressive seminar in the nearest taluka town of Sirsi in 1981, the proceedings of which have been published in a slim book titled, *Major Dams - A Second Look*.

ANYONE WHO HAS ANY DOUBT

whether the Western Ghats deserve to be "developed" for the sake of power (to the people?) or irrigation, will do well to browse through these papers. Economists like Vijay Paranjpye, who teaches at Wadia College in Pune, have shown how the entire cost-benefit ratios on which big dams are built are altered by environmental 'boomerangs'. The Planning Commission insists that any such project should earn Rs 1.50 for every rupee spent. What happens when dams like Bhakra — the original "temple of modern India", in Nehru's memorable words — are erected is that the run off rate of water in the catchment areas increases and steps up the pace of soil erosion, shortening the "life" of the reservoir by filling it up. According to the Union Irrigation Ministry, the actual sedimentation rate in 17 reservoirs in India is 2.17 times the expected rate. We are then faced, as this writer has himself witnessed in the Tirunelveli hills in Tamil Nadu,

with the paradox of hydel projects lying idle in February-March simply because there is no water in the reservoirs, as has happened at the southernmost tip of the ghats. Furthermore, cases like Bedthi and, even more so, Silent Valley, establish the principle that we should be looking for energy — as distinct from electricity — for people's needs, mainly for cooking. Ludicrously, Karnataka's per capita expenditure on energy declined from Rs 1.66 to Rs 1.23 per month between 1961 and 1976, even though the state's output of electricity increased ten-fold in the same period!

Silent Valley, an 8,900 hectare strip of virgin monsoon or *shola* forest (*sholas* are the thick vegetation at the base of a ghat valley) in Palghat district in Kerala, was the site where all these and many more questions concerning the role of the Western Ghats were raised. One benefit of this range, of course, is that it halts the onward march of moisture-carrying clouds



The Silent Valley: where nature won the battle.

Much of the northern stretch of the Western Ghats has been very severely denuded of trees. Indeed, this part of the Konkan, the narrow strip lying between the ghats and the hills, has been heavily industrialised. These industries have spelt a huge urbanisation boom in this strip of the Konkan, and the resident population requires tree wood for home chullahs. This has set in motion a virtual decimation of the tree cover on the ghats, rendering them almost bald.

and brings on the south-west monsoon. As Gadgil, who is now also Scientific Advisor to the Prime Minister, states, "(the ghats) consequently receive heavy precipitation of 2,000 mm or more a year. The eastern slopes of the ghats are much drier than the western faces." Many important Deccan rivers, like the Krishna, rise in the ghats (the catchment areas include prominent hill stations like Mahableshwar) and flow through Andhra to reach the east coast.

APART FROM OTHER arguments in favour of preserving Silent Valley, the need to protect genetic diversity was perhaps paramount. This is a much-bandied about expression and even environmentalists mouth it often without realising what it implies. In nature, of which man is the most precious part, it is essential to retain as many different species of plants (and animals) as possible. The argument becomes crystal clear if we look at the specific case of the genetic resistance that wild cultivars (oldest cultivated varieties) of rice provided in Palghat district.

Rice breeders in Southeast Asia found that the new dwarf varieties were being attacked by a new pest called the brown plant (grass) hopper. They found varieties in Palghat (and Sri Lanka) which could withstand this threat, "married" the high-yielding with the old, and obtained a resistant mutant which has been propagated throughout Asia. Unless wilderness areas remain preserved, therefore, these "natural frontiers" or gene banks will deprive humankind of a vital line of defence. In fact, they are every bit as worthy of protection as national borders; yet the comparative expenditures tell the tragedy of neglect. In Silent Valley, at least five new uncultivated varieties of pepper have been identified; if a pest attacks plantations, these strains may prove to be of great use.

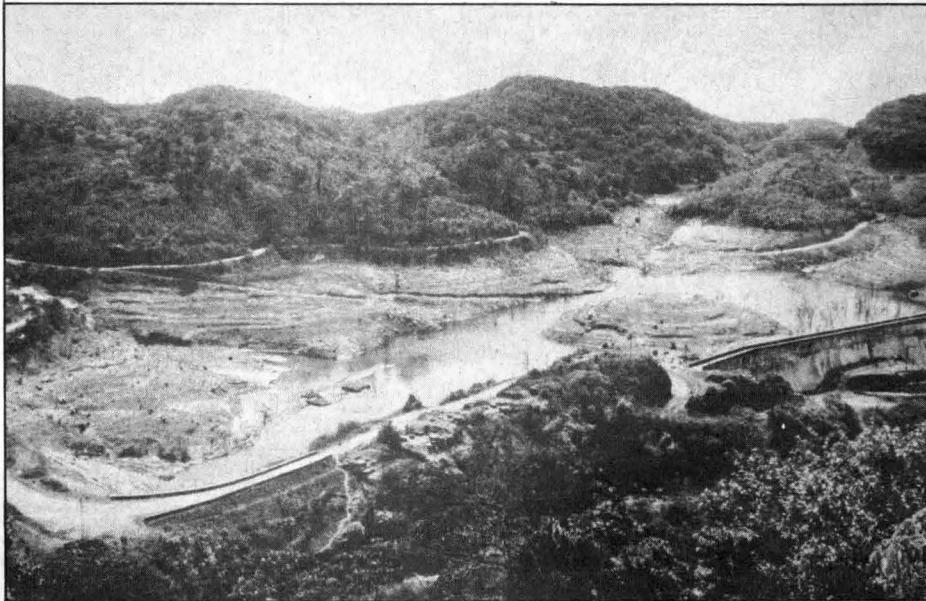
Continues Gadgil: "The Western Ghats are a treasure house of plant and animal life, next only to the Hima-

layan tracts, in the variety of unique plant and animal species. The ghats also harbour a number of wild relatives of cultivated plants, including pepper, cardamom, mango, jack-fruit and plantain. This biological wealth has paid rich dividends over the years. In fact, the tract has enjoyed popularity for its wild produce of pepper, cardamom, sandal and ivory (in Kerala, a similar trade has been taking place for centuries). This diversity has been in continual decline over the last century and more specially in recent decades, with many biological community types almost totally eliminated. Recent decades have, however, seen serious measures being initiated to conserve some of this fast vanishing biological diversity with the constitution of wildlife sanctuaries, national parks, and tiger reserves." Gadgil has been associated with the setting up of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve which straddles Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala, in an effort to conserve remaining patches of these ghats. Perhaps the best way to recognise their threat is to see some of the "biogeographic" maps prepared by Dr Meher-Homji and his colleagues at the French Institute in Pondicherry, which show that it is not a question

of saving Bedthi or Silent Valley selectively: there are very few areas (coloured purple) of these forests left, and as many as can be, ought to be preserved unless their exploitation is absolutely essential.

IN MANY WAYS, Tamil Nadu has been much more conscious in this regard than Kerala. Possibly Kerala, being the first place in the world to elect a communist party to power, is unduly influenced by Lenin's dictum: "Soviets (communes) plus electrification equals socialism!" The Tamil Nadu Government halted the Moyar hydel scheme after the now-defunct National Committee on Environmental Planning and Co-ordination ruled against the project on the grounds that it would interfere with the movement of elephants.

In all these controversies, there is a tendency to forget about humans in the concern to protect animals — Silent Valley being no exception. There, a lot of fuss was raised about the extinction of a threatened primate, the lion-tailed macaque, which prompted the Kerala State Electricity Board and other protagonists of the project to ask, "Are monkeys more important than man?" Protagonists



Dams have led to destruction of forests.



The Cholanickans: a fast vanishing tribe.

and antagonists alike neglected to remember that just north of Silent Valley, which is totally uninhabited, live the Cholanickans (Chola after *shola*). There are just 57 families left of these nomadic tribals who are still at the food-gathering stage and live in makeshift huts under rocks along ghat streams near Nilambur, off the Calicut coast. Unfortunately, these ancient people are all but decimated by venereal disease, contracted from middlemen who have been buying forest produce which the tribals collect on arduous treks, leaving their women

folk "at home". Just the presence of these cave dwellers should have been sufficient to realise that areas like Silent Valley are in an extremely "natural" state and such dwellers must be looked after by the state, rather than left to the mercy of commercial interests.

WITH SILENT VALLEY protected, because of the intervention of Indira Gandhi coupled with the work of the Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad, a very valuable precedent has been set in calling for "development without de-

struction". In Karnataka, similarly, the Appiko Movement, led by Pandurang Hegde and other activists, is agitating against the commercial plantation of eucalyptus by felling traditional forests on the ghat slopes.

It is perhaps the single biggest achievement of the 'Save the Western Ghats March' that it has been able to bring together some 170 small development groups. According to Ulhas Rane, "even finance won't help as much as the voluntary co-operation of such groups on a march like this. We will be visiting places where there is very little except people's contribution. But in future, a local group in a place like Ratnagiri will know that when they have a problem, they have the backing of all these groups."

Rane reveals that most of the marchers are hikers and trekkers who have been exposed to conservation and environment issues over the years. "People in Delhi envy us because we can reach the mountains in a couple of hours from Bombay and Pune. In fact, I often meet fellow trekkers from Maharashtra in the Himalayas, more often than in the state itself!" Contrary to popular impression, however, the bulk of the Western Ghats marchers are not naturalists but development activists, which is how the twin demands of environment and development have blended perfectly during this march.

In February, when the marchers get together in Goa, they will discuss how to follow up the achievements. It may not accomplish very tangible things on paper, but the dust raised by so many feet, backed by the goodwill of thousands of people, will take a long, long time to settle. When Rane organised a similar march after the 1982 floods in the Konkan, he was amazed by the ready response from local people. This time, the organisers have been swamped with more applications to march than they can handle, but to their credit, no one has been turned down: all have been accommodated, somewhere, some of the time. ♦

TRIBUTE

"THE TRIANGLE HAS BEEN broken," says Ashok Kumar emotionally. He is referring to the famous trio – Ashok, Anoop and Kishore Kumar – that provided so much joy to generations of film buffs in Chalti ka naam gaadi, a memorable film that still plays to houseful audiences, decades after it was first released. It was perhaps one of the rare Indian films that compare favourably with a Chaplin or a Marx brothers' film. This was largely because the refreshing humour that underscored every frame of the film was spontaneous and very infectious. The Kumar (or rather Ganguly) brothers' masterly performances were immortalised forever. Today, that magical combination is fragmented – the youngest and, according to Ashok Kumar, "most intelligent" of the three brothers, Kishore Kumar, has left behind a void that his brothers believe will never be filled.

Seventy-seven year old Ashok Kumar today confesses to being a lonely man. "Sab ulta hua," he says softly, "I should have gone first." The anguish behind that simple statement is very apparent. Yet Ashok Kumar, or Dadamoni as he was affectionately called by his brothers, refuses to get maudlin over his youngest brother's death. He remembers him with great affection, warmth and compassion – "There were so many things Kishore wanted to do," he says regretfully. Reminiscing over the distant past when Kishore was a "little monkey", Dadamoni traces Kishore's career with great pride – his eyes light up as he recounts some particularly amusing incidents that took place decades ago. He is indulgent while reviewing some of Kishore Kumar's much-publicised quirks – "Yes, he was a little eccentric" – the words are accompanied by an affectionate smile.

Though his grief and that of younger brother Anoop Kumar, also present at the interview, is intensely private, Ashok Kumar retains a certain quiet dignity and sensitivity as he pays tribute to his dead brother. As you leave his vast and empty house, you suddenly realise how true Ashok Kumar's personality is to his screen image – that of a paternal, genial, friendly, essentially warm-hearted person. Excerpts from the interview:



Kishore's death was a great shock to me. The industry won't find a singer like him, at least not in my lifetime. He wanted to give me a surprise party on my birthday – he was to come here at 5.30 pm – he died instead, at 5.05 pm. I had been shooting a film that day when my driver gave me the news. I just didn't believe it, I thought the news was fake. It had happened to me before – I was once declared dead. I thought reports of Kishore's death were just circulated after a freak misunderstanding. It was

The Day The Music Died

Kishore Kumar's golden voice, his flamboyant, energetic, mesmeric personality that enthralled film and concert audiences for over three decades, will always remain unparalleled. "There will never be a singer like him," says elder brother Ashok Kumar proudly.

In this exclusive interview with MINNIE VAID-FERA, the Ganguly brothers – Ashok and Anoop – pay tribute to the Indian film industry's unique musical genius.

only on reaching his house that I was confronted with the truth – the crowds gathered near his residence were phenomenal. He had specifically wanted to be cremated in Khandwa so we took his body there.

Anoop Kumar elaborates: We told Dadamoni (Ashok Kumar) not to go to Khandwa because of his health and age. Crowds lined the road for miles as the funeral procession moved on to Khandwa – there was elaborate police *bandobast* right upto Madhya Pradesh. At Khandwa, we took the body to the room in which he was born, and later on, placed it in Gandhi Bhavan so that his fans could pay homage. At least five lakh people turned up at the crematorium, including women – in fact, as per the Hindu custom, women do not accompany the men to the *shamshan ghat* (crematorium). Yet his fans, who loved him so devotedly, flocked to the crematorium, where a special burial place had been created for him. Motilal Vora, the Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister, also attended the funeral along with several other dignitaries. One fan came all the way from London, for the funeral. We've been receiving letters

By Ashok Kumar



of condolence from all over the world. Kishore's songs were played at the cremation site, songs like *Zindagi ka safar*, which were very touching. I believe some people were videotaping the funeral — I don't ever want to see those cassettes.

Ashok Kumar agrees vehemently and continues: No, we don't want to see it. Kishore always wanted to live in Khandwa — he was renovating our ancestral house. It's a beautiful place. But he had to fulfil his commitments in Bombay and then retire to Khandwa. It was not to be. He was also very excited about the place he'd bought, in a valley near Panchgani. We had made so many plans — he was to sing my songs; the album was to be called "Kishore Kumar sings Ashok Kumar's songs". Poor boy. We will always miss him — all three of us were very close to each other. Now both of us keep consoling each other — Anoop spends half his time at my house. One is suddenly feeling very lonely. Actually I've been getting one jolt after another — my wife died very recently, and now Kishore . . .

Death is inevitable, I know, and one should take it as it

comes and try to be cheerful even in one's grief — in fact, that is the only way people can survive. It is morbid to keep brooding. Yet I'm really cut up about this; sometimes I feel, what's the meaning of life? Everybody's going — Vijay Merchant was also a close friend of mine.



I had warned Kishore that his 58th year would be a troublesome one for him. He had already had one heart attack earlier. I used to tell him not to do so much, not to tire himself out at his concerts. Have you ever seen any of his concerts? He used to make the stage come alive, dancing and jumping around, hailing people from the audience to join him onstage.

Just recently, when Kishore won the Lata Mangeshkar Award (a cash award of Rs 1 lakh and a citation), the three of us — we had all been invited by the CM — went to Indore to collect it. He started singing at 7 pm, to a 30,000 strong crowd, that kept applauding his songs. After he had sung 6-7 songs, I indicated that we should leave. But Kishore wouldn't have it. He addressed the gathering — "Aap kab tak sunna chaheinge?" (How long do you want me to sing?) And the audience roared "Saari raat." He sang till 2.30 pm that night. And certain songs brought tears to my eyes. He was truly the best singer of them all — his singing had depth.



Strangely enough, in his childhood, he had an unimpressive voice, he used to stammer and cough with every word he spoke. I would never have predicted that he would go on to become such a fine singer. Then one day, he hurt himself very badly. In those days there were no pain-relievers, so the poor boy kept crying in pain — almost a month went by. Amazingly, once his wound healed, his voice also changed dramatically. I started teaching him to sing — I had had classical training, you see, and so I was able to coach him. (In fact, I was his only coach — he didn't have any classical training — but that boy had guts. He used to practise religiously — he was very hardworking. He would retire to a quiet corner with the harmonium and practise, practise, practise! His success came only after about 30 years of vigorous practice.

When he was 8 years old, he would be asked by our family to sing my songs, or K L Saigal's songs. He would then demand payment — Re 1 for a Saigal song and 25 paise for one of mine. And he'd take the money before singing.

TRIBUTE

(Laughs). Much later I told him he sang Saigal's songs better than the maestro himself – and he would always negate it. Saigal was his idol.

He was 19 years younger than I. I used to call him Kishoriya; he'd come charging into my arms like a monkey. Later, when I was at a hostel, while in college, he would see me after lengthy intervals. I would go home for the holidays and be really pampered by my mother. He used to ask our mother, "Who's this? Why are you feeding him so much?"



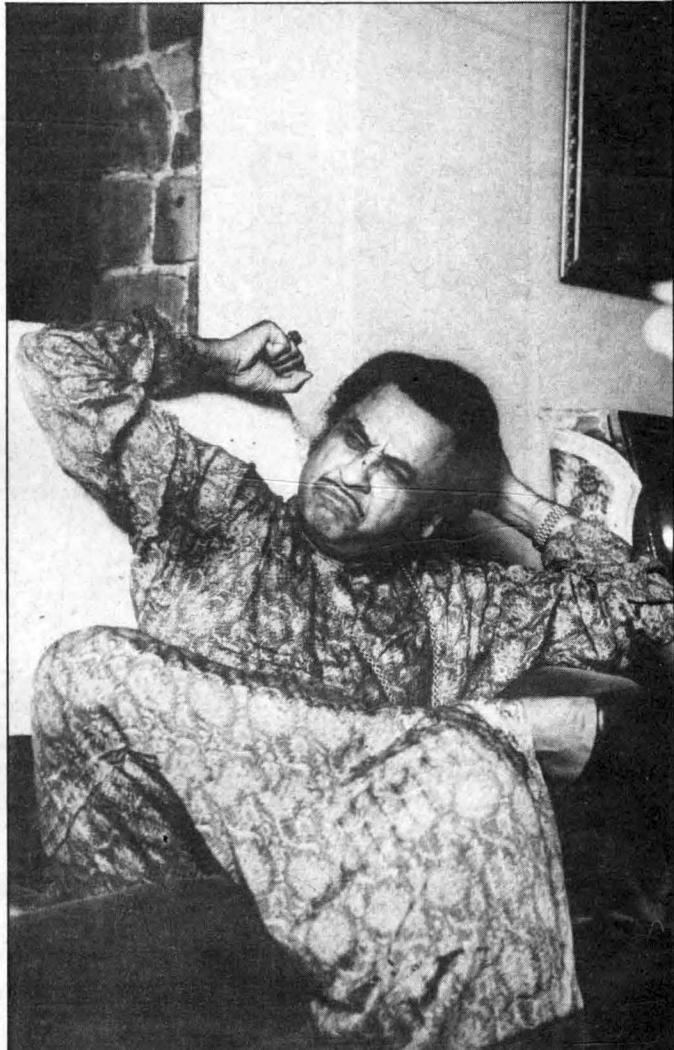
When I came to Bombay to join the film industry, my father, who was a lawyer, asked me to look after my younger brothers – so of course, I pushed them into the industry as well. Kishore established himself as an actor first, rather than a singer.

In fact, I used to admonish him and say that his singing wasn't upto the mark. He would get very upset at that and accuse me of not liking him. He was never very interested in films and film-making. Music meant everything to him. I know people still remember his memorable performance in *Chalti ka naam gaadi*, but that film was almost like playing ourselves on screen. There was so much ad libbing and impromptu improvisation – for example, the boxing scene or the more famous dialogue – "Manu, tune duniya nahin dekhi," and its repetition by Anoop, followed by my "Tune dekhi hai?" and "Nahin," from Anoop and finally "Toh chup kar!" from me again. Now that little bit, that is remembered by fans till today, was totally derived from Anoop's habit to repeat sentences! (Chuckles fondly). So we were merely living out our lives on screen – it was great fun. It's one of those films, like my *Mahal* earlier, that will always be popular. Especially the songs – each song was written, set to music and sung by Kishore alone.



In fact, he had composed so many tunes without taking the credit for them; for example, that *Roop tera mastana* song from *Aradhana*. *Aradhana* was a milestone in his singing career. His success and popularity were at its peak, at that time. He could sing any song, freely and extremely well. Take his yodelling – nobody could achieve that as well as him. All that is over now. But his songs will undoubtedly endure, he will be kept alive through his music.

People had several misconceptions about him – that he was a miser, an eccentric person, etc. But Kishore was basi-



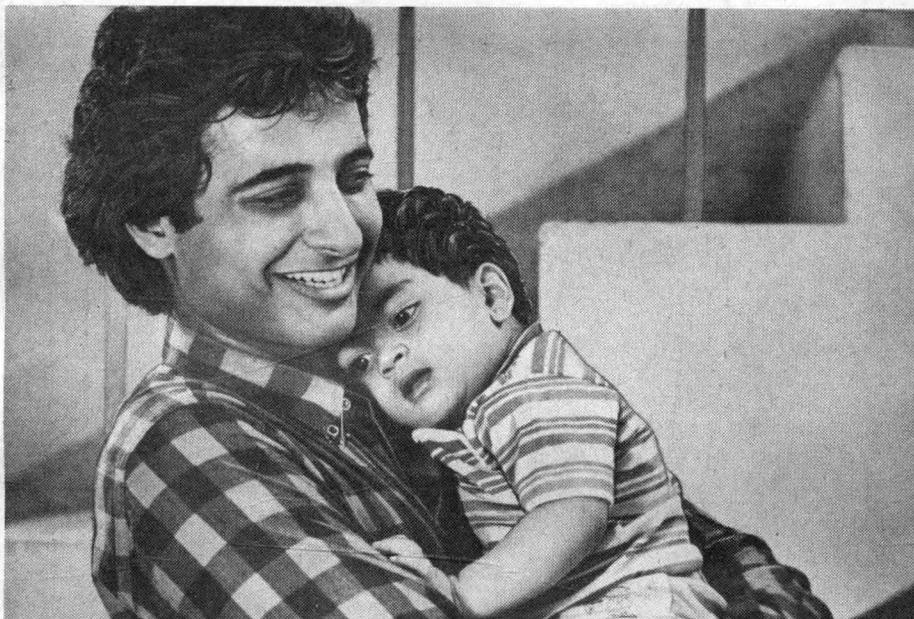
cally very reserved and liked to be left alone with his music. This is why he also avoided the press. I used to advise him to throw a few parties to clear his 'miser' image but he would stoutly refuse. Instead, one day, he suddenly hired 12 cars and took all of us – 12 families – to visit Aurangabad. Of course, we drove behind his car, at 30 miles per hour, but finally had a splendid holiday. When we came back to Bombay he teased me, "Now you won't call me a miser, will you?"

He was also paranoid about Income-tax officials. He came up to me solemnly one day and said, "I'll make a Bengali film, see that it flops, and then I can show a loss to the taxmen." Unfortunately for him, the film, *Lookachuri* (Hide and seek) was a 'hit' (Laughs uproariously).

Amit (Kishore Kumar's elder son) will have to take on his father's mantle now. Although his voice does resemble his father's, he will have to practise as hard as Kishore did, before he can equal his father's prowess. ♦

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FEVER!

It was in the cruel month of October that a strange fever attacked Bombayites. Few were spared, and by November, the epidemic raged through the city. Those afflicted displayed alarming symptoms. TRISHANKU visited the overflowing hospitals and scanned the medical reports...

THE FIRST HINTS OF the strange epidemic came during the beginning of October 1987. Bombay's municipal hospitals and private clinics began reporting an alarming number of cases suffering from a new kind of fever.

Hospital authorities did not press the panic button immediately. Years of experience had taught them that for Bombayites, October is the cruellest month, the moist heat and high humidity causing numerous cases of 'flu, malaria, viral fever and so on.

Routine reports on the new fever were forwarded to the Health Committee, Standing Committee and Sitting Committee of the Municipal Corporation. A copy of the report also reached Bombay's self-confessed 'Hindu Mayor', Dr Ramesh Prabhoo. It was then that the issue blew up.

"This could be an epidemic," exclaimed Dr Prabhoo. "So long as the fever was confined to Muslim areas, it was okay. But now it is affecting the Hindu areas in large numbers and as a 'Hindu' mayor of the city, I can no longer keep quiet."

