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Indian Writing

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INDIAN WRITING

Edited by

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SECOND SERIES

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COMMENTARY

THE reappearance of *Indian Writing* after this long interval is almost in the nature of a resurrection. Needless to say that the delay was not entirely of our own choosing. The present issue actually went to press as far back as last February, but it was not until a few days ago that we managed to get sufficient paper to go ahead with the publication. Even so drastic reduction in size has been necessary and some important articles, stories and reviews have had to be held over till the next issue. It is, of course, difficult to see into the future; the continuation of this magazine must inevitably depend on the conditions of paper supply available; but we are hoping that it may be possible to keep it alive in one form or another.

So much by way of an apology and explanation. Meanwhile there are matters of much greater import calling for comment. During the past six months events in the East have moved to an unexpected climax with catastrophic rapidity. They provide their own eloquent moral and any outside reflection is perhaps superfluous. However, in view of the serious deterioration of Indo-British relations, certain observations must be made. It is now some time since Cripps went out to India displaying his renegade's mantle with a theatrical elegance reminiscent of Ramsay Macdonald in the days of his sumptuous dinners with the duchesses. Simultaneously with his visit, and particularly since his return, we have witnessed in this country a campaign of lies and distortions about the Indian situation which for its malice and mendacity has rarely been surpassed even in the history of the British Press. Demonstrably, it would be a mistake to suppose that Hitler and Goebbels are unique in their belief that bigger the lie you tell the greater the chance of your getting away with it.

But this is not the point. The point is in what mysterious fashion is this particular propaganda campaign calculated to help the anti-fascist struggle in Europe or Asia? We do not pretend to know. We wish merely to record a most extraordinary paradox. The paradox is that, while the Axis propaganda to India, for whatever motives of its own, starts from the assumption of Indian unity, the "freedom-loving" British Government and its literary hirelings ceaselessly harp on Indian disunity and lose no opportunity of provoking and encouraging discord. This contradiction is implicit in

the imperialist logic. We note it not because we feel that the British propaganda is likely to succeed in its insidious intent, but for a very different reason. If this tendency persists it is certain to widen the gulf between the peoples of India and Britain—a gulf which is already wide enough and is not likely to be bridged easily. And it will be the people of Britain who will have to pay in “blood, toil and tears” for this supreme folly of their rulers, as they have done so often before for other idiocies of their masters.

In this connection one curious fact deserves special attention. It is impossible not to be impressed by the striking unanimity of British attitude towards India and the subject peoples of the Empire generally—a unanimity which embraces the Right as well as a good part of the Left. The Pink and the Blue, Bloomsbury and Blimpdom, the 1922 Committee and the Transport House, intellectual “socialists” like Laski and senile Anglo-India in retirement, Brailsford and Blatchford, the ersatz progressives of the Cocoa Press and the crypto-fascists of the Kemsley Circus—all speak with virtually the same voice and iterate the same outworn imbecilities. Only in a country almost completely devoid of informed opinion on the subject could it have been possible to stage that fantastic exhibition, the mock debate on India in which the B.B.C. presented as representatives of Indian opinion a number of abjectly illiterate nonentities incapable of representing even themselves. And only on the assumption that the intelligentsia in England has never thought about India in realistic terms would it be possible to explain the publication in the *New Statesman and the Nation* of that masterpiece of irrelevant and nonsensical profundities—Sir John Maynard’s article entitled “India’s Two Voices.” Again, we are tempted to ask, is it merely ignorance which made H. G. Wells describe India as “an administrative phantom” and Nehru as a “shifty politician”? Or is it impudence born of self-righteous smugness? Or that “power to confuse his own mind” which Mr. Forster once described as the distinctive attribute of the Englishman?

Perhaps it is something subtler than all these. On some other occasion we will try to analyse it. For the moment it is enough to say that, though it may be possible for the Englishman to confuse himself, even he cannot cheat history. History, as Mussolini admitted in a moment of agonised discomfiture, catches one by the throat. And in this matter history will have the last word. It will speak in no uncertain terms. There is a saying in India: A hundred days for the thief and one day for the honest man. We cherish no apocalyptic illusions about the early establishment of the kingdom of righteousness on earth. But it may be that, despite the shadow of catastrophe which looms large on the immediate horizon of humanity, the day of the honest men is nearer than it seems.

SASADHAR SINHA

THE DEFENCE OF INDIA

ALTHOUGH it is possible and even desirable to discuss the subject of Indian defence theoretically, for the Indians, at any rate, it still remains an unreal problem. For the question can be discussed as a practical issue only in terms of power, which is always a function of political sovereignty. India has yet to achieve her national freedom, and the responsibility of the Indians for her defence will assume reality only as this objective is attained.

Until now, the defence of India has been an euphemism for the defence of British imperial interests, a large part of which has consisted in holding down the Indians and making use of the country as a strategic base for the safeguarding of Britain's eastern empire. Moreover, India's man power and raw materials have been utilised in such a manner that she has been rendered totally incapable of defending herself independently.

Nor was any other policy possible for an imperialist Britain. Since the extension of the war to the Far East, the inadequacy of India's defences has been made more glaring and never in her recent history has her security been so acutely menaced as it is today. Even the recent alteration in the war situation has brought with it no corresponding change in the attitude of Great Britain towards India's defence requirements. Facts, however, are an unpleasant task-master and as the strategic perspective changes, it will become clear that without the active military assistance of the Indians themselves, India cannot be defended against a powerful adversary. And ultimately, as a free agent, it is to India's own interest to fight on the side of freedom in this crucial phase of the world's history.

Of the many valuable lessons supplied by the present war, one of the most important is that the strategy of modern wars is highly flexible and must be rooted in the geographical, political and material needs and capacities of a country. The failure to take cognisance of this fact may be fraught with disastrous consequences.

Take the example of Germany. By the very nature of her political structure, isolated position and poverty of essential strategic raw materials, the idea of the offensive has played a dominant part in her war strategy, not only under Hitler but also in the pre-1914 regime. Its essence is continual aggression for the purpose of stabilising the ruling order. This explains in part the spectacular nature of German successes at the opening phases of every war.

The British and French strategy, on the other hand, forms an intermediate type. It relies mainly on passive defence, although

its tactics become more and more aggressive, the further away the theatre of operations is from the home bases. The relative inactivity of British arms in Europe makes a strong contrast with the more active policy pursued at the periphery of the empire. For home defences, it depends primarily on economic and political methods. Under conditions of mechanised warfare, however, this is largely a strategy of despair and can succeed only in exceptional circumstances. The collapse of France, due in some measure to inner political causes, must, in the last resort, be considered a military collapse, because a purely defensive policy cannot succeed against overwhelming military might. Nor could the Russian strategy have been followed in France owing to the limited scope of her terrain. A military alliance with another strong continental power was her only means of escape from the catastrophe that befell her.

The third type may be called the offensive-defensive strategy of war, so successfully carried out by the Soviet Union. Its object is not to challenge a powerful adversary frontally but piecemeal with a view to exhausting the enemy. This undoubtedly involves a large loss of territory in the early stages of a campaign, but ultimately proves economical of both men and material, making it possible, at an opportune moment, to undertake a successful offensive. This is the only effective strategy open to a country with a large compact territorial basis, economic self-sufficiency and peaceful foreign policy. Further, in the case of the Soviet Union, an offensive strategy had to be ruled out for political reasons. An aggressive move on her part, in the present crisis, would probably have found the entire capitalist world ranged against her, a not unlikely contingency even under most favourable conditions.

