

attempt to validate a whole collection of legislations found invalid by the Supreme Court, en masse and with retrospective effect, does smack of violating the spirit of constitutional rule. Making amendments to nullify whatever provisions of the Constitu-

tion are found inexpedient at a particular point of time can be a politically opportune game for a party commanding an absolute majority in the Parliament. But it is a game that cannot but make the Constitution lose sanctity in the eyes of the lay

public—a result that is hardly likely to strengthen the still young tradition of constitutional government in the country.

Bombay  
April 28.

A READER

### Capital View

## The Corrosion of Secularity

Romesh Thapar

WHATEVER you may read to the contrary, we have succeeded willy-nilly in making Abdullah a vital factor in our political future. Everyone is wondering what he is going to say to the Prime Minister and whether it will be possible to curb his mischief-making should the talks result in a deadlock. There is only one interesting shift in official posture. Previously, the plan was to give Abdullah a warm and affectionate welcome. Now, the atmosphere will be distinctly cool and official. Abdullah's adventurist outpourings have splintered his 'base' in India, causing even those who would 'conciliate' him to panic.

From what one can gather, Abdullah has received an impressive reception on his way to Srinagar and in Srinagar. It is true that Jammu's earlier enthusiasm was dampened by the tenor of the speeches and the fairly obvious attempt to play to the gallery. The reception in the valley has been dominated by pro-plebiscite demonstrations, and punctuated even by pro-Pakistan manifestations. Sadiq, however, during his recent visit to the Capital, has been at pains to explain that the decision to release Abdullah was correct and that there is every reason to believe that political stability in the State will increase in the coming weeks.

### Different Analysis

The sharp difference in analysis between the reports received from Sadiq and those received through the Centre's own intelligence network is not difficult to explain. Sadiq relies heavily on the fact that Abdullah's adventurism, his mercurial moods, will create chaos among those elements who believed him to be

some sort of saviour; indeed, Masoodi is already reported to be re-thinking his position vis-a-vis the Abdullah bandwagon. In other words, Sadiq believes that, given time, it is possible politically to isolate those who threaten to detach Kashmir from India. The GOI's reports only reflect the surface signs—and do not indicate the real feelings of the people in the Valley. Sadiq goes further, he says with confidence that Srinagar is not the Valley!

I have seen certain independent reports and met a number of detached observers who believe that it is possible to see the developments in the Valley the way Sadiq and his colleagues do. But all agree that confidence begins to disappear when one gets a feel of the GOI's dithering. Increasingly, for instance, Krishna Menon's strong and consistent stand is contrasted with the vague and unreal attitudes of the leading elements in the Union Cabinet, particularly Lal Bahadur Shastri who does not seem to have a tight grip over the problem. This is alarming, because it suggests that we may well lose Kashmir in Delhi.

While in Delhi, Sadiq once again attempted to persuade the powers that be to keep Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad out of the Valley. A sphinx-like silence greeted him. Then again, the decision to open up Kashmir to the political parties in India is not being encouraged in the way it ought to be; it is time these parties moved on their own momentum, but there seems to be a reluctance to act until the integration of the State is completed by the abolition of Article 370 which has been the constitutional cloak for legalised corruption and political brutality. The failure to integrate the State fully

may yet become the GOI's and Sadiq's major headache.

### JP's Proposal

Jayaprakash Narayan's plea, publicised through an article in a local newspaper, that if the State is part of India we should not be fearful of an election, is dismissed as puerile. It is pointed out that the setting of a precedent on secession could lead to far-reaching repercussions wherever there are movements inspired by autonomous or semi-autonomous dreams, that JP's attempt to make secessionism a right to be exercised whenever there is doubt about a particular people's wishes is absurd and unrealistic. Significantly, while JP imagines that the acceptance of his position on Kashmir would restore India-Pakistan goodwill, contrary reactions are being sparked.

Even those who support Jayaprakash Narayan argue that the step he advocates would 'put an end to the blackmail of untrustworthy Kashmiri leaders' and 'prove once and for all time that the Muslims of India cannot but look Pakistanwards'. There is glib talk of 'population transfers', 'a tit for tat approach' and a 'proper settling of accounts'. The more militant Hindus speak of 'drowning Pakistan in India's fifty million Muslims', whatever that might mean! There is an upsurge of nascent communalism in the most unexpected quarters. The GOI does not seem to be too anxious to face this terrible truth—or are Home Minister Nanda's 'talks' with RSS 'Guruji' Golwalkar supposed to suggest this in an odd sort of way?