The Shiv Sainiks and the BJP members of the civic body applauded



this statement.

The Corporation was alerted. Health officials, deans of municipal hospitals, health experts and leading citizens were called to attend an urgent meeting.

The hospital authorities explained the gravity of the situation. By now it was the third week of October and the fever was raging. Even the posh localities of Malabar Hill, Nepean Sea Road, Peddar Road, Marine Drive and Cuffe Parade reported numerous cases.

The medical experts analysed the symptoms. They prepared a detailed report, extracts from which are given below:

1. The patient suffers from a pe-

culiar type of fatigue which affects him only when he has to go to office. The fatigue disappears when he plonks himself in front of his television set after taking casual, sick or privilege leave from work.

2. The patient's eyes acquire a wild look. They are constantly riveted to the TV screen and he keeps on edging closer and closer to it.

3. The arms become stiff and the head is inclined at an angle of 45 degrees. This is caused by holding the transistor radio close to the ear even while commuting, walking on the road or allegedly working



in the office. The eardrums suffer temporary damage and the patient is deaf to his surroundings except to the sounds emanating from the transistor.

4. The patient often shows signs of irritation and is usually bad tempered when he is disturbed while sitting in front of the television set or listening to the transistor radio. Even major family problems like the elopement of a daughter, the arrival of the mother-in-law or the wife's shopping spree fails to disturb him.

5. As the fever reaches its final stages, the patient begins to suffer from what is medically known as 'Runratis'. The symptoms include

muttering to oneself, quoting numbers with decimal points and punching away at the calculator, all the time.

6. A number of patients suffered from torn ligaments in the leg. According to their family members, this was caused by their unusual agility to pounce on the morning newspapers and look at the sports page.

7. By the first week of November, some new symptoms were visible, particularly among MLAs, MPs and Corporators. This is known as 'Passitis' where the patients try to throw their weight around, using their official position and clout, to collect what are known as 'passes'.

THESE DETAILS were discussed at a meeting of experts. Futurologist Dr Rashmi Mayur, after visiting Spain, Holland and Madagascar, said that ionospheric pollution had nothing to do with the Bombay epidemic and added that rats, too, could not have caused it. Well-known cardiologist, Dr Goyal, appearing on Bombay Doordarshan, loosened his bowtie and pointed out that the fever did not affect the heart. "Treating Badshah Khan was easy compared to finding a remedy for this strange fever," he admitted.

Scientists at Bombay's Haffkine Institute discovered that a similar fever had raged in India during 1983, peaking in June. "The symptoms are the same this time, but they are more severe," they pointed out.

A thorough study of the symptoms and physical examination of patients led to some interesting conclusions. Doctors suspected that the fever was caused by a virus which had originated from England. Unfortunately, it had been carried to India and after a series of elimination tests, the carrier himself was identified. It was Mr N K P Salve.

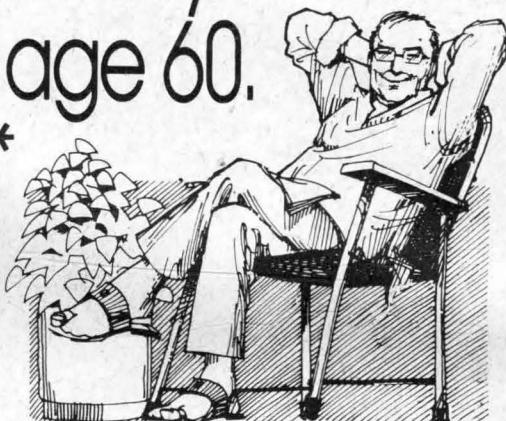
Once this was done, identifying and naming the fever was easy. The epidemic was named *Reliance Fever*.

There is an interesting footnote on Reliance Fever. While the overall symptoms were as described above, the fever had an entirely different effect on a small group of people. These included Bombay Dyeing Chairman Nusli Wadia, criminal lawyer Ram Jethmalani, press baron Ramnath Goenka, his sidekicks Arun Shourie, Gurumurthy, as well as a number of alleged journalists and editors.

They all turned green and the doctors immediately said that the Reliance Fever had generated a lot of envy among these VIP patients. They were advised to leave India during the epidemic. ♦

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FOLLOW-UP

INDIAN AIRLINES: MOUNTING ANXIETY CONTINUES

The responses to the expose detailing the frequent violation of safety norms by Indian Airlines, have been predictable. And revelatory. While the management insists on reiterating empty platitudes about the maintenance of safety standards, technicians and pilots tell a different story. Meanwhile, as evidence of overall negligence reaches alarming proportions, so does public anxiety.



ON NOVEMBER 1, 1987, 53 passengers on board an Indian Airlines Boeing, Fl IC 513, escaped with their lives when the Bangalore-bound aircraft landed on its rear wheels after its nose-wheel failed to open up. Fortunately, forewarned and therefore forearmed of the failure by electronic systems, preparations for an emergency landing had been carried out and an emergency landing was made. Film director Abhijit Naidu, one of the passengers on board the aircraft, was reported to have exclaimed, "God was our pilot!" Not so. Had the defective aircraft not been ably and expertly landed by Captain A Ranganathan, a tragedy would undoubtedly have occurred. In fact, the pilot's expertise was chiefly responsible for the fact that no injuries were sustained, although inevitably, the aircraft was badly damaged. The incident was duly reported by the press, and even Doordarshan referred to it on its news broadcast.

Despite the increasing press coverage of 'incidents' that seem to have become a regular feature of Indian Airlines' flight record, there seems to be a dangerous tendency amongst senior management personnel in Indian Airlines to write off all news items exposing the organisation's flouting of safety standards, as 'scurrilous'. Still, there is little doubt that Abhay Mokashi's expose, published in *The Indian Post* and later in *Imprint* (September 1987), cataloguing in-flight engine shutdowns, snags 'carried for-

ward', and overall negligence *vis a vis* maintaining safety standards, certainly triggered off something. Whispers of changes to come are, apparently, afoot. Although it is too early to determine whether and when these might be translated into immediate and corrective action, responses from Indian Airlines officials to the expose have been revelatory.

Management personnel have, predictably, issued rejoinders denouncing the expose, describing the allegations contained therein as 'baseless', but curiously enough, have not taken any action against the publications concerned. Every effort has also been made to prop up a fast-tarnishing corporate image and reassure an anxious public: "Indian Airlines has never flouted any of the safety norms that have been laid down by the manufacturers and the Airworthiness Authorities. Indian Airlines has always been conscious of safety. It is for this reason that technical delays and groundings of aircraft occur." Statements such as these, offered as a panacea to allay public fears, are empty platitudes at best, and plain fiction at worst. The latter would seem to be the case according to certain Indian Airlines employees who have been vociferous in their condemnation of what are evidently slack and dangerous practices.

AS INTERNAL BATTLES rage on, the list of groundings, snags 'carried forward' and in-flight engine shutdowns seems infinite. At least 30 cases of grounding or withdrawals of aircraft in the month of September alone, have come to light. On the

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face of it, the number of snags would appear to have assumed alarming proportions. However, it is not that more snags and consequent groundings have occurred, but rather, that details of these have been made available.

Well-placed sources claim that reasons for grounding of aircraft have included at least 12 incidents of engine trouble, including in-flight engine failure, some of which were of a minor nature, but a few of which could have led to serious accidents. At least seven flights were reportedly delayed due to faults in the landing gear. Pressure fluctuations — in some cases, a result of cracks in the windows and door frames — and leaks of oil, gas, and air, from different valves, also led to the grounding of aircraft. Two of the 'incidents' were of a very serious nature. The anti-icing valves — essential in helping melt the ice formed around the engine at high altitudes and thereby preventing fuel from congealing — of VT EHC were removed by the engineering staff during the aircraft's night halt in Bombay on September 28. No entry was made about their removal. It was only due to the vigilance of a technician who noticed that the valves were missing that the aircraft was prevented from taking off the following day. The mystery surrounding their disappearance was finally solved when it was discovered that the valves had been fitted to the engine of another aircraft.

In another instance, VT EDW had a fuel leak which was permitted to last for almost a week before the aircraft was finally grounded on September 29 for rectification to be carried out. The dangers are obvious: fuel starvation could have resulted in a major accident. In addition, well-placed sources claim that 20,000 kg of fuel was burned during what transpired to be an expensive rectification procedure, an expense that could have been avoided if proper and timely action had been taken.

More recently, on October 27, passengers on board IC 490 travelling from Guwahati to Delhi, experienced

some tense moments when one of the engines failed while the aircraft was cruising some 200 miles away from Delhi. Fortunately, no major mishap occurred.

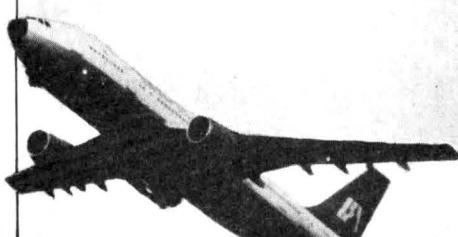
DESPITE THE SEEMLYING never-ending catalogue of 'incidents' testifying to Indian Airlines' apparent carelessness, some company personnel continue to tenaciously cling on to previously uttered inanities about maintaining safety standards. Surprisingly enough, when confronted with the number of groundings that occurred in September, Robin Pathak, Public Relations Officer, did not even attempt to refute them. Instead, he reiterated his earlier statements, clearly designed to assuage the well-founded fears of the public. On October 22, he told *Imprint*: "We operate around 200 flights from a base daily, so even 30 instances of grounding are really of no consequence. *I can assure you that not a single defect or snag is left unattended.*" Reassuring words indeed, which he promptly contradicted: "Despite the best of intentions and efforts, snags do appear while the aircraft is airborne. And sometimes, snags have been 'carried forward' beyond the stipulated 72-hour limit, but I can assure you that it has al-

ways been in conformity with safety requirements." Can he be believed? The discrepancy between his version of events and the realities of the situation, is indeed vast.

Captain Tasker, Acting Regional Director of Indian Airlines, Western Region, who had valiantly defended the corporation against a battery of charges levelled against it (*Imprint*, September 1987), was rather cautious. Not prepared to repeat his previous boast — "Our first target is safety" and "... people prefer travelling by Indian Airlines because they have implicit faith in us" — he remained tight-lipped when asked to comment. Understandably perhaps. Chief Engineering Manager Mr K P Sarkar, taking refuge behind a supposed instruction that he had been forbidden to make statements to the press, was also taciturn.

Mr S P Marya, however, who had previously been evasive when approached in September, was more forthcoming. Director of Airworthiness for the Western Region of the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), Mr Marya sprang to the defence. "I think the press has overreacted a bit," he said. "Terms such as 'violation' and 'criminal negligence' are too strong to describe the laxity in Indian Airlines' performance. They might have overlooked certain rules, but they have certainly not compromised on safety. I can say that with assurance, because the DGCA has very stringent rules which no airline in the country can flout." And more emphatically, "Let me assure you that the airworthiness and licensing standards of the DGCA are stronger and more effective than those of any regulatory body in the world!" Again, performance records would suggest the contrary, and indeed, such a statement calls into question not only the negligence of the airlines itself, but the very standards that the DGCA itself draws up.

Well-placed sources claim that reasons for grounding of aircraft have included at least 12 incidents of engine trouble, some of which were of a minor nature, but a few of which could have led to serious accidents.



WHILE THE MANAGEMENT tries fervently to reassure both the public

October 1987: A Calendar of Snags

OCTOBER 3: (IC 120) Airbus VT EFV grounded at Hyderabad since the No 1 engine fuel flow was zero at take off.

OCTOBER 3: (IC 493) Boeing VT EFW withdrawn as engine trouble was observed.

OCTOBER 4: (IC 171) Airbus VT EGD withdrawn due to a loud sound from the No 1 engine.

OCTOBER 5: (IC 181) Airbus VT EDZ withdrawn due to asymmetry of the fan blades in the engine.

OCTOBER 5: (IC 183) Airbus VT EFX withdrawn due to a snag in the flap of the wing.

OCTOBER 5: (IC 161) Boeing VT EGD take off abandoned due to a continuous 'thud' coming from the No 1 engine during take off roll.

OCTOBER 6: (IC 119) Airbus VT EDZ withdrawn as the shut-off valve of the No 1 fuel tank was stuck in open position which would affect the flow of fuel.

OCTOBER 7: (IC 145) Avro VT DXO was grounded due to 'door unsafe' warning during flight.

OCTOBER 7: (IC 189) Boeing VT EFM withdrawn due to a snag in the Auxiliary Power Unit (APU) and the non-availability of a pneumatic starter at Baroda.

OCTOBER 7: (IC 191/192) Boeing VT EFM grounded at Cochin as VHF No 1 made a strong whistling sound in the background, making communication difficult.

OCTOBER 8: Avro VT EAV held up at Jabalpur due to a snag in the hydraulic system.

OCTOBER 8: Avro VT DXO withdrawn due to 'door unsafe' warning.

OCTOBER 8: (IC 296) Boeing VT EAH withdrawn due to port exhaust gas temperature not registering beyond 340 degrees Centigrade. Spares were not available.

OCTOBER 9: (IC 135) Boeing VT EAH withdrawn due to the No 2 EPR gauge rendered unserviceable.

OCTOBER 9: (IC 179) Boeing VT ECS grounded at Mangalore due to want of the Ground Power Unit (GPU) starter.

OCTOBER 9: (IC 159) Boeing VT EFL returned to hangar after taxiing due to a snag in the hydraulic system.

OCTOBER 10: (IC 133) Avro VT DXR grounded for 'door unsafe' warning at Bombay and repairs were delayed due to lack of spares.

OCTOBER 10: (IC 195) Boeing VT EDR withdrawn due to a snag in the throttle.

OCTOBER 11: Boeing VT EHE withdrawn due to 'master caution' snag at the last minute and was grounded for quite a while due to lack of spares.

OCTOBER 12: (IC 495) Boeing VT EFL grounded at Baroda due to deflation of both the port side tyres.

OCTOBER 13: (IC 434) Boeing VT EHG withdrawn due to Auxiliary Power Unit shutdown.

OCTOBER 14: (IC 495) Boeing VT ECS grounded at Baroda due to deflation of the No 3 and No 4 tyres after parking.

OCTOBER 15: (IC 434) Boeing VT EGH withdrawn due to a snag in the flap of the wing.

OCTOBER 16: (IC 103) Boeing VT EAG grounded due to a snag in the flap of the wing.

OCTOBER 22: (IC 495) Boeing VT EGD withdrawn due to suspected melting of brake assembly.

OCTOBER 27: (IC 490) Mid-air failure of the left engine of the Guwahati-Delhi flight, 200 miles from the Capital.

OCTOBER 28: (IC 554) Airbus VT EFX take off abandoned as the No 2 engine flamed out, ie stalled.

and the press, what of the technicians? Armed with first-hand information and knowledge, not only of the maintenance requirements of Indian Airlines' fleet but also the day-to-day practices that have brought safety records under scrutiny, some have been quick to point to the hypocrisy of attempts by the management to woo the press.

Mr C D Soman, Regional Secre-

tary of the Airline Corporations Employees' Union (ACEU), told *Imprint* that Abhay Mokashi's exposé was "more or less true", qualifying this by stating that if the report had contained factual inaccuracies, these would have been immediately refuted by company officials. He went on to add, "Since the appearance of the article, officials have held several meetings with the Civil Aviation Mi-

nistry. However, they seem to have considered it unnecessary to brief the union about the outcome of such conferences. We expected the management and the ministry to take remedial action, instead they have taken what can only be described as 'camouflaging action'."

Mr Soman also stressed the need for more manpower: "We must repeat that there is absolutely no doubt

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that we need more technicians. This is easily calculable from the amount of overtime that has to be put in — about 60 technicians and 30 helpers are forced to do overtime at this base, daily. We are working under tremendous pressure and have even been driven to file a writ petition in court for a normal day off in a week."

THE PILOTS TOO, on the frontline, so to speak, echo the need for more maintenance staff. In an exclusive interview, Captain Naresh Pathak, General Secretary of the Indian Commercial Pilots Association (ICPA), articulates the very real dangers that a pilot and his crew can find themselves in, if faced with a major snag while airborne. He recalls a series of in-flight engine failures that occurred a year ago which prompted the ICPA to take a very firm stand against the lack of adequate maintenance of aircraft. Little came of it.

Recently, when a wheel detached itself from an aircraft during take off at Bombay, and when the same problem recurred in the same aircraft within five weeks, the ICPA lodged a strong protest. "To this day, the ICPA has no knowledge about whether an investigation was carried out into the incident, and if so, what the outcome was," complains Captain Pathak. He quotes another instance: "There were two cases of the nose-wheel leg collapsing after landing. We are still in the dark as to why that happened and if any remedial action was taken." He complains, too, of the frequency with which the pressurisation system of an aircraft fails in-flight, resulting in emergency landings, and that the aircraft's Auxiliary Power Unit (APU) which provides electrical power and air-conditioning on ground, and which is essential in case of generator failure in the aircraft, is often unserviceable.

Perhaps most alarming, however, is the following allegation: "All aircraft have a back-up system. Invariably, Indian Airlines staff clear an aircraft despite the fact that at least

one system is unserviceable. This is permissible under the provisions of the Minimum Equipment List (MEL) — and herein lies the rub. If the back-up system also fails in-flight, then the safety of the aircraft, passengers, and crew, is definitely in jeopardy."

His comments on the 'carrying forward' of snags are also far from reassuring. "It is often difficult for a pilot to find out which snags have been 'carried forward' as the previous pilot's defects report is either not available or not shown to the next pilot. The crew is *never* informed beforehand about the snags or faults in the aircraft. The snags attended to or 'carried forward' are intimated to the crew only when the book recording the defects is brought to the commander for acceptance. By then, the aircraft is already loaded and all the passengers are on board. Although the preamble of the MEL stipulates that the responsibility to accept an aircraft with snags or not, lies with the commander, he is almost presented with a *fait accompli* and is forced to accept the aircraft, snags and all, unless he is prepared to face the wrath of the passenger. The lacuna in the MEL is that it does not specify how *many* snags can be 'carried forward' at any given time. So, the aircraft can be flagged off with a dozen or more snags."

THE PICTURE IS GRIM, and attempts by the ICPA to file written complaints have either been ignored or met with a cursory response. On the rare occasions that 'incidents' and accidents are investigated, the ICPA is critical of the fact that their pilots are grounded indefinitely for the duration of the enquiry while, curiously enough, executive pilots in the direct employ of Indian Airlines, and involved in similar 'incidents', are often cleared overnight.

Complaints that even senior investigators from the DGCA are not entirely familiar with the problems that a crew can confront when airborne, are rife. Capt Pathak complains that many are conversant with the flying techniques of aircraft that are no longer used by Indian Airlines, for instance Dakotas or Pushpaks, and asks, "Are we forced to conclude then, that many of the continuing malpractices evident in the company's flight record occur in collusion with the DGCA?"

Clearly, the lines have been drawn between a management increasingly on the defensive, on the one hand, and those more immediately threatened by the company's mishaps, on the other. It is indeed fortunate that no major accident has occurred in recent years, although there have been several near-misses, the 'incident' of November 1 being the most recent. It would have been quite a different and tragic story if the main landing gear of the aircraft had not opened. Such an eventuality would have made landing near fatal. Indian Airlines officials report that the Boeing 737 will be ferried to the Boeing base in New Delhi for a thorough analysis of the 'incident'. Officials dismissed any suggestions of inadequate maintenance and added that such "minor engineering snags" were inevitable! An ominous statement, for if a snag of such a serious nature can be so cursorily dismissed, can the monopoly domestic airline be trusted with the maintenance of safety standards? Or has it thrown safety to the winds? — SS ♦





CFSI

A Lost Cause

The mass resignations of members of the Executive Council of the Children's Film Society of India, including that of chairman Amol Palekar, barely six weeks before the 5th International Children's Film Festival, this month, have opened a Pandora's box, says MINNIE VAID-FERA.



PARTICIPANTS AT THE 5th International Children's Film Festival, to be held in Bhubaneshwar, Orissa, from November 14-23, will scarcely realise that the organisation hosting the event — the Children's

Film Society of India (CFSI) — is today, in a complete shambles. And that this Festival will be the last, heroic attempt to resuscitate a dying institution. The only consensus that CFSI Chairman Amol Palekar — who, along with other Executive Council (EC) members, writer-director Gulzar, Bengali actor Anil Chatterjee, Oriya writer J P Das, and T S Narasimhan (of *Malgudi Days* fame) resigned on September 22 — and disgruntled officials of the beleaguered society have arrived at, is that the CFSI should be given a decent and much-needed burial.

The mass resignations of the EC have brought the hostile and petty wrangling within the organisation into the open. Charges and counter-charges are being made, denials have been issued, confidential papers have been 'leaked', and the press has been inveigled into what can only be aptly described as a mutual vilification campaign. Amidst this unseemly bickering and apportioning of blame, the cause that both the EC and the CFSI staff supposedly espouse, has been totally relegated to the background.

The CFSI, established in 1955 to provide wholesome entertainment for children, has, in over three decades, achieved pathetically inadequate results. In a country that produces approximately 900 commercial films each year, the CFSI can claim credit for a meagre three or four films annually, most of them of rather dubious quality. What is even worse is that by their own admission, and despite a staff strength of 25 in their marketing department, CFSI films do not reach the vast audiences they should, especially in rural India.

Not surprisingly, the CFSI staff is extremely wary of the most obvious and perfectly legitimate queries with respect to their organisation's performance or rather, non-performance. How many films are they expected to make each year, as against their actual output? Do they export any films to other countries? Do they have any worthwhile awards to their credit? What is their foreign exchange revenue



In a country that produces approximately 900 commercial films each year, the CFSI can claim credit for a meagre three or four films annually, most of them are of rather dubious quality. What is even worse is that by their own admission, and despite a staff strength of 25 in their marketing department, CFSI films do not reach the vast audiences they should, especially in rural India.

each year? Six days and umpteen phone calls later, the 'official' response from the CFSI was that "information of this kind can only be di-

vulgued by our senior officers."

Senior officers however, chose to keep a low profile or more accurately, no profile at all. There was, thus, no confirmation or denial of estimated statistics pertaining to their organisation. The CFSI receives an annual grant of Rs 80 lakh, with an additional Rs 25 lakh every two years for the hosting of an international film festival. There seems to have been virtually no export of films for the last 3-4 years and against a target of four feature and two short films, the CFSI has completed only two films — *Aaj Ka Robinhood* and *Rhino* — over the last three years. Given this track record, it is truly remarkable that so much time and energy has been devoted to vicious in-fighting.

AMOL PALEKAR, in the thick of the controversy today, preserves a deliberately calm facade as he explains his actions. Occasionally his voice takes on a note of righteous indignation. "Let me make things very clear. There was no question of bargaining with or blackmailing the Information & Broadcasting Ministry (I&B) for an extension, when we resigned our posts. If we'd wanted an extension, all we had to do was to make a trip to Delhi. As for pressure tactics, we are all working for this Festival with the same enthusiasm," he says quietly.

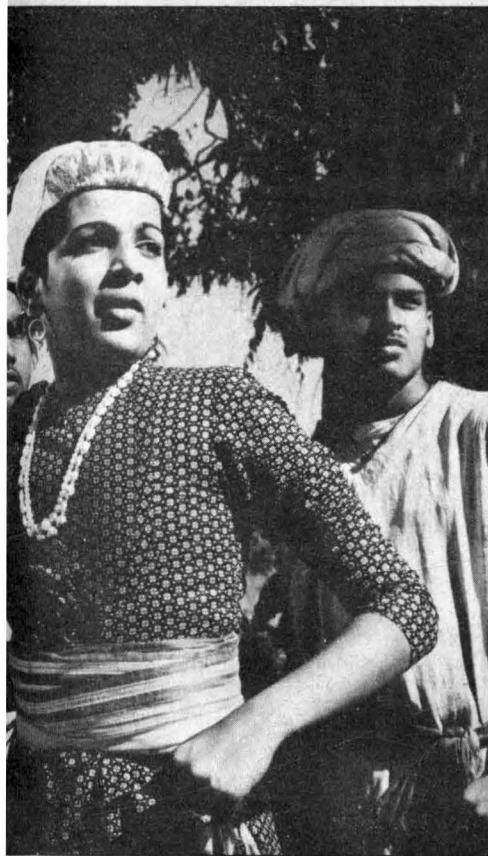
"Why couldn't he have quit with grace after the Festival?" demand CFSI officials angrily. Some of the anger stems from the fact that Palekar has allegedly side-lined in-house talent to bring in outsiders like NFDC's Nitin Kene, to take charge of the Festival. "Had we been so uneducated, incompetent, corrupt, defiant and rotten to the core, the Society could not have survived so long," says an official passionately.