India, like China, obviously belongs to the latter category. Vast spaces and a united and numerous people have always been important military factors, but these have received a renewed significance under conditions of modern warfare. Indeed, mobile operations and guerilla tactics can be successfully carried out against unprovoked aggression only where these conditions exist. The valiant resistance of the Chinese people against the Japanese has demonstrated beyond doubt that these advantages hold good even in those instances where equipment is poor and supplies inadequate. In the political as in the military sphere, the day of small countries is over. In other words, all the strategic considerations which apply to the Soviet Union are equally applicable to China and India.

A free India will be faced with a threefold problem of defence : (a) a correct utilisation of her man power ; (b) a correct utilisation of her raw materials and (c) a correct orientation of her foreign policy.

The utilisation of India's man power must assume a dual character : (a) the creation of a large well-equipped army and (b) the training of all adult citizens of both sexes in the use of modern arms, providing

reserves for the regular army as well as the basis of a people's army for local defence. The latter will play an increasingly important role in all future wars, as it is doing today in China and the U.S.S.R. The growing reliance on the people for defence shows, on the one hand, that the power of mechanised terror to crush the spirit of an awakened people is limited and, on the other, that democratic rights can be adequately guaranteed only by a nation in arms, valuable though the professional army always is as a spearhead of defence.

The high degree of mechanisation of modern armies presupposes a large measure of industrialisation. The more adequate the industrial background, the greater the efficiency of the army. Indeed, a large mechanised and efficient army is unthinkable without a sound industrial basis. The ultimate weakness of the Japanese and Italian armies and to some extent of even the British army must be attributed to inadequate industrialisation proportionate to the needs of defence. India, like the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R., possesses all the essential raw materials required for independent defence. A rapid development of the key industries and their location in strategically safe areas must play an important part in the planning of industries and defence of India. The aim should be to make defence requirements as independent as possible of supplies from abroad, although at the beginning, it may not be possible to avoid large imports of foreign war materials.

India is singularly fortunate in her neighbours with whom she has no conflict of interests. It is a negative factor, no doubt, but with imaginative handling this could in time be turned into a positive system of friendly alliances. Nor should this be confined to India's neighbours alone. Indeed, the formation of a solid peace front of all non-aggressive nations is the only guarantee of their future safety. The right orientation of India's foreign policy will certainly form the most important element in the country's defence, at any rate, in the early stages, before material defence has had time to become strong.

India is vast in size. Her man power and raw material resources are inexhaustible. The existence of friendly neighbours and strong natural strategic frontiers make her ideally suited for both active and passive defence. Finally, with the disappearance of the artificial distinctions between the so-called martial and non-martial races, the quality of her soldiers will become the common property of the nation. Undoubtedly, some of these are still potential advantages, but it will be the task of a free India to turn them into powerful facts.

IQBAL SINGH

SPECTRE IN THE EAST

A SPECTRE is haunting Europe. Words spoken nearly a hundred years ago still retain their original urgency. To-day the same spectre is haunting more than Europe. It is haunting all the continents of the earth. It broods palpably over the boundless horizons of Asia. But spectre is perhaps a misleading term. To the oppressed multitudes it signifies the promise of deliverance—and something more than the mere promise of deliverance. We have the living testimony of the Central Asian Republics. The long awaited deliverance is already a reality in the lands stretching from the eastern shores of the Black Sea to the Altai mountains—and beyond.

We in India have not so far taken full heed of this portent. We have been inclined to watch the unfolding of this crucial drama of human destiny, if not with indifference, at least with a certain aloofness. We have seen it in a somewhat dimmed perspective: seen it, as it were, through the wrong end of a telescope. This may seem strange. Strange, because it is hardly five hundred miles from the Khyber Pass to the golden gates of Samarkand. Indeed, somewhere across that legendary roof of the world, the great watershed of the Pamirs, the frontiers of India meet those of the Soviet Eastern Republics. Physical proximity, however, is no assurance of cultural intercourse. Other factors intervene. And there are subtle barriers which divide us from our neighbours. These are none the less formidable because they cannot be computed in terms of geographical distances.

These barriers are created by imperialism. A rigid *cordon sanitaire* of censorship has always insulated India from the outside world, particularly the Soviet world. Mahatama Gandhi once likened India to a vast prison. It is even more like a quarantine of continental dimensions. A quarantine, moreover, with a difference. Political rather than hygienic motives have determined the design. The aim of the great wall of censorship that envelops India is not only to prevent other colonial and semi-colonial countries being infected with our political enthusiasms and passions, but to guard against the possibility of the Indians being affected by the highly contagious ideas germinating in the territories just across our North-Western frontier. In this matter even the amiable "Handshake of Moscow" has brought no relief. It is still a criminal offence in India to possess a copy of M. Molotov's speeches—or even of Gorky's *Mother*. Evidently it is not only in Berlin that certain types of books

provide excellent fuel for bonfires. In a less spectacular and more private fashion the customs officials in Bombay have long been in the habit of finding a similar use for dangerous literature. This may partly explain why the dawn over Samarkand and Bukhara has passed almost unheralded by the people of India.

Almost, but not quite. Truth possesses quite surprising powers of infiltration, of getting across barriers of propaganda and censorship. And slowly, by devious channels the news of the great Soviet experiment has succeeded in reaching India—even if in the course of transmission the fact has acquired something of the imaginative enchantment of a legend. In this instance, however, the import of the fact transcends that of the legend to which it has given birth. For the future of Indian civilisation its significance is manifold. It must be remembered that the development of the Soviet Eastern Republics has taken place against an historical background not unlike our own. As such it offers us at once a challenge and inspiration. More than that it indicates the possibility of creating socialist forms of culture out of semi-feudal conditions without the necessity of a prolonged transition through all the intermediate phases. And lastly, it explodes the myth of Asiatic backwardness so assiduously built up by occidental imperialists and their apologists. In two decades the people of these Asiatic Soviets, once regarded as backward, have traversed vast stretches of time. By their own labour and effort they have built up gigantic industrial enterprises, thus laying the material basis of cultural advance. They have demolished the physical barriers between man and man and covered impassable regions with an intricate network of communications. They have upturned virgin soil, restored fertility to desert earth, transformed wildernesses into flowering orchards.

But this is not all. The renaissance of the Soviet East goes beyond mere conquest of time and space. A soviet writer recently described the process as akin to man "changing his skin". But even that comparison seems inadequate. Behind and beyond these material achievements it is possible to discern still subtler processes of reorientation. It is possible to discern the crystallisation of new psychological patterns, assertions of new attitudes—indeed, a fresh integration of the human soul itself.

What does this reorientation imply? For an answer we must go to the contemporary folk poetry of the Soviet East. In it we touch the very heart of the people. It has always been the common assumption of bourgeois criticism that revolution destroys the continuity of cultural tradition. The experience of the Soviets of the East does not justify any such pessimistic forebodings. Far from destroying cultural traditions, the revolution has actually revitalised them. It has revitalised them in two ways. Firstly, it has released the creative energy of the people from all the material and psychological

inhibitions which tended to thwart free outlet. Secondly, the development of technique has furnished folk poets with new and infinitely more dynamic media of expression.

By its very nature, however, revolutionary transformation is something intrinsically different from that sentimental and self-conscious revivalism in art with which we are familiar. It is not concerned with the resuscitation of archaic and antique æsthetic ghosts. It demands the impregnation of all living art-forms with fresh content capable of further development, the transmutation of current modes of value to a higher plane of meaning. As an illustration of what this implies, it is illuminating to compare the folk poetry of the Soviet East with the folk poetry of India.

