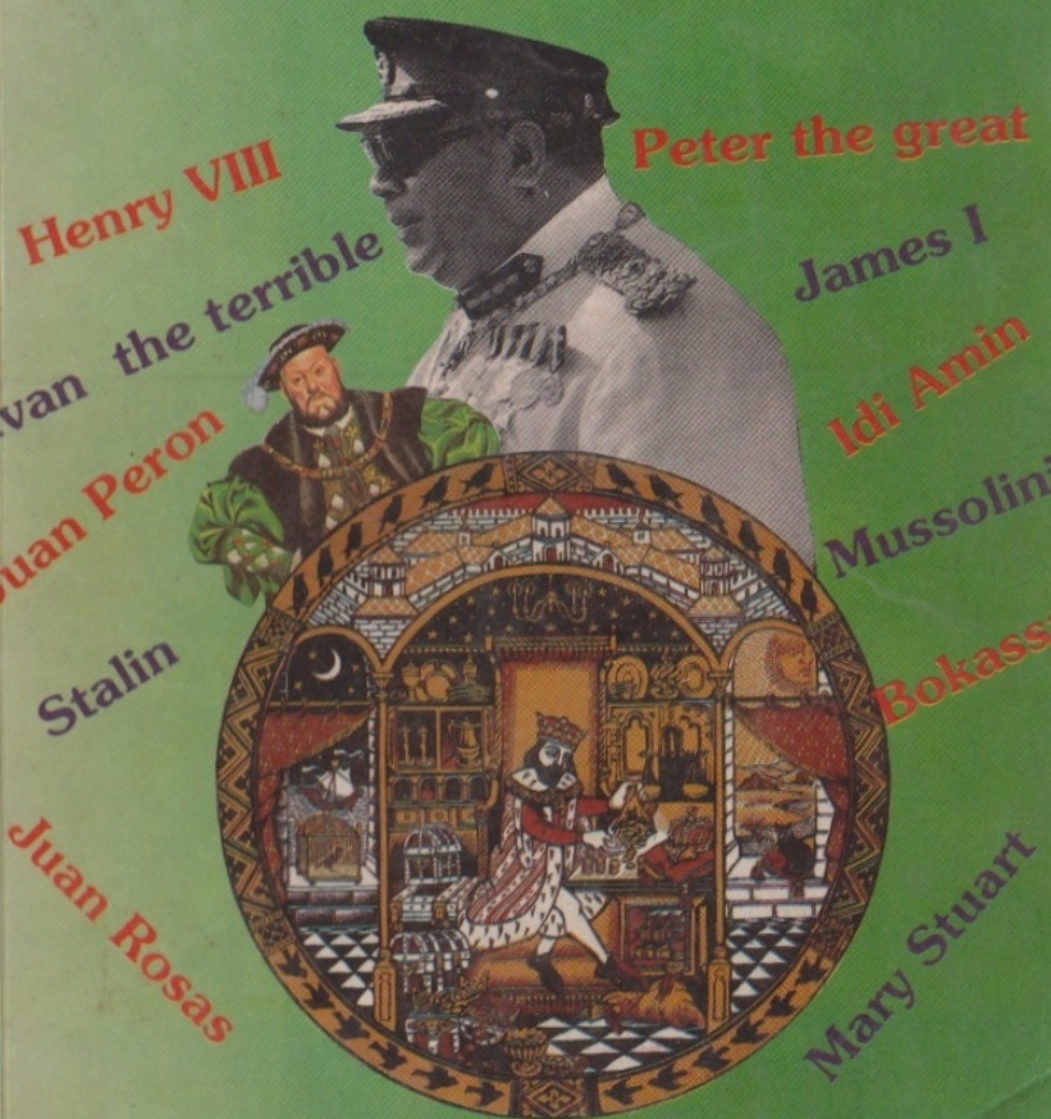


World-Famous Crazy Despots



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Publishers' Note

The present age has rightly been described as the Age of Speed. Naturally, the present-day reader wants to read books which, besides entertaining him, also keep him abreast of whatever is happening in the world of knowledge. In other words, he wants an ideal blend of instruction and entertainment. Our guiding philosophy is to provide precisely these kinds of books. Besides, these books have been priced so reasonably low that they remain within the purchasing capacity of average readers.

It is in terms of this philosophy the World-Famous Series of books has been launched. The books in this series provide a kind of mini encyclopaedia for the respective fields that they cover. The response of our readers to this series has only confirmed what we had thought about the needs of the reading public. The books in this series have sold well within a short period of time. Emboldened by this success, we are planning to bring out a larger number of titles than we had earlier planned.

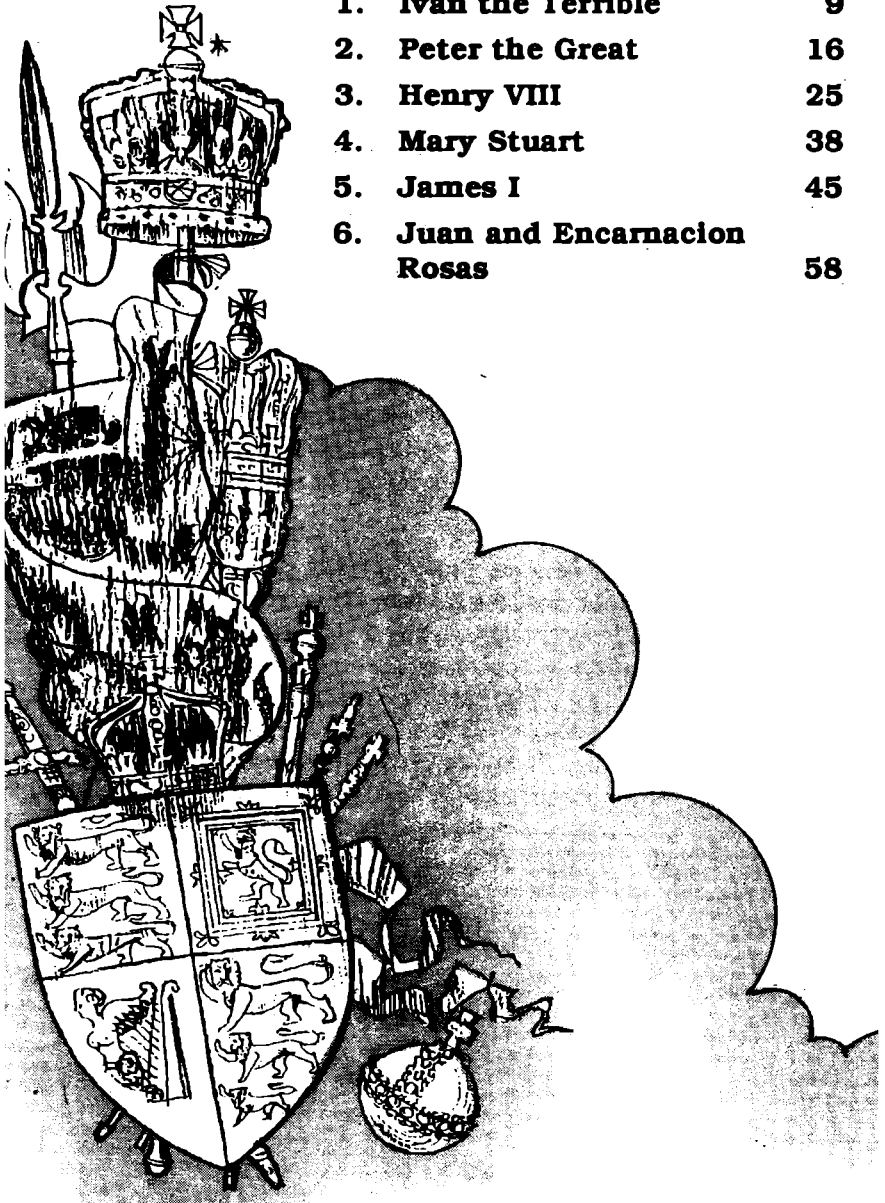
The 'World-Famous Crazy Despots' is the 21st title in this series. In this book, we have presented the crazy life-styles of some of the famous despots in the history of the world and their eccentric beliefs and actions. We have shown how in their fits of craziness, these despots have perpetrated inhuman cruelties on both people close to them and also on general populace. Idi Amin of Uganda or Mussolini of Italy, Stalin of Soviet Russia or Mary Stuart of England—these despots have basically been chips of the same block. We have presented these despots in their historical contexts so that their rise, their inhuman deeds and their eventual fall are vividly captured by the discerning readers.

We will welcome your response to this title after you have gone through this book. Your response will help us to do better in future.

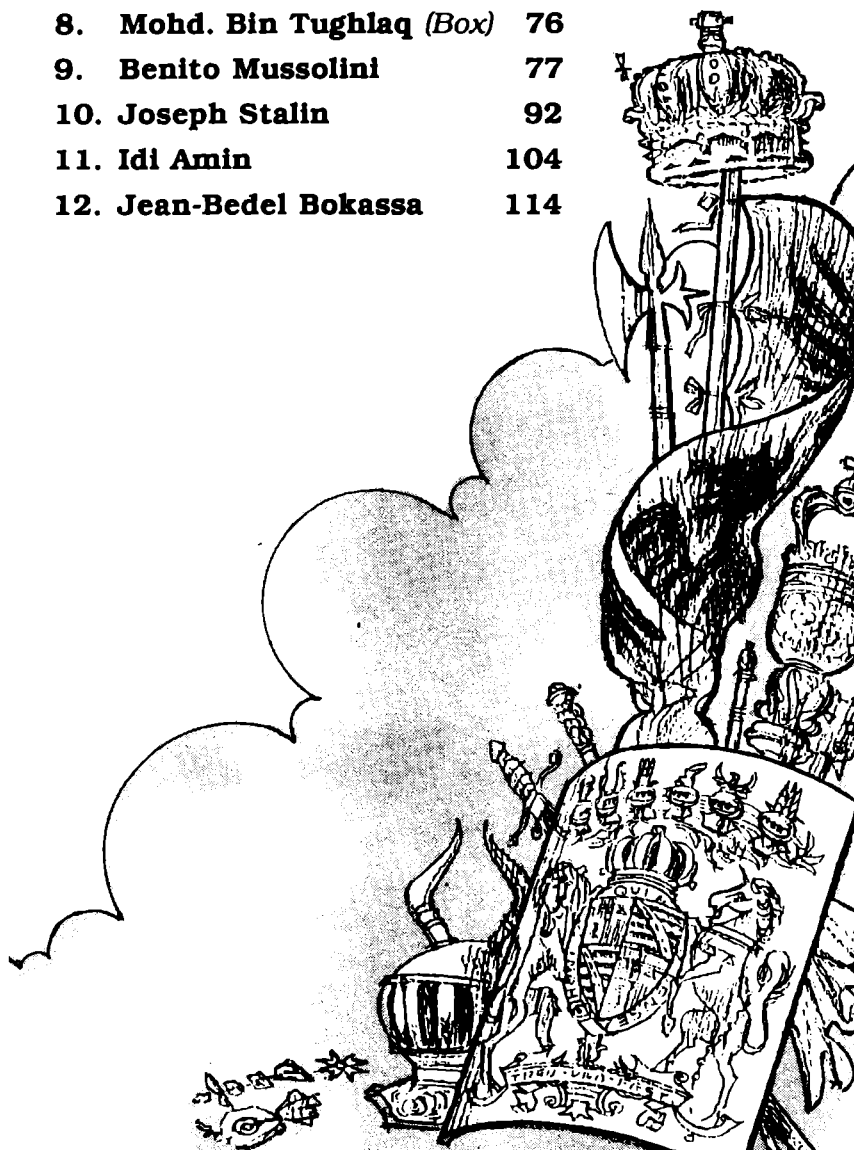
— Publishers

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Ivan the Terrible

Ivan constantly suffered from persecution complex. He saw treason where there was none. This persistent feeling finally led him to seek delight in acts of inhuman savagery. He took sadistic delight in inflicting cruelties on innocent human beings like setting them on fire, feeding them to wild dogs, drowning them, etc.—all in his presence. According to a rough estimate, he got at least 10 thousand people butchered during his reign. In his madness, he did not spare even his own cousin and son both of whom he got murdered. He was, indeed, a megalomaniac of the worst order.

Ivan IV succeeded his father, Vasily III, at the age of three to the throne of Russia. His mother, Helen, governed the country in his name with the assistance of a group of influential community of boyars headed by Duke Ivan Obolensky who, it was rumoured, was something more than a friend to the Grand Duchess.

Helen died suddenly in 1538: She was poisoned. Duke Ivan Obolensky was arrested seven days later and starved to death in prison. Indignities were inflicted upon the child, Grand Duke Ivan IV, by the leading boyars. The unhealthy conditions under which the young monarch spent his boyhood had a great deal to do in determining his outlook and in framing his future methods and policies.

The savage cruelty, heavily tinged with sadist became apparent in the character of Ivan while he was still a boy. He was frequently seen galloping in the streets of towns and villages, freely using his whip on the terrified people. He soon began to make excursions into the field of extreme sexual licence.

Ivan was the first Grand Duke of Russia to espouse the doctrine of political absolutism openly and to assume the title of Tsar in 1547, at the age of 17. He was the first ruler of Russia to be crowned who ruled as well as reigned over his country for more than half a century. To him powers



Ivan assumed the title of Tsar when he was barely 17.

of the sovereign were of divine origin. He was God's own representative on earth. He continuously referred to Pruss, brother of the Roman emperor, Caesar Augustus, as the Russian Tsar's ancestor.

Ivan's character presented an inextricable maze of contradictions. In 1574, he installed Simeon Bekbulatovich, a Tartar prince who had embraced Christianity, as the Grand Duke or Russian Tsar, and crowned him in Moscow, while Ivan himself assumed the title of prince of Moscow and treated the new ruler with all outward marks of respect. Simeon never exercised real power. Later, he was removed from Moscow and sent to Tver. It seems impossible to supply a rational explanation for the strange Simeon episode.

Ivan was proud of his imaginary descent from Caesar Augustus and was at the same time anxious to establish a dynastic link with one of the European ruling houses.

After the death of his first wife in 1560, Ivan sought the hand of Catherine, sister of Sigismund Augustus, the king of Poland, but his proposal was rejected and Catherine married John, the Duke of Finland, who was a brother of Eric, the king of Sweden. Eric arrested John and Catherine and concluded an agreement with Ivan under the terms of which he undertook to surrender Catherine to the Tsar in return for the

province of Estonia. Ivan, who, in the meanwhile, had married a second time, intended to make Catherine his mistress under the pretence of holding her as a hostage. Fortunately for Catherine, Eric was overthrown in an uprising in 1568 and John acceded to the throne of Sweden.

Towards the end of his life, Ivan was obsessed with the idea of an English wife. He would have preferred Elizabeth, the virgin queen of England, but as she was out of his reach, he would accept one of the queen's relatives. A special embassy was despatched to England, and after long parleys Mary Hastings, the daughter of Lord Huntingdon and a relative of the queen, was, suggested on, behalf of Ivan as a possible bride, but his proposal was rejected.

When Ivan decided to contract his first marriage, he issued a decree directing the nobility under the threat of severe penalties to send their daughters to the provincial governors for selection as eligible young damsels. The final choice was to be made in Moscow. He married Anastasia, who was later poisoned by his enemies. His two other wives were forced to retire to monasteries and take to the veil, and a third was drowned under his orders. At the time he proposed to marry Mary Hastings of England, he was married to Maria Nagoi, his seventh wife, who luckily escaped death because of Mary's refusal to wed Ivan.

Mania of Persecution

Ivan suffered from the mania of persecution. He saw treason everywhere around him and almost all men who were at times close to him were eliminated one by one. This is the reason why he was called 'Ivan the Terrible' or 'Ivan the Dread'. He did not spare even the members of his own family his son and cousin, besides his close henchmen, counselors and even priests.

Sir Jerome Horsey, an English agent who frequented Ivan's court, narrates the ghastly murder of his own son by the Tsar in his sixteenth century English "strake (struck) him in his furie (fury) a box on the ear; who take (took) it so tenderly, fell into a burninge (burning) feavour (fever), and died within three dais (days) after. Whereat the emperor tore his hear (hair) and byrd (burred) like a madd (mad) man, lamentinge (lamenting) and morning (mourning) for the loss of his sonn (son)." His son's only crime was that he had attempted to protect his mother, who was pregnant, from the Tsar's brutality.

Ivan would deport the people who became a prey to his wrath to distant monasteries. After the death of Anastasia, his dear wife, he



Ivan grieving over the death of his son whom he had earlier killed in a fit of madness.

abruptly dismissed two of his advisers—Silvester and Adashev. Silvester was banished into confinement at the remote Solovetsky monastery and Adashev was rumoured to have consumed poison while under arrest. By disposition, he would not trust anyone for long. At the age of 13, Ivan had suddenly arrested Prince Andrew Shuisky and ordered him to be handed over to huntsmen, who killed him and threw his body in the gutter. Ivan executed not less than 10,000 men, women and children during his long reign.

Ivan was an eccentric. He used to send to monasteries lists of the executed, together with a donation for defraying the expenses of prayers for these with a forwarding note to saying “Departed Orthodox Christians of man’s, woman’s and child’s degree, who ... are here written down by name, degree and surname: grant them, O Lord, eternal remembrance”. Sometimes in place of a list only this phrase appeared: “Their names, O Lord, Thou Thyself dost know” or simply “Their names God knows.”