Arrogance and arbitrary behaviour are only the first of the many grievances CFSI officials hold against their erstwhile Chairman. Accusations are hurled, fast and furious. "Palekar and the other non-official members of the EC were a law unto themselves, form-



ing a very unhealthy majority. Every move of Palekar's was a ploy for self-aggrandisement. He promoted his own people and often hired out his own equipment to the Society," says an official scornfully. "Did he ever make any attempts to carry the staff with him?"

"I would have loved to carry the staff with me," says Palekar with equal fervour, "if I was convinced that they were capable and talented. As it turned out, I had to do it all on my own. The very first assignment I took up — the Bangalore International Children's Film Festival in April 1985 — was extremely successful. For the first time, India reached an international level — it was commended by the International Centre of Films for Children and Young People (ICFCYCP), in their annual general meeting. We also had a children's jury for the first time. And," he adds, warming to his argument, "I had to do it all *in spite* of the staff. What did the staff contribute? The hospitality, the screenings, the looking after of the delegates etc was all done with local

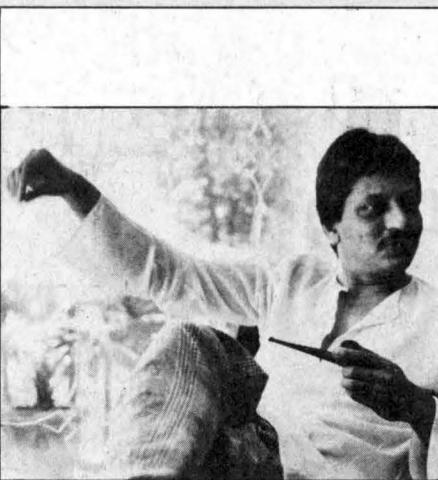


'Bal Shivaji': an outstanding film.

professional help. The earlier three Festivals were messed up by the staff," he concludes wryly.

Predictably, the staff is dismissive of the Bangalore Festival's success. "One festival is no yardstick for judging performance," says one official. "We've been recognised internationally since 1981; we've also had children on our jury for earlier festivals," is the bored response of another. "The Bangalore Festival was a perfect example of mutual back-scratching. The funds spent on lavish extravaganzas there could well have been diverted to making more films for children," says a third official, sneeringly.

Such laudable sentiments notwithstanding, both the CFSI staff and its Chairman reluctantly concede that funding has never been a hurdle, as far as the production of films is concerned. "If you show results, the Ministry (of I&B) will definitely allocate more funds," admits an official. Palekar concurs, "Government funds have been returned unutilised in the past.



Amol Palekar. Victimised?

In fact, I kept insisting that we should stop wasting time trying to get more grants and instead concentrate on utilising existing ones. Money was never any problem."

ON A WIDER MATRIX therefore, an autonomous organisation, generously funded by the Government, adequately staffed by 63 administrative personnel, and led by creative professionals like Palekar, Gulzar and Narasimhan, could have at least improved upon its earlier dismal performance.

An obvious query of this kind elicits a perfect storm of justifications, either defensive or belligerent. Introspection and self-analysis seem totally subservient to a policy of shifting or allocating blame. The separate versions provided by Palekar and his aggrieved staff are an interesting study in contrast.

Palekar begins the post-mortem. "As soon as I took over as Chairman, we (the EC) defined the glaring deficiencies present in the system and analysed ways of overcoming them. The problem lay with both the production and marketing of CFSI films. Both spheres needed a complete overhaul, the entire process was wonky. There was no incentive for good filmmakers to make films for children, and we had to meet absurd specifications of length or quantity, so naturally the quality (of films) suffered." Was this universally true of all CFSI films produced so far? Palekar names *Bal Shivaji* and *Karuna ki Vijay* as out-

standing examples in an otherwise lacklustre list.

He continues, "There was no attempt to make foreign versions or to subtitle films. Since the statutory requirements of the CFSI provided for the dubbing of 5 films annually, it was being done monotonously, and without any background research or analysis. We stopped that. Then, we took a policy decision to ban in-house productions. We *had* to make the field open to outsiders—professionals—to ensure quality." Furthermore, there was no co-ordination between the production and marketing departments. In any case, were our films worth marketing?" questions Palekar.

Although he repeatedly insists that his ire is directed towards the Information & Broadcasting Ministry for not giving the CFSI the 'national priority' it deserved, and not towards the CFSI staff, his contempt for the latter is fairly obvious. In fact, there is an underlying arrogance in his statements but it is arrogance borne out of supreme self-confidence. "Their (the staff's) own performance speaks for itself. We—Gulzar, Narasimhan and myself—who have managed to survive creatively, outside the safe and secure confines of the CFSI, on the strength of our merit, had hoped to inspire our officials. They got every encouragement from us on how to cut down on red tapism, how to ensure quality, etc; we gave them the longest possible rope. They chose to get bogged down by bureaucratic memos and faulty rules and regulations," says Palekar solemnly. He also claims to have decentralised the entire power structure so that no arbitrary decisions could be taken by one person.

The CFSI staff members' rage seems almost menacing in the course of *their* appraisal of Palekar's performance over the last two years. Their vitriolic denunciation of Palekar's tenure at CFSI begins with his appointment itself. "V Shantaram (the earlier Chairman who held the post for six years) resigned in August 1984. Prominent personalities like Sai Par-

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"I am not interested in fighting bureaucracy either here or in Delhi. It's below my dignity," says Amol Palekar categorically. What he is extremely bitter about is that the Ministry did not give CFSI the national priority it deserved. "Our target was to generate a 'movement' of children's films that went beyond just the production and screening of films. But we didn't get any co-operation even from Doordarshan."



'Aaj Ka Robinhood': one of the two films completed by CFSI in three years.

appointment in April 1985. His very appointment during VN Gadgil's term as Information and Broadcasting Minister, reeks of linguistic chauvinism," declares a CFSI official. "Far from decentralising authority, Palekar formed his own 'caucus' within the CFSI — administrative officials who would approve his expenditure and remain silent on misdeeds," alleges another. "Palekar has conveniently focussed on government apathy today, (one of the reasons mentioned in his resignation letter) because the Ministry sent two joint secretaries to replace the earlier deputy secretaries. Obviously these senior officials were appointed to investigate into the affairs of the CFSI. Didn't he notice any government apathy earlier?" says a CFSI spokesman trenchantly.

Elaborating on this sinister interpretation of Palekar's resignation, he says that Palekar resigned before an inquiry against his actions could be conducted by the Ministry. The staff's chargesheet against Palekar seems endless — favouritism, nepotism, introduction of a 5-star culture, excessive foreign jaunts, abrasiveness, are merely the broader categories of Pale-

kar's faulty stewardship, according to his hostile staff members. More than willing to provide specific examples of Palekar's perfidy, these officials, however, insist on anonymity being preserved while they tear Palekar's reputation to shreds. "Palekar shouldn't have had problems with administration. Wasn't he a bank clerk before *Rajnigandha*?" says an official nastily. Another questions his film-making prowess — "What is Palekar's standing in the industry today? Did *Akriet* and *Ankahee* make any waves?" Palekar's *Kacchi Dhoop*, one of the rare television serials for children which offered a fairly realistic portrayal of children, is overlooked.

THE VITRIOL AND VENOM underlining the confrontationist attitudes of the staff become even more prominent as they dissect each of Palekar's attempts at revamping the moribund organisation. A stand that remains inexplicable when staff members agree that the CFSI enjoys only a secondary status, has no exhibition outlets or distribution strategies, and is riddled with politicking and linguistic chauvinism. Professionalism in every sphere

anjpye and Gulzar were offered the post but they declined. Palekar was not sounded out even once during the eight months preceding his 'surprise'



A still from 'Dhoonketu': a CFSI production.

of the CFSI's activities, especially the marketing of children's films which cannot survive the 4-shows a day that commercial cinema demands, is a most pressing need, assert the officials.

"A professional approach is exactly what I've been fighting for, these last two years," says Palekar emphatically. "Quality should be the only yardstick," he affirms determinedly. "This is why we (the EC) introduced several novel features. These included collaboration with Film Development Corporations, (West Bengal, Manipur, Madhya Pradesh have backed us in this), a new modality where the ceiling on budgets for films has been removed and projects are analysed on merit and expected outputs, a vigilant script committee, and several other innovations to tone up the department." But, he adds, "Routine handling of policy or administration has to be done by others. I'm not an administrator nor do I wish to be one. Implementation of policies laid down

by the EC has to be supervised by the Chief Executive Officer — the post has been vacant for two years." Palekar further clarifies that he had tried to create incentives for creditable achievements by his staff even as he expected them to shoulder responsibility for non-performance. "Unfortunately this system could not be followed," he rues, "since all I encountered was statistical jugglery indulged in to meet ridiculously low targets. I have stepped up production to at least seven films a year instead of the earlier two or three," says Palekar. "But this is still totally inadequate. It's not just the number that matters — if the CFSI could make one film like *Jungle Book*, we'd consider ourselves to have succeeded!" he smiles.

Enthusiastically, he reviews projects he had initiated — films like *Aaj Ka Robinhood*, directed by Tapan Sinha and budgeted at approximately Rs 18 lakh (a co-production with Gaurang Films Pvt Ltd), *Rhino*, direc-

ted by Palekar's assistant, Shashank Shanker, (budgeted at Rs 11 lakh) and *The Crocodile and the Boy* by the famous Romulus Whittaker. "With such films to our credit, we've clearly widened the scope and concept of children's films — from fairy tales to fairly serious topics. *Rhino* has extensive wildlife coverage as well as extremely natural performances by children. And there were animation films on the cards as well," says Palekar rather proudly.

"*Aaj Ka Robinhood*, such an extravagantly budgeted film, bombed at Calcutta, the only place it was released," scoffs an official. "And Palekar had the temerity to blame it on poor marketing strategy. Chairmen can come and go, but who is left to scrutinise such expenditure?" he adds. "Was only Palekar's assistant qualified to direct CFSI films?" queries another official cattily.

IRONICALLY ENOUGH, although selected on to the Executive Council ostensibly due to their expertise and knowledge, EC members are banned from making films themselves. Palekar finds this very amusing. "We're brought in here due to our contribution to cinema — then we're asked to become officers," he laughs derisively.

"I'm not interested in fighting bureaucracy either here or in Delhi. It's below my dignity," says Palekar categorically. What he is extremely bitter about is that the Ministry did not give CFSI the national priority it deserved. "Our target was to generate a 'movement' of children's films that went beyond just the production and screening of films. But we didn't get any co-operation even from Doordarshan, a fellow Government-controlled medium," he laments. "After a continual fight over two years, Doordarshan has now conceded a respectable amount for children's films — an A-grade film fetches in Rs 4 lakh, a B-grade one — Rs 3 lakh. Earlier, a national-award-winning children's film rated only Rs 70,000," says Palekar. "Moreover," he continues, "though certain

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Ultimately, the confusion and animosity within the CFSI and the disappointment of the honorary professionals who have just relinquished charge, proves once again, that creativity and bureaucracy are antithetical concepts.

educational institutions are given time on Doordarshan, the CFSI does not merit even a once-a-week slot. We could reach a maximum number of children through television. The CFSI could also be made a canalisation agent for children's programmes and films, following NFDC's example. We could have earned considerable revenue. Especially as children's films cannot recover their costs commercially, despite tax exemption. Our organisation was always looked down upon, as being perpetually in the red," Palekar adds vehemently.

THE CRUX OF THE PROBLEM, according to Palekar, is that when convenient, the CFSI is considered an autonomous body by the Ministry; when any hard decisions are to be taken, the Government steps in to create obstacles, since the CFSI is wholly funded by it. "What is far worse is that representatives of the Ministry (on the EC) do not even have the time to attend

meetings. Their attitude is very clear. It is this attitude that we were fighting. Let the Ministry make up its mind — if that larger perspective is lacking, we're not interested in going round in circles," he says firmly. This is especially relevant to the policy of staff appointments, says Palekar. "Almost every appointment at the CFSI has been irregular — the rules are so faulty and outdated that we (the EC) could only try to regularise them while accepting the blame," he adds.

Technicalities are moreover, according to him, convenient umbrellas sheltering three CFSI litigants, who have filed writ petitions in the High Court. Sridhar Sharma — the CFSI PRO who was suspended and then reinstated on the orders of the Ministry — plans to file a second writ petition against Palekar for defamation. The other litigants are Subhash Pise, Marketing Manager, and Ramesh Mohre, Secretary, who continues to draw a salary without having done any work for the last two years.

"Procedures have to be followed to terminate the offices of Government employees," declares Sharma indignantly. "You have to be warned first, then fined, asked to explain performance levels, etc. No one's services can be terminated on the personal whims and fancies of a chairman. That's why we've gone to court, otherwise we're not fools to enter into litigation that costs one so much time and money," he says.

Staff non-co-operation notwithstanding, Palekar hopes that the projects he helped set up, will be nurtured by his successor. Among the more prominent of Palekar's achievements at the CFSI is the introduction of mini-festivals all over the country, through the year. Furthermore, in collaboration with the Madhya Pradesh Government, the CFSI also held free screenings in tribal areas in Bastar and other districts.

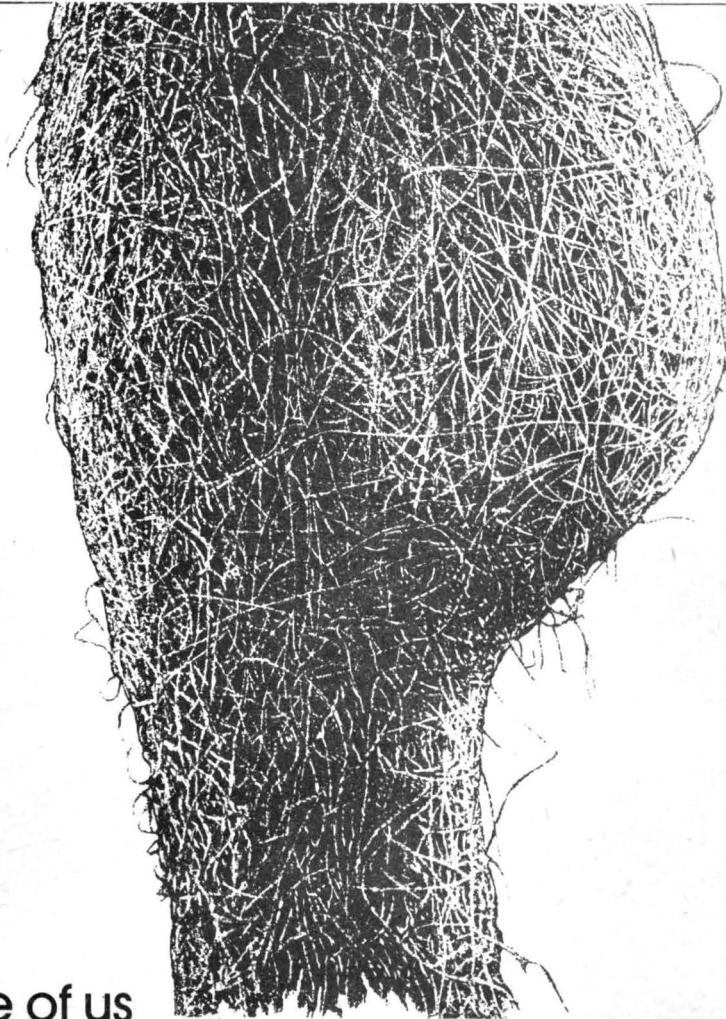
Another well-publicised achievement is the setting up of a Children's Film Studio at Bangalore on 5 acres of land which were donated by the

Karnataka Government. "It will be the Asian centre for children's films, and will be known internationally," enthuses Palekar. He speaks glowingly of a collaboration with the Czechoslovakian Government, which is to provide expertise and equipment for animation and puppet films. "Palekar wants Czechoslovakia to provide all this, free of cost," scoffs a CFSI official. "Obviously, this will involve exorbitant consultation fees. So he (Palekar) is now trying to tap diplomatic channels to further this project," he continues. "Besides, no additional work has been done at this famous studio, beyond the laying of the foundation stone two years ago," he says scornfully.

The fight seems interminable. As the controversy and bitterness continue, Amol Palekar has self-righteously washed his hands off the sordid mess that the CFSI finds itself in today. "I saw it as a national duty. For the last two years, my personal commitments ranked second to my duties as CFSI Chairman. I could have invested all that energy into creative projects — films or television serials — of my own."

The rebellious staff members of the CFSI seem to have also, unwittingly, followed his example. "Close down the CFSI" is the standard refrain. "Merge it with the NFDC" is another response. Obviously there are no takers for what could have been seen as a challenging and satisfying task — to provide healthy entertainment for children now being brought up either on sub-standard serials on television or on the routine escapist fare of commercial cinema.

Ultimately, the chaotic confusion and animosity within the CFSI and the disappointment of the honorary professionals who have just relinquished charge, proves once again, that creativity and bureaucracy are antithetical concepts that could not have expected to find a common meeting ground. As Palekar, Gulzar, Narasimhan and the CFSI staff members have learnt today, to their cost. ♦



For those of us less resourceful, HDFC has provided over Rs.600 crores in housing loans.

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HDFC. Helping increase India's housing stock.



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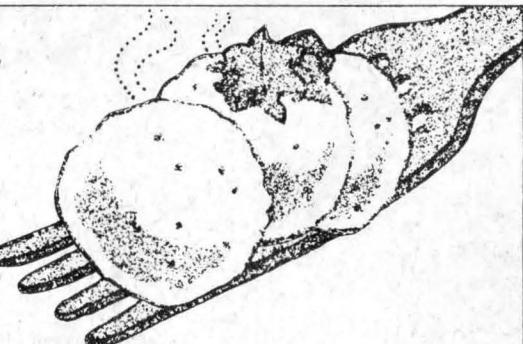
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ULKA-H-11-86

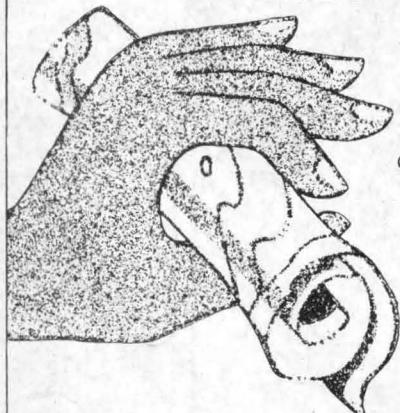
Snack them!

Mafco's got a range of the most mouth-watering pork treats for your family. Juicy kababs, chunky luncheon meat, choice chicken 'n ham loaf — just what snappy snacks are made of.



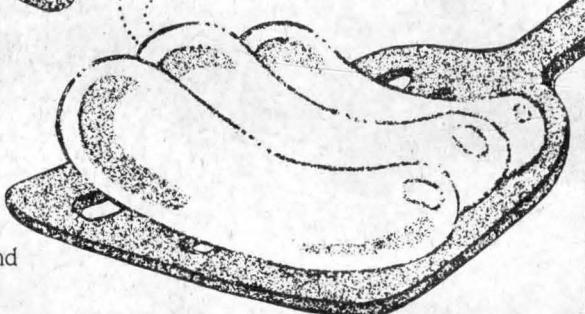
Fry them!

Mafco adds that special sizzle to savoury favourites. Sausages, frankfurters, bacon and more. You can make a meal of Mafco's meat marvels!



Pack them!

Take your pick of Mafco's flavour-packed fillers for the sandwich box. Salami, ham, chicken 'n ham paste. What a dee-ee-licious spread!



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Mafco meats are the choicest meats. Because Mafco keeps a close control on their quality, ensuring that all the natural flavour and goodness is preserved...for you. Give your family Mafco — and they'll soon be saying "Mmmm-mm-Mafco!"



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For further details please contact: Senior Divisional Manager Marketing, Mafco Limited (A Government of Maharashtra Enterprise), Mistry Bhawan, D.V. Road, Bombay 400 020.

Tel: 22 22 44

Tlx: 011-5149

Grm: CORPOAGRID

THE BACKDROP IS an expanse of black — at a corner, stand three blind men: 'Whenever you see colour, think of us,' they say to the passerby. With the desired results. Four years ago, the Times Eye Research Foundation (TERF), New Delhi, set off on a quest for eye donors. They followed a series of advertisements with literature, urging people 'to gift their eyes to the nation'. Created by Everest Advertising on behalf of TERF, the campaign bombarded the public with articles, posters, stickers, door-to-door mailings, slide-shows at cinema houses and the theatre, television, radio and panel discussions. And bagged the Certificate of Merit in the Max Lewis Memorial Challenge Trophy, 1984. The campaign had managed to break through the inherent and irrational fear that is associated with the thought of removing eyes from a corpse, and by 1986, TERF was deluged with 42,000 pledges, 13,000 of them from entire families. Various celebrities who have since pledged to donate their eyes to TERF have added to the success of this advertisement.

In recent years, India has witnessed

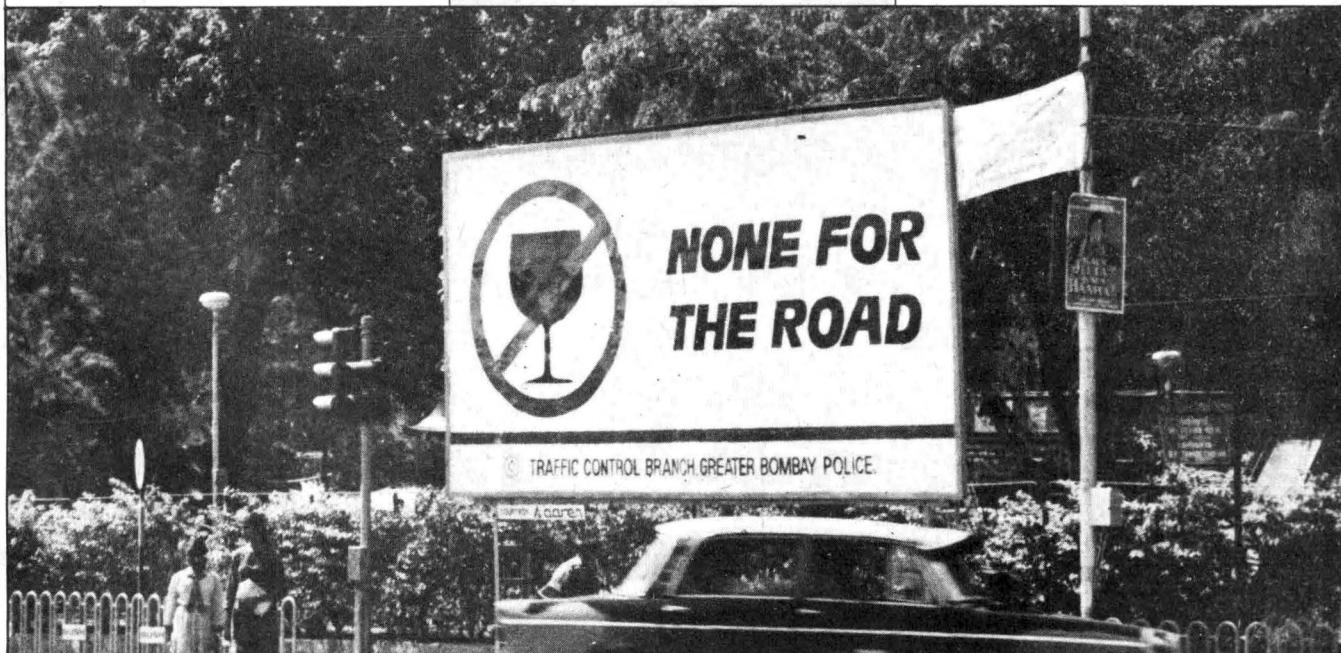
CATCHING THE PUBLIC EYE

An unprecedented boom in public service advertisements injected with a professionalism seldom seen before, is increasingly evident. How effective are they?

