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## Nuclear hypocrisy in India

'NOTHING will better serve the interests of those who are hostile to us than for us to lose our sense of perspective and to undertake measures which would undermine the basic progress of the country. We believe that to be militarily strong, it is equally important to be economically and industrially strong'. Thus Mrs Gandhi in 1968 in declaring that India would develop her atomic energy programme exclusively for peaceful purposes. In the strictest sense, the recent detonation by India of a nuclear device does not violate any of the carefully worded statements of the past. But if the Indian government believes it can explain away its possession of nuclear devices by careful wording of statements, and can justify a peaceful-purposes programme on economic grounds it is guilty of wicked hypocrisy. Whatever the celebrations in India, scientists there should know that they gain no increased respect from scientists in other countries for producing a nuclear explosive, rather they lose it for being party to such a transparent deception.

The explosion was detonated in the Rajasthan desert—a mere 90 miles from the Pakistan border—and had a yield of 10 or so kilotons. It was fired sufficiently close to the surface (perhaps no deeper than 100 metres) so that it produced a large crater, the purpose of which, apparently, is water storage. There are no immediate reports of radioactive leakage so the experiment must have been done with some delicacy. There have been several cratering shots both in the United States and the Soviet Union and the literature on the subject is relatively open.

Can a nuclear explosives programme be purely peaceful? There is nothing in the science and technology which differentiates between peaceful and military devices, so the distinction can only be in the mind of the firer. Whatever Mrs Gandhi may say about her own intentions she is not going to dismantle the devices when she resigns from office, and her successor could well have much more aggressive intentions. Even in Mrs Gandhi's term of office a political situation could easily arise in which the Government 'with the greatest reluctance' was forced to consider the option of commandeering peaceful devices for warlike purposes. Thus India possesses all the psychological and physical ingredients for a nuclear deterrent and deceives none of its neighbours by talking about making holes and mining copper. The means of delivery are also there in the form of Canberra bombers; despite recent pronouncements India does not need missiles to become a military nuclear power to be reckoned with.

Can India afford it? It costs several hundred million pounds to develop nuclear devices. The cost of the hole in the desert and of any future project could if produced in more conventional ways hardly amount to this—and could employ and feed large numbers of people. If the programme is to be justified on its peaceful benefits, and is not to 'undermine the basic progress of the country' the government has a lot of explaining to do to its people, particularly the hungry ones. For a country with a GNP per capita of £40 there are surely more effective economic ventures than this.

What will be the impact on other potentially nuclear

countries? The test is bound to trigger concern in Pakistan, but a more important question is the reaction of many other countries with nothing to fear from India. There are several abstainers from the Non-Proliferation Treaty who are bound to feel increasing pressure as a result of India's action, notably Israel and South Africa. India has compounded the seriousness of the situation by showing not only that even a poor country can make nuclear devices but also that there is a way in which they can be given some sort of flimsy justification in terms of peaceful uses.

Two golden opportunities have been lost. If India had been prepared to press her need for peaceful nuclear explosives in international circles, it is not out of the question that she could have been responsible for establishing some sort of agency which would have removed peaceful explosions from their present national basis. And if the present nuclear countries had busied themselves more over nuclear arms control in the past 5 years, they would have a better moral platform from which they could harangue proliferators.

## 100 years ago



AN excellent device has been forwarded to us for use in field-club excursions. It is designed to promote an interest in common flowers, and can of course be varied and worked without a prize. It consists of a large envelope, with a description, but not the name, of a plant, and directions as to what ought to be done with the plant when found. The particular envelope, forwarded to us by Mr. Higgins of the Liverpool Naturalist's Club, contains the following on its back :—

### EXTRA PRIZE.

#### DESCRIPTION OF PLANT.

Leaves opposite, Sessile, Lanceolate, Acuminate.  
Sepals 5, half as long as the 5 deeply-cleft Petals.  
Stamens 10, Styles 3, height about 12 in.

Members finding a plant answering to this description should take it to the President or Botanical Referee, with their name signed at the foot of this slip. When correct the slips will be initialed and handed to the Secretary. The finder should be prepared to answer questions on the description; but the name of the plant will not be officially announced till after tea.

A Prize or Prizes will be awarded at the end of the Season to those most successful.

Signed, \_\_\_\_\_

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