The comparison is illuminating because the two traditions have more or less identical points of departure. They possess striking formal similarities. The comparison, nevertheless, ends in a poignant contrast which is ultimately a contrast between two distinct social orders and the corresponding psychological patterns. It is, of course, necessary to avoid approaching Indian folk poetry from too narrow and exclusively political an angle. The content of this poetry is one of extraordinary richness and diversity. Broadly speaking, four main threads enter into its imaginative fabric. There is, to begin with, the Dionysian ecstasy of desire and passion articulated in all its infinite variations of nuance and expression. Dialectically linked with this is the mood of nostalgic longings which runs through our folk music and poetry like an obsessive, but somehow insidiously gratifying memory. Further there is the element of mystical sublimation of human aspirations. From Kabir and Chandidas, Mira Bai and Nanak down to our own days Indian folk poets have iterated this compensatory theme, invoked an illusory state of bliss in which all the contrarities of human existence have been magically resolved into a subjective unity of thought and will and feeling. Finally there is the motif of social protest. This protest, however, rarely rises to a note of positive human triumph and fulfilment.

Yet human triumph and fulfilment are the dominant motifs of the folk poetry of the Soviet Eastern Republics. They represent no fortuitous or incidental theme, but form the very core of poetic inspiration and colour everything else. Desire and passion are there, but they are no longer haunted by the inevitability of their frustration, no longer inhibited by psychological complexes and social obstacles. As such they do not find solace in mystical and eroto-mythic sublimations. Nostalgia has given place to a sense of confidence in human destiny which, even if at times naively formulated, is profound and convincing. The theme of social protest occurs, but only as a retrospective echo, like the memory of some distant pain. The ambient mood is one of achievement and promise, of exultation resulting from purposeful communal activity. Mr. E. M. Forester

somewhere speaks of the imperative need for the "resuscitation of joy" and suggest this to be the basic task of those concerned with the future of our civilisation. He does not indicate, however, the manner in which this task is to be realised. And it is here that the experience of the peoples of the Soviet East furnishes a clue to the way forward. For, despite the bitter agony and travail inseparable from the process of rebirth they appear to have created the necessary precedent conditions for the resuscitation of joy. Something of this new joyfulness can be felt, for instance, in the following poem by Karimbai Shamsi (translated by Herbert Marshall):—

And the cotton plantations now bloom
 On the hill-sides the vineyards now bloom,
 In Khodjent the roadways are white
 Because all the gardens now bloom.
 You lay arid, oh earth,
 You were fruitless and barren, oh earth,
 You were groaning from thirst, oh earth,
 But Stalin remembered you, earth !

He sent engineers to Khodjent,
 He sent machines to Khodjent,
 That in Kolhozes joy should bloom,
 He sent his heart to Khodjent.
 You shall drink fresh water, oh earth,
 You shall flower with fresh power, oh earth,
 You shall spring with green shoots, oh earth,
 I shall kiss and caress you, earth.
 Khodja Bakirgan . . .
 Khodja Bakirgan . . .

In another poem Shamsi reiterates the same theme with even greater subtlety and a crystalline simplicity that evokes more than an echo of the elusive beauty of the Chinese poetry :

My song flies
 Over the windy Altai,
 My book speaks
 Of Socialism.

It may be argued, and in a sense it is true, that in Shamsi and other poets of the Soviet East we witness a simplification of human experience and vision. But this simplification is not negative : it actually points to the discovery of a new level of perception where all the antecedent complexities and obscurities of the human situation have become intelligible—and, therefore, transcended. And more. It represents the affirmation of a new relationship between man and his world, a relationship at once direct, immediate and creative.

ALAGU SUBRAMANIAM
THE MARKET SQUARE¹

ON their way back, Indian bullocks instinctively know that they are returning home. Soon their work will come to an end, at least temporarily, so they run faster, sometimes they even gallop. But the "tilk ! tilk ! tilk !" of the carter does not cease, however fast they run. He does it by force of habit. He does it as often on the way back as on the outward journey. Moreover, the bullocks, even when they are returning home, do not keep the same pace throughout the entire journey. They simply cannot. It is impossible. Even bullocks can get tired. So they are kicked between their legs, on their behinds. They are beaten on their bellies with a cane which invariably leaves an imprint. Their tails are twisted, and sometimes when the carter is not satisfied with their speed, he crushes their tails between his teeth.

Subbu, the carter, was therefore not being unduly cruel when he shouted at his bullocks. They took the hint and galloped and the uneven road made the cart jerk. It shook Mrs. Ramaswamy. Her reverie was disturbed.

"Don't drive them fast, there's no hurry."

"I am not driving them, I am not even beating them," replied the carter, "they are running of their own accord, they know they are returning home, the beasts. Tilk ! tilk ! tilk !" The bullocks ran. Mrs. Ramaswamy leaned against the side of the cart and returned to her thoughts.

"Tilk ! tilk ! tilk !" the carter produced the sounds in his mouth but did not repeat them as he thought he heard his mistress crying. The carter held the reins firmly and turned round. Mrs. Ramaswamy was sobbing with her face buried in her arm. "Don't cry, mother, don't cry," the carter said, "your daughter will be happy in the school."

His mistress started to cry louder.

"Don't cry, mother, please don't cry," the carter begged her again, but finding that his requests were of no avail, he pulled up the cart. He then got down from the vehicle and resting his elbows on his seat, he stood facing his mistress.

"Why mother, why are you crying ? I really can't understand all this fuss, mother. Why, you are crying as if somebody had died in your family."

"My child ! my child !" cried Mrs. Ramaswamy, "Parvati, my child, how am I going to pass my days without you ?"

¹ *Extract from a novel in preparation.*

“Siva, Siva, this is a nuisance,” cried the carter, holding the reins in one hand, and beating his head with the other. “Siva! Siva!”

Soon the carter realised that his intervention only made matters worse, so he mounted his seat and drove on.

“Tilk! tilk! tilk!” He twisted the tails of the animals in his hands, kicked their behinds and tried to reproduce his sounds louder than before. He wanted to drown Mrs. Ramaswamy’s sobs and moans. And he did succeed to some extent. They were now nearing the market place and the carter again stopped the vehicle on the side of the road. “You must stop this, mother,” he begged, “we are nearing the market place, it is a crowded area, and if you go on crying, all those ruffians will crowd round the cart.”

“Subbu, don’t stop the cart where there are too many people, you know I dislike crowds.”

“You may dislike crowds, but you are going to have them all right,” replied the carter, somewhat rudely.

“Why, why do you say that?”

“Because you are crying, you are making a scene and those ruffians in the market place only wait for a chance to assemble together to make a fuss and crack dirty jokes.”

“Don’t talk rubbish, Subbu,” said Mrs. Ramaswamy, wiping her eyes with the edge of her sari. The carter smiled triumphantly and drove on.

“Tilk! tilk! tilk!”

“I am not talking rubbish, mother,” he said, starting to speak again, “I may be your servant, but I have more experience than you. Don’t forget, mother, I served your mother and I knew you as an infant in arms.”

“You are talking like a father, Subbu.”

“Of course I am like a father to you, mother, though I call you mother. I have carried you in my arms in the days when I was your mother’s servant and called her mother. Then I used to call you by your name. Now I am your servant and wouldn’t dare to address you by your name.”

“You are becoming too difficult to understand. I have never heard you talk like this, Subbu. Please don’t talk in that manner. I can’t worry my head to understand you. I am too unhappy to think hard. My daughter is separated from me and here you are talking to me in riddles!”

Hardly had the carter had time to think over his mistress’s reply when Mrs. Ramaswamy burst into tears.

“My only child, my dear pet, my own Parvati, how am I going to pass my days without you? I shan’t see you for three months, and it’s going to be like three years to me,” she moaned.

“What’s this? What’s all this? We are near the market place and you are making a fuss. Siva! Siva!” cried the carter.

“They were now near the Grand Bazaar, and the carter stopped the cart on the side of the road at some distance from the market.