SHEKHAR GHOSH discusses the pros and cons of the recent efforts — both the outstanding and the mediocre — and describes the growth of this new industry.

an unprecedented boom not just in commercial advertising but also in those issued in the public interest, popularly referred to as public service advertisements. Designed to appeal to the conscience, or to educate, public service advertisements have tackled a variety of issues including road safety, national integration, the evils of dowry, drought relief, cancer prevention, and family planning. And today, most of these are being executed with a professionalism hitherto absent, and succeed in saying what a million words could not.

A television advertisement produced by Lintas on the need for national integration is a case in point. A striking image is presented, that of men from different representative communities, carrying the torch of communal harmony through the length of the country. Another one depicts a simple etching of Mahatma Gandhi's face. A subtle message flashes: 'Bring out the Gandhi in all of us'. Whereas most hoardings in urban areas previously urged a growing consumer market to buy magazines or soft drinks, today, an increasing number carry a message of a different kind. Motorists in Bom-



The message is stark, simple and effective.

FEATURE

bay are probably well-acquainted with an eye-catching hoarding that warns: 'None for the road'. Another exhorts people to contribute to the drought relief fund before sitting down to their next meal.

Advertisements conceived on behalf of the Indian Cancer Society (ICS) are outstanding examples of ones which combine compassion and sensitivity with an obvious professionalism. The ICS had always faced a problem — very few would come to its cancer detection centres; the few who came were often too late. Mani Iyer of Ogilvy, Benson and Mather (OBM), who handled the campaign for the Society in 1978 says, "We broke new ground by changing people's attitudes towards cancer. It was the first time in the world, I think, that an advertising campaign was based on hope and encouragement, rather than fear." The advertisement which said, 'There's life after cancer . . . it's worth living!' was followed by testimonials from people who had survived cancer and were leading productive lives. The results were rapid and tremendous: the number of people who came to the detection centres in Bombay rose from 324 at the end of 1978 to 604 a year later.

Other success stories have included the Petroleum Conservation Campaign, launched by the Petroleum Conservation Research Association; and a similarly oriented campaign that sought to educate the public on family-planning methods.

Precautionary advertisements like those on fire-prevention, and informative advertisements about new agricultural methods and vaccinations, have also been effective. While the latter are known to be reasonably successful, those which address the conscience or attempt to foster morality occupy a grey area as far as assessing their impact is concerned. For instance, a hoarding at Chowpatty, Bombay, calls on the public to discourage communalism; a short TV film on handicapped children asks for help — it is difficult to gauge the response that such

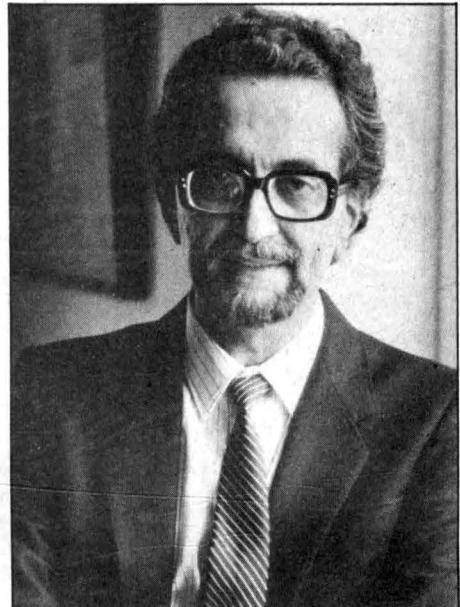
public service advertisements elicit. Unlike consumer products, where the response can be easily monitored by observing any increase in sales, those advertisements which exhort the public to develop a social conscience or civic sense are less fathomable.

PUBLIC SERVICE advertisements are just that — they aim to increase public awareness. They are designed to touch that particular nerve of sensitivity, and appeal to the conscience so as to urge action. Unfortunately, many of them are not up to standard and consequently fail to do their job. About two decades ago, public service advertisements were the virtual monopoly of the Directorate of Audio Visual Publicity (DAVP), a Government body. The dull and unimaginative advertisements that the DAVP regularly churned out were probably responsible for the cynicism with which they were greeted.

However, an increasing number of private advertising agencies are now devoting time, money and expertise to launch campaigns on issues that concern the public.

The doyen of public service advertising in India is Alyque Padamsee, Chief Executive of Lintas, who has been pioneering work in the field for more than twenty years. Several other agencies, including Clarion, Everest and Shilpi, have also contributed to the effort.

One of the earliest advertisements of this genre was conceived by a team of five — Gerson Da Cunha, Frank Simoes, Kersey Katrak, K Kurien, and Farrokh Mehta — who submitted the official Indian entry in a competition sponsored by the Asia Advertising Congress 18 years ago, and won. Selecting metropolitan decay as the theme, the team developed its campaign around a slogan which was not without an element of prophecy: "Bombay is dying. Help!" Collecting facts and figures on the city's multitudinous evils, the team first identified the problem areas. It then surveyed the problems that the city would



Alyque Padamsee.

encounter over the next ten years, suggested some reforms, and defined certain target audiences. Advertisements based on its recommendations were then splashed across the media. A constitutional model of an authority that would implement the reforms and work in tandem with the government authorities, from ward to cabinet level, was also presented by the team. Offering a comprehensive media strategy and scheduling plan, the team then concluded with an elaborate fund-raising scheme, adding a few inventive touches, including tax reliefs for contributions and public lotteries.

Public service advertising has come of age since. The country's major advertising agencies, most of which are located in Bombay, have launched campaigns which have redefined the concept of public service advertising in the country. A film that seeks to change attitudes towards the handicapped, currently showing both on TV and in cinema houses, relying on simplicity and directness has proved to be extremely effective. The film shows a child drawing figures on his slate. "This is my Daddy. This is my Mummy. And this is me. No *this* is me," says the child matter-of-factly, as he

A decade ago, public service advertising was done more as a favour to society than with any real commitment. And, it is the lack of professionalism that results in many of them going unnoticed. As Alyque Padamsee puts it, most public service advertisements are at best amateurish, and at worst ludicrous.

erases one hand from his own figure. A slogan then flashes: "The disabled don't need your pity. They need your help." Explaining the underlying concept, Alyque Padamsee says, "The problem does not lie with the handicapped themselves. Rather, the problem is with us, who treat the handicapped as handicapped. In fact, we handicap them further."

WHAT IS IT THAT MAKES some advertisements effective and others not? According to Alyque Padamsee, the three rules of effective presentation are: "Keep your message single-minded, keep it short, keep it dramatic." Behind every successful advertisement lies a lot of hard work. Research, the bane of any advertising campaign, is essential not only before a successful advertisement, but also after its appearance. The reaction that a particular campaign triggers must be assessed as it is on the basis of this that future strategies are evolved. In-depth studies and surveys are not enough. Alyque Padamsee stresses that the impact created by a public awareness campaign must be assessed by conducting "psycho-analytical" research as well. An anti-dowry film

made by Lintas illustrates this point. The film equates young unmarried dowry-seekers with buffaloes at a cattle auction. The key line of this advertisement, in which young men are shown with placards hanging from their necks denoting their 'price', reads: "You are no better than cattle at an auction sale when you ask for a dowry." The post-campaign research was revealing, not only for ascertaining immediate responses which were mostly favourable, but also in gleaning information about the issue itself and thereby informing and developing the campaign in its next phase. For instance, in Agra, several cases of the groom's family secretly providing dowry to the bride's family so that *izzat* could be maintained came to light. Again, in Bihar, incidents of kidnapping were reported where, unable to afford the dowry, the prospective groom had been kidnapped by the bride's family and married at gun-point.

A decade ago, public service advertising was done more as a favour to society than with any real commitment. And, it is the lack of professionalism that results in many of them going unnoticed. Some are unavoidable, but are also so unappealing that they do not make any impact whatsoever. Except for a few professionals who entered the arena almost with a vengeance, as if "to assuage their guilt" as Alyque Padamsee puts it, most public service advertisements today are at best amateurish, and at worst ludicrous. Commuters in Bombay must be well-acquainted with the anti-brown sugar campaign visible on hoardings at Worli. Slogans like 'Dreams will drown if sugar is brown' and 'People will frown if sugar is brown' are not only ridiculous and stupid, but they also serve to desensitise the target audience. Such shoddy efforts, despite being well-intentioned, contribute to weakening the impact of the campaign.

ENDEAVOURS BY the Government-owned publicity agency, the DAVP, to

launch public service advertising have proved futile. Formed to produce and manage all Government publicity, the DAVP advertisements are renowned for their lacklustre and mundane quality. Most of the few that are noticeable urge the public to save at the Post Office, to pay their tax arrears, buy Government bonds or renew licenses. The inefficiency at the DAVP which has perhaps the largest staff, has earned such notoriety that recently, the Government assigned two big-budget campaigns, previously handled by the DAVP, to private advertising agencies. According to available reports, ministries and other governmental bodies have even been known to recruit the services of wayside artists at Delhi's Chhori Bazaar, while the Directorate's own professionals — 24 artists and five visualisers — sit idle.

Like most other public offices, the DAVP is riddled with bureaucratic policies. A senior DAVP official also bemoaned the indifference of the Information and Broadcasting (I&B) Ministry quite succinctly, "No Secretary has ever visited our studio or held any discussions with the creative artists about our work. And, suddenly they seem to be very concerned about the quality of our output and are bringing in outsiders. As if we are not professionals too. . ." According to him, the higher-ups in the I&B Ministry have always been interested in employing the services of private agencies with fat expense accounts to entertain guests. There are other limitations. The DAVP still continues with its outdated Press Insertion Rate Policy with regard to placing its advertisements — that is, it is only prepared to pay rates fixed many years ago. As a result, DAVP advertisements are not published by major national newspapers. The Government is also reported to have used the DAVP to control the editorial policies of small newspapers whose very survival depends on it.

Even after severe criticism about the functioning of the Directorate by several high-powered Government-

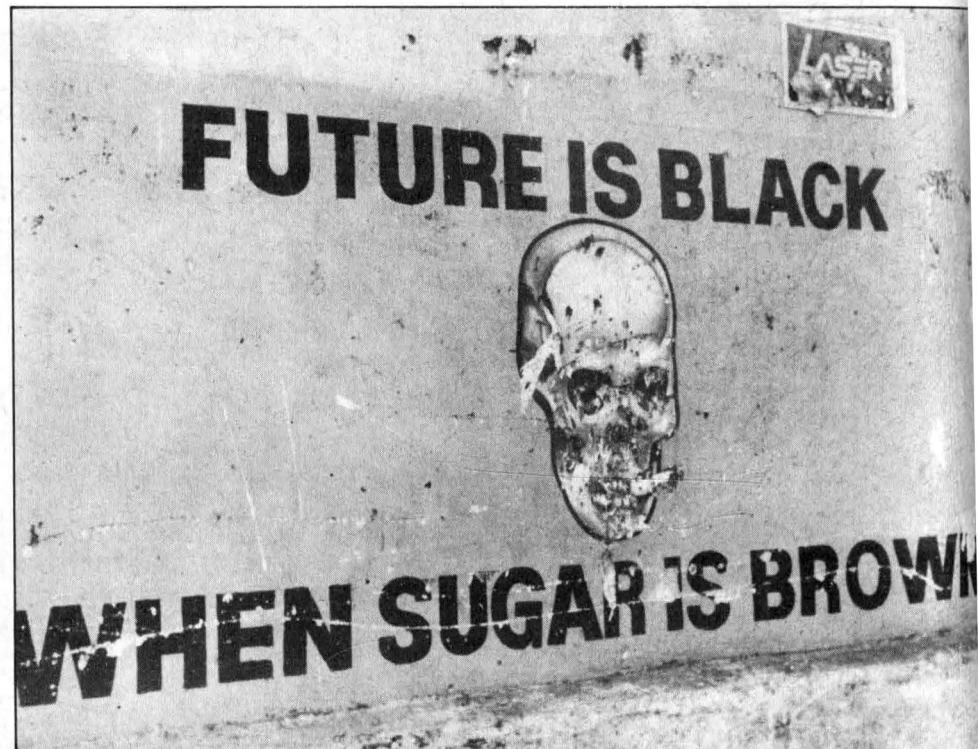
FEATURE

appointed committees, things at the DAVP are progressing from bad to worse. Paragraph 103 of the Chanda Committee Report (1966) concluded that the DAVP should not be run by bureaucrats or the Central Information Service (CIS) whose personnel are subject to frequent transfers: "We are convinced that for the DAVP to be an efficient medium of mass communication, its control and organisation should rest in the hands of professionally competent people, and recruitment should be suitably modified." Successive committees, like the 1978-1979 Estimates Committee and the 1981-1982 Kurien Committee, also took the DAVP to task and recommended several measures for improvement – but to no avail.

Clearly, precious resources and manpower are being under-utilised at the DAVP as the Government is increasingly turning to private agencies to do the job well. Still, the bulk of public service advertising is being shouldered by private agencies who have volunteered their services to various 'causes'.

GRADUALLY, SOCIAL SERVICE and charitable organisations are also making inroads into this arena. The Xavier's Institute of Communications in Bombay is one of these. Often designed and conceived by the students by the students themselves, some of the campaigns have achieved a reasonably competent standard. Memorable among them have been the Keep Bombay Clean campaign and the more recent ones against drug abuse. Sponsored by Akbarallys, the Keep Bombay Clean campaign used hoardings, posters, stickers, banners and T-shirts to get its message across, and also enlisted the help of volunteers – donned in Keep Bombay Clean T-shirts – to clean the city.

Another multi-media campaign that the Institute contributed to was that by the Indian Cancer Society in 1986. It sought to educate the public about mouth, tongue, lung, breast and cervical cancers, and in order to add-



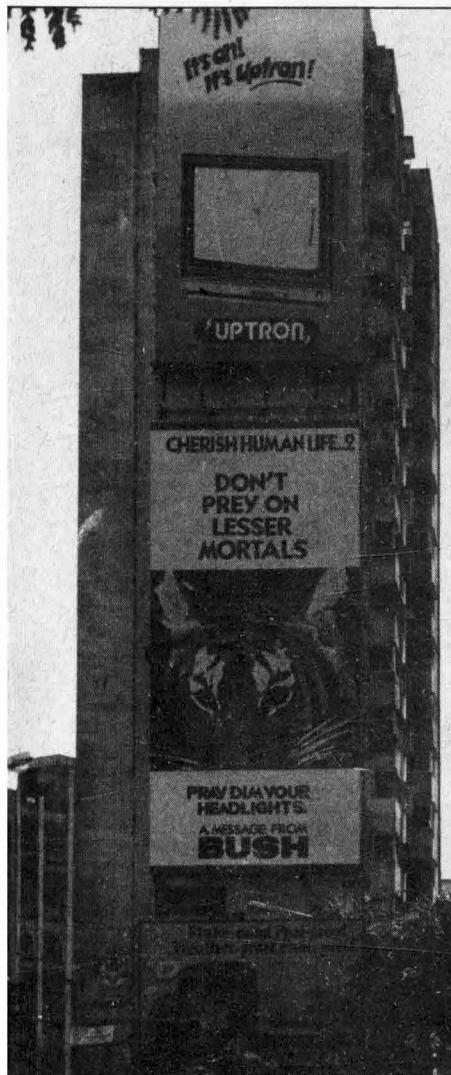
Advertisements such as these desensitise their audience.

ress women directly, used a novel method. The ICS brochure, 'Living Free', was distributed along with sanitary napkins and ladies' undergarments. Ms Alka Bhosle, Managing Director of Da Cunha's Communications, who supervised the campaign says, "Cancer still carries a social stigma, and talk about it is taboo amongst most Indian women. So, they are most likely to read this kind of literature in private." The ICS plans to conduct a survey to gauge the effectiveness of the campaign every three years. If the initial response is anything to go by – soon after the advertisement appeared, its cancer detection centres were swamped with calls, so much so, that additional phone numbers had to be asked for – the purpose of such public service advertisements becomes more pertinent.

HOW DOES THE PERSON on the street – the target of such campaigns – react to public service advertisements? While the more discerning members

of the public are easily disillusioned by sloppy advertisements, most seem to be aware of the more impressive ones. A recent film on family planning, produced by Lintas, shows a tomato being forced into a tumbler already containing two tomatoes. When one of the three tomatoes becomes squashed in the process, the line 'One or two. Enough!' appears on the screen. Post-campaign research revealed 65 per cent unaided recall by villagers; many also said it was the first film that they remembered and were able to interpret the message.

Anil Singh, a young journalist, finds some of today's professionally-executed public service advertisements very effective. While appreciative of the efforts of Lintas and other agencies, he laments the lack of good consumer guidance advertisements in the media. Shailesh, a commercial advertising man, finds most of the public service advertisements sub-standard, and accuses their creators of over-indulgence. Illustrating his point by



Businesses must support social causes.

referring to a recent advertisement which asks drivers not to overspeed, Shailesh says, "The slogan and the visuals of the film are extremely convoluted. The image of the speedometer clocking 90 kmph lasts for only seconds. The slogan then refers to the speed which is undecipherable. It took me four months to figure it out!"

What public service advertising needs is a big boost from the business community. "Today, more than ever before," writes S R Iyer, an editor of *The Times of India*, "responsibility should be logically shared by business to step into the role of the major sup-

What public service advertising needs is a big boost from the business community. "People expect business houses to bear in mind the well-being of a society. And if society does not perceive that this is being done, then sooner or later, it will cease to place any kind of trust in them," says S R Iyer.

porter of social and public causes... People expect business houses to bear in mind the well-being of a society. And if society does not perceive that this is being done, then sooner or later, it will cease to place any kind of trust in them. Indeed, it will regard business as an irrelevant Leviathan, a monster. To prevent this, the business community must apportion a percentage of its efforts, its energies and its resources — meaning its profits — to the society of which it is a part."

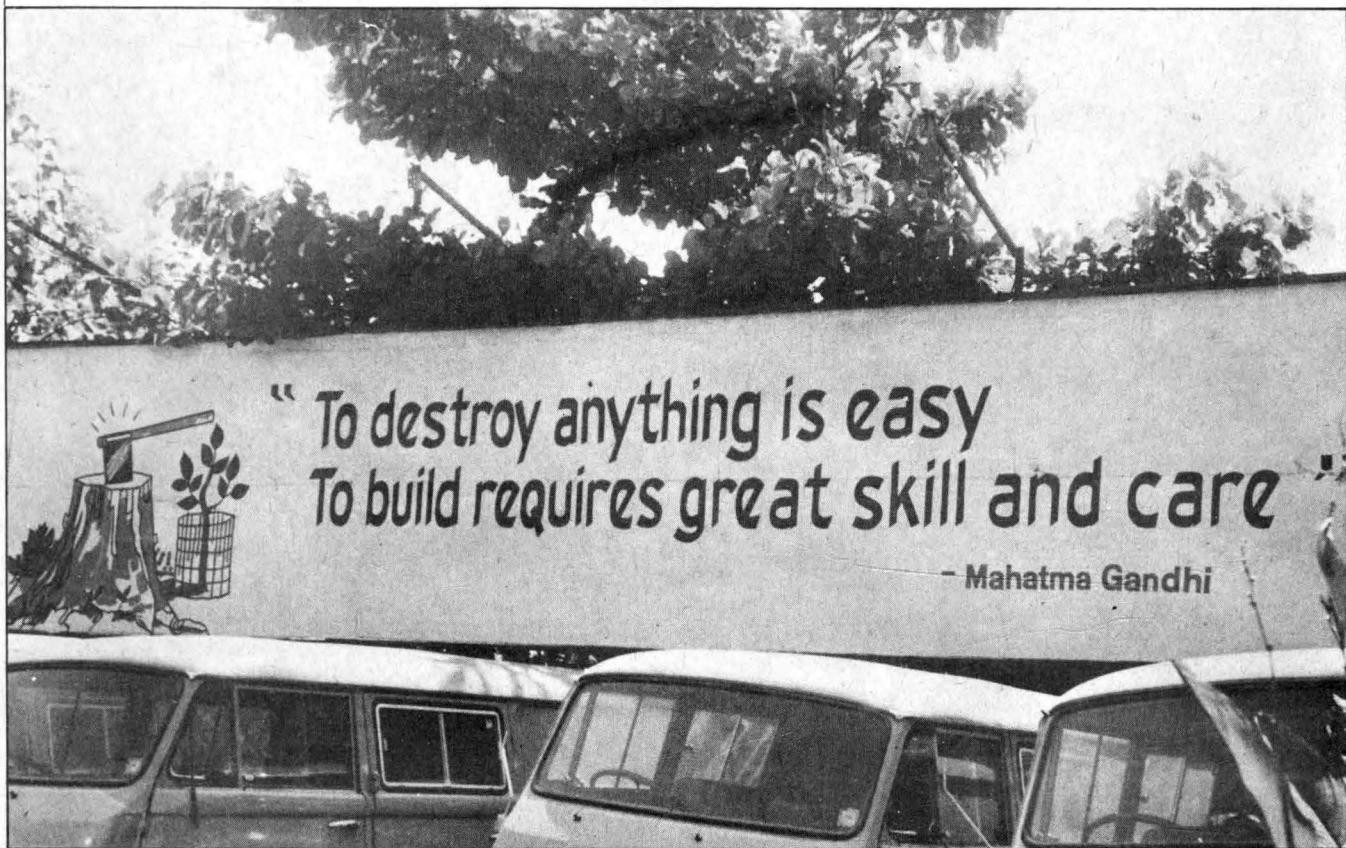
Alyque Padamsee is even more emphatic, "I believe everyone who is making a profit, in any country, has a social responsibility to the public at large. I believe that besides taxes, we need to put something else back into the society in which we operate and take our profits from." Agencies can do it with their skills, newspapers and other media could donate space and time, while business houses could sponsor the campaigns. Moreover, public service advertising can render a certain credibility and a moral legitimacy to the business house it is associated with; half of the goodwill that companies like Tata and Godrej have built up has been earned by their public spiritedness.

Some advertising agencies are doing

more than their fair share of public service. Lintas has donated 40 per cent of its shares to Mother Teresa and her activities. OBM's campaigns on old age, sponsored by Help Age, and on blood donation, sponsored by Lions Club, are generating some encouraging trends. Clarion Advertising Services, which bagged the Max Lewis Memorial Citation for its road and fire safety campaigns, recently published a booklet devoted entirely to public service advertising as part of its Silver Jubilee celebrations.

THE GREATEST SERVICE performed to promote public service advertising has been the institution of the Ashok Jain Awards for National Awareness, which has inspired some of the best agencies in the country to compete for the prestigious award. Nirmal Goswami, the Director of ULKA Advertising, lists the salient features of the award: "Firstly, it is a fresh and imaginative idea sprouting out of a monumentally boring and highly profitable publishing empire. Secondly, as a corporate public relations exercise, it is flawless. Thirdly, it liberates a lot of talent in the mass communications industry, long-be-fuddled by the convoluted demands of brand imagery. Finally, it has generated new and exciting expressions of old and not so old issues. There has been evidence of clear thinking on national integration, dowry, ecology, alcoholism, disability, equality of women and so on, since the time it was introduced." The best campaigns, even if they do not win a prize, are exhibited in major cities all over the country.