Ivan was a worst sadist. In his *Russia at the Close of the Sixteenth Century*, Sir Edward A. Bond tells us on the authority of Sir Jerome Horsey that Ivan had the capacity to perpetrate cruelty upon the poorest of the poor, the hungry and the crippled. In 1575, Russia witnessed a severe famine. The towns were swarmed by hungry village folk—men, women and children—beggars and the crippled. Ivan wanted them to leave Moscow and return to their places but, as they had nothing to eat there, they would not obey his orders. Ultimately he played a cruel joke

with his own people in moments of their utter misery. He made a proclamation asking the destitute rural folk to receive alms distributed on behalf of the Tsar at the Kremlin square. As thousands of hungry souls swarmed the specified place, all of a sudden the Tsar's soldiers started a massacre. As many as 700 innocent men, women and children were done to death and their bodies thrown into the great lake under his orders "for the fish to feast" upon. Thousands others were arrested and sent to monasteries and hospitals to be "relieved" (killed).

Amongst the church dignitaries, Metropolitan Macarius alone succeeded in preserving, till his death, the friendship of Ivan. The Metropolitans, who followed him, were invariably maltreated. His immediate successor, on sensing trouble, retired of his own accord. The next metropolitan was almost immediately removed from office. His successor, Philip, failed to realise the gravity of the situation and showed the temerity to plead with Ivan for some of the men sentenced to die. He was first banished to a remote monastery and then strangled to death. Leonid, the Archbishop of Novgorod, was sewn into a bear's skin and thrown to the dogs. Yet, this crazy monarch seldom missed a mass.

Lust for Destruction

Ivan would confiscate any property, house, street, field or a whole village, town or area and then distribute these among his henchmen at his pleasure. He confiscated estates in the central provinces during winter. Those who were expropriated were summarily evicted in the severest cold. Some 12,000 such persons and their families were driven out of their homes, on foot, to new undeveloped holdings assigned to them.

On one occasion, a delegation of 70 most respectable inhabitants of Pskov town complained to Ivan about the atrocities perpetrated on them by one of his governors. The Tsar was so angry at this that he poured boiling wine on their heads and set their long hair and beards on fire. He asked them to lie naked on the floor to be executed. But they escaped sure death by an act of providence. Almost exactly at this moment, a large church bell fell down in Moscow. This event excited Ivan so much that he completely forgot to execute them.

In 1570, Ivan ordered the plunder of the ancient city of Novgorod on a mere suspicion that its population was planning to go over to Poland. Even churches were not spared. Their properties were looted and buildings desecrated and burned. Members of the clergy were flogged, tortured and murdered in full public view.

The Dramatic Departure

Shortly before Christmas in 1564, Ivan the Terrible, accompanied by his family and a large retinue, left Moscow and departed for an undisclosed destination. He took with him all the movable possessions of the palace and the entire proceeds of the state treasury. The royal caravan marched towards Ivan's favourite residence at Aleksandrovskia Sloboda and settled there.

A month after his departure, he sent two messages to Moscow on January 3, 1565. In one of these, he charged the powerful boyars of treason, graft and embezzlement, and the clergy and state officials of having connived with them. It said that the prevailing conditions in the realm have so distressed the Tsar that, 'from the great compassion of his heart,' he had abandoned his throne and decided to let Divine Providence choose his future abode. The second, a proclamation read out in public, assured the merchants, artisans and the common subjects that the Tsar had no grudge against them. They had thus not earned his displeasure and were exonerated.

All this sounded like an abdication, but Ivan, though a maniac, was not the man to give up power and throne pleasily. He had made elaborate arrangements for a coup. He had with him a military force adequate to overcome any possible resistance. The boyar lobby and the clergy got the message right. They lost no time in sending a delegation comprising higher clergy and some boyars which waited upon him. The Tsar promptly and graciously consented "to take his state anew" and "resume his royal duty." The delegation agreed to Ivan's condition that henceforth his power over the state shall be absolute and he will be paid an indemnity of 100,000 roubles to meet the expenses of his flight from the capital. But after Ivan's return to Moscow, one eminent member of the boyar community was impaled upon a stake and six other were beheaded.

Monastic Garb and Torture Chamber

The Aleksandrovskia Sloboda became a second capital for the rest of Ivan's reign. It was transformed into the kind of a fortified monastery governed by strict quasi-monastic rules written by Ivan himself. There the Tsar and his favourites put on a monastic garb, attended lengthy church services and also engaged in extravagant orgies and visited the torture chamber.



The cruelties perpetrated by Ivan rightly earned him the title of Ivan the Terrible in history

Obsessed by Fear

Ivan lived in the mental state of perpetual suspicion and dread of conspiracy against him. He, therefore, tried to make sure that in case of need he would get asylum in a friendly country. In 1559, he wrote to Queen Elizabeth of Great Britain asking for asylum in England in the event of his ouster from Russia. He was even willing to reciprocate. But Elizabeth declined to conclude such a treaty. Angered by her negative response to his proposals, Ivan soon put the English merchants under his ban. He decided to encourage the trade of England's competitors—especially the Dutch—by the northern route.

Ivan the Terrible died suddenly on March 18, 1584. He was an incurable maniac and this he had admitted in his testament in 1572 : "The body is exhausted, the spirit is ailing, the spiritual and physical wounds are multiplying and there is no doctor to cure me."

Ivan's character remains an enigma. He was really a sick soul. He was a victim of his own panic, terror and narcissistic hatred against those he suspected of not appreciating him. He was a self-suffering hero, a product of his own environment and an egoist. He posed to be a philosopher, while he was a man of poor comprehension, suffering from lack of courage and self-confidence. ■■



Peter The Great

Peter was a crafty despot. Like Ivan the Terrible, he had fits of manic-depression in which he would indulge in the worst kinds of brutalities and take delight in them. Typical of his sickeningly cruel behaviour was the way he treated hundreds of men and women who, he alleged, were plotting to overthrow him—they were mercilessly whipped which tore their flesh, their bones were broken on the wheel and then grilled on slow fire. Could Devil be more ruthless than him?

Tsar Alexis Mikhailovich's fourteenth and his father's second wife, Nathalie Naryshkin's first child Peter was merely three years' old at the time of the Tsar's death in 1676. The Tsar was succeeded by his eldest son, Fedor, a boy of 14, from his first wife Maria Miloslavsky. Fedor was sickly and he died childless at 20. He left a brother, Ivan—a half-blind and mentally deficient boy of 15—six sisters and a half-brother, Peter.

Immediately after the death of Fedor (April 27, 1682) Peter's mother succeeded in nominating Peter as his, successor. This was resented by Sophie, the eldest of the six daughters of Peter's father by his first wife. Sophie organised a military revolt which began on May 15 and resulted in the brutal murder of Peter's maternal uncles and other supporters and on May 17 she took control of the government in her hands. On May 26, she proclaimed Ivan the first and Peter the second Tsar and herself became the regent for the duration of the minority of her brothers. She first refused regency, as a comic act on her part, and then accepted it on May 29. Thus she became Russia's first woman ruler since the rule of Princess Olga in the tenth century. Sophie was not beautiful by any count. She was madly in love with Prince Vasili Golitsin, one of her father's advisers, and he became Sophie's most trusted counsellor.

Sophie tried to change her title from Regent to 'Autocrat' but her military generals resisted. Finally, she decided to do away with her brothers, Ivan and Peter—the two Tsars—and assembled her faithful



*Peter's father
Tsar Alexis*

soldiers in the Kremlin palace. Peter had advance information about her intentions; so he fled by night to the Monastery of Trinity, some 40 miles from the capital. Her coup failed and she was locked up in a convent in 1691, with her chief counsellor and paramour Golitsin having been deported.

Play boy

Peter married Lopukhin when he was 16 but never remained true to her. He took to philandering and met foreign belles whose venal charms made him forget his duties as a husband. He took to drinking and became a hot-tempered man. Bishop Burnet, who came into contact with him, has recorded his impressions of the Tsar in the following words :

“He is a man of very hot-temper, soon inflamed, and very brutal in his passion; he raises his natural heat by drinking much brandy, which he rectifies himself with great application ... a want of judgment, with an instability of temper, appear, in him too often and too evidently....

“God moves in a mysterious way his wonders to perform. I could not

but adore the depth of the providence of God that had raised up such a furious man to so absolute an authority over so great a part of the world ... man seems a very contemptible thing in the sight of God, while such a person as the Tsar has such multitudes put as it were under his feet, exposed to his restless jealousy and savage temper.”*

Peter organised orgies of debauchery and drunkenness so great as cannot be described. For three days, shut up in the house, Peter and his friends were drunk and many of them died therefrom. He consorted with foreign ladies, and his first affair was with a merchant's daughter, Anna Ivanova Mons.

The conclave of Peter's friends was named as “The Most Drunken Sobor of Fools and Jesters” around 1690. Besides Peter, it had two other prominent members—Peter's former tutor, Nikita Zotov, who was nicknamed as “Pope” and chief of Peter's security police and master of the torture chamber, Prince Fedor Romodanovsky, who was given the title, ‘King of Presbury’. The club was dedicated to the two deities, Eremka (Venus) and Ivashka (Bacchus). Peter occupied the humble rank of a deacon. The club organised public functions, participation in which was compulsory under the threat of heavy penalties. Public processions and masquerades continued for several days and these were attended by the royal family, court and state officials and the diplomatic corps in fancy dresses and playing strange musical instruments, with Peter attired in a Dutch sailor's suit, vigorously beating a drum. The club's activities included strange wedding ceremonies. The Tsar's jesters, Turgenev and Shansky, and ‘Pope’ Niketa Zotov were wedded when they were in their seventies. When Zotov died two years later, Peter Buturlin was named the ‘Pope’ as his successor and three years later he was wedded to Zotov's aged widow. These weddings were celebrated with great ceremony. Zotov's marriage ceremonies continued for four months personally supervised by Peter.

Peter the Brute

Peter was a man of harsh and volatile temperament. Human life was of no consequence to him and norms of justice he flouted at will. He did not spare even the women he loved and flirted with and made them not only bend but break before him.

He had his first wife locked in a convent and later she was ordered to take to the veil. He ordered his first mistress, Anna Ivanova Mons, into

* Bishop Bumet's History of His Own Times IV. 407-408, Oxford University Press by Gilbert Bumet.



*An embodiment
of cruelty, de-
bauchery and
drunkenness*

prison on learning that she had another lover. He had a short affair with one Marie Hamilton who later chose to marry Peter's assistant, Ivan Orlov, and gave birth to a child who died soon thereafter. Peter charged her of infanticide and sentenced her to death. Peter personally attended her execution.

When Peter was 25, he declared that he had discovered a plot against his life. The plotters aimed at the re-establishment of Sophie's regency with Peter's infant son on the throne. He let loose a reign of terror, put a number of his military officers through torture chambers and executed them.

At Peter's orders, the body of Ivan Miloslavsky, Sophie's uncle, was exhumed and his blood-stained coffin was placed on a carriage drawn by pigs and brought to the place of execution.

As many as 1,700 men and women were charged with sedition. They were interrogated and mercilessly whipped which tore their flesh, their bones broken on the wheel and grilled on slow fire. Most of them, unable to bear the torture, made false confessions to the sedition charges. Then there were mass executions. Gallows and execution blocks were erected in the Red Square, around the convent in which Sophie was detained. Peter personally kept a record of executions in his diary : On September 30, 201 men were sent to gallows on October 11, 144; on October 12, 205; on October 13, 144; on October 17, 109; on October 18, 63; On October 19, 106; and on October 20, 2.

Three were hanged in front of the window of the convent where Sophie was incarcerated and 197 around it. Some were mercilessly, beheaded by an axe prolonging their agonies thus. The victims included church dignitaries.

After a short pause, another round of executions followed in January 1699. More than a thousand men were done to death.

Sophie and her sister, Martha, were examined personally by Peter. Both of them were ordered to take to the veil and while Sophie stayed in the Moscow convent, Martha was banished to a remote convent.

The Crazy Man

Peter was utterly crazy about the Western culture. He donned the Western dress and proceeded to cut off beards of court dignitaries which they regarded as sacred and venerable by tradition. In this irreverential act, he was assisted by his court jester, Turgenev.

Peter murders his own son

Peter's first wife Tsaritzza Eudocia gave birth to Ivan's first son, Alex-15, in 1690, one year after their unhappy marriage. A second son was born to her a year later who died almost immediately. Peter spared no time for his son who grew up in the care of his mother, living in the traditional Kremlin palace, until the age of nine. In 1698, Peter banished Eudocia to a remote convent.

After his mother's incarceration, Alexis was entrusted to the care of two foreign tutors, a German and a French, who taught him the two languages with dexterity. Alexis was temperamentally a religious man and he detested violence and war his father was fond of. Yet, he would not disobey his father who assigned him various military missions. On 1711, he was married to a German princess, Charlotte, whose sister Elizabeth was married to the Crown Prince of the Roman Empire who later became Charles VI.

Alexis was never happy with his father, and this led him to heavy drinking. Peter never gave him enough money. Neither Peter could forget that Alexis was his son born to a hated wife, nor Alexis could forgive his father for deserting and incarcerating his mother. Alexis, under the influence of liquor, would at times give vent to his disapproval of his father's ways and policies. Peter's agents always kept him informed about his son's views and he began to suspect Alexis as his potential rival and leader of a revolt against him.

Alexis' wife died in 1715 after giving birth to a son. This virtually sealed the fate of Alexis. Peter had a legitimate grandson and he could now dispense with Alexis. He sent him a stern warning that the Tsar would disinherit him if he did nothing to overcome his utter incapacity and neglect of duties as the Tsarevich (Crown Prince).

Misfortune and adversity never come alone. Peter had legally taken his mistress, Catherine, as his wife. Just a day after his letter containing the warning was delivered to Alexis, Cathrine gave birth to a boy, who was named Peter after his father's name. This made Alexis all the more superfluous.

Alexis had a better knowledge of his father's whimsical and brutal ways and means. He, therefore, thought it best to admit the charges made by Peter against him and renounced his title to the throne of Russia. He begged to be allowed to live peacefully on his estates. But Peter thought this situation fraught with danger. He thought that an alive Alexis was potential enemy to him.

Peter asked Alexis to retire to a monastery and threatened to treat him as a criminal in case of his refusal. Alexis did not refuse and sent his acceptance immediately. Peter was puzzled and in the meantime, he reached Copenhagen at the head of a victorious army. In August 1716, he wrote to Alexis from Copenhagen to again retire to a monastery or report to him in the battlefield. Alexis decided to go to Copenhagen and as soon as he crossed Russia's boundaries, he, instead of heading towards Copenhagen, reached Vienna and beseeched his wife's brother-in-law, Charles VI, to grant him refuge. Charles sent him, near Naples for safety. But Peter would not tolerate his son's escape. On the one hand, he assured Alexis forgiveness if he returned to him and, on the other, he threatened to occupy the Roman empire by force in case Charles did not surrender and extradite Alexis.

Alexis was left with no option. Charles dared not incur the wrath of the Tsar. Alexis, thus, returned to Moscow on January 31, 1718. On February 3, Peter assembled high clergy and state officials and Alexis was given a public hearing. He asked Alexis to name all those who had helped him in his escape to Vienna, if he wanted to attain Peter's forgiveness. Alexis had nothing to hide as he was not hatching a conspiracy against his father. He disclosed the requisite names. He also agreed to renounce his right to the throne in favour of Catherine's son, Peter.

Peter, in his fury, alleged that Alexis' mother, Eudocia, was involved in the plot. He asked for the nuns from the convent in which Eudocia was incarcerated, and had them flogged mercilessly to pressure them into admitting that she was really involved. But the nuns failed to comply.

Peter was bent upon humiliating Eudocia and her son, Alexis. He charged her of an illegitimate affair with an army officer named Glebov. Glebov was impaled and his friend, the Bishop of Rostov, was broken on a wheel. Eudocia was banished to a remote Siberian convent to ultimately die of cold and starvation.

Matters moved fast in the mind of the maniac Tsar, and Alexis was thrown into a solitary cell of the fortress of Peter and Paul on June 14, 1718. Once again Peter gathered an assembly of clergy and state officials who invariably left the judgment on Peter as "the heart of the Tsar is in God's hands." On June 19, Peter ordered Alexis to be put through the torture chamber and whipped. On June 24, a court of 127 high state officials was assembled which found Alexis, in a stage-managed trial, guilty of sedition against the Tsar and sentenced him to death.

Now the final moment came and Alexis was tortured to death on June 26, in the presence of Peter and Catherine. His death was made public on June 29, and his body buried the next day.

Poor Alexis at no time conspired against Peter. There was no plot against him. All this talk of sedition and show of justice was a sham. The basic truth remains that Peter hated Alexis only because he hated his mother Eudocia, and fuel was added to this brutal fire by Catherine who was totally bent upon removing Alexis from the path of his son inheriting the crown. She filled Peter's heart with venom. But Providence did not spare her and let her go unpunished. Her infant son, for whose sake innocent Alexis was murdered, died all of a sudden a year later.

Catherine

In 1705, when Peter's armies invaded Livonia in Sweden, his military officers found a prize in the person of a robust peasant girl, Catherine, the maid-servant of a Lutheran pastor. She moved from lower to higher officers at a fast speed and arrived in St. Petersburg palace as the mistress of Peter's intimate subordinate, Menshikov. It was at Menshikov's place that Peter was introduced to her and Peter soon got her transferred to his palace in 1703. In the next three years, she gave birth to



Menshikov, who introduced Catherine to Peter's seraglio

two children who were adopted by Peter. It was in 1712 that Peter married her and she bore him 11 children, most of whom died in infancy.