“There, mother, see the crowds there, and that is the market place. The market is in the square there. We’ll have to pass that place and unless you stop crying I won’t proceed further.”

Mrs. Ramaswamy remembered what the carter had told her about the ruffians, and so with a deliberate effort she stopped crying.

“Tilk! tilk! tilk!” Subbu drove on, proud of the way he had averted a public exhibition of his mistress’s emotions.

“I don’t mind your crying, mother,” said Subbu after a pause, attempting to explain, “but you know how these town rowdies behave; you see they are worse than our village loafers. Beside, in the village nobody would dare to make a rude remark to you, because you are the wife of the headman, but here it is different, mother. I hope you understand. I beg your pardon for my interference, and if you can’t pardon me, you can deduct twenty-five cents from my salary when I get my pay.” He emphasised the word “when” sarcastically.

“It’s all right, Subbu, I understand you, you are an experienced man, you are much older than me, and you should guide me.”

“I don’t mind your crying, mother,” the carter repeated, “but you must control yourself at least here in Grand Bazaar. When these rowdies hear you crying, they will crowd round the cart and one man will say this, and another man will say that, but they will all be agreed on one thing. May their bodies rot, the wretches!”

“What is it, Subbu? Why are you angry?”

“Do you know, mother, do you know what these rowdies will say? They will suggest that I tried to do something to you, and that is why you are crying. And even if I swear by the life of my own mother I never attempted to do anything to you, they will with one voice shout me down and call the police. And with the police I’ll be more truthful and swear, not by the life of my mother who is dead, but by Siva. Even so the police won’t believe me, they will beat me with their sticks, handcuff me and drag me to the police station.”

“Don’t talk nonsense, you are like a father to me. You are an old man, you’d never do a thing like that.”

“Sure, I’ll never do that to you, mother. By Siva, I’ll never. But all the same, I am not too old, mother,” replied the carter, peevish at the suggestion that he was incapable, “if you ask big-breasted grass-seller, she will tell you of my strength, she will.”

“My God, Subbu, I never dreamt that you were such a bad man. Subbu, do you really . . . ?”

“No, mother, I was only fooling you,” replied the carter with a tremor in his voice.

They now reached the square where the market was held, and the carter slowed down. A woman with a child in her arms ran after the cart and cried "Please give some alms. Look, mother, an infant!"

The carter turned back and scolded her.

"Please, mother, please give a cent. The child is starving. I shall pray that one day you become a Maharanee."

"Run away, or I'll measure your height with my stick," shouted the carter.

Marakayer, a stealer and mender of umbrellas, stood right in front of the cart and exhibited his umbrellas.

"It's going to rain hard. The astrologer says that there will be a storm, with thunder and lightning. Even Lord Indra, God of the Rain, Thunder and Lightning, will not be able to stop it. Woe unto those who haven't umbrellas. Buy them immediately and from me, Marakayer, Prince of Umbrellas."

"Prince of Umbrellas! Oh, you liar! You mean stealer of umbrellas," shouted a man who stood nearby as he cleared his throat and spat contemptuously at Marakayer.

"Run away, you dirty swine! You son of a . . ." bawled Marakayer, as he raised one of his umbrellas to strike the man, who ran to a safe distance and spat again.

The bullocks were terrified at the sight of the black umbrellas and refused to move. "Tilk! Tilk! Tilk!" Still they declined to budge. The carter kicked their behinds, twisted their tails, then bit them, and, in exasperation, even spat on them, yet he couldn't persuade them to step forward. At each beating, they raised their heads and contracted their backs and the cart began to move backwards.

"Subbu, stop on a side where there aren't too many people. I would like to see what is happening here. Perhaps we could buy something if it is cheap."

"Move on, you wretched fellow," shouted the carter. "Don't you know, you rascal, that bullocks are scared of black cloth, and if you stand there with those black umbrellas, I can't drive."

"Mind your words," said Marakayer, "I have made younger and more robust men than you measure their lengths on the ground."

"Tilk! Tilk! Tilk! You son of a prostitute. I'll measure your height with my stick!"

"Mind your words, I warn you again," said Marakayer, and he threatened to strike the carter with an umbrella.

Mrs. Ramaswamy, who had been trembling all the while, now screamed. The onlookers laughed.

"If you don't put that umbrella down, I'll circumcise you again," cried the carter.

The altercation would have continued, but the chauffeur of the

car that was held up because of the bullock cart, grew impatient and blew his horn loudly. Marakayer shamefacedly gave way.

"Tilk ! tilk ! tilk !" The bullocks drew to a side. The carter got down and looked right ahead at the centre of the market.

"There he is, there's the rogue," he shouted.

"Who ?" asked his mistress.

"The renter of the market, the rogue who collects the money from the vendors. I'll run up and ask him if we can park the cart here."

He stepped into the square. The bullocks started to move.

"Hey, Subbu, the bullocks are moving ! Come here and save me. My God, they are going to drag me into a bottomless pit. Come, Subbu, come quickly !"

The carter held his dhoti up and ran back.

"Ah, there he is, there's the rogue."

"Who, Subbu ?"

"The rogue of a renter, Hay Raman."

The renter was on his usual round collecting rents. He thanked his prompt payers and patted them on their backs. The defaulters he abused mercilessly, and in some cases confiscated a part or whole of their goods. He was also the owner of a hay shop close to the market. It was, at the same time, a rendezvous for the ruffians of the neighbourhood, who sat on stacks of hay, smoked cigars, compared notes on the scandals of the town and versified them. Their latest victim was a young nautch girl whom they nicknamed "Cycle" because her lovers were mostly boys who had just left the high school and who, when they were not with her, rode on bicycles. Her mother was called "Bus" because her customers were bus-drivers.

"You mustn't call him Hay Raman," said Mrs. Ramswamy to the carter.

"Why not, mother ?"

"Because, if that is his nickname he may get annoyed and won't help us."

"It is not his nickname, it's his name. You see, mother, he owns a hayshop, but no hay ever gets sold there."

"What happens, Subbu ?"

"Something else happens, but I won't tell you, mother. It would frighten you."

"You have already frightened me, Subbu. Now tell me what happens ? Oh, this is a terrible place, and I am leaving my child, and that too, a girl, in this horrible town. Oh, my poor child, my Parvati."

"Now, now, don't cry, mother."

"Oh, my child, my child," cried Mrs. Ramaswamy loudly.

"Siva ! Siva ! What am I going to do ? The rowdies are coming !" cried the carter.

Mrs. Ramaswamy immediately stopped crying and wiped her tears. The carter's eyes gleamed triumphantly.

"Hoi, Hay!" shouted the carter.

"What is it? What do you want?"

"Come here, Hay, I want to speak to you."

"Don't say anything hasty," said Mrs. Ramaswamy softly to the carter.

The renter went near the cart.

"May we park the cart in some part of the square?"

"You'll have to pay a rupee," replied Raman.

"Come here, Hay, I want to tell you something," the carter whispered something into the renter's ear. Raman peeped into the cart and looked at Mrs. Ramaswamy and surveyed her sari.

"Wife of a headman!" whispered the carter again.

"All right, take the beasts along to the square. I shan't charge you anything this time." He faced Mrs. Ramaswamy. "My market will be honoured by your presence, mother."

Mrs. Ramaswamy got down from the cart and thanked him. The renter joined his hands and bowed. The carter led the bullocks to the square.

"Let us go to the market, Subbu," said Mrs. Ramaswamy as soon as the carter was back.

A middle-aged man came running to Mrs. Ramaswamy, stood in front of her, joined his hands and said, "Come to my stall, mother, I have lots of things, mother. Bangles, combs and toys. Very nice articles, all from Yapan. You should buy some for the children."