"It is time to be businesslike about public service advertising," says Ms Tara Sinha of Tara Advertising Associates (TAA). Ms Sinha proposes to draw on the talents and resources of advertising professionals on a committed and long-term basis for an enterprising scheme: an organisation based on the Advertising Council in the USA, whose governing board will



Inculcating a morality in the public.

consist of eminent people concerned with social causes. Ms Sinha defines the dual role that such an organisation could play — that of bringing together causes and resources — its functioning would require the participation of a competent advertising agency, national media, and a sponsoring body. Ms Sinha's proposal has been enthusiastically received by the Advertising Standards Authority, the Advertising Agencies Association of India, and the Indian Eastern Newspaper Society.

NOT JUST BUSINESS HOUSES but also the Government needs to review its role and commitment to public service advertising. It is not enough to create awareness and expect action until an infrastructure with sufficient legislative and political clout is established. Equipped with ample manpower and machinery to convert action into results, such an infrastruc-

ture will complement the advertising.

While applauding such efforts as the one produced by Lintas on communal harmony ('In how many ways will your son hate his friends'), and the campaign to prevent drug addiction amongst children, Frank Simoes declares, 'It is necessary to understand that unless political pressure is brought to bear on community leaders who fan the flames of violence for their own ends, and draconian penalties legalised for those who deal in drugs, no amount of well-meaning and excellent advertising will work.'

Indeed, most public service advertisements are often brushed away with cynicism. The indifference that they elicit and even the derision they sometimes evoke should not be indicative of their overall effectiveness. Public service advertisements are only one of many channels through which to inculcate moral values in the so-

society around us. It is not easy to change beliefs borne out of a lifetime of conditioning by advertisements alone. To alter fixed ideas on a particular issue takes years of successful media publicity. Even for a professional communicator, selling soap is easily achieved, but selling an intangible product, an idea, is very difficult.

Although many are tempted to dismiss public service advertising as an exercise in futility, this is not, in fact, the case. That people have been affected, and more importantly, educated by the few that have recently been published and broadcast, is beyond doubt. Certainly, the potential for development in this sphere is as endless as the number of social issues that could be commented upon. In recent years, we have witnessed more public service advertising than ever before, and the trend is likely to continue. ♦

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CRY

NOT JUST CHILD'S PLAY

On Children's Day this month, a select group of India's 253 million children will take part in the scheduled festivities. For the rest, including a sizeable majority of children who are victims of neglect, exploitation and abuse, life will go on as before. There is an increasing need for the establishment of several child welfare organisations in the country.

M PINTO profiles Child Relief and You (CRY), a unique organisation which raises funds on behalf of the voluntary sector.

CRY, AN ACRONYM of Child Relief and You, established in November 1978, The International Year of the Child, operates on the belief 'you' extend to the child. It appreciates the fact that there *are* people who care; who want to do something but, being overwhelmed by the enormity of the problems that children encounter, feel their efforts would be inadequate. However, the formation of organisations such as CRY proves that individual limitations can be converted into significant contributions to the children's cause. CRY raises funds for 'worthy' child welfare organisations, on the premise



A mobile creche for the children of construction workers funded by CRY.

that "children are the world's greatest human resource and thus demand respect." The financial aid CRY provides arises chiefly — approximately 65 per cent — from the sale of its cards. A further 25 per cent is contributed by 3,000 individual donors who adopt the Sponsorship Scheme which requires a paltry donation of Rs 120 to foster a child for a year. Several philanthropic trusts and commercial organisations donate between Rs 500 - Rs 5,000 to the Corporate Fund, and contributions from Indian clubs and communities abroad augment CRY's

corpus by five per cent.

Yet, contrary to popular belief, fund-raising drives are not CRY's primary activity. "CRY does not want to be perceived as a mere fund-raising organisation," protests Rippa Kapur, a founder-member and trustee, "but one which works in partnership with people and projects." Funds are only the means to the end.

The organisation's fundamental goal is to discover people who wish to organise and channelise their talents and skills into serving underprivileged children in the country; thereby act-



ing as a catalyst, igniting awareness and enthusiasm in people, and translating the resultant ideas into tangible, ongoing projects. By harnessing individual efforts to strengthen group resources, concrete, substantial solutions to many of the hardships faced by these children can be formulated, and a dynamic network of learning and sharing between individuals and institutions can be constructed.

CRY cards, apart from carrying seasons greetings, demonstrate this ingenious *modus operandi*. Not only do they effectively and widely spread the message of the organisation — "Help a child change its life" — but they also illustrate the success of pooled resources. Artists like Anjali Ela Menon and B Prabha, private collectors and art galleries, together with designers, printers, and the advertising world, have all contributed to their popularity.

THE FUNDS RAISED through the sale of cards and donations are carefully allocated according to a "funding methodology" which is meticulous



A CRY card by B PRABHA.

lously worked out to ensure that funds are not abused. Before sponsoring a project, CRY scrutinises the proposal diligently. The applicant is required to submit a detailed budget, and once granted funds, is obliged to submit accurate expenditure accounts. CRY also enlists the aid of a full-time, professional social worker, and three experienced consultants to monitor the programmes they foster.

Not each and every project that applies for assistance from CRY receives it. Since there are many more projects at work than the 18 CRY currently aids, refusals are common. "We do reject those that do not meet our criteria," explains Michiko, a project support co-ordinator. Projects are accepted for study only if they suit CRY's priority areas of education, health and foster care. One of CRY's major concerns is the number of children it can reach through sponsoring a particular programme, and whether the programme has potential for growth. Whether a project survives shortlisting and wins CRY's foster-care also depends on how small it is, and whether it is solely dependent on CRY for its funds.

CRY functions as an intermediary body between donors and child welfare organisations, as it believes that there are enough social workers helping children. Since no organisation servicing the voluntary welfare sector previously existed in India, CRY stepped in.

On the other hand, CRY performs its *sole* task very efficiently. Its funds are easily accessible — "They never keep you waiting," says Dr Indu Balagopal of Mobile Crèches. She describes them as "the most enlightened of funding societies — a group that seems to understand our needs and is willing to accommodate whatever amount we want."

WHEN IT WAS CONCEIVED, CRY had only Rs 50 in hand, boasts Ripan. Innovation, co-operation and dedication have now generated a lot more. Despite restraining factors like

CRY. WE'D RATHER YOU REMEMBERED US FOR LITTLE THINGS.



the exigencies of space, CRY's growth chart is quite creditable — from Rs 900 in 1978-1979 to Rs 1,06,170 in 1980 to Rs 8,76,670 this year. And

CRY's funds are expected to double in the next financial year.

The increased funds enabled CRY to extend its services to New Delhi in

1983, Bangalore in 1986, and Madras and Calcutta only this year. Yet, while the network's expansion, both financial and structural, endorses its belief that "You can help", CRY officials honestly admit that they are at the crossroads, hoping that many more people will come forward and help them take the right turn. For CRY has "many miles to go" and many millions to collect, before it can reach out to the country's underprivileged children — there are approximately 83.8 million 0-4-year olds and 179.3 million 5-14 year old children in India, and the majority are deprived. Funding 18 projects and helping two lakh children with a full-time staff of only 50 personnel is obviously not enough.

In a socio-economic framework where the infant mortality rate is 11 per cent, where the literacy rate is 24.8 per cent among females, and 46.9 per cent among males, and where only 28.0 per cent of India's child population attend secondary schools, Child Relief and You has a long way to go in making children's dreams come true. ♦

SIGNIFICANT PROJECTS AIDED BY CRY:

SARJAN seeks to compose a creative childhood through non-formal education in craft and the performing arts. CRY has funded Sarjan's core activity at Juhapura and the extension of its ideas to other educational institutions, like Ankur.

CHEATNA VIKAS helps the poor agricultural community in Wardha district, Maharashtra, to combat exploitation through collective ventures like grain banks and to acquire leadership skills and a basic knowledge of health care. CRY also funds five Earn and Learn Centres of Chetna Vikas, to help 125 school drop-outs.

ANKUR is a non-formal institution which, among its many activities, runs general knowledge classes linked

to the rights and needs of the poor. Ankur reaches 1,500 children in 50 urban and semi-rural communities in and around Delhi. Ankur merited funding from CRY primarily because it offers health programmes for women and children.

PRAKRUTI comprises a group of young doctors, medical students, and local part-time workers, who run a weekly clinic at Varose, a hamlet of adivasis, 70 km away from Bombay. The medicos, sent by CRY on study-tours of rural health care projects all over India, focus on providing mother and child care for over 2,000 tribals. They also hold camps for the prevention and timely detection of diseases.

PARIVAR SENA SANSTHA is a fa-

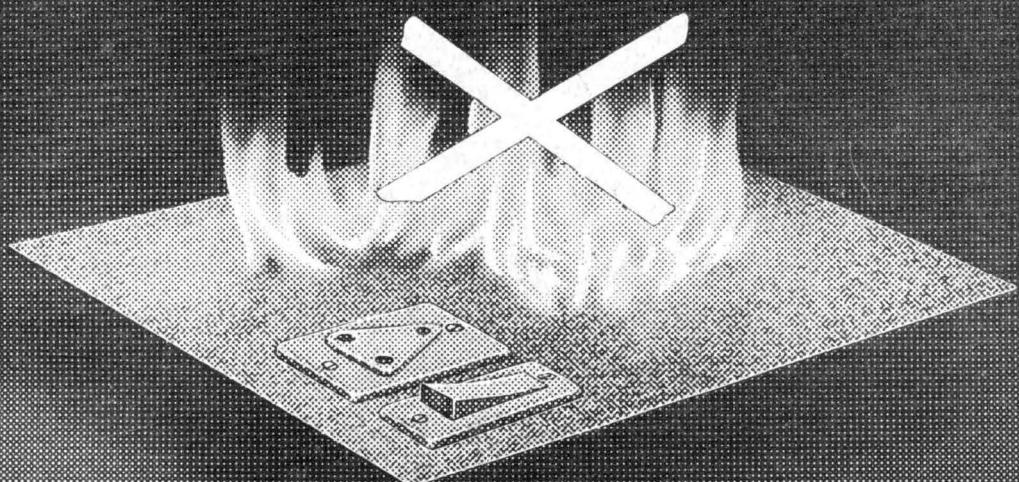
mily-planning organisation established a year ago and which has since then motivated 12,700 people to practise birth control. CRY's funds initiated a programme that carried its message on family-planning to the doorstep of the rural poor in North India.

PRERANA, a project undertaken by the Nirmala Niketan College of Social Work, Bombay, runs a night-care centre, and a foster-family care programme, for the children of prostitutes.

THE KARNATAKA STATE COUNCIL FOR CHILD WELFARE, working towards saving children from exploitation, weans them from rag-picking and begging. CRY 'fosters' 60 children, providing basic education and other essentials.



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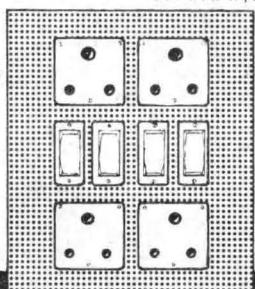
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THE CIA: UNVEILED?

Reagan dismissed it as "an awful lot of fiction", and the present CIA Director, William Webster, calculates that little damage has been done. But Bob Woodward's book, 'VEIL: The Secret Wars of the CIA', has been hailed as an unparalleled effort in unmasking the machinations of the CIA, under the stewardship of its Director, William J Casey. But has it? Eminent journalist M V KAMATH reviews the bestseller and concludes that it masks more than it reveals.

WHO IS AFRAID of the CIA? Some are, and others should be, for if God and the Devil are ubiquitous, so is the Central Intelligence Agency. Its tentacles spread far and wide: it has financed and masterminded civil disturbances and wars, and overthrown duly elected governments. All this, according to Bob Woodward, the author of *Veil: The Secret Wars of the CIA*.

Although Woodward, of Watergate fame, has exposed the CIA to public scrutiny, no one should be under the impression that the book represents the whole truth. The CIA is not, and has never been, in the truth business unless the truth could be marshalled for its defence. But since the CIA already enjoyed the reputation of being up to just about anything, whatever Woodward has unearthed only confirms the belief that everyone held — that the CIA is up to no good. It spies on friends and foes alike. No one and nothing is sacrosanct.

The men in the White House, for instance, President Carter's National Security Adviser, Brezinski, wanted it that way. Woodward describes Brezinski thus: "He loved raw intelligence. The National Security Agency which intercepted foreign communications often provided him with transcripts of some Head of State talking, or with the decoded political analysis that some foreign embassy had sent back to its capital." As far as Carter and Brezinski were concerned, when



Bob Woodward: The author.

intelligence did not work, when the bug was not instantly in place, or when the CIA predicted future events wrongly, there was hell to pay. Great risks were frequently taken, often to glean only marginal information.

One of the top-secret operations conducted by the CIA was that of a special Navy Control Programme in which US submarines trailed Soviet submarines and conducted high-risk surveillance and intelligence-gathering around the Soviet Union, at times even inside Soviet territorial waters or in its harbours: a totally illegal mission, but who cared for legality?

A deputy in the CIA once sent a note to the Director, which said that "there was a greater need for intelligence on allies and friends." Spying

on friends, the gentleman believed, was "a sticky but essential business". Following the Iranian revolution, when the CIA was virtually caught unawares, it attempted to increase its network of paid agents in foreign governments and intelligence services, including those of "allies and friends". Egypt was a classic case in point. A CIA security operation, designed to provide President Anwar Sadat with protection and arm him with information on possible coups and assassination plots, was also used to gather information on him. His home was wired and Carter soon learnt details of Sadat's personal life. As for protecting Sadat, the CIA failed — Sadat was assassinated, a point that Woodward conveniently omits to mention.

THE CIA ALSO HAD its ears to the ground in Saudi Arabia, and Prince Bandar, Saudi Arabia's Ambassador to the United States, and the son of the country's Defence Minister, was often 'useful'. The Saudis had assisted the resistance to the Marxist government in Ethiopia, for which "the CIA was grateful". Understandably. The Saudis had also once provided the then Egyptian Vice-President "with a regular income". Of this Woodward says: "It was impossible to determine when Saudi interests in these arrangements ended and American CIA interests began."

Sometimes, Saudi Arabian and American interests clashed. A story

had appeared in *The Washington Post* stating that Saudi Arabia was considering sending some money to the Nicaraguan Contras. A CIA official was sent to the Saudi Embassy to check it out. Prince Bandar thought that the story had been planted by the CIA itself to assess Saudi reaction. The Prince checked with his own government only to learn that the CIA could not or would not offer anything in return for Saudi aid to the Contras, or at least nothing had been suggested; that Saudi foreign policy in Central America was at odds with the US since the Sandinista Government in Nicaragua was basically pro-Arab; and that the Saudis had no confidence that secrets could be kept by the Reagan Administration.

Prince Bandar was approached by emissaries on behalf of the Contras, among them, two Chief Executive Officers of major American corporations. Quite predictably, in the end, the Saudis had to agree to fork out US\$8 million to the Contras, through a Swiss Bank. When the cash flow slackened, a CIA friend of Prince Bandar telephoned him to say that the Contras were not getting the money. Of course the conversation was in code. Said the CIA official: "My friend did not get his cigarettes – and he is a heavy smoker!"

WOODWARD TELLS HIS STORY well, but sometimes one wonders about his credibility. Is he, for example, telling the truth about the assassination of Patrick Lumumba, or is he dexterously telling a half-truth to shift the blame from the CIA to others? On August 25, 1960, a cable was sent from the then CIA chief, Alan Dulles, to the station-chief in Congo, stating that President Lumumba's removal "must be an urgent and prime objective and that under existing conditions this should be high priority". Woodward writes that before the CIA plot could be executed, Lumumba was assassinated by another group of Mobutu supporters. The story circulating in 1960, however, was that

it was indeed the CIA that was responsible for Lumumba's assassination. Perhaps it does not matter. The CIA wanted him destroyed anyway.

CIA efforts to assassinate Cuba's President Fidel Castro were revealed years ago by *The New York Times*. Yet Woodward makes only three brief references to these. In one instance, a CIA agent was apparently given a ball-

cent and gullible participants" in any procession. It further suggested that "if possible, professional criminals will be hired to carry out selective jobs." Thoughtful, indeed.

The CIA had its supporters in the Congress. There was Congressman Charles Wilson who had made three trips to Pakistan and who wanted "more dead Russians". Woodward



William J Casey: The ex-CIA Director.

point pen rigged with a hypodermic needle so fine that its insertion would not be noticed by Castro. The needle was coated with Blackleaf-40, a commercially available high-grade poison. According to Woodward, "The delivery of the assassination device took place on November 22, 1963." Fidel Castro must have got wise to the plot. He survived.

The CIA could be very explicit in its orders when it suited them. For example, there was once a manual which taught the Nicaraguan Contras the "selective use of violence" to "neutralise carefully selected and planned targets such as court judges, police and state security officials." CIA agents were advised that guerrillas equipped with weapons – knives, razors, chains, clubs, bludgeons – should march slightly behind "inno-

Although Bob Woodward has exposed the CIA to public scrutiny, no one should be under the impression that the book represents the whole truth. The CIA is not, and has never been, in the truth business unless the truth could be marshalled for its defence. Whatever Woodward has unearthed only confirms the belief that everyone held – that the CIA is up to no good. It spies on friends and foes alike.

quotes him as having said, "There were 58,000 dead in Vietnam and we owe the Russians one." Wilson had suggested to the US Government that the Afghan rebels be given some advanced anti-aircraft weapons and the rapid-fire Swiss-made Orlon guns, and claimed that it was President Zia's idea. Wilson managed to divert US\$40 million into the CIA's account, appropriating this from the Defence budget. Woodward says: "For Casey (the CIA Director) it was a windfall. Not only was the US\$40 million an important boost to the Afghan programme, but it showed that Congress could support and even get ahead of the administration on covert action."

CASEY WAS ALL FOR entrusting more power to the Chiefs of Station abroad. He was particularly eager to

BOOK REVIEW

help Pakistan since President Zia's willingness to allow the CIA to funnel increasing para-military support to the Afghanistan rebels, through Pakistan, was crucial. Woodward writes, "Casey, the CIA, and the Reagan Administration, all wanted Zia to stay in power and needed to know what was going on in his government. The CIA station in Islamabad was *one of the biggest in the world.*" (italics supplied.) Woodward, of course, does not outline what "one of the biggest CIA stations in the world" was actually doing. Was it through Pakistan that aid was being sent to the Khalistanis? Or were the Pakistanis indulging in anti-India activities all on their own? Were the CIA agents in Islamabad really not aware of what was going on? No answers are forthcoming.

If Woodward is to be believed, the US Ambassador to India, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, had few illusions about the capacity of the CIA to deliver useful intelligence. "When he was Ambassador to India from 1973 to 1975, his CIA station chief had often rushed in with Indian government 'secrets' in special folders, denoting importance, but then the Indian leadership would do something that was not mentioned in the folders. It was clear to him that the CIA was missing a great deal."

THE REFERENCES TO INDIA are tantalisingly brief and one can only conclude that either the CIA was ineffective or alternatively, that its espionage activities were too effective to be openly discussed. However, one CIA observation claimed that during Mrs Gandhi's time, power was divided between the Gandhi Government and a Defence Ministry that was "wholly under Soviet domination". This "two-tier government" made things difficult for the US "because it is often unclear who has the real say". India should take pride in the fact that one happy result of its inefficiency was that we neatly foisted the US and the CIA. Inefficiency in a



The references to India are brief and one can only conclude that either the CIA was ineffective or that its espionage activities were too effective to be openly discussed. One CIA observation claimed that during Mrs Gandhi's time, power was divided between the Gandhi Government and a Defence Ministry that was "wholly under Soviet domination".

democracy certainly has its uses.

There was one occasion when the Government of India learnt about CIA espionage activities in the country. Woodward puts it gently: "A CIA source in India had been compromised and rolled up. Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi had been furious that the United States had planted a spy in her midst. But both countries had decided it was best to play down the matter." Who was the spy? Was he a cabinet minister? Was he a senior official? Or was he an American? We do not know and we are not given an answer. It is this sort of writing that makes *Veil* extremely frustrating reading.

It is important to remember that the book is not the result of Woodward having outsmarted the CIA by planting his own spies inside the

Agency, but the result of "interviews with more than 250 people involved directly in gathering or using intelligence information." Woodward says that he would have liked to have mentioned the names of about 15 "key sources" but since he was briefed on a "background" basis, they remained unidentified. He claims to have been given access to "documents, memoranda, notes, calendars, other written chronologies, letters, transcripts and diaries," but again, we do not know how many of these were 'sanitised'. With the CIA, one can never tell.

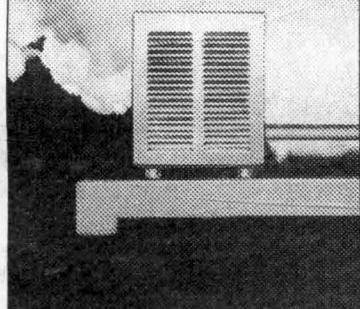
The CIA has been under public scrutiny in recent times because of its involvement in Nicaragua, which is what gives this book a special relevance today. On the subject of Nicaragua, of course, Woodward is more specific and presumably tells the story straight. Despite a penchant for spying, the Americans can often be shockingly frank, at least to each other. There must be something in their national character that often gives even top spies a sense of guilt and a feeling of remorse. Thus, as Director William J. Casey lay dying in a hospital, he saw Woodward for the last time. Casey knew that he was dying. Woodward put a question to him. Why had the CIA given aid to the Contras? Casey replied briefly: "I believed." "What?" asked Woodward again. "I believed," Casey repeated weakly. The Catholic in Casey had to believe that what he had done was commensurate with his convictions. So ingrained is the American belief that communism is wrong and should be fought and that there is such a thing as the American Way of Life, that only this belief could sustain wrong-doing. Casey was such a 'believer', even if, in the end, he brought the Reagan administration into disrepute. The CIA will not be dissuaded from further adventures, but perhaps it will be more careful. As the saying goes, and as the CIA knows, the sin is not in doing something wrong and forbidden, but in being caught in the act. ♦

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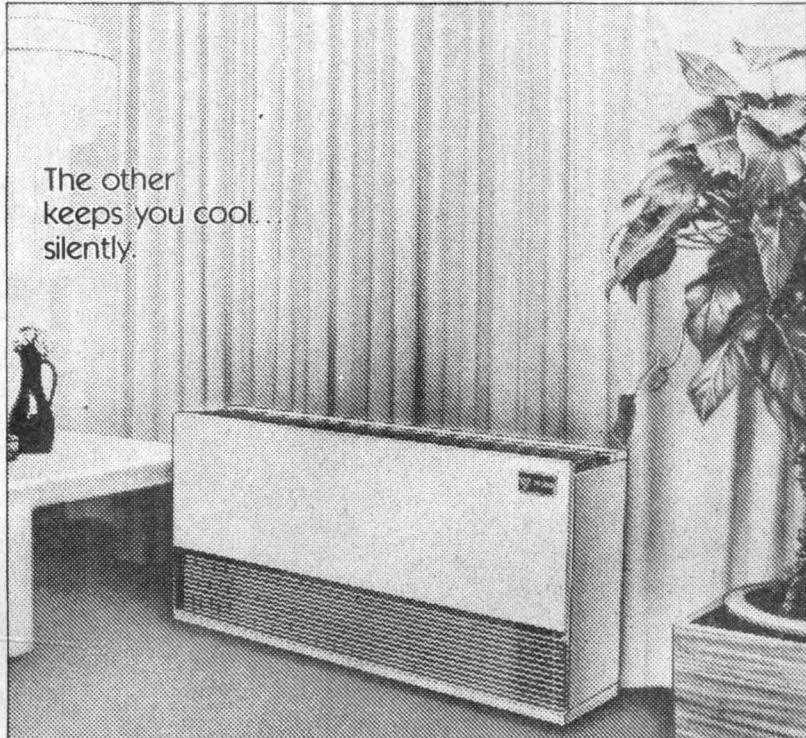
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ANUP JALOTA: THE SOUND OF RELIGION

Anup Jalota has, by his own admission, beaten Elvis Presley to it. No, not really, but he just may — as a singer with the largest number of gold records as well as the largest sales of a single hit, *Bhajan Sandhya*. Having sent the necessary information to the Guinness Book of World Records, Jalota is confident of his entry. A name which frequently appears at the top of the music charts in India, he is, more than anything else, a singer for all occasions: ganesh poojas, mar-

riages, mundan ceremonies, and of course, professional concerts.