Catherine wielded great influence upon Peter and it was for this reason that men like her former lover, Menshikov, sought her patronage. She was aware of her importance and she never granted a favour without substantial presents from favour-seekers. In December 1721, the title of Empress was conferred upon Catherine and her coronation took place on May 7, 1724, among great pomp and show.

In November the same year, Peter had before him incontrovertible proof of Catherine's love affair with William Mons who was his chamberlain and the brother of his former mistress, Anna Ivanova Mons. Peter personally investigated the affair and found William guilty of seducing Catherine. William was charged with embezzlement, sentenced to death and beheaded.

Now it was Catherine's turn to face death. She was already in disgrace. But Peter's illness and subsequent death caused by acute venereal disease on February 10, 1725, came to her rescue. She had no

male progeny left who would wear the crown which ultimately came to her own head. Fortune had always been smiling upon her. She reigned over Russia for more than two years and it was because of her wish that after her death Peter II, the grandson of Peter and the son of the ill-fated Alexis, was crowned as king. She continued to be the king-maker for a long time as she had mentioned in her will that in case Peter II died childless the crown would pass to her daughters. Catherine's will, though not carried out immediately, materialised 11 years after the death of Peter II when her daughter Elizabeth was crowned as Russia's empress. But Catherine's brood did not end up here. Her elder daughter Anne's son was crowned as Peter III. And the Catherine legend was put to an ignominious end by another Catherine, Catherine II, the legendary empress of Russia—Catherine the Great. ■ ■



Henry VIII ✓

As a despotic king, the principal trait of Henry the Eighth's character was his ungratefulness which had dimensions of cruelty attached to it. He was equally ungrateful to his many wives as he was to his loyal courtiers and friends. For instance, he charged his wives of infidelity and got them butchered one by one. About his loyal courtiers and friends, the fate of Cardinal Wolsey and Oliver Cromwell is perhaps typical of the way he treated them. The death of Henry VIII is marked as the end of the tradition of despotic rulers and the beginning of a democratic and civilised form of governance.

Queen Elizabeth, daughter of Edward IV and wife of Henry VII, the first Tudor monarch of England, gave birth to her third child and second son on June 28, 1491, at Greenwich palace. The prince was baptized Henry. His elder brother, Arthur, the Prince of Wales, was the heir-apparent to the throne. Henry VII, therefore, wanted Henry, the Duke of York, to be the Archbishop of Canterbury, so he was made to study religion from his boyhood. But destiny willed other wise. Prince Arthur, who was married in October 1501 at the age of 14 to Princess Catherine of Aragon, 16, was stricken with acute influenza and died in April, 1502. Arthur's death changed the entire course of Henry's life. He became the heir-apparent and the Prince of Wales next year. In February 1503, Henry lost his mother, Queen Elizabeth, who died of fever.

After the queen's death, the king proposed to marry his son Arthur's widow, Catherine. Her father, Ferdinand, the King of Aragon and Naples, and his wife Queen Isabella, countered the offer by withholding the unpaid portion of Catherine's dowry and demanded the return of the rest. Ferdinand and Isabella wanted, instead, Henry, the Prince of Wales, to be betrothed their daughter, Catherine. After a long argument and persuasion, the King agreed to their proposal and gave up the idea of marrying

his own son's widow. Henry, 12, and Catherine, 18, were finally betrothed in June 1503.

Henry VII, though nearing his end, was still seeking a wife for himself and all the ladies he was courting were in one way or the other so linked with Catherine's father, King Ferdinand's realm that the marriage of Henry VII to any of them would have affected him adversely. This irritated both him and Henry VII, with the result that on June 27, 1504, young Henry's betrothal with Catherine was formally cancelled.

King Henry VIII

In April 1509, Henry VII died. On May 10, his body was taken to Westminster and laid to rest. Henry, the prince of Wales, was now proclaimed Henry VIII the king of England. On his death bed, his father commanded him to marry Catherine and King Ferdinand, now reconciled, despatched 200,000 crowns through Italian bankers in bonds and bills of exchange as the unpaid dowry. Henry VIII, therefore, married Catherine in a private ceremony at Greenwich Palace on June 11 so that he could take his bride to his coronation with him and proclaim her as the Queen—consort of England. On June 24, 1509, Henry was crowned as Henry VIII, the King of England.

Catherine in the Dustbin

Catherine delivered a still-born daughter in May 1510. She gave birth to a son on January 1, 1512, who was christened Henry but the prince died on February 22. Her third child, Mary, was born on February 18, 1516, at Greenwich. Henry was quite happy and, while still an infant, Mary was betrothed by proxy to the infant Dauphin (heir-apparent) of France on October 5, 1518. But royal marriages depend upon political equations. England had to fight against France. Mary's marriage to the French heir-apparent stood no chance. Henry now offered Mary to Charles V, Emperor of Rome and a nephew of Catherine. Charles V accepted the offer but he renounced Mary in 1525 when she was only 9. This meant a severe setback to Queen Catherine. In the height of anger, at the insult from Charles V, Henry now heaped abuses on Catherine. Of Catherine's six children, Mary alone had survived and Catherine was not bearing any more. Henry now decided to deprive Catherine's daughter from inheriting the throne and he set upon the course of grooming Henry Fitzroy, his bastard by Elizabeth Blunt, a nice boy of six. He was made the Earl of Nottingham, then the Duke of Richmond and Somerset. The child was given a great household, 4,000 pounds a year and a number of

gifts. He was appointed to high nominal offices : the Warden of the Cinque Ports , the Lord of Ireland, etc. Tutors were appointed to teach him. Henry ordered Mary to Ludlow Castle, away from Catherine, to begin her duties as the Princess of Wales.

It was now quite obvious that Henry contemplated remarriage in the interest of succession. As soon as Cardinal Thomas Wolsey, Archbishop of York, became aware of the king's intention, he entered into a conspiracy with the Bishop of Tarbes who arrived in London in February 1527 and let the authorities know of his intention to negotiate the betrothal of Princess Mary to one of the French princes, the only hitch being the doubt about the status of the princess and whether the marriage between the king and her mother, who happened to be his brother's wife, was perfect.

Wolsey had by this time gathered that the king had become interested in Anne Boleyn, the third sister of Mary Boleyn, one of Henry's discarded mistresses. Anne had been a maid of honour at the court of France. In 1524, Anne, who was 16, returned to England, and Henry had instructed Wolsey to prevent her marriage to Lord Henry Percy. Anne was a vivacious girl of wild and violent temper and formidable tongue. She came of a rich family. Her father Sir Thomas Boleyn was made Lord of the Privy Seal in 1530 by the king as he was infatuated with Anne.

Soon Cardinal Wolsey manipulated the Bishop of Lincoln and other Church authorities into declaring that Henry was living in sin with his brother's widow and that Mary was his illegitimate daughter.

In the meantime, Henry had been madly in love with Anne Boleyn. He wrote her numerous love letters between 1528 and 1529 and told her that she was "the woman in the world I valued most. . . . Consider well, my mistress, how greatly your absence grieves me." In another letter, he wrote to her : "I beg you, my entirely beloved, not to frighten yourself nor to be uneasy in our absence, for wherever I am, I am yours." Henry sent Anne a miniature set of jewels. He was wooing her and asking her to meet him. She kept him waiting for one full year, then one day she saw him and this aroused his passions more wildly and he became more deeply obsessed by her.

Henry, at this stage, told Catherine they must separate. Catherine was all in tears and countered that she was his lawful wife and that she would never leave the court. But Henry was determined and, at his behest, the Universal Church gave a hearing to the King, the Queen and the



To avenge the insulting behaviour of Charles V, Henry (left) started ill-treating Catherine of Aragon (right)

witnesses. But ultimately, the matter was referred to the Pope, who would not take a decision. In the meantime, Wolsey's enemies spread the rumour that it was under his influence that the Pope had now officially forbidden Henry to marry Anne or anyone else while his case was pending. Informed of this, late in October 1530, the infuriated king ordered Wolsey's arrest for high treason. He had already been removed as The Lord Chancellor and his place had been given to Sir Thomas More, the famous author of 'Utopia'. Cardinal Wolsey died of dysentery on November 7, 1530, in captivity.

Henry made the Reformation Parliament of England pass a revolutionary act which derecognised the authority of the Pope over the Church affairs of England and declared the King of England as head of the temporal as well as the clerical affairs of the country. Now as Anne was pregnant by Henry, he, under the new dispensation, married her on January 25, 1533. By another act, parliament downgraded Queen Catherine to Princess Dowager, and on April 23, 1533, Henry obtained divorce from her through the Archbishop of the Church of England of which the king himself was previously proclaimed the head. The Archbishop also declared, officially, that Anne Boleyn had been married to the king. Henry, thereafter, had her coronated with all extravagant pomp and show.

But Henry soon discovered that Anne was high-strung, neurotic, all too articulate and incessantly crying after the king. He was even a little afraid of her, and her tantrums made him look ridiculous. He had other women to turn to and this made Anne furiously jealous. By August they were cross with each other. On September 7, Queen Anne gave birth to a girl christened Elizabeth, who later reigned over England and is known as the greatest queen of England.

Anne's Fall

Dowager Queen Catherine's death relieved Henry of a great mental strain. He did not want to ditch Anne while Catherine lived. Now he was free to get rid of Anne. In 1535, only three years after his marriage with Anne, he decided to take Jane Seymour, 25, as his new wife. He made Jane lady-in-waiting to the queen. But Jane was very particular about her virginity. She refused to be the king's mistress. Henry could see her only in the presence of her brother. But he soon won her over to him and Jane, sure of the king's love for her and prospective marriage with him, accepted a locket with Henry's miniature and let him take her on his knee in the queen's ante-chamber. Instantly, Anne found them in that position and made an appalling scene. Henry tried to pacify her but she was so enraged that she tore the locket from Jane's neck. Anne was pregnant at that time and got so upset later that on January 29, 1536, she bore a still-born male child. This was the end of Anne's predominance over Henry.

Jane Seymour was now settled in one of the royal palaces and Thomas Cromwell, the King's vicar-general, was asked to proceed against Anne. Cromwell had long spied upon her and by April a secret commission examined the evidence. Anne was accused of treason, adultery and incest and sent to the Tower on May 2. The frame-up alleged, with dates, that over three years Anne had procured a number of men to violate her, including her own brother George Rochford. The others were Henry Norris, steward of Oxford University, Minister Lovell and Burford, William Brereton, Sir Francis Weston of the king's privy chamber and Mark Smeaton, a musician. Sir Thomas Wyatt, a poet, was also sent to the Tower on suspicion of being the queen's lover.

Anne defended herself, contested the charges and remained unmoved. But the monarch's will was the law. Brereton, Norris, Weston and Mark were already condemned to death. Now Anne was sentenced to be burnt alive or beheaded at the king's pleasure, and her brother had to die by axe. All men already executed, Anne was taken to the scaffold on May



Anne Boleyn



Jane Seymour

19 in the morning. She behaved in a most majestic manner and kept her calm while she was beheaded mercilessly by the man she had given her all. Everyone within the realm and without, knew and was convinced that Anne was quite innocent.

On the day Anne's life ended, Henry and Jane Seymour received special marriage licences from Archbishop Cranmer. Two days later, they were betrothed and on May 30, married privately. By the end of June, Jane was proclaimed the queen.

Henry's craziness knew no limits. He got Parliament to declare that Elizabeth, like Mary, too was an illegitimate child of the king and that the child by the king's new marriage shall be his successor.

Noble woman

Jane was a kind-hearted lady. The first thing she did was to rehabilitate Mary, the eldest daughter of Henry by his first wife, Catherine of Aragon, who was now 20 and still unmarried. She told Henry that in order to let her have company she needed Lady Mary grace the court. "I would make merry with her". She pleaded. Henry consented. Mary arrived at the palace in state. One day, Jane remarked to Henry suavely that it had been a great pity to have lost the chief jewel of England, pointing towards Mary. The king first nodded in agreement to what she had said, then clapping the queen on her belly said heartily, "Nay, Edward Edward"

Jane became pregnant by the Spring of 1537. On St. Edward's Eve, October 9, the queen was in labour and on October 12 she bore a son to Henry. The prince was christened Edward. Henry held the child in his arms and wept with joy and ecstasy. But he never knew that his dear wife, Jane, was going to leave him for good. She developed fever, became delirious and died on October 25, leaving behind the infant Edward, only 14 days old. Henry's sorrow knew no bounds, yet he tried to comfort himself and devoted his attention to Edward. The prince was not recognised by the Pope and the hostile continental powers who still regarded Princess Mary as the legal heir to Henry.

Anne of Cleves : A Tragic Figure

The king was once again in search of a wife. No eligible lady on the continent was willing to marry him. Finally, his Chancellor Cromwell proposed a German princess, Lady Anne Cleves, 34, who was not ugly looking but pock-marked—purely for diplomatic considerations. Cromwell pushed the match so vociferously that Henry consented and, despite the fact that he disliked her, before their marriage, he agreed to take her as his wife. But the marriage could never be consummated. The king was furious with Cromwell and wanted a new match desperately. It was at this juncture that he was introduced to Catherine Howard and he fell for her at first sight. At mid-summer, Anne had been relegated to Richmond and on July 9 the Church decreed Henry's marriage with her null and void, followed by a bill of dissolution passed by Parliament. Anne was endowed with many palaces and £ 4,000 per year as pension. She accepted her fate and wrote to the king to take her as his sister if not as a wife.

Another Catherine Falls

Now Henry took another Catherine as his lawful wife. The Christmas of 1540 was once again a merry christmas for him and Catherine invited the former queen, Anne of Cleves, to join the festivities at Hampton Court. But the great romance was cut short next year before Catherine Howard was proclaimed Queen of England. She was jealous of Princess Mary and wanted precedence over her in the matter of succession. The king was just seized of this matter that on November 2, 1541, Archbishop Cranmer slipped a letter into Henry's hand. The letter contained circumstantial evidence of Catherine Howard's misconduct before her marriage. The king at first hardly took any notice of the charges as he was busy and worried about Prince Edward, 4, his successor and

dearest darling child who was sick with malaria. But soon he called for the entire evidence and it was proved beyond doubt that Catherine had a loose character and participated in sex orgies before her marriage to the king. Strangely enough, Catherine confessed and confirmed that the charges were true. Henry ordered her to keep to her rooms. She became frantic and made several attempts to see him but Henry never saw her again. He cried and his grief was inconsolable, because, as he said, he “loved Catherine madly”.

Catherine also admitted that even after she was married to Henry, she had carnal relations with other men, particularly her secretary Dereham who had been her lover even before her marriage. The council proclaimed that ‘the queen had forfeited her honour’. Catherine petitioned Henry for mercy. But he was too badly offended to grant mercy to her and her lovers. Early in December, Dereham and Culpeper—two of her lovers—were executed. Dereham was cut down alive, his guts and private parts burnt and the remains quartered. The other fellow was allowed to die by sword. Their heads were set on spikes on London Bridge. On December 16, a special commission indicted the young uncrowned queen for presumptive treason in that she had before her marriage “led an unlawful, carnal, voluptuous and licentious life. She had been found a harlot before he married her and adulteress afterwards.”

Early in February 1542, Catherine was conveyed in a closed barge from Sion to the Tower, passing under the heads of her lovers, impaled on London Bridge. Catherine was now sure that she was going to be beheaded, so on the night before her execution she sent for the block and rehearsed the correct way to place her head. On February 12, she was taken to the spot, where the former queen, Anne Boleyn, had been beheaded, and executed that chilly morning. ✓

Third Catherine outlives the King

In 1543, Henry, who was 52 now, was again courting. This time, she was the twice-married and widowed Lady Latimer, born Catherine Parr. She was the third Catherine, Henry took as his sixth wife. She was 31, well-educated and rich. She preferred to be his mistress rather than his wife but she had to accept to be the Queen of England when Henry asked for her hand. Providentially she was the only Catherine to outlive the king. They were married on July 12, 1543, at Hampton court. Catherine Parr was as kind-hearted as Queen Jane and she took Henry’s chil-

dren—Mary, Elizabeth and Edward—under her benign care. But her detractors were out to destroy her. They whispered into Henry's ears that she was a heretic, opposed to the theological views of the king. Henry was so enraged that he ordered her arrest. But for Catherine's wit she would have been beheaded like her predecessor. When she was told of her impending arrest she was appalled; she wept and lapsed into hysterical convulsions. Henry, when informed about her condition, mellowed down. He visited her and Catherine won him back with her suave manners and show of affection. Henry was moved and took her into the garden. Suddenly, the Lord Chancellor accompanied with armed men, marched into the garden with a warrant for the queen's arrest. As soon as he moved towards the queen, Henry jumped at him like a tiger and called him a fool, a knave, a beast. The Lord Chancellor beat a hasty retreat and Catherine was out of the woods.

The Tyrant

An old prophesy, that at the beginning of his reign Henry would be gentle as a lamb and at the end worse than a lion, came literally true.

Henry was temperamentally a tyrant. He set upon destroying all those who could be conceived to have the remotest claim upon the throne of England, without investigating whether such a person had ever staked his claim or ever intended to do so.