"Yes, mother, let us go and look at his things," Subbu said, and then softly "it is not necessary to buy anything."

When they reached the stall, the man offered the visitor an empty wooden box, and suggested that she might sit on it. Subbu sat on the ground. The keeper of the stall pestered Mrs. Ramaswamy to buy something, and she bought a cheap comb to avoid further trouble.

"Here you are, Subbu, you can give this to your grass-seller."

The carter felt it in his hand and remarked, "This won't do for that elephant. This will break the moment it touches her porcupine quills."

His mistress laughed and thought of her own mass of sleek blue-black hair. The stall-holder repeated the carter's remark and looked at him angrily.

"It won't break," he said, "it is very strong, it is Yapan-make. You can comb the thorny bushes of the jungle with it."

Mrs. Ramaswamy smiled and raised her eyebrows. "Keep it, Subbu," she said, "if you don't want it, we can give it to someone else."

A terrific noise now burst upon them. A bus passed by with loud hooting of horns.

"Hoi, Hey!" shouted an old man, "bus going to Karainagar. Villagers returning home. These fellows at one time used to walk to town and back. Now they sit proudly in buses. What has come of the world? May their legs rot! The wretches!"

The occupants of the bus looked out of the window and grinned. "Wretches, they don't even have the time to answer," said the old man.

"It's because of the speed, brother," replied his companion.

"It's something for the white man to have made the motor car, but how did he manage to put speed into it?" remarked an observant man who stood right in the centre of the market scanning the entire square.

"How did he manage to put speed into it? How did he manage to put speed into it?" a chorus of voices rose into the air.

"How did I manage to put speed into my bullocks?" shouted the carter.

The crowd turned towards him and laughed.

Grey and black clouds drifted slowly across the sky and covered the sun. As the sun disappeared, Marakayer made his appearance.

"Whensoever there is misery and ignorance, I come," he quoted the Gita.

"Who comes?" interrogated the crowd.

"Subramanya," replied Marakayer.

The umbrella seller knew the tricks of his trade. He knew that to the crowd in the square, who were worshippers of the Saivite pantheon, Krishna meant little. Krishna to the Saivites was a playful boy, who had a beloved called Radha, to whom he had not been very faithful. Marakayer had learned the words from a brahmin priest to whom he had sold three umbrellas on credit.

"Whensoever there is misery and ignorance, Subramanya comes," Marakayer repeated, modifying the Gita, "but whensoever there is going to be storm, thunder and lightning, Marakayer comes."

"Don't tell lies, you umbrella stealer," someone said, "there won't be rain. Look, the clouds are drifting away."

"Who said that?" interrogated Marakayer, "I have just consulted the astrologer. He said that we were going to have a heavy storm."

"Subbu! Subbu!" shouted Mrs. Ramaswamy.

"Don't be afraid, mother, he is a liar," said the stall-keeper.

"You rascal," shouted Hay Raman, who now made a sudden appearance, "you haven't paid your rent and have the cheek to insult my honoured visitor. Hold him, all of you!"

Two stalwart men seized Marakayer and held him on the spot while the renter snatched his umbrellas,

“Run away, you umbrella stealer. Go and steal some more umbrellas and come back,” said Hay Raman as he hit Marakayer with an umbrella.

The umbrella broke in two. Marakayer took to his heels.

Subbu now appeared on the scene after wandering through the market.

“Look, mother, look what I have bought.”

“What, Subbu?”

“I have bought new jewellery for our bullocks. I got them very cheap, they are gilded. Bells, necklaces and these for the horns.”

“You are a good man, Subbu. I’ll ask my man to pay you when we reach home.”

“That will never happen, mother. Anyway, I shan’t ask him. For if I do, he will only scold me. He would say that I was wasting his daughter’s dowry.”

The carter noticed that his mistress was thinking of her daughter at the mention of the word “dowry”.

“Let us go,” he said, “you never know when it will rain. True the clouds are parting, but you can never be certain of anything, mother.”

“Tilk! tilk! tilk!” The bullocks trotted, cantered and then galloped. The bells round their necks tinkled. The jewels on their horns gave them a raised effect like the double plaits on a woman’s head. They were beaten and kicked and their tails twisted, yet they didn’t mind as they seemed to be preoccupied with their new ornaments. Their bellies shook rhythmically like the rounded breasts of a mature temple dancer. They ran self-consciously, proudly and hopefully to their destination, unheeding of the carter.

“Tilk! tilk! tilk!”

K. S. SHELVANKAR

SCIENCE IN INDIA

OF all the fallacies concerning India, there is perhaps none more insidiously far-reaching in its ramifications than that the Indian people are innately other-worldly and averse from scientific, material, and worldly pursuits. This dogma has much to answer for. It is at the root of the classic antithesis between East and West. The alignments in the present war show how utterly meaningless this dichotomy is ; India is left alone now, an India bereft of a voice in the world's councils, to bear the whole burden of representing the conventional East—backward and poverty-stricken, but rapt in mystic contemplation. At the same time, the excessive and unnatural religiosity ascribed to the Indian people stands in the way of any realistic appraisal of social and political movements in India in terms that would be held valid for other countries.

It would be highly interesting to trace the origin and development of this fallacy. The subject is bound up with the story of the rediscovery of India's past in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The scholars who delved into Indian antiquities in that period were in the main European, if not British. Conscious of themselves as representatives of the ruling race, possessed of a technique whose superiority was evidenced by the very fact of conquest, they yielded readily to the temptation to ignore or belittle the material achievements of the subject people. Besides, the Hindu texts which were held in the highest esteem, and which formed the starting point of all study and research, were the Vedas. They offered endless scope for investigation ; they served as the basis of a new and important science—comparative grammar and philology ; and together with associated scriptures and philosophical systems they occupied so much of the Orientalist's attention that they came to be regarded before long as the sum total of India's cultural heritage.

This one-sided emphasis has subsequently been reinforced in totally different circumstances. The disintegration of capitalist culture in Europe led to a revival of interest in the East. It became fashionable once more to say *Ex Oriente Lux*. And although every writer was not equally enthusiastic—some, indeed, like Lowes Dickinson, Bertrand Russell and the earlier Huxley were distinctly critical or professed at best a lukewarm admiration—they all agreed in looking upon India as in some sort saturated with religion. The writings of Keyserling, Radhakrishnan, Heard, Huxley and others have helped to disseminate this caricature far and wide. Some see in it a pretext for considering India alien and incomprehensible, while

others, bewildered by a crumbling society, find in it the surest hope of the world's regeneration.

But there is nothing in the history of India to justify us in attributing a unique spirituality to the Indian people. It is a history as unspiritual, as material, as that of any other country—a history of violence and greed, of toil and ambition, of achievement and frustration. Far from being sunk in meditation, far from turning their backs on mundane affairs, the Indian people sweated and struggled for all that the world can give. They established kingdoms and empires, they administered vast territories, they produced great generals and statesmen. Their ships sailed across the oceans; their colonists built up flourishing communities in the Far East; their architects raised temples and towers and fortresses of enduring beauty and strength; and from all over the world came traders in search of what only Indian peasants and craftsmen could supply.

These multifarious activities testify not only to the energy and the worldly enterprise of the Indian people but also to their knowledge of and mastery over the forces of nature. There is no need to pretend that this was as exact and extensive as modern science. We need not assert, with some over-zealous nationalists, that submarines and aeroplanes were not unknown in ancient India; but it would be equally inexcusable to under-rate either the rôle that science played in Indian life or the value of the advances made in India. The commercial predominance enjoyed by India for many centuries, particularly in metallurgy and textiles, rested, as Sir P. C. Ray has shown, on two important scientific discoveries relating to the chemistry of steel and of vegetable dyes. In other branches of science, too, especially medicine, mathematics and astronomy, notable progress was made at an early date. The invention of numerical figures, used all over the world, and of the decimal system of reckoning, we owe to Hindu mathematicians. Arab science was, to no small extent, Indian science transmitted to medieval Europe by "Arab" intermediaries.