A music buff may be surprised at the man's popularity. One need not be. The reasons for Jalota's success are quite obvious. He has unerringly gauged public tastes, giving people what they want — a skilful combination of simple lyrics, sung in easy-to-hum tunes, with deliberate undertones of religion. The content is often pure, undiluted kitsch.

An arts graduate from Lucknow,

Jalota never imagined he would make it to the top. In fact, he candidly admits: "I feel I don't deserve the fame I have achieved." You respect the man for his honesty; he is capable of introspection, you tell yourself. The optimism is premature as soon as you cut through the hype and examine the statements for what they are — attempts at self-promotion.

Sober, sedate, kurta-clad Jalota can also be profound when the occasion demands. He can speak eloquently of his knowledge of the Brahman, swara, dhyan, and anand, about his exclusive commitment to music. Money has never been his primary concern, he says, as he sits back in cushioned comfort. The career graphs and sales charts however, tell another story. He charges approximately Rs 25,000 for a concert and performs, on an average, 20



By P G Menon

concerts a month. Although Jalota vehemently denies being just a bhajan singer, his popularity is unquestionably linked with this form of music. Ultimately, it is the rendering of the bhajan that makes for its quality. The singer encapsulates the soul of the song, he breathes life into it, absorbs the listener, weaves an enchanting web around him. Anup Jalota fulfills these criteria with consummate ease and self-confidence.

Presenting Anup Jalota, on his successful career, and the satisfaction that music has given him.

On His Success:

I have cut 70 gold and platinum discs which include both bhajans and ghazals. I have really popularised the bhajan among all generations. My ver-

satility, which enables me to sing in Bengali, Gujarati, Oriya, Punjabi and Marathi, has also played a considerable part in my overall success.

Manoj Kumar's film, *Shirdi Ke Sai Baba* for which I sang three songs, gave me my first break in 1976. The film was a big hit, people came to recognise me as a bhajan singer. Maybe it runs in the family — my father too, is a well-known bhajan singer.

Today, the sheer volume of my concerts — at least 20 each month, can make my singing mechanical, but finally it is up to me as an artiste to introduce variety. Audiences invariably flock to concerts of their favourite artistes as long as the singing is strong, and there is a distinct rapport between the performer and the listeners.

It is only hard work that can ensure success. Pursuit of money has ne-



The Jalotas with the Giani.

ver been my sole aim. If wealth has come my way it is well-deserved, for I have always worked hard and with total commitment to my music.

On The Ghazal And Bhajan Craze:

The explanation for the ghazal and bhajan craze today is quite simple. Most songs have no repeat value, even film songs are appreciated for only short durations. When Mehdi Hassan appeared on the music scene here, his melodious voice ensured his endurance. Jagjit and Chitra Singh went on to familiarise the masses with the ghazal. Children started humming *Ahista . . . Ahista*. Later, Ghulam Ali provided a classical touch to such music. Then came Talat Aziz. I joined the bandwagon in 1981, my forte being light classical music.

On His Early Years:

I was the only one of five children who displayed any interest in music. At the age of seven, I started learning music from my father and used to accompany him on concert tours. As part of my relentless training schedule, my father used to lock me up in a room for three hours every day, compelling me to practise my singing. As his tours became more frequent, he



MUSIC

insisted on my joining the Bhatkande College of Music, to prevent me from losing contact with music. He also thought a degree would come in handy, later on.

But I sincerely believe in the *guru-shishya parampara*. You cannot learn music in a college. My father was my *guru*. I learnt classical music under him. In those times, I used to practise for at least six hours every day. Today, I spend only two to three hours on *riyaz*, because I have to devote a lot of time to my concerts.

On His Popularity:

Sixty per cent of my popularity can be attributed directly to my bhajans — my compositions are so good that even children can understand and sing them. The rest, to my ghazals. Moreover, I respect my listeners, I am accessible to my fans, I never waste their time — even before my audiences stop applauding I start the next song. I don't have to refer to any diary — I have memorised over 500 bhajans, 500 ghazals and 500 film songs.

My style of singing has remained the same over the years. Many people say that my voice is very similar to that of my father's, but they also accuse me of resorting to gimmickry.



Encouraging new talent: Anup with Lalit Gurwara.

This is unfair. You see, I have always tried to popularise bhajans and ghazals among people who don't know music. You *have* to introduce more entertainment. So, I intersperse my singing with effective use of the *jugalbandi* between the *santoor* and the *tabla*. Some people term this 'gimmickry'. If it is, then every successful Hindustani artiste indulges in it, I am merely following earlier traditions.

In the final analysis I would like to be known as a singer — the forms of singing are not important. Whatever I sing, my only goal is to be true to the emotions expressed by the poet. A bhajan should induce a feeling of *bhakti* in the listener, while a film song must evoke a 'filmi' feeling.

On The Western Connection:

I do listen to Western music — I am very fond of the Beatles. Nobody sings more melodiously than them.

I give concerts in the West quite often, around six times a year. In fact, I was the first Indian to perform in Israel. Abroad, my audiences consist largely of Indians, while foreigners, mainly ISKCON devotees, enjoy my bhajans, especially *Main nahin maakhhan khayo*.

On Branching Out:

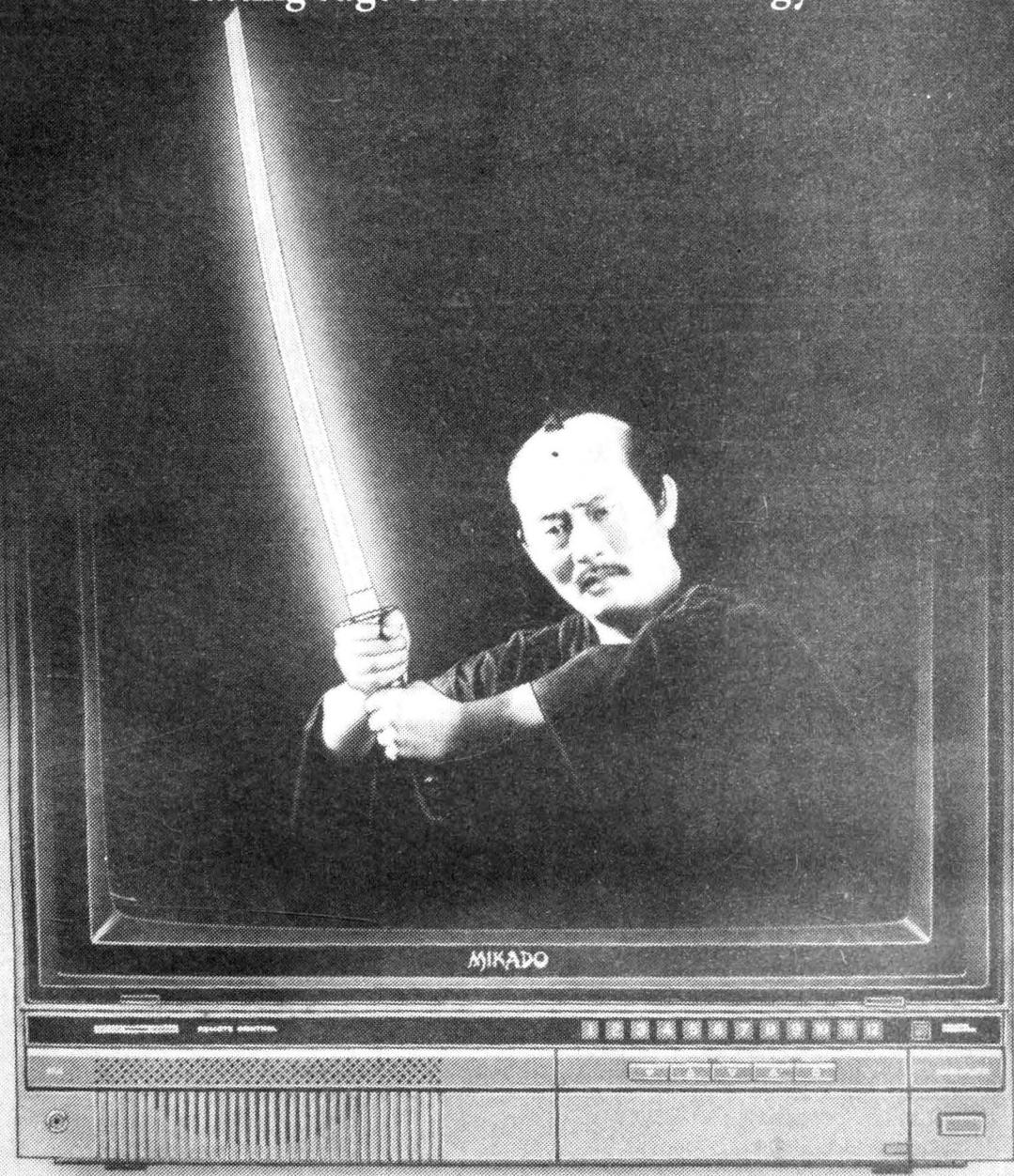
Films are a recent hobby of mine. In my most recent film, a Bengali one, I play the role of Surdas — it is a welcome break from routine. Strangely enough, in most of my films I play myself. Financially I stand to lose, since my concerts have to be cancelled to accommodate shooting schedules and I don't charge any fees for acting.

On What Music Means To Him:

The moment I hear the strains of the *tanpura* and begin singing, I forget my sorrows and experience peace. It gives me *anand*, immense satisfaction. I forget the world. In return, I have devoted my entire life to music. My most recent contribution has been a donation of Rs 2.5 crore to help establish a new branch of the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan in New York. I am proud to have played a role, however small, in promoting Indian culture at home and abroad. ♦



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A HIMALAYAN ODYSSEY

Each year, the majestic Himalayas play host to a thrilling international car rally. GOPIKA MEHTA and photographer HORMAZD SORABJEE capture the drama and derring-do of India's premier motoring event as they follow the speeding cars on their gruelling drive through the mountains.



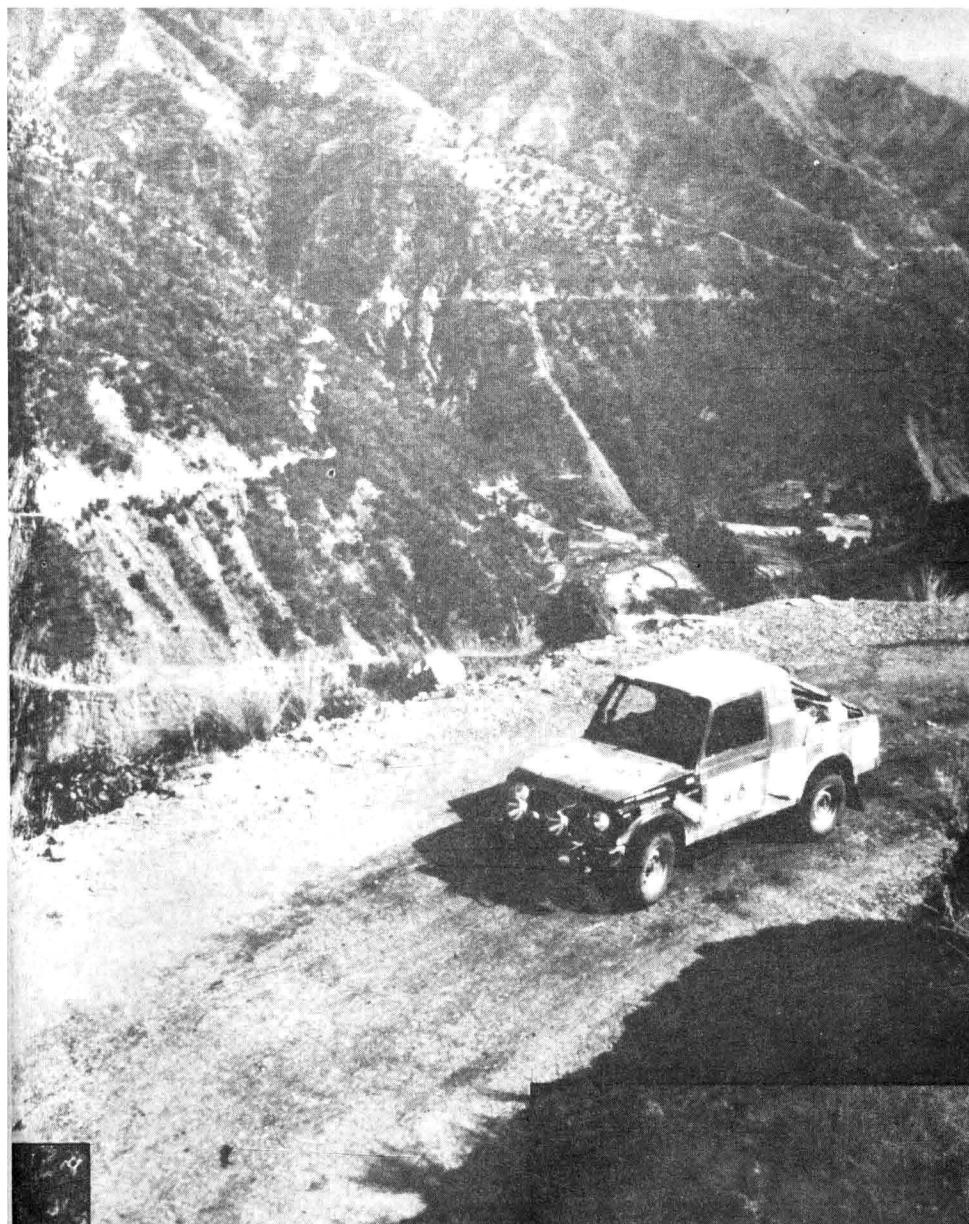
Flory Roothaert blasts his way through the forest.

AS THE SUN HAULED ITSELF over the horizon on October 27, 1987, an air of excitement descended over Delhi. At the Nehru Stadium, tucked away in South Delhi, there was a flurry of feverish activity at the start of the eighth Himalayan Rally. Last-minute instructions were called out, watches were adjusted to the rally time, good-luck charms worn, and wishes made.

Meanwhile, sitting pretty in a *parc fermé* (closed park) was a congregation of 96 cars that would battle for top honours — Nissans, Mitsubishi, Opel Mantas, Jongas, and Maruti Gypsies, smothered with stickers and sporting the logos of sponsors — a carnival of colour. But a closer look revealed a more sobering reality. Painstakingly painted on the side of



Steaming ahead on a narrow road.



Majestic mountains play host to the rally.

each car were the blood-groups of the driver and navigator, and suddenly, the dangers of the sport were apparent — the chilling possibility of injury, and even death. It is to keep such hazards at bay that rally organisers impose mandatory safety requirements such as a fire-extinguisher and a roll cage — a metal frame that lines the car's interior, cushioning the impact in the event of a collision. Several cars sported additional accessories like crash-guards and blinding 100-watt headlights.

Soon, a gawking crowd had elbowed its way into the stadium. The cars, flagged off at two-minute intervals,

By Gopika Mehta

snarled past the billboards and cheering crowds on their way to Nainital — the first leg of the rally.

I FOLLOWED THE RALLY in a press car, along with a fellow journalist. We left the stadium at a leisurely pace, gulping in the early morning air. Once out of the city, we stepped on the gas, and as the speedometer needle soared, the concrete jungle gave way to spine-bending roads cutting through forests of *sal* and *deodars*. The six-day, 3,000 km rally through Nainital, Mussoorie and Simla was to cover some of the most scenic spots in the Himalayas. The route ranged from the relatively easy to the virtually suicidal — straight, tarmac roads to adrenalin-pumping, boulder-strewn, competitive sectors where the cars were pushed to the very limit (average speed here was 100 kmph).

The first leg of the rally, which involved driving on dirt roads, took a heavy toll on the vehicles. The Australians, David and Kathryn Officer, the first to be flagged off, were also the first casualties. They were forced to



There's more to rallying than kicking up dust!

PHOTO ESSAY

pull out of the rally when their Mitsubishi Starion skidded off the road and turned turtle, a mere 18 km from the start. Several others soon joined the ranks of wayside wayfarers, including ace Italian rally driver, Andrea Zanussi, whose prototype Nissan Pulsar developed a mechanical problem.

But escapades such as falling into a *khud*, somersaulting, and wearing out tyres are almost a *sine qua non* of a rally with service cars rushing to the rescue with fuel and spares. To guard against the all too possible probability of the service car itself breaking down, some competitors had several back-up cars. Factory-entered vehicles usually have an edge over others in their no-costs-barred battery of service teams which check frustrating breakdowns.

BUT EVEN THE BEST laid plans, as Captain Chauhan and Major Sekhon ruefully discovered, can go awry. Driving a factory-entered Maruti Gypsy,

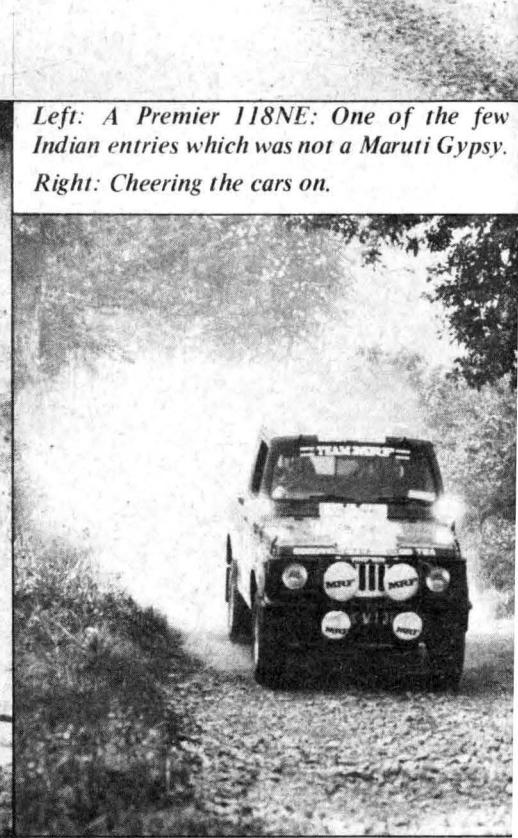


Left: A Premier 118NE: One of the few Indian entries which was not a Maruti Gypsy.

Right: Cheering the cars on.



Capt Chauhan and Maj Sekhon's hopes of a hat trick were dampened.



A Maruti Gypsy won the national award.



son, the gutsy septuagenarian and a Himalayan Rally veteran, for whom the thrill of entering the rally was reason enough to rejoice. Unfortunately, much of this enthusiasm was dampened by some misguided enthusiasts who threw stones at the passing cars. Kenjiro Shinozuka's windscreens were shattered, while Ross Dunkerton reported that he had had to physically remove the large stones blocking his path. Even our press car was not spared. While climbing a narrow gradient near Mussoorie, we watched with horror as a man set an empty barrel rolling in our direction. Luckily, it came tumbling down at an angle and hit the hillside. A close shave.

But, as if to make amends for their unsporting elders, the cherubic village children, perched on hilltops along the route, cheered the rally cars on. Perplexed as to why our Ambassador was not hurtling down the mountainside, they egged us on, "Jaldi jao, rally-walla, jaldi jao!"

the twice national award winners, aiming for a hat trick this year, complained that they were never able to meet their service cars en route. So, when their Gypsy keeled over to one side, and Sekhon sprained his hand, the hapless duo could do little more than stand by the roadside until a good Samaritan, also a competitor, helped them get on the road again. Having lost 45 precious minutes in the bargain, and with Sekhon's arm in a sling, the burden of driving fell on Chauhan. Ill-luck baited them once again when their erring Gypsy stubbornly refused to go at over 95 kmph. The recalcitrant vehicle was the last straw, and victory, which had seemed only a heartbeat away, slipped from their grasp. At the end of the third leg in Simla, Chauhan was resigned: "Now there's no way we can win," he lamented.

The heady wine of victory was certainly not the tonic of Jangoo Nichol-



It was for the thrill of entering that J Nicholson, the oldest contestant, raced.

PHOTO ESSAY



Precipices and steep cliffs...

However, there is more to rallying than just kicking up a cloud of dust. When the evening shadows lengthen and darkness drapes the mountains, driving on a dirt road flanked by a steep cliff on one side and a sheer drop of 8,000 feet on the other, becomes as much a test of nerves as of skill. With only the vehicle's headlights piercing the utter stillness and blackness of the night, and the eerie white-washed milestones guiding the way, driving in the Himalayas can be a chilling experience.

IT IS THEN that you realise the vital role of the navigator. While the driver concentrates on the road, the navigator with his tulip chart, roadbook, and route map, warns the driver of any approaching culvert, hairpin bend, river-bed, or change in terrain. He also keeps a tab on the average speed clocked and time taken, since if a driver checks into a time control a minute late he gets one penalty point, but if he checks in a minute early, he

is given 10 penalty points. The perfect rapport between driver and navigator was nowhere better exemplified than when Flory Roothaert's car battery had failed last year. As his navigator held out a torch to light the way, Roothaert had driven through the night, without losing speed. Needless to say, quick reflexes were called for. There may be obstacles which even a navigator cannot foresee, like the two jackals which jumped into our path and kept sprinting ahead of us, hypnotised by the car's headlights. Or the giant iguana that suddenly emerged from the bushes and scuttled into the middle of the road to take a closer look at us.

Such colourful experiences are certainly not restricted only to the road. Lofty Drews, Jayant Shah's navigator, recalled that when the hotel bell-boy failed to supply firewood last year, despite repeated requests, Drews took



... suicidal curves and a harsh terrain are a test of nerves and skill.

the simple way out by breaking a few chairs to get his heart going! This year, there were some experiences that may not have happened at all, like the unconfirmed report of how Kenjiro Shinozuka killed a tiger on the way!

The drama and derring-do over, the cars prepared for the last leg of the rally, a straight transport sector back to Delhi, where a large crowd waited impatiently for their arrival. The first to drive to the finishing ramp was Japanese Kenjiro Shinozuka who clinched the top prize of Rs 40,000 — his highest honour in 20 years of rallying. He was closely followed by Australian Ross Dunkerton and Kenyan Jayant Shah, the four-time Himalayan Rally winner.

AND, AS THE LAST CARS chugged into the stadium in the falling dusk, there were some memorable vignettes



Shinozuka's Mitsubishi Starion wins the rally!



Ross Dunkerton speeds on to come in second.

that would stay with us forever: the *bonhomie* and champagne-popping; Nisha Sutaria and Dilshad Irani, the only all-women crew who finished the rally to win the Coupe des Dames Trophy; and the exuberant Shinozuka who, narrating his experiences in the heady heights of the Himalayas, quipped succinctly, "What use is a crash-guard? What you need here is a parachute!" They all left with a rich palette of memories, reluctant to return to their tedious, humdrum eight-hour jobs. All except Dunkerton, who, I am sure, was raring to go fishing in the lobster yacht he had invested in two years ago. And their dusty weather-beaten cars, having stretched themselves to the limit, were going to take a well-deserved breather before being smartened up for the next rally.

And, standing silently on the sidelines, was a dust-covered Ambassador whose stoic composure had seen us through the memorable six days. An unsung hero. ♦

Five Forget-Me-Nots

that would benefit you

1

Keep your bank pass book updated... it could save you embarrassment, and help you keep track of all transactions.

2

Check that you receive current account statement regularly—if not ask.

3

Ensure cheque book and pass book are kept securely. Inform bank immediately in writing if any signed cheque is lost.

4

Remember and renew term deposits on due date.

5

Ensure demand drafts sent by you, are acknowledged.