Edmund de la Pale, The Duke of Suffolk, the Yorkist claimant to the throne was held captive by his father for a long time. Henry had Edmund executed before his first expedition to France. In July 1518, Henry had no male successor to his throne and his illegitimate son by his beautiful mistress Elizabeth Blunt was only two. He, therefore, decided that the most obvious claimant to his throne from amongst England's nobles had to be done away with. His evil eye first fell upon Edward Stafford, The Duke of Buckingham, whose father had descended from the sixth son of Edward III and whose mother had been a sister to the queen of Edward IV. The Duke was actually framed up by Cardinal Wolsey, a close confidant of Henry. What made Wolsey angry with him was The Duke's unguarded remark about Cardinal Wolsey: "My lord Cardinal is the king's bawd, showing him what women were most wholesome and best of complexion". He had railed against the king too. The Duke's Chancellor, Robert Gilbert, and his chaplain, John Delacourt, turned informers. Henry personally examined the evidence which confirmed his suspicions. In May 1521, The Duke was accused of treason and conspiracy



Anne of Cleves



Catherine Howard

against the life of the king. He was arraigned in Westminster Hall. The clerk of the council intoned, "Sir Edward, The Duke of Buckingham, hold up thy hand! Thou art indicted of high treason". Edward retorted, "It is false and untrue, and conspired and forged to bring me to my death."

The verdict pronounced was guilty and the sentence passed was death. The Duke died by the axe.

The Despot and the Church

At the end of April 1535, John Houghton, Dr. Reynolds and a young priest, Robert Feron, were all indicted for treason and inciting sedition. Feron had declared : "Since the realm of England was first a realm, there was never a greater robber against the commonwealth than is our king.....look how many matrons of the court he had violated and now he had taken for his wife in fornication this matron Anne." Reynolds too had remarked that until King Henry and the rulers of the realm were eliminated, the people of England could not live happily. Houghton, head of all the Carthusians in England, had questioned the right of the king, a lay-man, to declare himself head of the Church.

Feron turned approver and the two were hanged one by one, with the other watching the ghastly act that was going to happen to him when his turn came. They remained resolute to the end. The arms of the victims were torn off, their hearts cut out and rubbed and their quarters stuck on long spears. Other Carthusians were taken to the Tower by the cartload



Sir Thomas Cromwell



Catherine Parr alias Lady Latimer

and they all succumbed to the inhuman torture perpetrated upon them there.

A few months later, Henry struck against John Fisher of Rochester who was made a cardinal by Pope Paul III. Fisher refused to accept the king as the supreme head of the Church. On June 15, Fisher, 74 (some say 90, and almost at the verge of death), was roused early at dawn. The emaciated cardinal was taken to the scaffold on Tower Hill. He said a prayer : "Come into His presence and be enlightened, and your countenances shall not be confounded." He was beheaded between 9 and 10 o'clock. Henry vowed to send his head to the Pope.

Henry's next victim was Sir Thomas More, the famous author of 'Utopia'. He was killed after a long imprisonment during which he wrote with charcoal because he was deprived of ink in the Tower. His only crime was that he had decided not to take the oath of Supremacy of the king over the Church. He had finally prepared himself to lay down his life with faith in God, Pope and his king, in their respective domains. He was tried for high treason but he was offered pardon if he would accept the king as supreme head of the church, which he would not.

At the scaffold, more was quite serene and composed. He did not betray the least emotion when his daughter embraced him and wept. He



Sir Thomas More



Cardinal Wolsey

told her : "It is God's will. Pray to God without tears or change of face or colour. Our Lord bless you." On July 6, 1535, he received word from Henry that he was to die that morning by axe. More was helped to the scaffold and while he was laying his neck over the block, he had the humour to say to his executioner : "Let me lay my beard over the block lest you cut it," and the next moment the heavy axe **separated** his full-bearded head from his trunk.

Henry had turned a murderer and a plunderer of the clergy and the churches. He killed abbots of Reading and Glaston and plundered and destroyed famous shrines like the great Norman cathedral at Durham. The shrine of St. Cuthbert was smashed with sledgehammers and the saint's body relegated to the vestry. Even the tomb of the Venerable Bede was desecrated. At Buxton Wells, the healing image of St. Anne was defaced. The shrine of St. Thomas of Canterbury, famous all over Europe, was plundered at the king's bidding. His men took away two chests of jewels that each took six or seven men to lift and carry, besides the 24 wagonloads of other treasure. The king declared the saint a rebel.

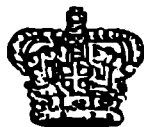
Peter destroys the best of his Men

Henry was an ungrateful monarch. He killed the men and women who helped and supported him. One of such man was Cardinal Wolsey, his Lord Chancellor, the other Thomas Cromwell, who had taken over from Wolsey. Cromwell earned the king's wrath for his selection of Catherine Howard for Henry to wed. Cromwell was arrested in the afternoon of June 10, 1540. The greatest administrative genius of the reign was taken to the Tower. On June 29, the Commons condemned him as heretic and traitor, and on July 28 he was beheaded at Tyburn. He died patiently and calmly.

'The King is Dead'

It was almost the end of 1546. Henry revised his will on December 30 and provided for his burial by the side of his third wife, Queen Jane. The year ended peacefully for the royal family but all was not well with Henry. He was too sick, not responding to treatment. In January 1547, he saw his end drawing close. He called his daughters and the queen and asked for their forgiveness. On January 27, he was given a humble suggestion that if he liked he could ask for a priest but he refused to accept that he was dying and decided for himself till the end. He said, "I will take a little sleep, then, as I feel myself, I will advise you upon the matter."

But when he awoke, he could hardly speak and when at about midnight the Archbishop arrived, Henry conveyed his faith and repentance to him only by pressing the priest's hand. At two in the morning of January 28, 1547, Henry was dead, and with him died an era of ruthless tyranny perpetrated upon England by a crazy, whimsical and neurotic monarch. ■■



Mary Stuart

Mary was a full-blooded and passionate young woman whose passion remained unrequited inspite of the many affairs she had. This lack of sexual gratification made her an unscrupulous and cruel queen for whom power became the only driving force in life. In order to gain and retain power, she indulged in acts of barbarity inflicting untold miseries on people around. Nemesis finally caught on her and she was beheaded. But unlike many such tyrants, Mary remains a tragic figure who was indeed a victim of circumstances rather than its master.

Mary was hardly one week old at the time of her coronation as the infant queen of Scotland after James V, when her father died of despair at his defeat at the hands of the English in 1542. Her mother Mary of Guise, a French woman, was a staunch Catholic. She ruled over Scotland for 18 years until she died in 1560, and Queen Mary Stuart of Scotland returned from France to her realm in the next year. Mary had been sent to France by the Queen-Mother in 1548 after a series of English invasions aimed at forcing the Scots to betroth their infant queen to the young Edward VI, the king of England, to achieve the union of the two crowns of England and Scotland and to create the United Kingdom of England and Scotland.

Mary was bred and brought up in France and was finally married to the crown prince of France. She enjoyed the status of the Queen of Scots and the queen-consort of France for a brief period of one year (1559 to 1560) when her husband died and she returned to rule over her kingdom in Scotland on August 19, 1561. Mary had been a claimant to the throne of England which was then occupied by Queen Elizabeth. As a conciliatory gesture towards Queen Elizabeth, she renounced her claim to the throne of England and hoped that Elizabeth would nominate her as her heir of her own accord.

Mary was an intelligent, well-educated and charming lady endowed with a strong will and still stronger determination to pursue the objectives

she set before herself, though, of course, she lacked the statesmanship and practical skill to select right objectives a young damsel of 19 could not be expected to possess. She found herself without a reliable adviser and counsel, her mother being dead, and her temperament too autocratic and impatient to admit of any sober advice tendered to her by her Privy Council. She aspired to give a good government to Scotland but her passions ruled over her rational faculty, while Queen Elizabeth was bent upon creating difficulties for young Mary. Elizabeth craftily let John Knox, a staunch Calvinist missionary, pass into Scotland to give headache to Mary. The worst thing she did to Mary was that she deliberately sent Darnley to Scotland to tempt Mary, while she was well aware of the brutal, ill-mannered, drunken and degenerate nature of the man who was at her court in 1564. Darnley's father, the fourth Earl of Lennox, was one of the claimants to the Crown of Scotland and Darnley's mother had the best claim to the throne of England after Mary.

Mary soon became infatuated with Darnley and married him hurriedly on July 24, 1564. It was a marriage doomed to fail from the very first moment. Mary had to attend the nuptial mass alone in the Catholic church as Darnley was a staunch Protestant, and neither her Privy Council nor her people cheered her on her marriage with him, as they had known him as a vain and stupid man. They did not want him to become their king, the goal Darnley had set before himself.

It were a strange coincidence that Mary's crooked half-brother, the bastard Earl of Moray, also a Protestant, and Darnley joined hands together to dethrone Mary, and Queen Elizabeth provided Moray with funds to raise an army in rebellion against her. Mary's only comfort was that the people of Scotland showed scant respect for Moray and, despite the offer of handsome pay, they did not join him in any considerable number. Mary succeeded in chasing Moray back to England where he was disowned by his sponsor, Queen Elizabeth, openly.

Mary's marriage with Darnley did not work and they were completely estranged within six months. He dropped out of the meetings of her Privy Council and Mary deprived him of the Crown Matrimonial which would have made him the king of Scotland even during her own lifetime. Darnley was entirely given to drunken orgies and infidelity to the queen.

Mary takes a Lover

Mary was a highly passionate woman. She needed intelligent

company, a confidant and a partner in bed. She soon fell for her Italian private secretary, David Rizzio. Mary's love for Rizzio went to his head and made him insolent, arrogant and unmannerly, particularly when he became aware of the fact that he had made the queen pregnant and began to take her for granted.

Mary was not prepared for this sort of nonsense. She became estranged with him too. Darnley became jealous of Rizzio and when he came to know of Mary's pregnancy, he plotted to murder both Rizzio and Mary. By killing Rizzio, he would avenge himself as a husband and by doing away with her, he thought he would be able to remove both she and her child from his way to the Scottish throne. Ultimately, Darnley, with the help of his band, succeeded in killing Rizzio at the queen's supper table in Holyrood Castle on March 9, 1566, but she was able to save her own life and that of the child she was carrying. Darnley and his band still believed that though they failed to slay Mary they would succeed in getting rid of her pregnancy. Their hopes were belied as Mary was not a nerveless woman. She absorbed the shock of Rizzio's murder right before her own eyes and did not miscarry. ✓

Mary possessed a diplomatic mind. She had three immediate threats to meet to save her life and her crown threat from her husband Darnley who had been spreading the rumour that Mary was carrying Rizzio's child in her womb, threat from a union between Darnley and her half-brother Moray and the threat from the armed men around her castle posted by hard-headed Protestants who wanted to see her dead.

Darnley was a nervous man. He feared for his life as soon as he realised that Mary had become aware of his design to take her life. He completely broke down early next morning when he saw from his window a violent mob demanding his blood. Mary promised him pardon and reinstatement and won him back. Moray arrived at Holyrood late the next morning to assist Darnley. He was shocked to see Mary alive and Darnley cringing to her skirts. Then Mary pretended miscarriage and the plotters withdrew their guards from her castle. Mary slipped out in the night with Darnley as he was not prepared to stay with his friends and reached Bothwell's Castle of Dunbar for safety.

Mary, thereafter, returned to her capital and restored order. She gave birth to a male child James Stuart—in Edinburgh Castle on the morning of June 9, 1566, and in the after-noon Darnley was forced to acknowledge James as his son.



Mary Stuart : A victim of her own sexuality

Mary was determined to isolate Darnley. She granted pardon to Rizzio's murderers. As soon as Darnley came to know of it, he fled to his father's house in Glasgow in search of safety. On his way, he contacted smallpox. By this time, the Earl of Bothwell had become Mary's chief supporter and he mobilised the support of the Scottish nobility opposed to Darnley behind Mary. Thus Mary fell in love with Bothwell. He was also keen to marry the queen to be installed as the king of Scotland. By the end of the year, Queen Mary got Archbishop Hamilton's old consistorial jurisdiction restored to him so that he had the power, without reference to Rome (the Pope), to pronounce a decree of divorce by nullity. She obviously had divorce in mind, either her own or Bothwell's.

Almost at this time, she received a confidential report from the French government of a counterplot masterminded by Darnley and his father, Lennox, to kidnap baby prince James from Stirling Castle, and hold him hostage in the trial of strength with the queen. This report changed the mind of Mary. She gave up the idea of divorcing Darnley; instead she decided to have him finished to make her own and her son's life and the crown secure for ever. She wrote to Darnley on January 14, 1567, suggesting that she would visit her ailing husband at Glasgow. Darnley sent a rude verbal reply that he did not find it necessary. In order

to foil the plot to kidnap him, prince James was brought from Stirling castle and lodged with the queen at Edinburgh Castle.

Mary reached Glasgow on January 21 unannounced. Darnley immediately submitted to Mary's dictates and agreed, against the advice of his father and friends, to be transported to Edinburgh, though still suffering from infection and his face disfigured by smallpox. On arriving at Edinburgh, Mary had Darnley lodged in a solitary, small four-roomed house at the outskirts of the capital on the ground of still-persisting infection. He was accommodated on the upper floor and a bedroom on the ground floor was magnificently fitted up for Mary. Apparently, this arrangement gave no hint of any probable plot against Darnley's life because Mary was staying in the same building with him. But Bothwell's retainers had already packed the cellars of the house with gunpowder. Mary visited him by torchlight on the night of February 9 for the last time. She wished him good night and left before midnight to attend a function in honour of the wedding of her French Master of Ceremonies Bastian, and at 2 o'clock the house in which Darnley was sleeping exploded. His body was found naked in the garden bearing no visible marks of injury caused by the explosion.

Darnley was given a state funeral and Bothwell was widely condemned as his murderer in Scotland as well as throughout Europe. Mary sensed trouble, so the baby prince James was escorted back to the safety of the Stirling Castle and Mary succumbed to the pressure to bring Bothwell to trial. Bothwell was summoned before the court on April 12, but Lennox was not present there to prefer and substantiate charges against him. He dared not appear before the court as on that day Edinburgh was policed by 6,000 of Bothwell's supporters armed to the teeth. The court had no option but to acquit Bothwell.

Mary was sensing trouble but she did nothing to restrain herself from precipitating crisis after crisis. She was blinded by her passion and infatuation for her new lover Bothwell. She decided to scotch the chances of her replacement by her son James. She arrived at the Stirling Castle on April 21 and asked his custodian Mar to surrender the child to her. Mar refused to obey. He told the queen that he held his trust not from her but from the Estates of Scotland. He also refused to allow the royal train a stay in the castle. The queen was permitted to bring in any two of her women attendants with her. Mary stayed in the palace for two days. On the second day before her departure from the castle, she visited James with an apple.

James started crying uncontrollably and dropped the apple she gave him. The apple was then and there swallowed by a pet greyhound which swelled up and died. Obviously, the apple was poisoned and was meant to kill James.

Mary had lost touch with her nobles and her people at large. She took them for granted and behaved in an autocratic and licentious manner. She perhaps thought that she could hoodwink them craftily. She left Stirling Castle without the prince and as she reached Linlithgow town, another pre-planned act of the drama was enacted. Bothwell was waiting for her there to play the farce. He 'kidnapped' and carried her off to Dunbar.

Mary remained at Dunbar Castle with her lover for three weeks. During this period, Archbishop Hamilton rushed through an annulment of Bothwell's marriage to his wife, Janet Gordon. Queen Mary, while still in her pretended captivity, married Bothwell on May 12. They went to Holyrood for a three-week honeymoon and, when they returned to Edinburgh, they found the situation in the capital quite menacing. People were quite incensed and agitated and they came out on streets calling their queen a whore and demanding her blood. Mary and Bothwell could not face the situation. They slipped out of Edinburgh and arrived at Dunbar—Bothwell's, stronghold. Mary's opponents engaged her in an armed struggle but her army melted away and she was left with no choice but to surrender. Bothwell escaped for his life. Mary was arrested and brought to Edinburgh where crowds came out on streets and longed to lynch the adulteress. **The vindictive mob was howling : "Burn the whore".**

The nobles who had arrested her were not against her. They were Bothwell's enemies and wanted her to disown him. In return they were prepared to let her remain the queen of Scotland. But she was not prepared to accept the terms. Her captors took her to the island castle of Lochleven and told her plainly that she had been merely secluded from Bothwell and was not held captive.

The Doom

Up to this stage, Queen Elizabeth was on the side of Mary though she disapproved of her conduct privately in her letters to Mary, particularly the murder of Damley and her remarriage with Bothwell in a surreptitious manner. But to Mary's misfortune, her detractors discovered a silver casket which Bothwell had left for safety in Edinburgh, and in which he had kept her letters and sonnets and her promise to marry him. This was disastrous for Mary as these letters had a devastating effect on

public opinion. Scotland had a law according to which an adulteress was punishable by burning.

Mary was shaken to the hilt, and when a deputation of her nobles waited on her on July 24 and threatened to bring her to trial and execution she gave way and signed her abdication in favour of her son James. Her reign ended ingloriously.

Execution

In the following spring, Mary escaped and gathered her supporters but her half-brother Moray chased her and defeated her forces on May 13. Mary did not surrender, she fled to England and sought sanctuary there.

Queen Elizabeth was systematically working to alienate James from Mary for whom his deep affection was quite natural. Elizabeth granted James a pension of £ 4,000 a year and a promise not to prejudice his claim to the English throne without due cause. Now James broke off all correspondence with Mary, telling his mother that he was now compelled to refuse 'to associate her with himself in the sovereignty of Scotland', and that he could not in future 'treat her other than as the queen-mother'.