There are still wide and numerous gaps in our knowledge of India's past—gaps due at least in part to a belief long cherished by scholars that only philological intricacies and the inter-relationships of metaphysical systems were worthy of study. This mis-direction of research—now being rectified—has helped to keep us in the dark concerning the actual life of the people, and the social and political forces which shaped their destiny in the different epochs of Indian history. While, therefore, it is possible to say that a certain degree of scientific knowledge prevailed in India, we cannot in the present state of research either trace the process by which that knowledge was accumulated or explain adequately why scientific curiosity and

invention and discovery suffered a decline at a later period. Such a decline clearly appears to have set in about the thirteenth century; and scientific activities were not to be revived until the introduction of modern science in recent years—modern science to the development of which India herself had in the past made such a vital contribution.

The major aims of the British conquerors of India had, of course, as little to do with “introducing modern science” as with “civilising” the people or raising their standard of life. The educational system that was established had for its object, in Macaulay’s words, “to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern—a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect”. Scientific training had no place in this project. Consequently, whatever scientific work was done in India in the nineteenth century was carried out mainly by Government departments in the pursuit of their normal administrative tasks and by some scientific societies, of which the foremost was the Asiatic Society of Bengal.

During the last thirty years, however, a change has come over the scene—a change brought about in the last analysis by the social and political ferment in India and the growing recognition of the importance of science as a factor in national progress. The University Act of 1904, which strengthened Government control over the universities and was widely criticised, had nevertheless the merit of removing the ban which had been in force till then against universities undertaking direct teaching functions. This new freedom was utilised in the early stages mainly to develop post-graduate work and research; but together with the creation about the same time of chairs for various sciences in a number of colleges throughout the country, it gave a powerful impetus to the study of science. Additional but smaller universities of the teaching type—thirteen in all—were established between 1916 and 1929. Most of them, as well as the older universities, now have flourishing schools of research in various sciences, and during the past decade a great deal of original work of very high quality has been done here. They are gradually beginning to fulfil their proper functions not only as centres of teaching but also of encouraging original work by their staffs and students. Special mention must be made here of Calcutta University which, assisted by large trust funds placed at its disposal by wealthy Bengalis, has done more than any other institution in the country for the promotion and advancement of science.

Scientific activity is by no means confined to the universities. There are a number of research institutes: the Imperial Agricultural Research Institute at Pusa, the Central Research Institute for Medical Research at Kasauli, the All-India Institute of Public Health and Hygiene, Calcutta, the Nutritional Research Institute, Coonoor, and

several others. Perhaps the best-known of them all are the Bose Research Institute, Calcutta, founded and endowed by the late Sir C. Bose, himself a scientist of the first rank; and the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, supported mainly by the private bequests of the Tata family. Numerous scientific societies, some local and some nation-wide in scope, have also come into existence within the last quarter of a century. The Indian Science Congress Association, founded in 1912, has now established itself as the leading scientific organisation in the country and has rendered invaluable service in promoting intercourse between scientists from all parts of India. They are now taking, as the late Lord Rutherford said, "an honourable part and an ever-increasing share in the advance of knowledge in pure science".

The existence of such organisations and the high fame achieved by some Indian scientists should not, however, divert our attention from the basic factors which are crippling the progress of science in India to-day. These arise not out of any widespread longing to run away from the world and practice yoga, not through any lack of aptitude or intellectual deficiency, but out of the economic and political conditions imposed on the country by British rule. Let us explain. Scientific research is inseparable from scientific education, and scientific education from the prevailing system of education in general. Now, in India, as is well known, the fundamental characteristic of the educational system is that it is so extremely limited in range that the overwhelming majority of the population is not touched by it at all. Because the government which rules over them prefers to spend the public money in other ways, they have not the opportunity to learn to read and write, let alone acquire any scientific education.

Not only is there a shortage of schools, but there is seldom any scientific education in such as exist. In Bengal, for example, "there is no Science teaching worth the name in any of the ordinary High Schools"—and Bengal is one of the wealthiest provinces in India. "The majority of the schools live from hand to mouth. Their finances are in a deplorable condition. Teachers are ill-paid, there is little possibility of providing reasonable facilities for effective teaching . . . The result is that when students enter the university and start on a science course, they have to begin with the most elementary portions of their subject. There is no time for any teaching of scientific principles and the whole University course is a race against time in order to go through the syllabus which on paper is not far different from that followed in the West". Another reason lies in the fact that "so few worthwhile openings exist for employment after graduation". That, nevertheless, a large volume of research work is being done in the universities is only due to the determination and zeal with

which a minority of Indian students are able to make up for the deficiencies of their school training.

This brings us to the second basic factor that impedes the growth of science in India—the general economic backwardness and industrial under-development. These conditions re-act on science in two ways : they are ultimately responsible for the poverty which keeps education starved for funds ; and the demand for technical workers and skilled personnel which an advanced industrial system would create, is absent. Cadres of technical and scientific workers cannot be built up in a vacuum ; they must be related to an industrial apparatus ; and that industrial apparatus has been prevented from developing in India as a result of imperialist policy.

The truth is that education in general, scientific training and research, technical cadres, industrial development and the prevailing political regime—these are intertwined and interdependent aspects of a people's destiny. The progress of science in India is bound up with the success of the movement for national liberation—which alone can change the conditions created by imperialist rule. Equally, the national movement can only achieve its aim of transforming the social and economic life of the people by giving the fullest encouragement to scientific training, research and development.

SHER JUNG

THE WORK OF THE LORD IS FIT FOR DESTRUCTION

HE seemed to exude sourness. In his conversation, his movements, his speech, his manners there was always a suggestion of something indescribably sour and dry. He was very dark, very thin, very tall, ungainly and awkward. His eyes were small and deep set; the nose rose high in the middle, broad in front and flattened at the bridge where the spectacles had etched an ugly mark. The gaps between his sharp, pointed teeth revealed the raw and tainted flesh of his gums. His beard and moustache were closely clipped. His ears were set high and the hair on his head was sparse, as though it had been pecked by birds. During conversation he had a habit of saying, "Eh! What!" not once but several times till the other person was compelled to say: "Yes" or "Doubtless".

Every morning about ten o'clock a new batch of sick prisoners were made to sit in a line to be examined by the doctor. The doctor sat in front of them on a chair beside a table. A prisoner-dispenser stood nearby with several numbered bottles of medicine to serve out the mixtures as the doctor called out the numbers. One by one, as the prisoners' names were announced, they presented themselves to the doctor.

"Hee! Hee! Hee!" He laughed contemptuously as a prisoner came forward. "So you have come! Where do you work?"

"The grindstone."

"The grindstone? Hee... Hee... Hee..." The doctor went into a guffaw of laughter, then turning to the prisoner-compounder near him said: "Do you see that? What? 'The Work of the Lord is fit for destruction.' Eh?" And once again addressing the patient, "It kills you to work, does it? So you have come to the hospital. One would think hospital was your father's home. What? And you think the doctor is your father's servant? Eh?"

"Doctor Sahib, for the last four days I have been getting very high fever every night. And my heart..."

"Your heart?" he barked incredulously. "You get fever at night, do you, you seed of a rogue? Hee... Hee... Give him Number 16 to drink."

He turned to the next patient. "Hee... Hee! So you have come? What is wrong? Eh?"

"Huzoor, in my leg there is such severe..."