In short, Jawaharlal Nehru's Kashmir policy, which was to have been one of the pillars of India's secularity, now threatens to become the main corrosive agent. Sixteen years

of misrule, corruption and political gangsterism, initiated in the days when Abdullah ruled and rapidly extended by the Bakshi regime, now threatens to unleash revanchist forces which we thought had been relegated to the dustbin of history. Jawaharlal Nehru did not act against those who made mockery of his Kashmir policy. And he continues to imagine that the problem can be tackled by entrusting the future of the State to this or that leader<sup>1</sup>. This is wishful thinking. Jawaharlal Nehru has either to take drastic steps to guarantee that Kashmir will not be a plaything of ambitious leaders and interested foreign powers or see the fundamental policies popularised by him crumble into dust. In this sense, weakness and indecision in Kashmir today can imperil the secular future of this country.

### From the London End

Delhi's present wait and see attitude is commendable, but the fear is widely expressed that it is merely 'wait and see'—and nothing else. We are growing accustomed, quicker than we thought, to ad hoc policy-making. But the problems of Kashmir, or for that matter the other frontier regions, can no longer be tackled in this ad hoc manner. There must be an understanding of the immediate needs and how these fit into our perspectives. This is apparently obvious to everyone except those who exercise power,

#### Abdullah's Motives

When will the break-through come? Will we surrender Kashmir to the pressures which have been mounted or will we learn new lessons in statecraft and mature as a nation? Were Abdullah's speeches calculated only

to consolidate his hold on a divided people and so to strengthen his voice in the political bargaining which the Delhi talks foreshadow—or are we up against a man who wants everything or nothing? Is there relevance in Sadiq's courageous stand, a stand by which he hopes to mobilise the best of Kashmir opinion—and the majority? Will we reserve our secular faith or abandon it because of the rantings of charismatic leaders?

These are only some of the questions we are asking ourselves as Parliament prepares to adjourn and summer's heat descends. Abdullah will soon be here. There will be more questions to ask ourselves. I don't have to say it but these are crucial days. We will require all our political wisdom to see us through.

April 22, 1964.

## The Boring Budget

A NY hopes that. Maudling's Budget was going to inject a new vitality into the flagging spirits of the Conservative Party were belied very shortly; Her the Chancellor started to speak. In the event, the Budget turned out to be one of the dullest in years, and certainly quite irrelevant as far as dealing with any of the major problems which lace Britain today were concerned.

It bore all the marks of a Budget prepared for a June Election. When Sir Alec's last moment announcement of the postponement of the Election was made, granting a reprieve of six months for the Conservatives, it was widely believed that Maudling would still grasp the chance to present a Budget that might set the tone for the Government's economic policy. Judged by the length of the Budget speech, this was a Budget for an October Election. Judged by its coverage and by the absence of any attempt at tax reform, it could well have been prepared for a June one. During the course of his speech, Maudling referred to several proposals which might have been made extension of indirect tax, reform of company taxation, overhaul of the

Exchequer account—only to postpone action on them.

#### A Policy Vacuum

Maudling has, therefore, resolutely refused to give some sense of purpose and direction to the Government in the embarrassing six months that are still left to it. As a result of the Budget, it must inevitably iceni that for the next six months the Party will be operating in a policy vacuum. The Budget was characterised by more words than action. An Wilson pointed out it was really an inflationary Budget with too many words chasing too few ideas. It is very strongly rumoured that Maudling was among the Cabinet Ministers who were very much in favour of a June Election, but it would perhaps be a little unfair to suggest that it was pique alone that prevented him from providing something more dramatic and far-reaching. Maudling has deliberately decided to be less restrictive than he was expected to be; he has decided to gamble on the chance that things will go well in the months ahead.

There is no doubt at all that public reaction to the Budget has been

lukewarm. Dull, pedestrian, unimaginative—these were adjectives freely used by members of both sides of the House. Indeed, once the general trend of the Budget was discerned, members of the House paid scant attention to the speech. Wilson very appropriately described it as a lame duck Budget by a lame duck Government. Of course, some Tones are relieved that the Chancellor has limited his increase in taxation, in the pre-election period, to roughly half the amount the economic experts had led them to expect; but none sees anything in his proposals to give new heart to the Party and to start off the long delayed recovery in Tory fortunes for which a six-month period of grace has been provided by the Prime Minister.

#### Economic Situation Ignored

An analysis of the Budget shows it to be one of bits and pieces hardly the clarion call which the Government should sound as the battle of a General Election approaches. The proposals in the Budget are simple enough. According to the Chancellor, it is designed "to steady