Mary was unhappy at the behavior of her son whom she called 'ungrateful'. She wrote a will of succession which was to pass to Philip of Spain. Besides, she entered into a conspiracy with some Englishmen to assassinate Queen Elizabeth. At the same time, she naively furnished all proofs of her involvement in the conspiracy to the Secretary of State of England, Sir Francis Walsingham, who was trying to induce Queen Elizabeth to put an end to Mary who had become a perpetual danger to England's safety.

Walsingham gathered the conspirators in August, arrested Mary's secretaries and sequestered her papers. She was brought to trial on October 11 and at the end of the month she was sentenced to death. James adopted a stoic attitude towards her fate. He told the French Ambassador in a matter-of-fact tone "as for conspiracy she must be content to drink the ale she has brewed."

Mary Stuart brought to herself a brutal end which she could have avoided with a little more rational and judicious use of her intellect and exercise of a little patience and moderation with her tearing passion for the man who exhibited neither discretion, nor honour, nor valour, nor affection for her. Mary was beheaded in February 1587 and thus ended the pathetic life of a cultured and beautiful but crazy queen. ■ ■



James I

Among James the First's many eccentricities were his belief in black magic and witchcraft and his weakness for homosexuality. As for the former, he believed that acts of mumbo-jumbo performed by people opposed to him were responsible for some strange happenings in his life. As for the latter, James had unnatural relations with a number of 'sweet' boys with whom he would often appear in public and indulge in indecent behaviour. So much so that he used to address one of these boys as his 'dear wife'. Did such a ruler deserve to rule over England?

The guns of Edinburgh Castle fired their salute and bonfires on the ramparts high above the city and conveyed the news to the people of Scotland that Mary, the Queen of Stuarts, had given birth to a heir to the throne on the morning of June 19, 1566.

The boy was baptised as James Stuart. James was the most unwanted and unwelcome child, except to the mother who had borne him. Neither the people, nor the General Assembly of Scotland, nor Queen Elizabeth of England wanted him to see the light. Even the child's father, Lord Darnley, had done his best to prevent his birth by making an attempt on the queen's life four months ago when he had done to death David Rizzio, her Italian secretary at the supper. Darnley had let all concerned know much in advance of the birth of James and that he was the bastard child of Rizzio.

In the afternoon on June 19, the day of his birth, Queen Mary Stuart had summoned her royal consort, Darnley, to formally acknowledge James as his son in the presence of her Privy council and few other courtiers. Darnley acknowledged him in return for the queen's reprieve of him for his attempt on her life.

Queen Mary was young and passionate. She had nothing but hatred



Queen Anne

King James I

for her husband and she never forgave him for his attempt on her life. She soon got rid of him. Her new paramour, the Earl of Bothwell, succeeded in murdering Darnley. She was a crazy girl of 26 and failed to realise that while Bothwell was trying to use her to become the king of Scotland, her privy councillors and the people of Scotland neither appreciated her amorous relationships and escapades nor were they prepared to accept Bothwell as their ruler. She was not prepared to give up Bothwell, but she soon realised that things were going against her. She became desperate and decided to end the life of her son, James, to deprive her enemies of the opportunity of deposing her and placing James on the throne as the child king. But the Scottish government was alert and Providence was on the side of James. Mary was not allowed to kidnap James and he himself discarded the poisoned apple his mother gave her to eat, which was devoured by the unfortunate greyhound of the palace and died instantly.

King James VI of Scotland

Mary was completely exposed and the people of Scotland were out to seize her and lynch her. She was forced to sign her abdication in favour of James on July 24, 1567.

On July 29, 1567, James was brought from Stirling Castle to the parish church where he was crowned as King James VI of Scotland.

James was brought up in an atmosphere of intrigues and conspiracies which were in abundance those days. He had a good education and had two passions—reading and hunting on horseback. His mother was taken to court and condemned to death. He appealed to Queen Elizabeth of England to spare her life, but when Elizabeth sanctioned him an yearly pension of £4,000 and assured him that she would not prejudice his claim to the throne of England as she was unmarried and without a legitimate heir of her own, his pleas became formal, and Mary was hanged in February 1587.

James grew into a well-trained monarch with a rational mind and keen and clear common sense, yet at times entirely overtaken by superstitious fears. He published a book on demonology in 1598 which makes it clear that where black magic was concerned there his rational faculty was completely suspended. He dreaded witchcraft and at times he was obsessed and haunted by its terrors maniacally. During those days, black magic had assumed an organised form of a pagan cult, quite wide spread over Scotland, and had penetrated almost every class of society. It was known as 'Dianic cult'.

James was married to Anne, the younger daughter of King Frederick of Denmark, by proxy. In the autumn of 1589, when Anne had been driven back by North Sea storms on the way over, James impetuously decided to go over himself to fetch her. When Queen Elizabeth learned about his plans, she was quite furious with him and tried to dissuade him but he would not listen. Leaving the government in the hands of the Privy Council, he left for Denmark and promised to be back within 20 days. But the sea was in storm and it took him a month to reach Copenhagen via Norway and spent the whole winter honeymooning there. Anne was an ordinary woman—well-educated, vivacious and affectionate with a cheerful disposition. Yet she was not talented enough to provide James with intellectual company he needed most as a monarch. Despite this fact, James never looked at any other woman in his life, but, of course, he had extraordinary relationships with good-looking young men, which Anne

tolerated. She did not fear them as they did not threaten her marriage with the monarch.

Soon after his return from Denmark, James was drawn to take keen interest in seeking out and prosecuting those who were rumoured to have caused the exceptional storms which prevented his bride from crossing the North Sea by a widespread conspiracy of witchcraft and black arts. These rumours horrified him and he spent almost a full year in an attempt to find the guilty men and punishing them. In all, some 39 persons were charged with involvement in the conspiracy against the king and his marriage with Anne. One Geillie Duncan, a maidservant, confessed to having played the tunes at the rituals, besides a toad was hanged and roasted to extract its venom, a cat flung into the sea with incantations to raise the storm, magical practices were exercised upon the king's bed-linen that he might waste away and his image of wax was melted away slowly in fire to consume him in agony.

There was, of course, some truth in the charges but confessions extracted by torture were mostly marked by distortions. Several men and women were burnt alive on charges of witchcraft. ✓

James I : King of England

After struggling for life for more than a week, Queen Elizabeth died on March 24, 1603, and late at night on March 27 Sir Robert Carey was admitted to the presence of James and conveyed to him the news of her death and his inheritance to the throne of England.

James left for London attended by a large train of over a thousand courtiers and officials, English and Scottish, and welcomed and entertained on way, he took three weeks to complete the leisurely journey to London.

Elizabeth was given a royal funeral on April 28. James wanted to be the chief mourner on that occasion but plague was rampant in London and it was not deemed desirable to let James enter the town. His wish could, therefore, not be fulfilled. His entry in State into the capital had to be postponed to the next spring but his coronation could not be postponed till that time. He was, therefore, crowned the king of England as James I on July 25, 1603.

Strange Justice

With the connivance of Sir Walter Raleigh, the greatest remaining figure of the Elizabethan epoch, men like Markham, Lord Grey, Lord

Cobham, George Brooke and Watson conspired to kidnap James and make him sign his abdication in favour of Arbella Stuart, a cousin of James, who was the chief mourner at the funeral of Queen Elizabeth and whose claim to the throne of England came next to James, even without the concurrence of Arbella. George Brooke sounded the Spanish agents on the possibility of military help in case it was needed to make the coup successful. But the coup failed and the charges of treason against the conspirators were investigated into and proved in the court of law. All the six accused, including Raleigh, were condemned to death. Watson and Brooke were duly executed and Raleigh was sent to the Tower for confinement.

The crazy monarch, eager to prove that he was merciful and rational, decided to spare the rest—Markham, Grey and Cobham. When these three convicts were taken to the scaffold before execution, to bid their friends and families farewell and make their peace with God, they were withdrawn on some technical point. They were then once again brought to the scaffold to stand in rain. Their crimes and sentences were read over to them, and when they had passed through this tortuous course, they were told of reprieve.

In granting them reprieve, James argued before his court : “To execute Grey, who was a noble young-spirited fellow, and to save Cobham, who was base and unworthy, were a manner of injustice.” On the other hand, “to save Grey, who was of a proud, insolent nature, and execute Cobham, who had showed great tokens of humility and repentance, were as great a solecism.” The courtiers listened to his endlessly prolonged discourse full of contradictions, until it seemed that no conclusion was possible at all. Then at last James announced that he would spare all the three.

James treated Sir Walter Raleigh most brutally. He confined him to the Tower and left him there for 13 long years with the suspended death sentence still hanging over him. This was but a proof of the meanness of spirit on the part of James, while Raleigh remained undaunted. He engaged himself in deep philosophic studies and chemical experiments. It was during this period of incarceration that Raleigh wrote his master piece, “History of the World”.

The behaviour of James towards Raleigh was quite whimsical. In June 1618, James set him sail for America to find goldmines and help the king in meeting the financial crisis caused by a deficit of £ 137,000 faced

that year by the English Treasury mostly because of his journey to Scotland and wasteful expenditure. Raleigh returned empty-handed and heart-broken as he had lost his son in a fight there. James lost all sense of justice and regard for public opinion and propriety. Without a fresh public trial and on the basis of the suspended death sentence passed on him in 1603, Raleigh was executed. Raleigh died on the scaffold with dignity. He wrote his last poem the night before his execution and smoked his pipe before he walked to the scaffold in graceful steps. For Raleigh's execution, James was never forgiven by his own generation and by the generations to come.

The conspiracy was hatched around Arabella, but, as she had refused to mix herself up in plots of any kind she had been rewarded. She had been allowed to take her proper place at court as a member of the royal family. There was another member of the royal family, William Seymour, who was a descendant of Mary, and whose claim to the throne had been canvassed in 1603.

In 1610, when Arbella was 35, she fell madly in love with William Seymour, 23. James saw in this union a threat to his crown and he specifically ordered the pair to desist from their design. But the lovers flouted him and went into secret marriage. James was enraged and under his orders Seymour was confined to the Tower and Arabella was brought in the custody of the Bishop of Durham.

James saw a real threat to his kingship and, therefore, turned unrelenting. Arabella managed to escape and manipulated the escape of Seymour from the Tower. But Seymour, escape was delayed and Arabella was apprehended while waiting for him on the sea coast. They had planned to cross the English Channel in a ship. She was brought to the Tower and given four years' imprisonment. She turned insane and died at the Tower. Seymour escaped in another ship to Ostend and thus saved his life.

Gun Powder Plot

Earlier in 1605, Catholics of England plotted to blow up the House of Lords on November 5 when the king was scheduled to address the joint session of Parliament. The plot was hatched by six persons. All preparations had been made and the conspirators had quietly dispersed into the country six months before the doomsday. But one of the conspirators, Tresham, lost his nerve and sent a warning note to Lord Monteagle which was delivered to him at dinner and read aloud to him then and there so that the conspirators were informed of the betrayal of their plan.

Lord Monteagle then addressed a letter to Lord. Salisbury, the Privy Counsellor, advising him to excuse himself from attending the session and retire into the countryside. He wrote: "For God and men have concurred to punish the wickedness of this time ... they shall receive a terrible blow of this Parliament, and yet they shall not see who hurts them." Lord Salisbury dutifully made the king read the letter and it was James who immediately sensed that there was a gunpowder plot and the House of the Lords was going to be blown up.

In the afternoon, Lord Suffolk looked in the cellar of the House. He found there one Guy Fawkes who was entrusted with the task of causing the explosion. The gunpowder was covered with faggots and Fawkes was ready with the fuses, the tinder box and the watch. Fawkes told Suffolk that the faggots belonged to Sir Thomas Percy. Fawkes remained undaunted and, instead of giving up, held on in the hope that he might still get his chance. Finally at 11 in the night, the cellar was visited by Sir Thomas Knyvet, Justice of the Peace for Westminster. He found Fawkes still there with his tools and apparatus. Fawkes was immediately apprehended and the plot foiled.

Spendthrift Autocrat

James was an autocrat. Those were the times when the kings were respected as the Lord's anointed and endowed with a mystic personality. James informed his first Parliament of "the blessings which God hath in my person bestowed upon you all."

James held two thrones—the throne of Scotland and the throne of England. He wanted Scotland and England to tie up in a perfect union. He elaborated his concept in this regard in his characteristic manner : "I am the husband and the whole island is my wife. I am the head and it is my body; I am the shepherd and it is my flock . I hope, therefore, no man will be so unreasonable to think that I, who am a Christian king under the Gospel, should be a polygamist and husband to two wives, that, I being the head, should have a monstrous and divided body, or that being shepherd to so fair a flock (whose wall hath no wall to hedge it in but the four seas) should have my flock parted in two".

This address amply states his egocentric and autocratic approach towards his realm and parliament. In 1604, he issued an edict that the returns of the forthcoming Commons, elections should be made not direct to the House of Commons, but to the court of Chancery. The Commons took affront in its stride and waited for an appropriate oppor-

tunity to assert its authority. The Chancery had cancelled the election of the Buckinghamshire M.P., who was duly elected. The Commons, after a minor debate, rejected the Chancery return and ordered the M.P. to take his seat in the House.

James struck back. He sent a message to the House of Commons saying that their privileges depended on the monarch's goodwill and advising them to consult the judges on the legality of their proceedings. As an absolute king, he ordered the House Committee to meet the judges. The House, this time, dared not contradict his assertion.

James never gave up his faith in his view that he was personally responsible to God for the good governance of England and Parliament was there only to help him in his task.

James was a spendthrift autocrat. In spite of all the lavish hospitality he had received on his way from Scotland to London to take over as King of England he spent over £ 10,000 on his journey to south alone in three weeks and had given away in his careless, open-handed manner another £14,000. As the king of England, the state exchequer was spending on his household an amount of £100,000 annually.

Queen Anne's debts were also a perpetual source of worry to the state treasury. In next 10 years, she ran up a bill of £40,000 with the jeweller George Heriot, alone. In January 1605, the celebration of making Prince Charles, the Duke of York cost the exchequer something over £10,000. During the first four years of his reign, James spend an absurd sum of £92,000 on jewels. Besides, he was in the habit of making grants and presents to whomsoever he liked. By 1610, a little over £220,000 were given away in cash and the pensions granted amounted to £30,000 a year.

Endless Corruption

James established a system which gave rise to corrupt practices and which depended on perquisites and commissions of all kinds in place of salaries and pensions and in which even minor offices were for sale. He encouraged open speculation throughout his household and in every department of state. Every government contract was the subject of endless underhand transactions, and more and more public money found its way into the pockets of government officials. His reign was marked by an alarming decline in the general standard of financial probity.

Boys as Favourites

James never took any interest in a woman other than his own wife.

Queen Anne. But he fell for young boys—first Robert Carr and then George Villiers.

In 1607, Carr was knighted and became Sir Robert Carr. James was worried about his allowances. The Exchequer grant of 600 a year was not sufficient for him, although he lavished on him precious jewels, clothes and golden tables set with diamonds. In January 1609, he granted Sir Walter Raleigh's estate to Carr. It was a most brutal decision as that was the only property for Raleigh's wife and family to support themselves with. He turned a deaf ear to the outraged public opinion at this mean act of his and to the appeals of Raleigh and his wife. Carr rose rapidly, after a year, he was created Lord Rochester and, in May 1611, Keeper of the Signet—virtually, the king's private Secretary. In 1613, he became the Earl of Somerset and Lord Chamberlain. Thus Carr became the most influential man at the court of King James. This new development accelerated the deterioration of the King's character and of his reputation in the country at large. James began to treat Carr in public with the same affection as in private. He appeared everywhere with his arm around Carr's neck, constantly kissing and fondling him, lovingly feeling the texture of the expensive suits he chose and bought for him, pinching his cheeks and smoothing his hair. The queen resented the show of his affection for Carr in public, but the king remained undeterred like any crazy man. His son, Prince Henry, too became estranged with his father on account of his affection for Carr whom he disliked.

At the beginning of 1633, Carr was involved in a love affair with the Countess of Essex. The Earl of Essex was completely upset over his wife being head over heels in love with Carr. The countess moved the court for the nullity of her marriage with the Earl of Essex on the charge that he was unable to consummate it. But the court was split evenly over the validity of her claim and the matter was deadlocked.

The probability of Carr—marrying Frances Howard, the countess of Essex, gave rise to another scandal. Carr had a tutor and adviser, Sir Thomas Overbury who guided him in all matters—private and public. As soon as Overbury heard about the divorce project, he perceived a threat to his own influence and hold over Carr and decided to sabotage it. He had in his possession the incontrovertible proof that the countess was seeking to nullify her previous marriage because she was in love with Carr and he threatened to place the material before the court. James offered him a mission abroad to remove him from the scene and purchase his loyalty, but Overbury refused the offer.



The conspirators of the Gun-Powder Plot

James was not the king to take a no from his subjects. He immediately ordered him taken prisoner at the Tower. Thus Overbury was prevented from sabotaging the nullity case filed by the countess. To resolve the court dilemma, James appointed two faithful bishops as additional commissioners and thus secured a majority verdict in favour of the countess. Her earlier marriage was declared null and void and she married Carr on December 23, 1613, while Carr's tutor and conscience keeper Overbury, lay dying in the Tower. The rumours about Overbury's murder had an element of truth which could not be denied but the crazy monarch had no respect for his public image.

Carr was a stupid young man and he became highly insolent and overbearing. He began taking the king for granted and never realised that James could never be enslaved and that he would ever remain a slave to his own whims. This was Carr's undoing.