"Give him Number 16 to drink."

To the third: "Hee . . . Hee . . . Where do you work?"

"The oil-press, Huzoor."

"The oil-press? Did you say that? What? You die at the very thought of work, you seed of a rogue. Eh?"

"Huzoor, since last night diarrhœa and vomiting . . ."

"Give him Number 16."

To the fourth: "Hee . . . Hee . . . You have turned up again, you seed of a rogue. What? Let me see his ticket. He was discharged from the hospital only last month. Eh? And here he is back again. His case must be sent up for investigation. These people take advantage of my indulgence. 'The work of the Lord is fit for destruction.'"

"But, Huzoor," protested the wretched patient, "I was not altogether well when I was discharged. The pain in my back was not cured. Even then, Huzoor, you . . ."

"Shut up, you seed of a rogue." The doctor shouted in rage. "I did you a favour and cured you. Is this how you repay me? What? Eh? 'The work of the Lord is fit for destruction.'"

"Huzoor, first listen to me. . . ."

"Shut up! Am I your father's servant that I should listen to you all day long? What? Eh? Warder, send them all back to their wards. Call all the old patients!"

The old patients were brought and made to sit in a line before the doctor. Many of them were mere skeletons. Their hairy faces had a deathly look. Their dirty clothes exuded the sickly smell of flesh in early stages of decomposition.

Addressing the first patient, the doctor barked: "You are well now—are you not? You seem to have grown fat on milk. What? Give him Number 24."

To the second: "Thanks to me your life has been saved. But for me worms would have been at you by now in your grave. What? Eh? Give him Number 24."

To the next: "You have quite recovered now, haven't you?"

"Huzoor, Doctor Sahib, my cough . . ."

"You seed of a rogue, where is your ticket? What? Eh? Send him back. He is quite well."

To the fourth: "How are you, you seed of a rogue?"

"Huzoor, I still pass blood with my urine."

"You scoundrel. I did you a special favour. I ordered a daily ration of half a seer of milk for you. What? Eh? Halve his ration of milk from now on, warder. Give him Number 24 to drink."

"Milk!" bleated the patient, with tears of anger and helplessness in his eyes. "Three-fourths of it is water. You did me a favour indeed. . . . I don't want such favours."

"Water? Water in the milk?" exclaimed the doctor. "What?"

Eh? This is the way you repay my kindness. . . . Well, let him die. Take him away and lock him up in a cell. Send back prisoners five to eleven. They are all seeds of rogues. 'The work of the Lord is fit for destruction.'"

BOOK REVIEWS

PROPHETS AND EXPERTS¹

NO critic can provide a more telling commentary on these two books than is offered by contemporary developments in India and the grave events in the East. The outlook and the approach which are basic to these books and the finalities which they lay down as axiomatic and self-evident, have no relation to the present circumstances and the solutions which are imperative today.

Though very different from each other the two books belong to the same class, they serve the same purposes, feed the same passions and rely on the same prejudices and sentiments for their appeal. Of the two Mr. Coatman's book is less likely to mislead people of average discrimination; for its bald assumptions will shock any but those who, like the author, regard British Imperial domination as the basis of freedom and civilised existence. Its imperialist bias is so little disguised that its thesis carries its own warning. The other volume is not one book but two. The first part is apparently intended to be a scholarly and informed piece of historical work executed with objectivity and the knowledge of facts both past and present. Mr. Wint's performance, however, falls grievously short of any such claims. This is a mild comment to make on this piece of "history". It is confused thinking and amateurish writing, tendencious in the way that only the ignorant can be. For historical material the author appears to rely on the writings of Anglo-Indians, or others even less scholarly, and draws on the college textbooks of a previous generation, also written by Anglo-Indians which even the Indian universities no longer consider adequate or historical! There are some unacknowledged sources, of which it is fair to infer that Mr. Wint has made more use than he is entitled to do. Perhaps the most

¹ *India and Democracy*. By Sir George Schuster and Guy Wint. (Macmillan, 12s. 6d.)

India: The Road to Self-Government. By John Coatman. (Allen and Unwin. 5s.)

pathetic part of this outline is where Mr. Wint is unable to differentiate between historical material and a "leg pull". One supposes that he went about India armed with the doctrine that the Indian has no sense of humour. Read one of Mr. Wint's footnotes given as serious historical material:—

"It is because of their disposition to worship anything and everything that the number of godlings in India is believed to amount to 330 millions. Among these are the spirits of former European officials, now propitiated by offerings of beer, cigars and whiskey. It has been reported that even the Privy Council is worshipped by a caste successful in a case brought before it."

In vain does one read through these pages for some knowledge of Indian realities or some sensible account or interpretation of past history. Mr. Wint does not think, apparently, that the condition of the people, their hunger, the social neglect, the *Chawls* of Bombay, the *Cheris* of Madras, the indebtedness of the villager and the plight of the peasant are as important as his other facts. Nor does he see the present development in India except in terms of the Act of 1935, of what the Princes' advisers told him about the States and what his wealthy friends told him about India. Where he met others he appears to have lost the opportunity to profit by it.

How little Mr. Wint understands the ethos of the institutions he sets out to study and how mistaken are his judgments in many of his pages, is revealed nowhere better than where he says in his chapter on India and China that the history of the Kuomintang "is curiously similar to that of the rise to power in India of the East India Company," and that "China, in fact, submits to the Kuomintang because its system is not very much unlike the *ancient regime*" (!)

Sir George Schuster was for five years Finance Minister to the Government of India. But he is not an Anglo-Indian official, having been appointed to this post from this country presumably because he is connected with finance and big business. His vision of a future National Government is, however, briefly "Dominion Status" by stages, in which he envisages the "Indian Government" to be no more than an internal administration, apparently getting its wings under the protection of the mighty arm of Britain. The infallible command of the armed forces remains in British hands, but the "Defence Ministers" must have "considerable scope and power" and the success of the venture must depend on "the spirit in which it is worked and on the personal relations between the Minister and the Commander-in-Chief." Sir George recognises that these two must be of one mind, but leaves us in no doubt as to where, in his own view, the mind should reside.

We are entitled to look to an ex-administrator, who claims independence of view, for some practical guidance on the imperative issues of the day and for some clear view on the substantive demands of the Indian National Movement. But when we come to Sir George's

“summary and conclusions” they boil down to this: (1) that the Indian problem must be viewed in a dual aspect—the Inter-Indian and the Indo-British; (2) that Indians must agree among themselves; (3) that “the constitutional problem cannot be solved completely or finally in advance.” He goes on to say that the essential thing is to get down to practical work, by which he believes “constructive economic and social tasks” would be carried out.

Sir George knows awakened India well enough to admit that his proposals “will arouse suspicion”. He need have no fear; for, India is travelling along a different road altogether, a road which Sir George discerns perhaps in the distance but does not regard as the main path of Indian development.

The second part of *India and Democracy* gives us some of the material which did not impress Mr. Wint’s scholarly mind. Its author is as remote as Mr. Wint from the realities of the Indian and world situation, but at least he does not ignore some of the stubborn facts, though he seeks to escape from their implications. His reform and his good will are all set within the compass of the hope that Indian aspirations can and may be met without fundamental changes and substantial inroads into British interests. But, even here, he goes further than Mr. Coatman or Mr. Amery in recognising that in the remote future the ties between Britain and India can be kept only by India being convinced that her interests are best advanced that way. But all this misses the issues of today, issues which are basic to Indian independence and Indian collaboration in the larger struggle. This is inevitably so, for Liberal Imperialist Sir George and the Imperial propagandist Mr. Coatman are each protagonists of Empire in their own way, but essentially the same way.

