

FROM THE EDITOR

CONGATULATIONS

"The great powers say that they continued to arm themselves against each other; but in the context of the nuclear reality it was a lie. They continued to arm themselves against an unarmed humanity." This had been the theme of our editorials in the two previous New Year issues. A great frustration had shadowed the minds of all who understood the implications of the failure of talks between the two super-powers at Reykjavik. More than any imminent threat from the nuclear bomb, what depressed people is the inadequacy of the mighty leaders on whose decision the fate of humanity had come to rest. Was this inadequacy characteristic of mankind? Consciously or unconsciously, the effect of such failures bred a kind of cynicism which contaminated all areas of human activity, literature in particular.

Obviously we have reasons to strike a note of hope in the New Year issue this time. The conclusion of the treaty between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. for elimination of the intermediate range missiles is a step towards triumph of sense over nonsense. It reiterates our faith that man can change the course of his destiny. .

The conduct of man in general is moulded by three automatic forces: his primitive instinct to protect his self, including his ego and his ignorance. If someone points out a blatant error in me, my instant reaction, in most cases, will be to justify the error. This primitive law holds good from such superficial every-day experiences up to one's vociferous defence of one's foolish actions as a leader of a nation, inflated by a bigger ego often uncontrollable. The bigger ego has other colours too, religious, communal, etc.

The second force is the force of material innovations. It is our intelligence and endeavour that make a thing, but the thing begins to control a considerable part of our mind. Instead of necessity mothering invention, a situation is created when "invention is the mother of necessity", as Thorstein Veblen put it. One invention leads to another, changing our life-style and influencing our thought-process. Most of us welcome the changes, for we believe them to be modernism or progress. We do not pause to think what is there to be proud of in being helplessly pushed by some forces.

The third force is the force of convention, a traditional bondage to forms without any respect for their content. It is this force which reduces religion to obscurantism and degrades fruits of intuition into superstitions. It can wear a deceptive mask of idealism. Most of those who dance with swords in the name of religion are victims of this dangerous force.

It requires true courage to go against these three currents carrying us in their sweep. Mr. Gorbachev and Mr. Reagan have at last projected humanity's hope to defy the first two currents. We congratulate them.

And, are there signs of some people, however small their number be, who have the courage to defy the third current? There are. They may be few, but it is a liberal, enlightened future that sends its signal through their voice. Some of them figured in a recent news: "Five progressive Muslim organisations had hailed the decision of the Indian Muslim Youth Conference President, Mr.

Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi to hand over 'Ram Bhoomi' to the Hindu community as a gesture of goodwill and end the prolonged controversy over the Babri Masjid-Ram Janma Bhoomi issue ...

"The signatories to the statement were Mr. Asad Ansari, General Secretary, IMYC, Mr. Sharif Jamal Quareshi, President, Muslims for Progress, Delhi, Mr. Ayyub Sayeed, President, Madhya Pradesh Muslim Sangharsh Vahini, Miss Nafisa Seikh, General Secretary, Maharashtra Manila Sangathana and Mr. Mohd. Karim Seth, President, Muslmeene Hindu." (UNI)

ON THE TIDES OF TIME

THE ENCHANTED BELOVED

Some men break your heart in two,
Some men fawn and flatter,
Some men never look at you,
And that cleans up the matter.

—Dorothy Parker, *Experience*.

A practice to which we have brought elaboration, not refinement, in recent years is the practice, of thanks giving in meetings. An institution convenes a seminar or organises some cultural function. The thanksgiving is generally vested in the second or the third man in command of the institution. He will begin with paying homage to his boss: "It is the great vision, imaginativeness and untiring interest of our beloved... that this great function has been possible!"

The plain fact is, the function is one of the activities for which the institution exists. But the executive, one of the hosts, must thank his superior who is yet another host. The enchanted boss does not fail his deputy either. He showers his praise on the former at the earliest opportunity. In one of the functions this mutual thanksgiving took such an intense form that for the audience it became as embarrassing as having to witness a public display of romance. Something else which was not in vogue earlier is the practice of thanking the press, the radio and, where it applies, the TV, for their 'kindness'. Although it is a bribery not in cash but in kind, it can perhaps be excused as courtesy. But the hosts thanking themselves before the guests is pure crudity. They could perhaps leave that part, as was done earlier, to one of the guests. Even a tutored guest will be in keeping with decency.

Thanksgiving is done in two instalments. At the introductory phase only the senior host or hosts are thanked along with the chief guest or guests. The second and final instalment which occurs at the end, thanks to the spirit of democracy, covers persons from the highest down to those who supplied the chairs, those who fixed the microphone and those who catered refreshments. The list is long and a test for your patience, for you don't get anything from it in terms of knowledge or joy and don't believe what is said.

But do those hosts and the rest who hear their own praise really believe that they deserved it? Difficult to answer. "What really flatters a man is that you think him worth flattering," said Shaw. Maybe there is some truth in it.