Carr was now a middle-aged married man and James needed a younger man to lavish his affection upon and have his infatuation satisfied. He soon became interested in one George Villiers, the last and the greatest love of his life. Villiers was a young man with effeminate charm. Although James made it clear to Carr that his taking Villiers as his favourite would in no way affect his position, Carr grew intolerant of Villiers. James wrote him a long letter charging him of insolence and asking him to behave, but Carr would not listen. He was more jealous of

Villiers than Queen Anne was either of him or of Villiers, and on the day the king decided to make Villiers The Gentleman of the Bed Chamber and conferred knighthood upon him, Carr sent a note asking James to desist from doing so. James was infuriated and proceeded ahead with his plans.

Now James was determined to teach Carr a lesson. He refused the appointments recommended by him and took away from him the wardenship of the Cinque Ports. The matter did not end here. With the positive proof of Carr having fallen in disgrace and disfavour of the king, his enemies produced the evidence of Carr's and his wife's hand in the poisoning of Overbury. James, once convinced that there was something more than a malicious rumour and jealousy of those whom he had so highly favoured, said that as Overbury was his prisoner and under his protection, therefore, his honour as well as his justice were involved in an investigation into his death. He called for a full written report from Sir Gervase Elwes, Lieutenant of the Tower. The report was duly submitted and the king ordered Lord Chief Justice Coke to investigate. Carr became alarmed and approached the king for a general pardon for any irregularities which he might have committed during his tenure as the Lord Privy Seal. Such pardons were a usual phenomenon. The king agreed and asked Lord Chancellor Ellesmere to affix the seal on the pardon document. Ellesmere fell on his knees and said that he must first have a pardon himself from His Majesty for sealing such a document. The matter was left hanging while the queen got to work to obstruct the king's resolution. Meanwhile, substantial evidence was produced before the court which made it impossible to pursue it any further. Carr was thus left unprotected.

Carr adopted a non-cooperative attitude towards the commission of Inquiry and refused to appear before it when called to do so. James pleaded with Carr ! "Nay, man, if Coke sends for me, I must go." He accompanied him all the way down the stairs to his coach, embracing him, demanding over and over again when he might hope to see him back and then giving him more kisses to be passed on to his wife.

But as the coach drove off, James was heard to mutter : "Now the devil go with thee, for I shall never see thy face more." Later, he sent him a letter to make it clear to Carr that he never meant wittingly to bear any man's sins but his own. He gave him instructions : "Read it (the letter) twice over at least".

The inquiry took a grim turn against Carr when his wife confessed her guilt. Yet Carr refused to do so as adamantly as he could. He, thus,



Robert Carr



George Villiers

forced the commission to order a trial. James felt embarrassed that his one-time favourite should be tried before a court and, if found guilty, the people would get an opportunity to accuse him of being unkind to Carr because he had taken Villiers as a substitute. He, therefore, sent a verbal message confidentially to Carr promising to spare his life and show some grace and favour to his wife and child if he would but plead guilty.

Carr rejected the proposal indignantly. Then the king adopted crooked tactics to bend him. He conveyed to him a white lie that his wife's confession had directly implicated him, having thus rendered his defence of himself quite futile. This further infuriated Carr and he threatened to make revelations which would bring disaster upon the king and the realm. He demanded to send a secret message to James.

In this threat, James sensed danger to certain highly sensitive aspects of his private life. He, therefore, ordered to have two men standing by Carr throughout his trial with cloaks in readiness to muffle him if he started any really dangerous outburst. Carr was sure to the last minute that James would save him from the indignity of a public trial. He began losing his balance and when he was informed that his wife had pleaded guilty and had been sentenced to death and that he was to face the Lords the next day, he was enraged and declared that he would not go to Westminster unless he was dragged there by brute force. The king was roused from his bed and the news conveyed to him. He was calm and was in no mood to relent. Law was left free to take its own course.

Carr, by this time, realised the gravity of the situation and he persisted in his innocence without creating scenes or making unsavoury revelations. The Lords found him guilty by an unanimous vote and the king's worries were over. Both Carr and his wife were sentenced to death. Carr's wife asked for the King's mercy and Carr asked to be beheaded rather than hanged. James spared their lives and finally released them from the Tower with the Order of the Garter and a pension of £4,000 a year intact. After all, the king was able to get rid of him by any means.

The queen died of dropsy in March 1619 and James became totally dependent on Villiers (who had now become Lord Buckingham) whom he had begun to proclaim his "sweet wife". He was aging fast and finally passed away on March 27, 1625. ■ ■

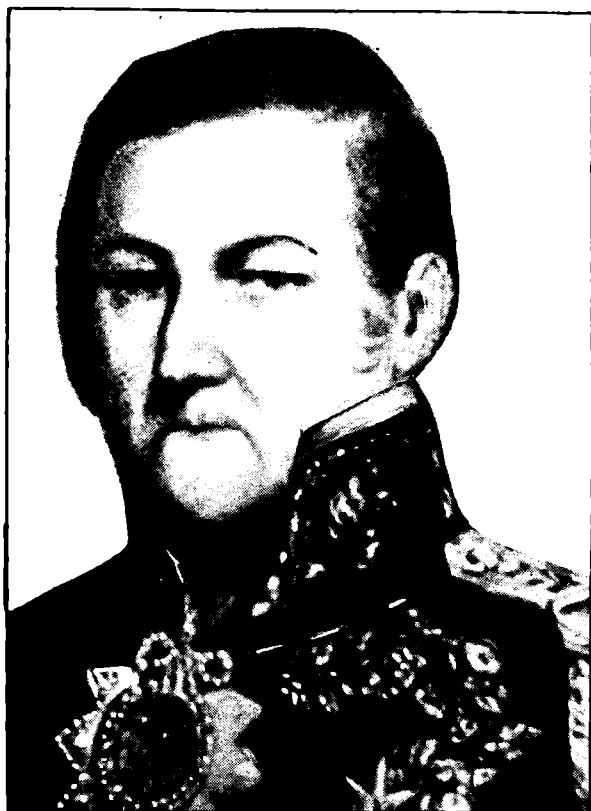


Juan and Encarnacion Rosas

Juan Rosas, the evil genius of Argentina, spread his tentacles on all aspects of argentinian life—political, economic and even social—alongwith his wife Encarnacion. The tentacles were so strong and all-pervasive that he was often equated with God by the people of his fear-struck country. According to a rough estimate, he beheaded 3,765 people, shot dead 1,393 people, stabbed 722 people, killed 14,920 people in combat and sent 1,600 people to gallows on the charge of deserting him. A veritable dance of death, indeed!

Argentina's legendary Governor and evil genius Juan Manuel de Rosas was born on March 30, 1793, at Buenos Aires. His grandfather, Domingo Rosas, the scion of a Spanish noble family, arrived in Argentina as an aid-de-camp to his uncle, Villasuso, who had been appointed as the Governor and Captain-General of the city of Buenos Aires with highest honours. Leon, the father of Juan Manuel Rosas, was wildly militaristic, and, in 1779, when he was barely 19 years old, he was named a lieutenant in the Buenos Aires infantry in which his father was then only a captain. Leon married Augustina in 1790 who bore him 20 children. Each child was torn by blind impulses. Juan Manuel was the eldest.

Juan's mother was a jealous and possessive woman. She was not prepared to give him up to any girl and when he mentioned to her his love for Dona Encarnacion, she wept in despair and went into tantrums. She flatly refused to allow her son to get married at all. Juan played a trick and won. He made Encarnacion address a letter to him saying : "I am so worried. What am I to do since I am with child?". She left the letter on his bed knowing that his mother would definitely read it. Augustina read the letter surreptitiously and allowed Juan to marry Encarnacion immediately.



*Juan Manuel de
Rosas*

Though a woman, Encarnacion was masculine in speech and in deed. She had a man's commercial skill. Juan and Encarnacion made an incongruous match. It was, none the less, a rare joining together of two such necessary political contributions as to make the dictatorship they ultimately ran resound on every imaginable level. What Juan by-passed in his cautious, cold, calculating way, Encarnacion's unrestrained, intuitive authority caught for it and acted upon. Juan's weapon was the petition, Encarnacion's the knife. He pursued his ends with caution. She sneered at that, but, nonetheless, gave him her fanatical devotion. Juan had a tyrannical compulsion and she gave it intensity, violence and energy, spontaneous and irrepressible in her subconscious impulses.

After 22 years of her marriage, Encarnacion finally saw Juan in power. Mobs with long knives and guns, placed by her in their hands, had filled the streets of Buenos Aires in 1835. More patriots and cultured men had already been done away with on her orders. But she had won the battle for him.

The Crazy Tyrants

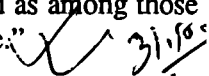
Argentina declared its independence from the Spanish monarch, Ferdinand VII, on July, 9 1826, but the Spanish power continued to dominate over the land till December 1824. Next five years witnessed a state of anarchy in Argentina. President Rivadavia, a Unitarios resigned in July 1827 to be succeeded by Manuel Dorrego as the Governor and Captain-General of the province of Buenos Aires with power to rule upon the entire country. In 1828, Dorrego was killed by Lavalle, the Commander of the regular Argentinian army. Ultimately, the Federales succeeded in defeating the Unitarios in 1829 and Juan was unanimously elected the Governor and Captain-General of Buenos Aires for a four-year term. During this period, he did everything conceivable and inconceivable to consolidate his power over Argentina.

Encarnacion's Mazorcas

While Juan was consolidating his power on the political plane, Encarnacion was organising the squad of political killers, known as Mazorcas—the society of killers who were provided with guns, knives and funds by her. Juan and Encarnacion were the richest landlords and ranchowners, yet they had chosen to woo the poor and the down-trodden because it was from their ranks that murderers and crowds could be obtained and mobilised to meet their political ends. Red was the colour of the Rosista Federales. Encarnacion's house was a sort of militia headquarters filled with people, militiamen, lower-class women and politicians. The Mazorcas were mostly an underworld and under privileged class. They were experts in disposing of their enemies with the help of the knives given to them by Encarnacion. Juan himself had provided the philosophy : “There shall be one ruler, one law, one command,” He saw death as a necessary flick of the swatter against troublesome flies.

Juan was constantly plagued by the claim that he was behind Dorrego's murder. In 1833, when he was almost sure of his re-election for a second term, he rode out into the desert at the head of his own militia to tame Red Indian tribes of the South American land. He was not satisfied with power restricted by an elected Assembly. He wanted absolute power and much more than that—deification.

Juan left for the desert but Encarnacion stayed back in Buenos Aires. Gen Balcarce was elected the Governor while the public was demanding restoration of Juan to power. Juan's newspaper, 'Restorer of the Laws', Carried articles in its columns which were termed as seditious by

Balcarce. The paper was required to be represented before a judge to answer the charges preferred against it. Encarnacion saw in it an opportunity to make a demonstration of the popularity Juan enjoyed with the masses. On the day of hearing, 2,000 citizens were brought to storm the government plaza. After a number of threats of reprisals, the crowd noisily rushed off to a suburb, where they were joined by a pre-arranged group of 10,000 men. The two Crowds merged and, after a quick conference, announced that they would lay siege to the city of fewer than 60,000 people. The reaction was instantaneous. Such a mob could dictate. The legislature held an emergency meeting and dismissed Balcarce. Viamonte was chosen as the new incumbent to the Governor's office. Viamonte was aware of the power of Encarnacion. He visited her twice, of this act of the Governor, she wrote to Juan : "...but I am not grateful for the visits because as my name has been mentioned as among those furious on account of his victory, they are afraid of me." 

Encarnacion was, of course, an object of fear. She kept an eye on the developments very shrewdly and wielded enormous power with the poor masses which adored her. She was a terrible woman. She divided the Federales into two clear groups—Rosistas and anti-Rosistas. The Rosistas were given a new identity—The Federales Netos, and Encarnacion was their chief. Earlier, Balcarce also had tried to win her sympathy, but she refused to meet his emissary. Her ego grew day in and day out. For an account of her activities in a nutshell, it would be advisable to quote from a letter she wrote to Juan : "I have called the poor and spoken to them that they are being cheated and I gave them the real story. I have also made hundreds of pamphlets. I have sent daily communications to the newspapers, telling them the truth, and I have in my room daily meetings so as not to let them cool off and I also reward the poor that help us The poor ardently desire to rise in arms against the regime but they fear Juan with disapprove."

Encarnacion's campaign aimed at bringing her husband back as Argentina's ruler, but Juan wanted much more worship and obeisance—total deification. He wanted absolute power for himself, not through revolution but through a legal and political procedure. Encarnacion, therefore, manoeuvred the submission of a spate of petitions to the assembly to request Juan to accept the office of the Governor and save the nation from anarchy.

The government retaliated vociferously. It refused to pay salaries to

Juan's soldiers who were with him during the desert campaign and issued orders that all those found guilty of arranging essential supplies to his expedition shall be punished. Juan retaliated not by an armed insurgency against the government but by threatening to leave the country. He wrote: "If I leave the country, they will pay for their intentions. They have excited the passions and unleashed licence, their own blood will run in streams."

Encarnacion had already started a vigorous campaign in the press against the regime and the government was aware that Encarnacion kept her Mazorcas in the constant state of agitation and rebellion. Everyone in the government felt frustrated and uneasy. The tension was mounting fast and becoming unbearable. The Ministry of war officially notified Juan of the changed events and requested him to take the necessary steps to restore tranquility and maintain order. He replied that neither he nor his army had the stomach to march on or take up arms against the people, nor to do anything that might hinder them. "I will join the ranks of the people if they come out in open against the regime," he announced. In the end, he reiterated his "burning desire to leave the country when I return from the desert campaign."

Juan was posing as indifferent to power. He wanted people to think of him as a god. The tension was so high that Viamonte resigned the governorship on June 5, 1834. Encarnacion immediately directed the Mazorcas to engage in the task of spreading terror and committing murder of the anti-Rosistas. Viamonte remained in office hardly for two weeks. Juan was now being implored to end the tension. He insisted upon a new election. Elections were held and Juan was declared elected unanimously. He returned to his ranch outside Buenos Aires exactly after a 15 month absence from the capital. He claimed that he desired to retire from politics and refused to accept the highest office on July, 4 1834, saying that his enemies were immoral and that he needed rest. The Assembly insisted but he sent it his second refusal. He begged his countrymen to understand that he yearned to quit politics and to leave the country.

After his third refusal, the Assembly reprimanded him for ignoring the universal will of the citizens. On July 24, he expressed his inability to contain the anarchy and that he could not be obliged to shoulder such a great responsibility. His fourth refusal was accepted and the Assemblies named four persons in succession to fill his place. None accepted. Desperately, the Assembly decided that in October the Chairman of the House would take over.

On the one hand, Juan was feigning indifference towards power and, on the other, Encarnacion was fomenting a mass hysteria of a unique and unprecedented nature. The public frenzy was aroused and Juan was the only one who could bring order to Argentina.

The Assembly now offered Juan absolute power for five years. He could rule alone, control the army, make the laws, forfeit private rights and freedoms, dictate justice and imprison, banish and shoot whoever he felt deserved it. He was given absolute power over the lives of the people.

Juan still did not accept the offer immediately. He asked for a few days to think over it. Nine months had already passed to his election and it was March 1835 now. He demanded fresh elections and won hands down. Juan assumed office for the second time on April 13, 1835.

The inaugural ceremony of Juan's take-over was celebrated with splendour. One of the highlights was that the proudest of Unitarios, his opponent, was harnessed like an oxen to a bandwagon on the walls of which Juan's pictures were emblazoned. They were made beasts of burden, forced to drag their humiliation over the cobbled streets.

Washerwoman's Brigade

The Governor's House had been converted into a public meeting—a place for the people of every sort and appearance and reputation. A fundamental aspect of Juan's government actually derived from the nefarious plots and plans laid there and to the fear symbol it soon evoked of power headquarters. Encarnacion's extensive spy system run from here was most important of his attempts at despotism. It was by means of this spy system that he got full details of his each and every adversary and could bleed, kill or exile him much before he could harm him. The spy system functioned through the members of the lowest class of the Argentinean society who reported directly to Encarnacion.

This spy system was better known as Washerwoman's Brigade. Encarnacion had employed washerwomen and maid-servants directly under her own charge. They eavesdropped on the most intimate situations in search of unguarded comments. They listened at key holes and pretended to sleep during noon siesta hour, listening to conversations. They had access to the houses of the highest persons of the country. Encarnacion maintained secret files on her husband's closest friends, colleagues and henchmen as well as his worst and probable foes—the Unitarios. This made up an intricate spy network. She had become her husband's one-woman intelligence agency.

Encarnacion had evolved a human machine of terror and she was proclaimed by her henchmen "the heroine of the Federation." She had developed an insatiable lust for revenge which sought to murder victim after victim. She had become so badly engrossed in intrigues and politics that she had lost all womanly appeal even for the man for whom she was working day and night and who took two women one after the other as his mistresses and married them off to his intimate friends when they became pregnant by him to give their names to his own expected children.

Jose Rivera Indarte, editor of El Nacional de Montevideo, compiled and published 'The Tables of Blood' in 1853 after Juan, fled into exile, according to which from 1829 to 1843 Encarnacion and Juan's goons poisoned four, beheaded 3,765, shot 1,393, murdered 722, killed 14,920, in armed confrontation killed 1,600 on charges of desertion. These are regarded as conservative and most modest figures.

Regimentation

An unscrupulous tyrant can never tolerate a free press. When Juan was elected Governor in 1829, 31 newspapers were being published from Buenos Aires. At the end of his term, only 12 continued and on his re-election in 1835 only three survived the first year and by 1838 only one remained in the field which became his mouthpiece and outlived his fall in 1852, while shortly afterwards once again the number touched the 30 mark.