Mr. Coatman’s book does not call for the attention that *India and Democracy* does. It is just official propaganda. He has called the book “The Road to Self-Government”, which is by definition some status within the British Empire wherein India will lead the non-European peoples! Mr. Coatman gives too much away, for in his Commonwealth with all its equality of status, the Europeans and non-Europeans remain two distinct categories!

The book is full of many factual inaccuracies which call for comment. As commentary and interpretation it is so blatantly official propaganda that one cannot go into reasoned criticism but must leave it to the reader to draw his own conclusions.

Following are a few of these oft-repeated misstatements chosen at random:—

1. “The All-India Congress is an offshoot of English Liberalism.”

2. “Without the English there would never have been an Indian Nationalist movement.”

3. "The 1919 reforms gave rise to something like a Federal system for India."

4. "The carrying of the Independence amendment at Lahore in 1929 led to another of those breaches in Congress unity which has marked its progress at every important turning point in Indian history since 1908."

5. "The summoning of the Round Table conference (1930) wiped out for ever the old tutelage of India."

6. The Irwin-Gandhi pact was responsible for the Hindu-Moslem riots in Cawnpore in 1931.

One could easily add to this list, but far more tendencious than these misstatements are the large omissions in this "historical survey", its quotations out of context and the statement of opinions and interpretations as though they were facts. Mr. Coatman's book should be an apt Ministry of Information publication on India. Perhaps the author would regard this as a compliment, but if that is the case, it only proves our argument.

From these prophets and experts, and their surveys and conclusions, let us for a moment look at the events. The whole case for progressive realisation of responsible government in the Empire is now a little unrealistic both in view of the emphatic attitude of the Indian people and the events in the East. It is *now* not a question of helping India or of tutoring her, but of rallying her vital forces and immense resources for the common struggle for a freer world. The debacle in Malaya completely refutes the argument about efficiency of administration and exposes the weakness of protecting territories without setting the populations free. The condition of India itself, unprepared—to put it mildly—calls for a complete and immediate change. In that change, India would seek not to maintain and strengthen the imperialism that oppresses her people but to cooperate with all peoples, including those of Britain. But her nearest and most natural friends are her neighbours; and it is also her task to devote her energies to striking at the root causes that have led to the present catastrophe.

The immediate problem in India is not Dominion or any other imperial Status. Mr. Amery's declaration of August 8th, stillborn, is not even a museum-piece now and it is futile to repeat parrot-like the stories and canards about Indian disunities and deficiencies. The hour calls for supreme wisdom and imagination. India has taken the initiative and offered cooperation. She is passionately concerned with the defeat of fascism but she does not see that it can be achieved by the defence of imperialism against herself.

The assumption of leadership by Jawaharlal Nehru, passionate anti-fascist and champion of democracy, is India's answer to the new

situation. The next step is with Britain. She can take it and make a better world; she rejects it at her own and the nation's peril.

Release India! For her release means the rally of vast and powerful forces for the struggle on the issue of which our future depends—here and in India.

V. K. KRISHNA MENON.

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JONATHAN CAPP

A LETTER TO KOESTLER.¹

Dear Koestler,

At the end of your latest book¹ you addressed two letters, one to Colonel Blimp and another to Comrade Blump. I daresay they have both already acknowledged receipt of your communications; if not, perhaps their deeds will speak better than their words. Myself, I presume to write to draw your attention to the inappropriateness of a metaphor you use when in your note to the Colonel you say: "A strange historical constellation has tied us together, and we are mutually in the position of the Indian bride: if one of us dies, the other will be burnt alive with the corpse on the great funeral pyre of European civilisation."

I suggest that your phrase is inappropriate not because I believe your readers are so stupid as to take it literally, but because I feel that the Indians having long since given up the attitude of the bride who would willingly burn herself on the funeral pyre of her lord and master for the sake of an outworn moral creed, I am surprised to find you accepting such an abject morality without even so much as a qualification.

I am not unaware, of course, that, in this war against fascism, first things come first. But don't let us be so naive as to imagine that if we vowed undying devotion to the Blimps they would leave a testament absolving us from the duty of burning ourselves on their pyre: most probably they will take us down with them or see us burnt before they go down if *we don't look out and save them from themselves*. As you know, the transformation which is going on through the fight against fascism in the social and economic systems of the Allied States will tend towards a planned socialist democracy or its various grim alternatives, according as the component parts of the Allied States exert themselves. So please don't go on being the pigeon who believed that the cat wouldn't eat it just because it had shut its eyes and couldn't see the cat coming.

It is strange how you have got tied up in knots through your insistence on this Ends and Means business even though you can recognise your own interests and those of the world order which you desire clearly enough. For, on the one hand, you act well in the defence of your own interests: In order to escape from the clutches of the police after you had been to the hell of La Vernet, you (quite rightly) lie and make good your escape. Again, to escape falling into the hands of the advancing German Army, you, with

¹ *Scum of the Earth*. By Arthur Koestler. (Jonathan Cape. 8s. 6d.)

great presence of mind, change your name and live in disguise, suffering terrible hardship with fortitude. On the other hand, you torture yourself endlessly because you want Means to justify Ends and *vice versa*. Don't you see that it is not only impossible to apply this dictum consistently in one's personal life, as you found, short of lapsing or fasting unto death or becoming a martyr, but that any hangover which we as individuals may have inherited in the way of morality from our forefathers is certainly not bequeathed intact by one state to another. For, whereas men may have become addicted to decency and good faith in their personal relations (though, even then, just think of our particular subterfuges, prejudices and the like !), and may go on practising these virtues even in times of crises, the political history of most states shows that they have never indulged in such luxuries in their dealings with each other, except as fig leaves to be used in diplomacy.

Your confusion seems to me to arise from accepting one of the many moralities current in the world (the Judaic-Christo-Hellenic-European tradition, for instance), with all the associations which may have accrued to it in history, as a fundamental moral law, to isolate it for special favour because of its peculiar validity in your subjective experience, and to see the whole of life, both public and private, through its lenses. No wonder that your picture gets out of focus at times. You watch the French authorities who condemn you to your ordeal without a complaint, like a rabbit fascinated by the vision of its torturer inflicting the torture, while you foam at the mouth every time you think of Russian foreign policy during the last few years and regard Stalin as a gangster . . .

I don't suppose that in the ultimate analysis the Soviet Government would want to be judged by any other morality than their own. Even Trotsky recognised that : "The amoralism of Lenin," he wrote, "that is, his rejection of super-class morals, did not hinder him from remaining faithful to one and the same ideal throughout his whole life ; from devoting his whole being to the cause of the oppressed ; from displaying the highest conscientiousness in the sphere of ideas and the highest fearlessness in the sphere of action, from maintaining an attitude untainted by the least superiority to the ordinary worker, to a defenceless woman, to a child. Does it not seem that 'amor-alism' in the given case is only a pseudonym for higher human morality."

You may believe that the "new moral climate" which you are hoping to create will produce a still higher morality than that of Lenin's or Stalin's. Who knows ? But if you can look at yourself detachedly from the point of view of a thoroughgoing pacifist like Gandhi or Huxley, you may find yourself being accused of using, through your help in a war which causes suffering to some, such bad

Means as are destined to achieve evil Ends. You, the accuser, thus become, from the point of view of the practitioners of non-violence in Deoli and the other concentration camps in India, the accused. And there are various other moralities equally at variance with what we regard as eternal truths and fundamental laws and we may not emerge altogether as paragons of virtue in the light of those systems.

Personally, I have no wish to judge you from any morality of my own. Only please don't think I am insulting your intelligence if I recommend you the liberal virtues, tolerance and consideration in the interests of balance and a few doses of history to enable you to see things in perspective.

MULK RAJ ANAND.

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