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- Allahabad Bank
- Andhra Bank
- Bank of Baroda
- Bank of India
- Bank of Maharashtra
- Canara Bank
- Central Bank of India
- Corporation Bank
- Dena Bank
- Indian Bank
- Indian Overseas Bank
- New Bank of India
- Oriental Bank of Commerce
- Punjab National Bank
- Punjab & Sind Bank
- State Bank of India
- State Bank of Bikaner & Jaipur
- State Bank of Hyderabad
- State Bank of Indore
- State Bank of Mysore
- State Bank of Patiala
- State Bank of Saurashtra
- State Bank of Travancore
- Syndicate Bank
- UCO Bank
- Union Bank of India
- United Bank of India
- Vijaya Bank

EXTRACT

"Rich people are usually boring because they don't face reality. Everything I have could go tomorrow. Instead of 12 houses, I could have two. You have to accept that it could all end. The person who doesn't understand that is lost."

— Khashoggi to Dossier magazine,
December 1985.

NO ONE KNEW what to call it at first — Irangate, Iranscam, Iran-amok. But it all referred to the same thing. The United States, which was taking a neutral position in the Iran-Iraq war, then six years old, had been secretly supplying arms to Iran. What is more, despite specific Congressional prohibitions on direct or indirect military aid to the *Contra* rebels in Nicaragua, excess payments for some arms had been diverted to the rebels fighting the Sandinista regime.

Behind the story was a bizarre tapestry of intrigue: secret envoys travelling to a hostile nation under false credentials, a swashbuckling Marine whose power seemed to rival the President's, Swiss bank accounts set up by the CIA, and American hostages held by ferocious zealots in a country torn apart by war. Through it all, Adnan Khashoggi's name kept turning up.

The first hint that the US had been shipping arms to Iran appeared in a Lebanese magazine, *Al Shira'a*. On November 3, 1986, the magazine reported that former White House National Security Adviser Robert McFarlane had accompanied one of the shipments to Tehran. From Washington came the usual denials. But by November 13, President Reagan acknowledged a 'secret diplomatic initiative' involving shipments of 'small amounts of defensive weapons and

Excerpted from "Khashoggi: The Rise And Fall Of The World's Richest Man". Published by Corgi Books and distributed by India Book Distributors, Price Rs 65.00.

ARMS AND THE MAN



A Khashoggi: The money-spinner.

His fortune is reportedly dwindling. But Adnan Mohamed Khashoggi, the controversial arms dealer, continues to spend a staggering US \$330,000 a day!

This extract from Kessler's biography, 'Khashoggi', pinpoints his intricate machinations vis-a-vis the Irangate scandal — a deal which catapulted him into notoriety, but not without making a slight dent in his vast resources.

spare parts' that could 'easily fit into a single cargo plane'. The purpose of the shipments was not to free the hostages, as the Lebanese magazine had suggested, but rather to gain influence with moderates who might succeed Ayatollah Khomeini, President Reagan said.

Within a matter of weeks, Reagan's story had become, in the vernacular of the Watergate scandal, inoperative. As it turned out, five different shipments, seven plane loads in all, had been made beginning in August 1985. Altogether, 2,008 TOW anti-tank missiles, 18 HAWK missile systems, and an array of spare parts for the HAWK had been flown to Iran. This was the same country that a few months earlier Reagan had called 'a new, international version of Murder Inc'. White House memos soon surfaced showing that the effort was, indeed, an attempt to pay ransom for the freedom of the six hostages then held by pro-Iranian Shiite Muslims in Lebanon.

By the end of the year, Irangate was a major national scandal, complete with reports of shredded documents and break-ins. Four Congressional committees had launched investigations. The House and Senate formed Watergate-style select investigating committees. The Justice Department called in the FBI, and a special prosecutor was named to determine if any criminal laws had been violated, as seemed likely. Meanwhile, Reagan announced that McFarlane's successor as National Security Adviser, Vice Admiral John M Poindexter, had resigned, and National Security Council (NSC) staff member, Lieutenant Colonel Oliver L North, the Marine who diverted money to the Nicaraguan rebels, had been dismissed.

AS THE SCANDAL UNFOLDED, Reagan's popularity plummeted. A *Los Angeles Times* poll found 78 per cent of those surveyed felt that the

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deal involved a White House cover-up. Sixty per cent felt it was as serious as the Watergate scandal that led to President Nixon's resignation.

Khashoggi's involvement was first mentioned in *Time* magazine. In a November 17, 1986, cover story about the scandal, the magazine referred to him as a middleman for Israel in the deal. Khashoggi immediately and vehemently denied this, telling a Spanish newspaper that such a statement was 'not only a lie and a slander, but an insult to my Arab nationalism. I have worked for international armament firms for more than 15 years, but always in favour of my country and the Arab world'.

In fact, *Time* had it just slightly wrong. It was not that Khashoggi had been working for the Israelis, who supplied the arms from their stocks of American-made weapons. It was that Khashoggi had masterminded the entire deal and was therefore working for himself.

That fact soon surfaced, too. On October 22, 1986, the *New York Times* reported in a page-one story that Khashoggi had been the major intermediary among Israel, Iran, and the US. On December 4, 1986, the newspaper called the Iran arms deal his 'brainchild'.

Soon, every newspaper, magazine, and television news show in the country had named him as father of the arms sale, depicting his role in intricate diagrams tracing the money flow. Major networks competed to put him on their shows. He made the cover of *Time*. Caricatures depicted him as an evil genius. And there was talk of a new dance: the Khashoggi shuffle.

To those not familiar with Khashoggi's way of doing business, it seemed as unbelievable as the arms sale itself. This rotund Arab, whose tastes ran to (US)\$2,000-a-night call girls, had gotten the US to ship arms to a hostile nation and had created a national scandal that severely undermined confidence in the Reagan Presidency.

It began when Roy M Furmark, a gruff, goateed New York businessman

who is a longtime associate of Khashoggi's, introduced him in London in January 1985 to Cyrus Hashemi, an Iranian arms merchant. Hashemi claimed to be a cousin of Hojatolislam Hashemi Rafsanjani, the Speaker of the Iranian Parliament.

ON APRIL 1, 1985, Khashoggi and the cherub-cheeked Hashemi met again in London to form World Trade Groups, which had three purposes: to act as the agent in Iran for Caterpillar Inc of Illinois (US), to barter oil from Iran for commodities like paper pulp and food, and to export arms to Iran. Khashoggi owned 45 per cent of the company, Hashemi 45 per cent, and Furmark — 10.

According to sources involved in the negotiations, the idea from the start was to sell US arms to Iran. Hashemi had already done so in 1980 and been indicted by the US Government for violating laws against exporting arms to a terrorist country. Khashoggi, for his part, was aware that Israel, with tacit US approval, had been secretly shipping US arms to Iran since 1982. His intelligence sources told him also that the US was looking for ways to improve relations with Iran and might consider shipping arms. Furmark, a friend of CIA Director William J Casey, told Khashoggi that Casey had said that the US already permitted sales of arms to Iran through other countries.

On June 13, Hashemi introduced Khashoggi to Manucher Ghorbanifar, a trusted friend and adviser to the Iranian Prime Minister, Mir Hossein Mousavi. Ghorbanifar was in a position to speak for the Iranian Government, and he had been trying to work out some kind of deal with the US for months. In November 1984, according to *The New York Times*, the Iranian approached Theodore G Shackley, a former American intelligence officer, with an offer to trade the hostages for money.

Nothing had come of these overtures, but no one had involved Khashoggi before. For four days, the three

men met at the Vier Jahreszeiten Hotel in Hamburg, West Germany, to iron out the business details. Day long negotiations took place in penthouse suites overlooking Alster Lake, and in Mercedes limousines en route to expensive dinners complete with gorgeous young women. There were side-trips in Hamburg to late-night bars and a Persian rug sale.

What emerged, according to sources, was the Iran arms deal, with plans to involve the Israelis, set up secret Swiss bank accounts, obtain bonds and letters of credit, trade arms for hostages as a way of establishing good faith, and solicit the approval of the

By involving Israel, Khashoggi could help diffuse the hostility between Israel and her Arab neighbours and win support for the plan from the US. By doing a favour for the US, Khashoggi could win more friends for Saudi Arabia and enhance his own standing in all the countries.

US Government.

It is likely that nobody else in the world could have pulled it off but Khashoggi.

BESIDES MAKING MONEY, he saw the deal as a way of making friends for Saudi Arabia and contributing to peace in the Middle East. Ostensibly, Saudi Arabia sided with Iraq in its war with Iran. But like many countries, it wanted to hedge its bets if it could be done secretly. In backing the deal through Khashoggi, Saudi Arabia could buy insurance if Iran were to win the war.

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could help diffuse the hostility between Israel and her Arab neighbours and win support for the plan from the US. By doing a favour for the US, Khashoggi could win more friends for Saudi Arabia and enhance his own standing in all the countries.

On June 23, Khashoggi dined with King Fahd at his palace and got his stamp of approval for the plan. Then Khashoggi put up (US)\$500,000 as the initial funding for World Trade Groups and promised more money to finance the sales. But first, he needed US approval.

On July 1, 1985, Khashoggi sent McFarlane a 49-page outline of his efforts to make peace in the Middle East, along with a suggestion that the US work through him to establish

logue with Iran — concern about Jews in Iran and Israel's hostile relations with the Arab nation of Iraq. Instead of broaching the idea himself, Khashoggi could well use Israel as his emissary to the US.

For some time, Khashoggi had been dealing with the then Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres as part of his Middle East peace efforts. Khashoggi also enlisted the help of two Israeli arms merchants who were old friends — Yaakov Nimrodi and Al Schwimmer, a close friend of Peres.

WITH PERES' BLESSING, Khashoggi met near the end of June in London with David Kimche, the Director of the Israeli Foreign Ministry, Schwimmer, and Ghorbanifar.

with Ghorbanifar, Schwimmer, and Nimrodi. At the meeting, which was arranged by Khashoggi, Ghorbanifar suggested that trading arms for hostages would help improve relations between Iran and the US.

Then, on July 24, came Khashoggi's fiftieth birthday and the lavish celebration in Marbella. As the parties continued during the next two weeks on his yacht and in his home, Khashoggi made a quick trip to Hamburg, where he met with Ghorbanifar, Kimche, Schwimmer, and Nimrodi to firm up the plans for the arms sale. Khashoggi also arranged for Ghorbanifar to meet with North and retired Air Force Major General Richard V Secord, who helped with setting up accounts at Credit Suisse Bank in Geneva.

Khashoggi returned to Marbella, only to fly off again to Riyadh to brief King Fahd.

An associate who talked with Khashoggi about his scheme said, "The way he said he justified it to the king was that it would be better to know our enemies. He said if I fail, you can disown me anyway. He said that with a smile, like it was a fact of life.

"To the Israelis, he said it would provide economic stability and peace in the area. To the US, he said it would provide stronger allies in the region — Iran and Israel and Saudi Arabia. It would combine Saudi money with Israeli technology and expertise in handling public opinion."

Later, both Saudi Arabia and Khashoggi would deny that Saudi Arabia was involved in any way. But as an unofficial emissary of the king, Khashoggi would never have hatched the plan without his backing and possible financial support.

BY AUGUST, KHASHOGGI and Hashemi had had a falling out over the amount of money Khashoggi would put into the venture. Khashoggi knew that he did not need Hashemi anyway. Hashemi had introduced him to Ghorbanifar, and now



Prince Sultan and King Fahd.

closer ties with Iran. While the letter referred to his conversations with Ghorbanifar, it did not mention the idea of sending arms to Iran and thus failed to stir up any interest in the Government.

Meanwhile, Khashoggi began lining up support for the plan from the Israeli Government.

"From the start, the Israeli connection was recognised as the way to go," says a participant in the plan.

Besides serving to disguise the true origin of the shipments, Israel could be an important ally in getting US Government co-operation. Israel had her own reasons for seeking a dia-

Khashoggi and Hashemi later met in Israel with Peres to go over the specifics of how US arms could be shipped to Iran through Israel.

On July 3, Kimche flew to Washington to see McFarlane and urge contact with the Iranians, with the possibility that arms might become part of the opening. Through discussions with Michael A Ledeen, an NSC consultant, McFarlane had already been considering changes in US policy towards Iran. On July 14, another emissary of Peres — apparently Schwimmer — came to Washington to push the idea.

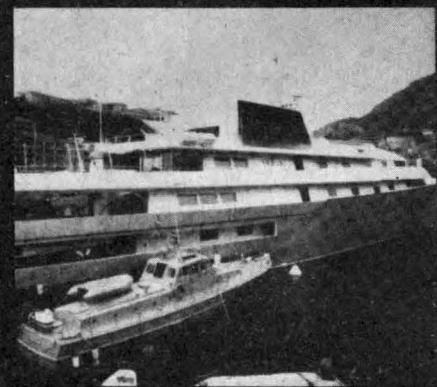
In late July, Ledeen met in Israel

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he could deal direct. Hashemi returned Khashoggi's (US)\$500,000, hoping he could pull off the plan some other way.

In fact, in another bizarre twist to the tale, Hashemi went on, in December, 1985, to involve Samuel M Evans, one of Khashoggi's lawyers, in a plan to sell (US)\$2 billion in US arms to Iran. Already, having been charged by the US Government with illegally selling arms to Iran, Hashemi was looking for a way to get off the hook. In return for getting the charges dropped, he let the US Customs Bureau videotape him as he snared Evans and sixteen other individuals in the scheme.

The videotapes show Evans and



Khashoggi's \$70 million luxury-liner.

the others refusing to go along unless they received assurances that the US Government approved. After they received what they thought were assurances, they agreed to do the sale. They were then indicted by the Justice Department — the same Justice Department that knew that the US Government itself was covertly shipping arms to Iran.

In early August, Kimche met with McFarlane again and told him the Iranians wanted arms from the US and TOW missiles from Israel in return for the hostages.

On August 8, McFarlane and other US Government officials briefed President Reagan on the proposal. By McFarlane's account, Reagan subsequ-

ently approved the plan, despite objections from Secretary of State George P Shultz and Defence Secretary Caspar W Weinberger. Reagan hoped the arms would bring about the release of William Buckley, CIA's station chief in Beirut, who was being tortured by the Lebanese terrorists.

With Nimrodi attending to the details on the Israeli side, the first shipment of 508 TOW missiles arrived in Iran from Israel on September 13. Because Iran and the US did not trust each other, Khashoggi put up (US)\$5 million to finance the shipment. He paid the money to Israel,

Reagan signed an intelligence finding, permitting the covert shipments to resume. The arms were to go directly from the CIA and the Pentagon to Iran, through Israel. Again, Khashoggi was asked to be banker, and he arranged a third shipment of 1,000 TOWs that cost (US) \$12 million.

which had gotten the arms from the US. He was later repaid by Iran.

The shipment prompted the release, not of Buckley, but of the Reverend Benjamin Weir, on September 15. Unbeknownst to Reagan, Buckley had already died at the hands of his captors.

Frustrated by their inability to free all the hostages, the Americans decided to deal direct. In late November 1986, McFarlane had the CIA arrange a second shipment of 18 HAWK missiles from Israel to Iran. But the Iranians complained that the missiles — disguised as oil-drilling parts — were not what they had ordered. No other hostages were released,

and the administration cut off further shipments.

IN EARLY JANUARY, 1986, Peres sent Amiram Nir, a senior Israeli official, to Washington. He thought one more would free the hostages.

On January 17, Reagan signed an intelligence finding, permitting the covert shipments to resume. This time, the arms were to go directly from the CIA and the Pentagon to Iran, through Israel. Again, Khashoggi was asked to be banker, and he arranged a third shipment of 1,000 TOWs that cost (US) \$12 million. He charged another (US) \$2 million for interest, expenses, and profit. The arms were sent on two chartered Boeing 707s on February 17 and 18.

It was the fourth shipment, on May 28, 1986, that created problems. Khashoggi paid (US)\$15 million to underwrite the sale, placing the money in the Credit Suisse account of Lake Resources Inc, a Panamanian company set up for the purpose. McFarlane and North accompanied the first portion of the arms' shipment, bringing along a Bible and a cake shaped like a key for the Iranian leaders. McFarlane thought he would be returning with the hostages; but the Iranians stalled again, demanding the rest of the arms before they would release the hostages.

With President Reagan's approval, the balance of the equipment was sent on August 3. But the Iranians, claiming they had been overcharged, paid only (US)\$8 million. Meanwhile, some of the excess money for the arms had been diverted by North to the *Contras*.

Since Khashoggi was unhappy that he had not been fully reimbursed, the US Government did not ask Khashoggi to handle the fifth and last shipment of an additional 500 TOWs, which the CIA sent to Iran through Israel on October 29.

Over the course of the effort, three hostages had been released, but three more had been taken, leaving the score the same as before the Iranians

had received several hundred tons of US weapons.

By Khashoggi's figuring, the Iranians' payment of (US) \$8 million left him (US) \$10 million short, since he had tacked on an extra (US) \$3 million to cover what he called 'shipping and handling'. A January 29, 1987, report by the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence said Khashoggi charged the Iranians interest of 20 per cent for a one-month loan.

As usual, Khashoggi had not used his own money — the funds for the May shipment came from an Arab investor and two Canadians.

ENTER THE SWAMI, or more precisely, His Holiness Shri Chandra Swami Jee Maharaj. For more than a year, the *swami* from New Delhi had been a frequent flier on Khashoggi's planes. At parties, he was a great conversation piece and not only told fortunes, but claimed to heal people as well. As the spiritual leader of the Sultan of Brunei, he had something else to offer: access to the Sultan's large fortune.

Khashoggi had known the Sultan since the late 1970s, but their relationship had cooled when the Sultan began doing deals with a former Khashoggi employee. The *swami* represented another path to the Sultan and his oil-rich country, which has the highest per capita income in the world.

More than six feet tall and weighing 250 pounds, the bearded *swami* has a red dot on his forehead and wears white silk robes. He speaks Urdu, a dialect written in Arabic, spoken by Muslims in India and Pakistan. He has his own right-hand man, Agarwal Kailash, who handles money matters and attends to the *swami*'s vast entourage of butlers, maids, and women.

When the Iran affair began to unravel, Furmark testified that Khashoggi had gotten most of the (US) \$15 million for the fourth shipment from two Canadians — Donald W R Fraser, an accountant, and Walter E Miller, a real estate developer. When the Iranians refused to fully reimburse Khas-

hogggi, Khashoggi told Furmark to tip-off Furmark's friend, CIA Director Casey, that the Canadians might sue. That would blow the cover on the fact that money from the arms sale had been diverted to the Nicaraguan rebels — a scheme that was not part of Khashoggi's script anyway.

The idea of tipping-off Casey — which Furmark accomplished on October 7 — was a ruse by Khashoggi to get his money back. The Canadians were not going to sue — because the money was not theirs. They were merely the money managers for the *swami* and, through him, the Sultan

approval from his king. As in most of his deals, Khashoggi had used other people's money to finance most of the sales anyway, and stood to lose very little.

WHAT DID CONCERN KHASHOGGI

was the possibility that Saudi Arabia might be implicated in approving the plan. Not only was Saudi Arabia supporting Iraq in its war with Iran, it was also supposed to be the sworn enemy of Israel. To confuse everyone, Khashoggi submitted to press interviews and wove fanciful tales about how the whole thing had started and his motives for doing it.

"I was in Hamburg," he told ABC-TV's Barbara Walters in a flying inter-

More than six feet tall and weighing 250 pounds, the bearded swami has a red dot on his forehead and wears white silk robes. He speaks Urdu. His right-hand man, Agarwal Kailash, handles money matters and attends to the swami's vast entourage of butlers, maids, and women.

of Brunei.

The fact that a portion of the Iran arms deal was ultimately paid for by a *swami* and the Sultan of Brunei, was but another ludicrous aspect of an ill-conceived scheme. Khashoggi knew that that plan would probably come out eventually and create a scandal, according to sources in his organisation. But he reasoned that it was not his concern if Reagan was gullible enough to believe that he could trade guns for hostages with the country that referred to the US as the 'Great Satan'. Nor was it his concern if Reagan did not obtain proper approval for his actions from Congress. As a loyal Saudi citizen, he had obtained



An answer to Khashoggi's prayers?

view on board his DC-8 bound for Nice. "I was told there were carpets from Iran. So I went to look at these carpets. There were ex-Shah carpets — beautiful — and the Government is selling them. The owner of the carpets invited me for lunch, and we made a nice little deal," he said.

"At this lunch, there was this gentleman, whose name was Ghorbanifar, who is the one who presented himself as head of the European intelligence for the Prime Minister of Iran," he said. "He took me aside and started telling me how awful the continuing war in the Middle East and the conflict between Iraq and Iran were, and added that too much blood had been shed for six years, and

EXTRACT

he was talking language that I could understand and accept. It was really seeking peace, in a sense, in the area."

As 40 FBI agents assigned to Irangate watched, Khashoggi said that the meetings initially had nothing to do with arms, but rather peace in the Middle East; that he involved Israel so it could check out Ghorbanifar for the US; that Saudi Arabia had nothing to do with it; and that he ultimately lost money on the deal.

In fact, the trip to look at rugs was but a one-hour diversion during four days of heavy business negotiations. Over time, Khashoggi expected to make hundreds of millions of dollars in commissions on the sales. If the arms deal did not quite turn out that way, Khashoggi already had other deals going. Secretly, his aides had

sheets did not always list his liabilities. So long as he continued to get new, billion-dollar arms deals, the strategy worked, and his wealth grew.

But in 1985, Khashoggi was trying to make a place for himself in history by seeking to bring peace to the Middle East, the constant theme of his seasonal greetings cards. Instead of attending to business, he was shuttling to see heads of state. In May 1985 alone, he flew to seventeen countries in his effort to bring the hostilities to an end.

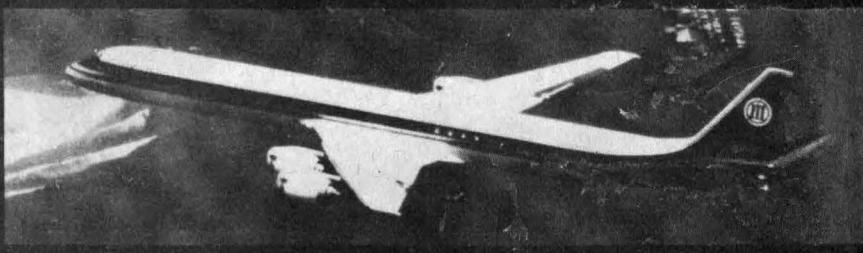
With his income from the arms deals falling, he began drawing money from his investments, which had never made much money anyway. From his Triad America Corp in Salt Lake City, he drew more than (US) \$100 million to cover incidentals. Al-

estate is done. If the cash is due at the wrong time, it causes problems."

But this did not mollify Salt Lake City citizens, who had come to think of Khashoggi as a local hero and now considered him a fraud.

Salt Lake Mayor Palmer DePaulis told the press, "I understand he (Khashoggi) is reputed to be the world's richest person. I think the question we have is, here's this guy flying around in a gold-plated plane . . . so why can't he make good on his debts?"

Even the local ballet company had come up short: Because of a promised (US)\$150,000 contribution from Khashoggi, Ballet West had been able



The billionaire's dream plane.

been meeting with deposed Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos in Hawaii to help him dispose of some of his hidden assets, including four office buildings in New York.

IN THE LONG RUN, the publicity was great for Khashoggi's business. After all, what could be a better advertisement for his services than the fact that he had orchestrated the shipment of US arms to Iran? But it also called attention to his latest money crunch — the worst in his career — and in doing so, aggravated it.

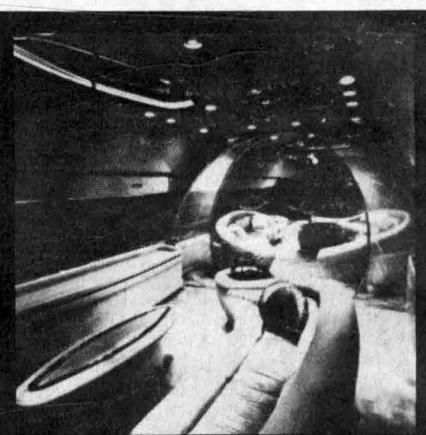
Khashoggi had always operated on the edge, leveraging his deals as much as possible. Bankers were only too happy to lend money to the man reputed to be the richest man in the world. The fact that he operated in so many countries means his balance

ready highly leveraged, the Salt Lake Project was in no position to absorb the loss.