Freedom of expression was trampled down during his tenure. Poets, writers and journalists fled Argentina to Montevideo. These included the men of world fame like Estaban Echeverria, Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, Juan Bautista Alberdi and Batolome Mitre. Sarmiento was sent to jail for publishing a paper, EL Zonda, in 1839. After his release, he fled the country. While crossing the Andes, he wrote down a phrase: "Barbarians, you cannot kill ideas". But history of mankind bears testimony to the fact that barbarians are most afraid of ideas and they always try to annihilate ideas which are too ethereal to be slayed and too unforgiving to allow barbarians a respectable place in history.

Juan's attempt at regimentation of life in Argentina went beyond mundane affairs. He was deified and the captive church was made to accept and propagate the idea that he was a god—a messenger of god. A religious mysticism was created around his person. Now the government was not required to conform to the dictates of the church. In 1837, Encarnacion called upon the church "to conform its opinions with those

of the supreme government because any divergence on its part could become ruinous and perpetuate evil on all."

The Church went to the extent of creating a corps of Juan priests who used their pulpits to proclaim his divinity.

The University of Buenos Aires was purged of those professors who refused to accept Juan as their patron and their books were burnt. Religion was made mandatory in all schools. Students were taught to regard him as God-incarnate. In 1841, when Juan survived an attempt on his life, the Argentine church declared it a miracle and a clear proof of his divinity.

Children in Argentina were baptised in his name as well as in the name of God. The church preached that all those who were opposed to Juan were opposed to God and to the church, therefore they should not only be excommunicated but also exterminated.

Every sphere of social activity was employed as a means of spreading the Juan cult. Each show in theatres began with the cry, "Long Live the Restaurador (restorer)" and "Death to Unitarios." At the end of the show, murder scenes of guilty Unitarios were enacted.

Juan declared that citizens could vote freely as they chose. But he never forgot to advise the people how to vote. "I have given out lists with the names of those citizens who I think deserve to represent the country, with the purpose of having them elected, if it is the will of the people."

On all wares and articles of public and private use, Juan's icon was etched or painted or engraved. Coins, emblems, playing cards, medals and all such things invariably carried his portrait.

But there was a place where the heroine was Encarnacion—the slaughter-house. Her portraits decorated the walls of all the slaughter-houses in the realm. Butchers were always at her disposal and who employed them for killing and beheading her opponents.

The End

Encarnacion had a mysterious end. She died in great agony in October 1838. She was neither allowed to see a doctor nor a priest by the order of her husband, the despotic ruler of Argentina in whose service she had debased herself.

Encarnacion collapsed suddenly and knew she was fatally ill. Her daughter, Manuelita, was so disturbed at her mother's agony that she desperately ran to her father, threw herself at his feet and begged him to

reconsider her mother's request for a priest. Juan was unmoved and he took his daughter into confidence : "Encarnacion knows many secrets of the Federation, and the priests tell everything fools whisper into their ears at confessions. It is the same thing whether she confesses or not. When she is dead, we will bring in a priest, say she has confessed, and everyone will believe it."

Encarnacion died soon. Her body was anointed. A period of national mourning was decreed. Tributes were paid. Special masses were held. A state funeral was organized, and 25,000 people walked behind her cortege. But Juan was not among them for he was too upset emotionally to attend. It was a costly show.

Soon after her death, Juan took Eugenia Castro, daughter of one of his faithful followers who had died and left 13-year Eugenia to his care, as his mistress. She arrived at his home in 1837. Early next year, Eugenia gave birth to her 45-year-old paramour a daughter, named Nicanora. She bore for more children from him but none of them was imparted legality by Juan.

The governors of the provinces were getting restless at Juan's treatment to them. Finally, they united under the leadership of Urquiza, the Governor of Entre Rios, who with the help of Brazil defeated Juan in a pitched battle on February 3, 1852. Juan sent his resignation, mounted his horse and rode away alone, except for an attendant, to the house of British Charged' Affaires Richard Gore. He was granted asylum in England along with his daughter, where he died in 1877 in utter penury.





Juan Domingo Peron

If history repeats itself, it has repeated itself in the case of Argentina where the repressive regime of Rosas couple (Juan Manuel Rosas and Encarnacion) has been replicated in the form of Juan Domingo Peron and his wife Evita Duarte who ruled the country after the gap of a century. The Peron couple established a naked autocratic regime in which the goons ruled the roost. They acted on Juan Peron's famous dictum that "we will give everything to our supporters and deny everything (including justice) to our opponents."

Argentina's history contradicts the maxim that 'history never repeats itself'. Juan Manuel Rosas and Encarnacion were as if reborn, as Juan Domingo Peron and Evita Duarte after the lapse of a century, and recreated the history and the dictatorial regime they had originally created in the second quarter of the 19th century in Argentina. Peron and Evita were as crazy, unscrupulous, power hungry and brute dictators as Juan and Encarnacion had been.

Juan Domingo Peron was born in a small mud-shack near village Lobos, some 60 miles from Buenos Aires. His father worked for a judge. When he was only five, his father moved to a sheep ranch in barren Patagonia, a remote, cold and harsh place. At 10 he was brought by his parents for schooling to Buenos Aires. At 18, he graduated as a second Lieutenant from the Argentine Military Academy and as a captain in 1924. In 1929, still a student at the Superior War School, he had his first posting in the Ministry of War. Soon he became a professor of military history in the War Ministry and became famous as a master tactician. He was highly impressed by the Nazi and Fascist military machines and he made a first-hand study of those military systems and wrote extensively about them. He was also impressed by Alexander the Great and Napoleon Bonaparte.



Juan Domingo Peron



Evita Peron

By the summer of 1945, Peron had assumed considerable importance in President Farrell's government as the Secretary of Labour, the Minister of War and the Vice-President. But because of his sympathies for the Italo-German Axis, which was completely vanquished during World War II, there was a widespread discontent in the elite, the intelligentsia and the army against him. He was persuaded to resign from the government and later arrested.

This became unbearable for Peron's wife, Evita, who, like Encarnacion, had been building the political image of Peron as a hero of the dispossessed, the poor and the toiling masses of Argentina. She had her private volunteer brigade, 'Descamisados', ready to pounce like Encarnacion's 'Mazorcas' and she plunged them into action. Riots broke out all over Buenos Aires and provincial capitals. Soon the city passed into the hands of the Descamisados or the shirtless. A mob of 50,000 labourers and workers laid siege of the government House demanding release of "our leader Peron" and hurling stones.

On the other side, Peron pretended to be dangerously ill in his prison and demanded full medical care. As the news of Peron's illness reached the demonstrators, the mass frenzy became uncontrollable. The cabinet lost its nerve and Peron was summoned hurriedly to handle the mob. He was immediately released and brought to the Government House balcony from where he waved to the crowd, and said. "I have left the hospital to

reassure you.” But he was not the man to miss the opportunity. He ordered his supporters to stage a general strike the next day as a protest against his arrest. The general strike was total throughout the country.

The Dictator

Peron was asked to withdraw his resignation and he became the virtual dictator of Argentina. Presidential elections were ordered for February 24, 1946, but no one dared to campaign against him. He won the election hands down and became the President on March 28 for a six-year term. The governorships of all the 14 Argentine provinces went to his supporters. His supporters also won all the seats in the senate and 109 out of the 158 seats in the Chamber of deputies, as if the people had elected a dictator.

Immediately after assuming office, he enacted the “disrespect law”, which said : “To attack or criticise the President or others in high office is treason and punishable by death”. By another law , he prohibited the opposition parties from ever joining a coalition, and made it obligatory upon them to declare their candidates and campaign openly for them, failing which they would be outlawed. Thus he prevented the opposition from uniting against him or going underground.

Thought Control

Peron embarked upon a programme of mind control. All professors, some of them Nobel laureates, who had been opposed to Peron, were relieved of their duties. He made it clear that there was no room for free thought. Students staged a sit-down strike in protest. On the fourth day, more than 1,000 students were arrested during the night and lodged in jails. The arrests were made not by the state police but by the private militia of the President. Students were severely beaten. Even girls were not spared, they were man-handled and insulted. A number of students were killed and university laboratories and libraries were looted and broken.

The students were stuffed into dingy barracks and kept there for four days. The leaders disappeared and never returned, five of whom were branded as communists and killed. Peron’s men, the Descamisados, would enter educational institutions and yell : “Shoes, yes ; books, no.”

Addressing the members of the Central Committee and the regional delegates of the General Confederation of Labour on August 9, 1950, Peron declared, “Let us be well aware of who are our friends and who are

our enemies. Let us give all to the friends—and to the enemy nothing, not even justice.”

“Not Even Justice” became the motto of the regime. Jails were full of opponents who were held without trial for years at a stretch. Peron employed ex-Nazis and ex-Fascists, who had fled Germany and Italy after the Axis defeat, in various Segments of the administration and many were granted asylum in Argentina. The services of men like Carlos Scorza and A. Muhli, former secretaries of the Italian Fascist party, Vittorio, the son of Mussolini, Ludwig Frevde and Ricardo Staudte, the top-ranking Nazis, were retained to stream-line his torture squads and crack commando brigades.

Inside torture chambers, victims were treated to electric shocks applied at sensitive parts of the body.

Media Silenced

Peron knew that dictatorship and free media cannot go together. He therefore, imposed rigid censorship and decreed that news unfavourable to him must not be sent beyond Argentina's borders. Yet foreign journalists, undaunted by threats to their lives, got their stories through. Two reporters of ‘Time’ magazine were imprisoned and thrown into solitary cells.

Privately owned radio stations were censored and seized. The worst happened to ‘La Prensa’, the internationally known bulwark of free Press in Argentina. It was closed, taken over and destroyed. Its publishers, Dr. Paz and his mother, had to flee to Montevideo. ‘La Nacion’ and ‘El Mundo’, though not made to suspend publication, were subjected to censorship, harassment and insults.

Censorship was not restricted to the media alone. It was absolute. All the mail was opened at the post offices and those of interest were seized. Any telegrams which made critical mention of official acts were denied transmission. Citizens had lost all freedoms and rights.

Before Peron’s inauguration as the President, the Supreme Court had exercised discretion and had the courage to declare some of the acts even enacted by the military government, unconstitutional and, therefore, null and void. Peron let it be known to the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court in unmistakable terms that he would take none of it any more, and the Chief Justice, Dr. Roberto Repetta, abdicated. He resigned instead of putting up a fight. This encouraged Peron and he embarked upon estab-

lishing his despotic sway over Argentina. The Supreme Court was put under restraints and purged.

Deification

Evita took upon herself the solemn task of Peron's deification. She would begin her speeches in all solemnity—head bowed, eyes half closed, intoning in a low, soft voice and pronouncing Peron as 'the god of the peoples interest'. "I am only a simple, meaningless little woman. I was no better off than you not long ago. Now I exist only to interpret Peron's great crusade to you—his people. I am here only to save his energy, to explain his ideals, to carry out his glorious programme." Crowds would listen in rapt attention and become hysterical, throw flowers and silken flags upon her, and yell... .Evita, Evita, Evita.

Evita transformed her husband into a major deity in the fold of Christianity. She would tell the crowds : "Peron is the air we breathe. Peron is our sun. Peron is life. I want nothing but to be the heart of Peron. Because, though I do my best to understand him and learn his marvellous ways, whenever he makes a decision, I barely mumble. Whenever he speaks, I hardly utter a single word. Whenever he gives advice, I scarcely dare make a suggestion. What he sees I hardly glimpse. But I see him with the eyes of my soul. And I have pledged myself to collect the hopes of the Argentine people and empty them in the marvellous heart of Peron so that he may turn them into realities."

".....The miracle that happened 2,000 years ago (emergence of the Christ) is occurring again. The rich, the learned, the men in power never understood Christ. It was the humble and the poor who understood him, because their souls, unlike the souls of the rich, are not sealed up with avarice and selfishness".

"...Leon Bloy...could not conceive heaven without his emperor—Napoleon. This appealed to me. . . . I also could not conceive heaven without Peron."

"I shall not commit the heresy to compare Peron to Christ...but I am certain that, by imitating Christ, Peron feels a deep love for humanity and that this, more than anything else, makes him great, magnificently great".

Image-Building

Peron had built a huge propaganda machine which affected the common man. In 1949 alone, an expenditure of \$250 million was approved for the Information and Propaganda Ministry. Expensive por-

traits of Peron and Evita were permanently put up on the walls of all towns.

Football games, car races, telephone booths, railway trains and stations, public construction sites, hospitals, schools, military barracks, in short, any conceivable place or occasion was not spared where and when the display of Peron and Evita's photographs and messages was not made.

Under the plan 'Young Juan Peron Library', two books were published which carried a hymn to the extraordinary qualities and virtues of the President and his wife on each page. All schools were directed to praise the work of government and the personality of the President.

Public charity was another Peronist Propaganda vanity. A complete and exclusive monopoly of charity had been organised under the name of social help by Maria Evita Duarte de Peron.

Evita's Charities

Evita established the Social Aid Foundation, the most monumental bastion of all her social activities. She claimed that she began with \$3000 of her own money, but once it was established millions of unaccounted dollars flowed into it, besides the grants received from the government. She never maintained any account because "keeping books on charity is a capitalist nonsense. I just use the money for the poor. I can't stop to count it".

She acquired a large and beautiful mansion endowed by a wealthy woman for the blind and converted it into a demonstration home for unwed mothers. It was on her regular tourist list for display purposes. Furnishings for it were selected from the stocks of the best city's furnishing stores. When the bills arrived, Evita wrote on them a bold 'Thank You' and signed her name. The bills were returned and were prominently displayed by the stores with a sense of pride.

Similarly, she furnished her welfare homes impeccably and when she would take the visitors around, everything appeared untouched and never used. As for the occupants, she would explain they were away on excursion.

Evita would organise charity distribution shows for propaganda purposes and to win public approbation.

On one occasion, a function was organised for her to hand out pensions to about half a dozen workers over 70 years of age who sat in a semi-circle at the stage overawed by her majesty. The hall was crowded



*Peron and
Evita Duarte :
Presided over a
repressive State*

by thousands of onlookers who had gathered there to see her and to speak to her.

After the distribution of pensions, she made a sign smilingly and from amongst the visitors almost every body began to throw small folded sheets of paper with their names and addresses written on them. Once in a while, Evita stooped and picked up a paper. The people whose slips she thus picked up that evening were later invited to have an audience with her and receive the help they needed in the form of money, a house, a job, adoption for an illegitimate baby, medical assistance, or whatever it was.

Irrespective of financial considerations, Evita was purchasing the support of workers and trade unions, which, having deserted the socialists and Communists, looked to Evita for leadership and patronage. Workers' delegations waited upon her almost daily to seek advice, to pass on information and to seek favours. Trade unions vied with each other for her patronage and presence at their rallies. Finally, the General Confederation of Labour surrendered to her and she used it as her bureau for crowds she needed for demonstrations. But not for nothing. She was distributing government money open-heartedly and her husband was printing paper

currency unrealistically. Railway workers asked her for a 40 per cent pay raise and expected at the most 20 per cent. But no; this was not Evita's method of doing things. She ordered a 50 per cent hike in their pay. Encouraged by this munificence, the telephone workers asked for 70 per cent pay raise and they got it in full. She never realised the disastrous effect this sort of bribing would have on the national economy.

The Fall and Canonisation of Evita

In early 1951, Peron sought another presidential term and Evita's name was proposed for the vice-presidency. But the Argentine armed forces did not relish the idea of a woman President in the eventuality of Peron's death. The message was conveyed in unmistakable terms and Peron dared not challenge his Generals. Evita's name was thus withheld. Evita gave the reason that she was not eligible to contest the election for she had not yet attained the mandatory age of 30. Then in September 1951, there was a military uprising which was suppressed by pro-Peronista officers and partly by mass action by the workers. This was the beginning of the end of the Peronism. Perhaps this awareness was too heavy a strain upon Evita's nerves. She broke down and never recovered from the shock.

In 1951, Evita was taken ill. She had cancer. However, despite best medical care and attention, she expired in July 1952. In Argentina, a funeral is as important a ritual as marriage. Peron was aware of Evita's popularity, especially amongst the lower strata of Argentine society. He took full advantage of her death. Her funeral was made a national event of unprecedented magnitude. Evita was instantly canonised. A vast mausoleum in the style of a greek temple was raised. Evita had now become the 'Virgin of the Calle Corrientes', and an altar was built for her worship. This antagonised the church to a great extent.