By the beginning of 1987, the whole amazing enterprise — once thought to be worth (US) \$1 billion, and a sterling asset to pass along to his children — was revealed in court to have (US) \$500 left in the bank. Some 47 lawsuits seeking (US)\$100 million in allegedly unpaid debts had been filed against the company.

Emanuel A Floor, the manager of the project, said many US developers were having problems at the time, and few used their own cash to rescue their projects.

"HE'S A BUSINESSMAN, not a philanthropist," said Floor of Khashoggi. "It's not all done with his cash. The deals are leveraged. That's the way real



The DC-8's space-age lounge.

to obtain a bank loan so it could perform *Abdallah* at the Kennedy Centre in Washington. But Khashoggi gave the ballet company only (US) \$50,000, leaving the ballet's general manager with his signature on the bank note.

Khashoggi's response was uncharacteristically arrogant: "They loaned the money against the collateral, the Triad Centre," he told *Time*. "Now they hear rumours about my cash-flow problems and call the loans. I am not going to bring in cash from other businesses to pay the bankers. The collateral is all they will get if they persist."

In late January 1987, Khashoggi's Triad America Corp asked for pro-

tection from its creditors under Chapter 11 of the federal bankruptcy laws.

Meanwhile, many of Khashoggi's other investments had turned sour. He had hoped to build a (US) \$1 billion development in Houston, where he owned 21 acres of prime land near the Galleria section. With Houston's economy in a shambles, he had to get rid of the property at fire sale prices. Other dreams — a (US) \$1 billion project in China — never really got off the ground.

As the world's consummate negotiator, Khashoggi sometimes thought that bills could be negotiated too. At gambling casinos, he sometimes offered to pay a percentage of his astronomical debts and found he was welcomed back, if only because he brought other high-rollers with him.

WITH HIS ACCOUNTANTS in Geneva scrambling to pay bills, Khashoggi began applying the same principle to some of his other debts. It was not working. In particular, he became embroiled in a feud with British industrialist Roland (Tiny) Rowland, who had extended loans to him beginning in the spring of 1985.

At first, the two men were talking about doing business together, and there were the usual grandiose plans. When Khashoggi asked for a (US) \$2.5 million loan in August 1985, Rowland agreed to it. Soon after, Rowland's London-based Lonrho PLC, a trading and mining conglomerate, advanced three additional loans totalling (US) \$5 million. In addition, Lonrho bought Khashoggi's Safari Club in Kenya for (US) \$3 million.

Then all the plans came to nothing, and Rowland was left with the loans that Khashoggi was not paying back. "Tiny felt Khashoggi had made a fool of him," says a friend.

Failing to pay the servants in Marbella for three months was one thing. But taking on the chief executive of one of the largest companies in Great Britain was something else. Rowland became determined to seize Kha-

shoggi's most visible assets in order to embarrass him and get his attention. In January 1987, he got French authorities to impound first Khashoggi's DC-9 and then his DC-8 at Le Bourget Airport in Paris, to help satisfy the debts still outstanding.

But Khashoggi claimed Rowland owed him money from other deals. Four days after the DC-8 was impounded, he got it back, having placed what he said was (US) \$7.5 million in an escrow account in a British court until the matter could be finally resolved.

Through it all, Khashoggi appeared unruffled. After all, he had been through cash crunches before and



With celebrity Joan Collins.

had always risen to be even richer than ever. As far back as 1972, a former Khashoggi financial man says, Khashoggi's executives learned to stash extra money in bank accounts used for paying their salaries, so they always had two or three months of payroll to protect themselves.

"They've had financial crisis after financial crisis, but of course they've always been solved," says the former Khashoggi financial man. "Then you get the next Lockheed contract, and the big (US) \$30 million commission would come through, and whew! Everything's solved. They would go away and gamble the money away in Las Vegas and so on. Then the next

financial crisis would come up."

By the traditional measure of wealth — net worth — Khashoggi clearly was no longer the world's richest man. Yet his goal had never been to accumulate wealth but to enjoy it. By that measure, he continued to be the richest man in the world, spending money that he got from existing arms contracts at almost the same rate as before.

IN OCTOBER 1986, he threw a party for Elizabeth Taylor in Los Angeles, where he introduced her to the *swami*, then flew them both to Las Vegas. But after the publicity broke in November 1986, over his starring role in the Iran arms deal, there was little time to play charming host. He had to cancel plans to spend the Christmas holidays in the US, where he was about to put down (US) \$80,000 deposit to rent twelve condominiums in Aspen, Colorado, for himself and his guests.

Instead, Khashoggi had sixty friends and family members over for Christmas at his Marbella home, which had been transformed into a Moorish palace: The chandeliers had been draped in white leaves and red streamers, and the ceiling of his 50-foot-high gazebo had been covered with shimmering gold and silver spangles.

For dinner, servants heaved great silver salvers of lobster thermidor and pheasant with apples. For the children, there was a magic show featuring live doves, as well as hand-painted Cinderella-like carriages for them to ride around in. His first wife, Soraya, and his second wife, Lamia, both posed for family pictures.

With an estimated (US) \$30 billion being spent on global arms exports each year, Khashoggi knew that he would continue to get his share. Besides being the world's pre-eminent arms dealer, he was an unofficial emissary of the House of Saud, and partner with many of its key members. As long as they ruled Saudi Arabia, Khashoggi would be fabulously rich. ♦

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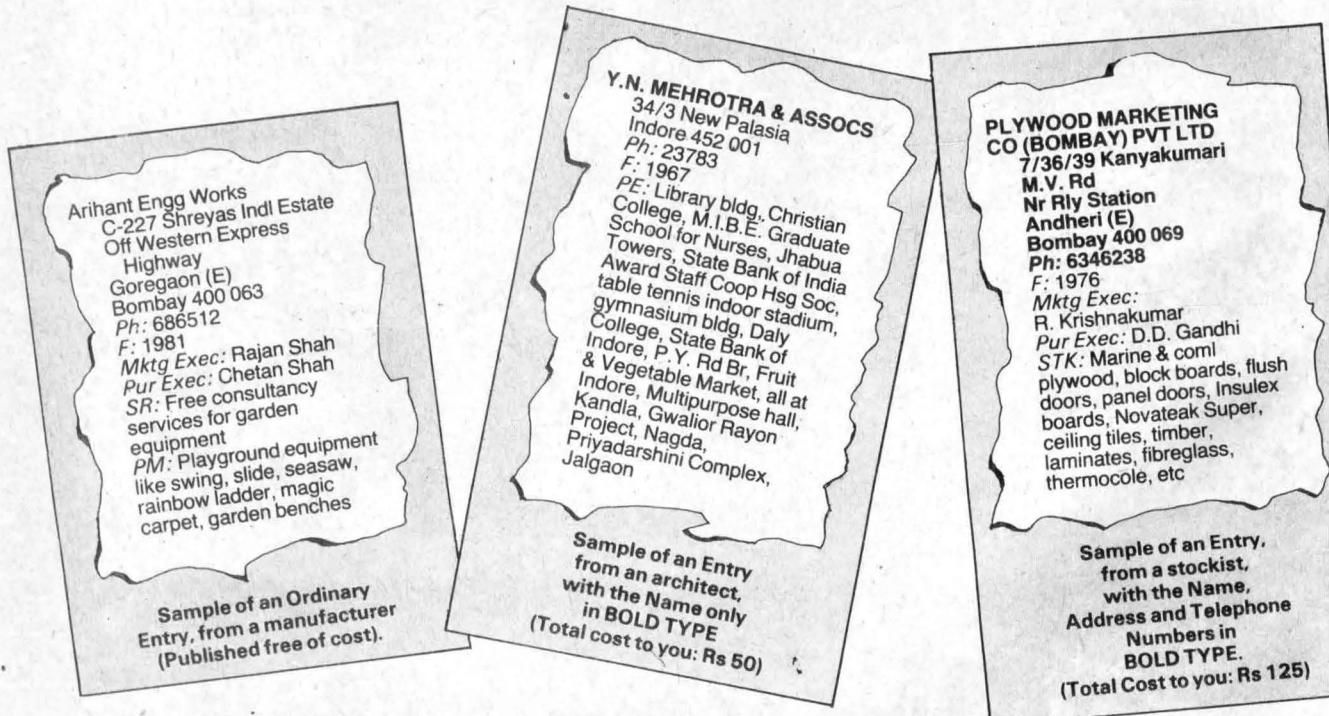
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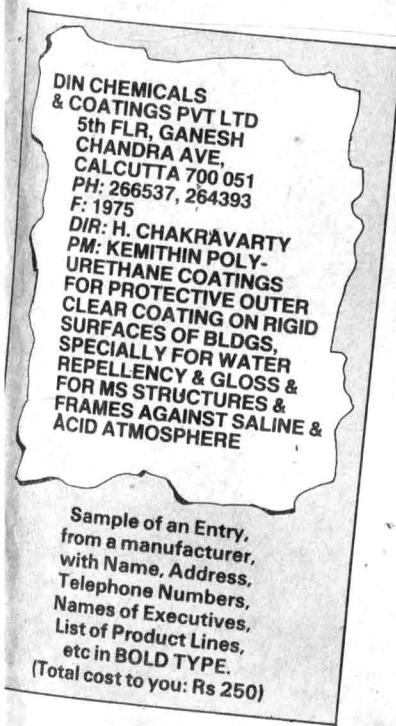
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NO REGRETS

MR DHARANIDHAR GANGULY was showing his guests around the house. His laughter rang out as he escorted them downstairs. He had been given to frequent bursts of laughter lately; he had every reason to feel pleased with himself, having finally achieved success after a lifetime of hard struggle. Now, he was enjoying the fruits of his labour at a ripe old age.

This could not be wholly attributed to Lady Luck. People work hard, some achieve a measure of success, but Luck always plays a major role. Often, success is obtained at a price — the sacrifice of one's ideals.

But Dharanidhar Ganguly's story is an exception — one in a million. He had achieved exactly what he had set out to do by shrewdly calculating each and every step, just like the house he had built. He made no compromises. Like a master potter, he had shaped his destiny with his own hands. Luck had no part in his elaborate scheme — he never let chance interfere in his well-plotted moves. Like a chess master, he moved his chess men according to his design. There was nothing haphazard about his moves.

This might sound fantastic, but those who have known Dharanidhar would vouchsafe for this. They would tell you about the old hand-machine press he had owned in a dingy lane. . . He used to do low-paid jobs then, but was happy, as his dreams extended well beyond the dead-end alley. People used to say, "Don't work so hard, Dharani. You will only make yourself ill. After all, your health comes first. . ."

The subject of their concern, thin and haggard even in his youth, was amused. He never bothered about his health. Even when he was young he had not enjoyed the emotions of youth. He knew that life and work, for him, were just beginning. The old, faded signboard for the hand-press still lay in some corner of the huge type foundry he now owned. He had not thrown it away, nor did he become sentimental over it. That was the kind of man Dharanidhar Ganguly was.

His business prospered as his health declined. He had been like this ever since his hand-press days. His friends wondered how he managed — for them it was a miracle, but Dharanidhar had it all well-thought out, long ago.

Patience, perseverance, and hard work lay behind it all.

Translated from the Bengali original by Enakshi Chatterjee.

One does hear of similar success stories, but Dharanidhar's well-regulated life would exasperate any biographer. It was so perfect, so controlled, with no gaps anywhere, and no room for speculation.

AS HE DESCENDED the majestic marble staircase with his guests — his clients and fellow businessmen — he spoke with the happiness of a contented man. "I am getting too old to look after everything," he confessed, but with evident pride.

"Oh, I see! So things are going to run by themselves!" retorted Prasanta Babu of Aurora Trading, sarcastically. "Oh no, no — Arun looks after everything! I just don't know what I would have done without him. You'd be surprised to know..."

But it came as no surprise. They had heard about the efficiency of his son, Arun, all too often. Arun was Dharanidhar's only weakness. For the last five years, ever since his son had joined him in his business, they were tired of hearing 'how clever', 'how practical', and 'how business-oriented' he was. He even corrected his father! In short, Dharanidhar depended on Arun for everything. Within his crusty exterior, he had a soft spot for his son; he was proud of him. Now that his life was on the wane, and all the tasks he had set out to do were accomplished, he found fulfilment through Arun.

Now, every night, after the press closes, he waits for Arun in his office, with enthusiastic expectancy. Arun, after having finished his paper work, comes to join him. He looks more like his mother, tired and dishevelled. Dharanidhar notices this, but never worries. Overwork never did anyone any harm. It had not harmed him and would not harm Arun either, as he had a strong constitution. It was his good fortune that he did not take after his sickly father.

Meeting in the deserted office one night, they had talked about the day's transactions; wholly business discussions, but they sounded as sweet as honey to Dharanidhar's ears. These chats were his greatest luxury; the time spent together, most precious.

"I do not think we will re-do the ten-point antique design after all," said Arun.

"But I think it should be changed, although there's no time," his father remonstrated.

"Let's wait for the Ballav Company's new set. It's going to be out in the market in a few days."

DHARANIDHAR, pleased with his son's wisdom, smiled. Although it was exactly what he had had in mind, he liked to hear his son voice his own thoughts. "I am sitting tight on the order from Bengal Prince," continued Arun.

"But you must not. They called me twice today — it is very urgent."

"They haven't cleared their previous bills," said Arun rather tersely.

"Let it be. It does not matter. They are never conscient-



FICTION

tious about payments. Besides, they are good customers."

"They used to be so, once upon a time. But now they are running at a loss."

"Things might improve. They are a good company of long standing," pleaded his father.

"Don't be so sure. I have heard that they were unable to meet the orders from the Ghosh Brothers. There is also trouble within their management — the Directors are not on good terms with each other. So, it is best to wait until their next meeting on Saturday before we make a decision."

"I suppose so," Dharanidhar's eyes lit up in affection, pride, and surprise. "By the way, what has happened to Kalipada? Not ill again I hope?" he inquired after a while.

"No, he is not going to come in any more. I asked him not to." Arun turned away.

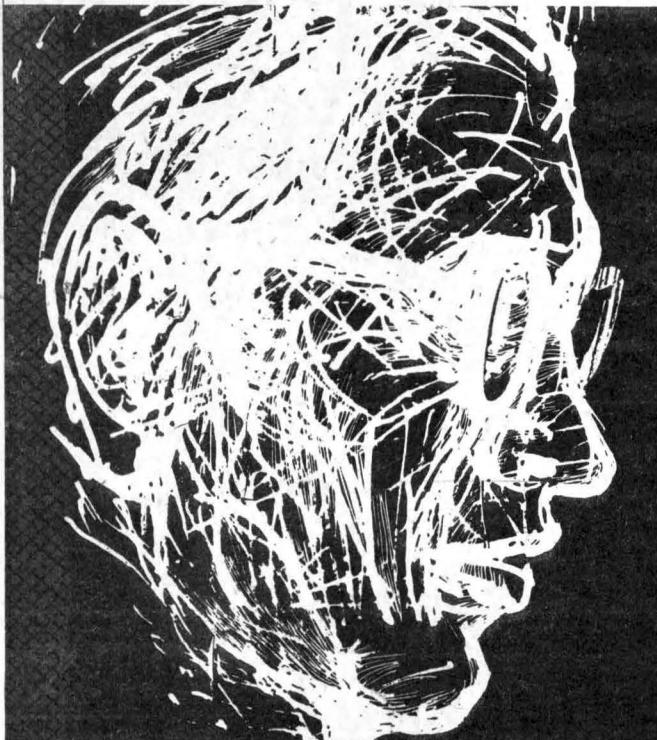
Dharanidhar was taken aback, he was speechless. "But..."

"I know he is an old hand, but he is no longer capable of carrying out the work. We cannot go on supporting him out of charity."

"But, he has a large family. They all depend on him. Besides, he has not been well lately."

"I know. But our foundry is not a charitable organisation!" exclaimed Arun.

Dharanidhar took some time to steady himself. Arun was right after all — one has to be unemotional about such things. He himself was like this at times, but Arun was stricter. Perhaps Dharanidhar himself would not have done this to an old hand. Kalipada had been with them from the old days. True, he had been ill for a long time and he did tend to bully the other workers even though he did not do much



work himself. But, to ask him to leave...

Never mind. Arun understood these things better; he never made any allowances for laxity. And that is how it should be. He would not budge an inch. After having talked about a few more business details, he rose to go. The car was waiting at the gate, and Arun saw him to it, but did not get in. "I'll come later, father," he explained.

Dharanidhar was disappointed. He would have liked to have enjoyed his son's company for a little while longer, during dinner, until they went to bed. His wife had been dead a long time now and Arun was all he had. Of course, his days had been full of work until Arun had taken the reins. Now, he felt lonely. For quite a while, Arun had not been accompanying him home — he never asked, but he knew *why*. He could not bring himself to ask him — he had never done so before, and he would not now...

PRESENTLY, HE TOOK the guests down to the spacious, well-furnished parlour. It spoke of money and taste.

Prasanta Babu, an arch-rival and a connoisseur of art, could not help feeling a little envious. Modern interior decor in the home of Dharani Ganguly... he smiled to himself. "This colour scheme is lovely," he commented politely.

"Arun's idea entirely. You know, he was quite artistic as a boy. But I gave him no encouragement... What is the use? Then, he decided to give up painting; it was his *own* decision." Dharani smiled smugly.

He wanted his guests to stay longer, to meet Arun. Normally, he would have been home by now, especially since today was a special occasion — not only because it was a house-warming party, but also because he had a surprise in store for his son. He was ready to accept his first defeat. For the first time in his life, he was going to act against his principles. But he did not mind doing so and he wanted Arun to be aware of that.

When he had first learnt that his son kept secrets from him, he was hurt and he felt betrayed. Naturally, Arun felt shy to confide in him, but Dharanidhar had hoped that the affair would be nipped in the bud. He had his own plans for Arun. Wealth he had in abundance, but prestige was what he sought. He wanted Arun to gain social prestige by forming an alliance with the Rays of Nayangarh.

Even though they were not as rich as they used to be, the Rays still commanded respect. Their patriarch, Debkishore Ray, was a frequent visitor to Dharanidhar's house. This had given rise to gossip about an impending marriage between the two families, but Dharanidhar pretended to disregard such rumours. He used to say that they were just good friends. Nevertheless, he *had* dropped a subtle hint, and Debkishore saw nothing wrong in that, although he was not quite so enthusiastic about the proposal. Negotiations had continued until Arun had decided to take his future in his own hands.

IT WAS TRIGGERED OFF with the following incident: Suren, a distant relative, had come to Arun for a job. After

their meeting, he had insisted on inviting Arun over to his place. Dharanidhar had thought nothing of it. Yet, that night, when Arun came home, he found that he had no inclination to eat. "They did not listen to me," he complained. "I had to eat. And, as I can't stand ceremony, this is going to be my last visit to that house." Then, after a short pause he added, "But she is a good cook. Better than our Govardhan."

"Does Suren have a daughter? I thought he had a son... Well, it has been such a long time..."

"He has two. The eldest is quite grown up."

"Did she cook?"

"Who else would? The mother is ill, and they can't afford a cook."

That was the end of the matter, or so Dharanidhar had thought. Later, when he learnt that Arun visited them regularly, he was surprised not because of the visits, but because of the secrecy surrounding them.

As the days went by, he grew more and more worried. Would Arun thwart his plans for him? He had once thought of giving Suren a piece of his mind, but had refrained from doing so. It was against his principles to say *no* to his son. That was not the way he had reared him. And if Arun discovered that he was trying to interfere, he would not take it well. So, let time take its course, he decided. He was prepared to wait and see...

THEN, SUDDENLY, a thought struck him — it was like a revelation. Why stop Arun at all? All his life, he had let reason rule over passion, but why must Arun follow in his foot-steps? To hell with social prestige! If he finds happiness by doing things his own way, then let him. He had seen the girl and approved — she would be able to adjust.

He was planning to break this news to his son, but where was he? One by one, the guests departed. And Dharani continued to wait. He had to talk to Arun.

Arun came home quite late, looking exhausted. Dharanidhar thought he was working too hard, more than was necessary. He must take a long vacation after his wedding, he thought. Yes, he would see to that. "You are late, Arun. Prasanta Babu and the others were waiting for you."

"I'm sorry, father." Tired, Arun collapsed on a sofa. "I have to tell you something."

"What is it?" Dharani inquired, smiling knowingly to himself. Now that he had prepared himself to accept his son's confession, he was all ears.

"I have taken over the Managing Directorship of Bengal Printers," declared Arun. "Negotiations had been going on for some time. I have had everything checked — there are not too many liabilities — and today, it was all finalised. Of course, the meeting was stormy."

His news took a while to register in his father's mind. He stared at Arun, stunned. They talked about Bengal Printers for sometime and for the first time in his life, Dharanidhar did not find their talking shop so interesting. Still anxious about his son's matrimonial plans, he came

straight to the point.

"Let's ask Suren to move in to our old house."

"Which Suren...? Oh, I see! But why?"

"It does not look right. Just think of his miserable house in that dirty lane!"

"But that's where they have been living for years — they can't afford a better house!"

Dharanidhar was fed up with this cat-and-mouse game. The time had come, he felt, to spell it out. "Precisely," he said. "Since they cannot afford a better house, we have to see to it that they get one." Pausing, he added, "The eldest daughter would be highly suitable for you. A very nice girl."

ARUN'S FACE LIT UP, but only for a second. He sat still without saying a word. Presently, he looked up. He had a tired but determined expression on his face.

"But that's not possible," he spluttered.

"Why not?" It was Dharanidhar's turn to be upset.

"The difference in our social status. You can't ignore that!" exclaimed Arun.

"But that should not matter," said his father, rather bewildered. "And I am willing to give you my consent."

"No, I'm sorry, father, it just won't work out. I have given it some thought."

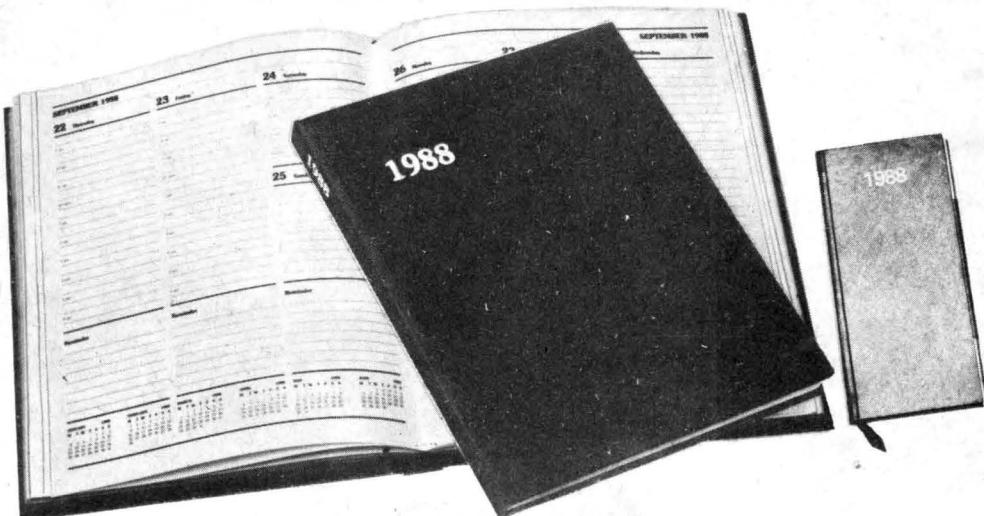
As he stood up to leave, he smiled, "I met Debkishore Babu today. They own some shares in Bengal Printers — he was present at the meeting."

Dharani looked at him, his expression quite blank.

It should make me happy, he thought to himself, very, very happy indeed...



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