Peron s Restoration

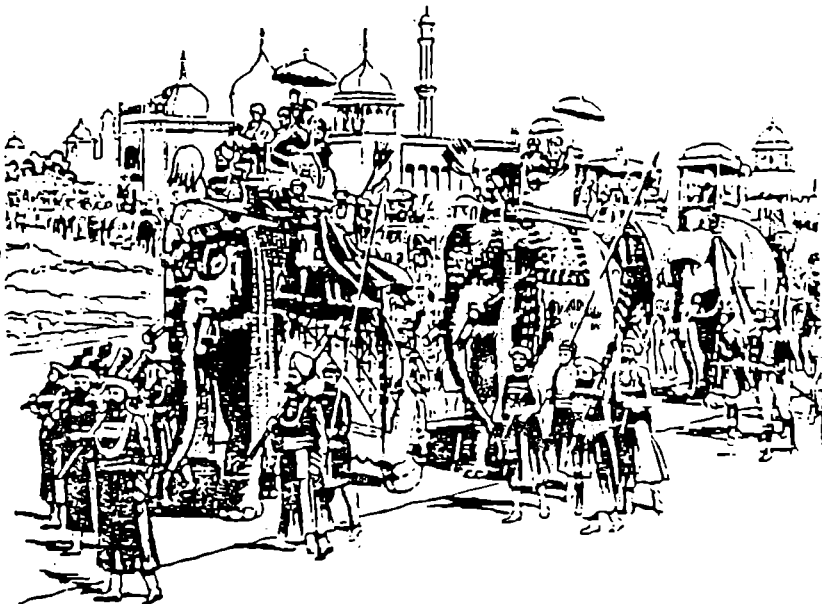
Elections were held and Peron won the second term by a majority of 4.6 million votes. Evita's labours had paid even after her death; the poor masses voted for him. During the next four years, Argentina's economy suffered a serious setback and politically the equation changed radically, with the armed forces aligning with the church, the intelligentsia, the student community and university elements. Peron was left with the support of his henchmen, foreign capitalists and the working class. Peron became crazy and he decided to weaken his adversaries. In December 1954, he hammered the church with a law, making divorce legal. He



Peron and his third wife Maria Estela wave to their enthusiastic followers on their return to Argentina

also licensed the running brothels. He issued a decree banning religious holidays and downgrading Christmas and Good Friday to the category of secondary holidays.

This was the worst manifestation of his power-craziness and egotism, insensitivity and neurotic character. In June 1955, there was a great mass celebration of Corpus Christi, converted by the church into a mammoth demonstration against the Peron government. Peron replied by kicking the papal delegates out of Argentina. The armed forces were ready to act. On June 16, a formation of the Argentine air force bombed the Presidential palace. Peron lost his nerve completely. He was rescued by his bodyguards. But he soon recovered, sacked his Home Minister, went on the air and appealed for cooperation. This was only a tactic. He organised his goons and, on the night of August 31, his hooligans went on rampage and burned and exploded the churches. Arms were handed out to workers and Peron vowed to retaliate and kill five enemies for every Peronista killed. Peron's intelligence network failed him. He was approaching the end of the road. Armed forces under the leadership of Gen Eduardo Lonardi left their barracks and students and middle class people came out on streets in support of the armed forces. Peron took to his heels and sought refuge aboard a Paraguayan gunboat, and went into exile in Gen Franco's Spain where he stayed for 18 years before he returned to his homeland in 1973 where a crowd of two million welcomed him back. He ruled over Argentina for one year and died in 1974 in the midst of a civil war, the war of succession. ■ ■



Marching from Delhi to Daulatabad

Mohd. Bin Tughlaq

Mohd. Bin Tughlaq has always been taken as a controversial historical figure. Probably this is so because he had two distinct faces that had got merged in his personality—that of an eccentric dictator and of a scholarly king. It is, however, the first face of Mohd. Tughlaq that has prevailed over the other. The most notable example of Mohd. Bin Tughlaq's eccentricity has been his order to shift the capital from Delhi to Daulatabad along with all its inhabitants. The journey lasted 40 days and caused the death of hundreds from starvation and fatigue. But after 15-16 years, when Daulatabad was struck by famine, he ordered everyone to march back to Delhi which was once again made the capital of his kingdom.



Benito Mussolini

Mussolini was a cruel dictator who would not brook any opposition to what he thought or did. He suffered no qualms of conscience when it came to dealing with those who disagreed with him—he simply destroyed them. It seems Mussolini lived in a world of myths and illusions. And whenever this world threatened to break up, he reacted violently unleashing the worst kind of repression all around.

Benito Mussolini, the founder of Fascism, was born on July 29, 1883, at Varanao dei Costa, an old hamlet on the top of a hill at Dovia in Italy. The time was 2 o'clock and the sun had just entered the constellation of Leo. His father, Alessandro Mussolini, was a blacksmith—a wayward, obstinate and selfish man. His mother, Rosa, was a quiet and gentle school mistress who supported the family with a meagre salary of 50 lire per month, because Alessandro spent most part of his income upon his mistress.

To properly understand Mussolini's character, it is necessary to delve deep into his family environment. His father like his grandfather had never been to school, yet he was an educated and intelligent man, a socialist by conviction and at the same time a revolutionary. Alessandro used to contribute to socialist journals and to a republican newspaper almost regularly. He was a capable orator and used to talk for hours on revolutionary socialism, republicanism, politics and also economics. He was, like his father, incarcerated for his revolutionary beliefs. Alessandro had two sons and a daughter. He named his children after famous revolutionaries. The elder son, Benito Mussolini, was named after Benito Juarez, the self-willed and hard-headed Mexican revolutionary, the younger son, Amilcare, after Amilcare Cipriani, an anarchist, and the

daughter, Andrea, after Andrea Costa, one of the founders of Italian Socialist Party.

Mussolini was born and brought up in an unusual family which was non-conformist and anarchist by tradition and by conviction. He was an obstinate, quarrelsome and difficult boy. His teachers found him uncontrollable and it was on their recommendation that he, when only nine, was sent to Faenza where the Salesian Fathers were running a residential school known for its rigid discipline. The Salesian Fathers as well found Mussolini uncontrollable. He was short tempered and irreverent towards superiors. He used to have fights not only with his classmates and schoolmates but also with his teachers when they tried to restrain him or to make him behave. He stabbed a student and hit a Father with an inkpot. This was too much for the Salesian Fathers to tolerate. They expelled him from the school. He was admitted to another school where he stabbed another fellow-pupil and had to be rusticated.

Mussolini's mother tried to use persuasion upon her son but he told her quite frankly and firmly: "I shall make the whole earth tremble." He was convinced that he was born to shock and shake the world. But despite his violent nature, he was an intelligent and studious boy. He not only passed all his examinations with distinction but also obtained a teaching diploma. He became a teacher at 18.

Mussolini was not incorrect in his own assessment. He was created specially for the task he undertook—the task of leadership. A firm and powerful jaw, big, dark and piercing eyes, a deep and sonorous voice and a restless, ambitious, angry and forthright temperament made him the centre of attraction in whatever company he kept, particularly in the company of women who generally thought of him as highly blasphemous and easily excitable.

Mussolini was neurotic and a sadist. He took great pride in being aggressive and violent towards women. Even while still a schoolboy at Forlimpopoli, he was almost a regular visitor to a local brothel and raped the first girl he met who was not a whore.

He gave up the teacher's job after four months and fled to Switzerland leading a bohemian life. There he joined a revolutionary group and led a vagabond's life, working now as a labourer and then as an assistant to a butcher. At times he took to begging and was once held for it. The neurotic streak in him made him violent, particularly towards women.

Mussolini : I shall make the whole earth tremble



One day, two English women, seated on a bench in a Geneva park, were enjoying a picnic. He flung himself upon one of them and grabbed food from their hands. The women became nervous at his ferocious mien. He later admitted that he would have, undoubtedly, strangled both of them had they put up resistance.

Syphilis

In Switzerland, Mussolini took a mistress and when she asked him for money, he behaved wildly, beat her and stabbed her with a knife in her thigh. Later, he took another mistress who was a whore and he contracted syphilis from her. The disease and the stigma that it carried with it became unbearable for him and he threatened to commit suicide, but his associates in the revolutionary party persuaded him to consult a doctor.

Extremism

Mussolini was always a man in hurry. During his stay in Switzerland, he did a good deal of reading but in a haphazard and hurried manner. He was solely interested extremist thought and he read mostly the works of Karl Marx, Immanuel Kant, Johann Fichte, Prince Kropotkin, Sonel, Blanqui, Karl Kautsky, Friedrich Nietzsche and Gustav Lebon. He was most impressed by Lebon's 'The Psychology of the Crowd.' It was

from this book that he learnt the art of hypnotising the crowd. He preached violence and was anti-church, anti-monarchy and anti-capitalism. In short, he seemed to have believed in anarchistic socialism. He was arrested for his extremism. Later he returned to Italy, where he was arrested again. This made him known in the socialist world as 'Comrade Mussolini'.

Mussolini was a gifted journalist and contributed to a number of socialist journals. He later founded 'The class Struggle' a four-page newspaper of his own, and wrote all the four pages himself. The success of this paper won him the editorship of 'Avanti', the mouthpiece of the Italian Socialist Party. He was equally a skilful orator. His mastery over crowd psychology helped him build up mass hysteria during his speeches.

War Cry

Mussolini had no consistency in his thinking. At the beginning of war, he raised such slogans as : 'Down With the War !' 'Down with the arms and up with humanity'. But soon he changed to the other side and became a supporter of war. He himself fought in the war and returned wounded and sick.

Leaving Avanti, he joined the newly founded 'Il Popolo d' Italia' with two significant mottos : 'Who has iron has bread', and 'Revolution is an idea which has found bayonets' — famous quotations from Napoleon.

He was so obstinate that when the socialist Party expelled him from its fold, he told the party, "You can't get rid of me because I am, and always will be, a socialist." But his expulsion marked his total alienation with socialism as such.

Dictatorship

This crazy despot propounded political despotism as early as 1901 and began advocating the emergence of a dictator at this time. He wanted the dictator to be "a man who is ruthless and intelligent enough to make a clean sweep." He began his efforts to build up a political movement in Italy which would thrust forward the political idea and ideology of a dictatorship.

It was now that he established the Fascist Party with 'Skull and Dagger' as its emblem. He moved rapidly towards the centre of power in Italy. In the 1921 general elections, his party was able to capture 35 seats of the Chamber of Deputies. He too was elected. But such an insignificant

minority could not open the doors of authority for him. He waited for an appropriate moment to strike and capture power.

His opportunity came in August 1922 when a general strike was called by the socialist Party of Italy. Mussolini who had been an anarchist and revolutionary socialist changed colours overnight and to defeat the socialist forces and win the sympathy of the king and the general public alike, who were deadly opposed to the general strike and the prospect of a Bolshevik revolution in Italy on the soviet pattern, declared that if the government did not prevent the strike, the Fascists would. "Either the government will be given to us or we will seize it by marching on Rome." It was not an idle threat. A huge contingent of Fascist activists and the 25,000 strong militia, Squadristi, embarked on the historic "March on Rome" in four columns under the leadership of four first-rank Fascist leaders, while the supremo, Mussolini, stayed back in Milan awaiting his summons from the king. The government proclaimed its intention to declare martial law and crush the march. But the king refused to sign the decree. He was determined to get rid of socialism and as he found Fascists helpful in this task, he decided to invite Mussolini to take charge of the government. He sent a telegram to Mussolini, asking him to proceed to Rome for consultations. Mussolini rushed to Rome and was made the head of the government. He formed a broad-based ministry with himself as the Prime Minister. Support poured in from all sides. Former Prime Minister Orlando put his signatures to a motion of confidence in the government and although there were only 35 Fascist members in Parliament, the Senate and the Chamber of deputies competed to grant it every facility. Only one or two of his intimates, who were in constant touch with him and were trusted executives of his orders, knew that behind the facade of goodwill Mussolini still nourished the old hatred and suspicions and rancours. He secretly ordered petty acts of revenge and made it clear to his followers that they need have no fear of consequences, as long as they did not boast publicly of their immunity. He told his lieutenants in the party that it was essential for his enemies "to live in fear".

In Turin, Piero Gobetti was beaten up, several of his ribs were broken and he spat blood. The Italian Press was already stifled by censorship, but a Paris newspaper published a facsimile of Mussolini's telegram to the Prefect of Turin : "Gobetti's damaging campaign against Fascism continues. Please take steps to make life impossible for the foolish opponent."

He sent similar instructions to the secretaries of the provincial Fasci (party branches), ordering them to proceed against the people whose names appeared in the lists of subscribers to opposition papers—lists which the papers naively published with full addresses. Mussolini cut out the lists from the papers and handed them over to his secretary with the orders to “liquidate”, them. He also sent the names to the local Fascist Party secretaries with a standard letter signed by himself, in which he complained that his opponents were still exerting influence and urged them to take “suitable measures” for reducing it. The unfortunate victims of these local vendettas were beaten up until they bled.

Mussolini actively supported Gen. Franco during the Spanish Civil War. When the war lasted longer than had been expected, the people began grumbling and the Fascist gangs beat up anyone who grumbled. Starace, head of the Fascist militia, ‘Squadristo’, got the blame and the people said, “If Mussolini knew, he would not allow it”. But, in fact, he was not only fully aware of it, but also boasted to the council of Ministers that it was his own idea. “I have ordered Starace to see if the wine of ‘Squadristo’ is still good. I have ordered some bottles to be uncorked. The wine is still excellent. A few heads and many radio sets have been broken. Everything is all right.”

Mussolini was a crazy and cruel despot. He ordered the shooting of Italian anarchists and Communists who had participated in the Spanish Civil war at the behest of Stalin against the forces led by Gen. Franco and supported by Italian and German forces under the garb of Fascist and Nazi volunteers. These anarchists and Communists had been taken prisoner during the civil war.

Soon after assuming power in 1922, Mussolini became a dictator. He suppressed and eliminated all political groups and parties except his own Fascist Party and maintained his total sway and control over it. All his adversaries had been done away with. He was obsessed with the idea of conquests and wars, always donning his military dress, ordering military reviews, flying his own bomber and regimenting the whole country, including children, in the dreary discipline of Fascist uniform and parades. As a dictator, he had fantastic visions of making the country great with prolific mothers and ferocious fathers. He persecuted bachelors, even going so far as to degrade a newly promoted general when he heard he was not married. “What sort of a general can he be,” he said, “if he doesn’t bother to provide the raw material of war?”

During the first decade of his dictatorship, there were some who had the courage to tell him the truth to his face and to whom he was willing to listen, but with the passage of time the courageous grew fewer and even his close friends gradually dropped the 'tu'. He developed the habit of sacking people without warning by means of a simple Press communique. Octavio Corgini, Under-Secretary for Agriculture, was one of the victims of this method. One afternoon Corgini went to the Chamber and took his seat on the government bench. Members seated on the other side of the Chamber, on seeing him there, began to shout, "What are you doing there? Go away. That is not the place for you." Corgini took it as a joke, though in bad taste, and did not leave his seat. Eventually, he was handed over a newspaper, in which it was mentioned that he had resigned his job and that the Duce had accepted it. Ironically enough, many years later, on the afternoon of July 25, 1943, the King of Italy adopted the same technique with him when Mussolini learnt that he was no more the Prime Minister and dictator of Italy.

Goddess Liberty Slain

Mussolini was a devotee of Machiavelli. In 1924, the University of Rome offered him an honorary doctorate of law, which he accepted on the condition that he would present a thesis to justify the award. The title of his thesis was "Introduction to Machiavelli". It was ostensibly an interpretation of 'The Prince', but, in fact, an exposition of his own commitment to and deep faith in dictatorship. The 'thesis' propounded the inevitability of an antagonism between the prince, i.e. the despot, and the people, or state and individual. It said : "The people tend to disobey laws, not to pay tribute (taxes) and not to wage war." Hence, the prince or the state must have the despotic authority to compel them, since the ruler alone could decide what the people should do in the best interest of the state. The ruler or the despot was under no obligation to obtain their consent since "regimes based entirely on common consent have never existed, do not exist and will probably never exist." In order to impose his will, i.e., the will of the state on the people, the prince (despot) must be in a position to use force; in other words, he must be armed and in full control and command of the armed forces of the state. Earlier, in an article published in 'Gerarchia', in March 1923, he had concluded that all governments are bound to create a class of malcontents and there was no other way to check this discontent from spreading and assuming threatening proportions except to use force. "Let it be known that

Fascism.....has already trampled and, if necessary, will trample again the decaying body of the Goddess Liberty”.

Mussolini's henchmen started building a myth and a cult around him and, as early as 1923, one of the Italian newspapers reported his presence at the eruption of Mt. Etna in a typical manner. It said that as soon as he arrived there, a miracle happened and the stream of lava flowing from the erupting volcano was halted by the “still more ardent fire” of his eyes. ‘Avanti’s’ art critic and his beloved, Margherita Sarfatti was disgusted at this gross adulation. She knew well that during Mussolini’s visit to Etna, his eyes were completely hidden behind a pair of dark glasses he wore on the occasion to avoid the glare of the Valcano fire. She expected him to show his dislike for the report and showed him the paper. She was shocked to see that Mussolini did not find the description as unnatural, perhaps he too thought that his magnetism helped to stem the tide of the blazing lava.

Fickle-minded Autocrat

Mussolini was a fickle-minded autocrat. Eleven years after he established his despotic sway over Italy, another dictatorship arose in the European continent—in Germany. After Mussolini’s first meeting with Adolf Hitler in June 1934, he described the Fuhrer as “quite mad” and “what a clown.....”. He disagreed with Hitler’s anti-Semitism and his racial theories. He said to Emil Ludwig that there was hardly a German among advocates of the purity of German race and regarded anti-Semitism as the “German vice”. He telegraphically advised Hitler not to make “the very dangerous mistake” of launching an anti-Semitic policy. He used to tell his close associates : “I don’t trust Germans.”

In July 1934, when Mussolini got the news of an impending German attack on Austria from Chancellor Dolfuss, he immediately ordered two divisions to leave instantly for Brenner. As a result of this quick move on his part Hitler dared not make any further move at the time. England and France also praised him for “containing the German menace.”

But Hitler was undaunted and determined to build Germany into a vast military camp in respect of both men and material. Mussolini was overawed by him and, despite his jealousy towards Hitler, he was drawn into a dangerous alliance with Germany. It was he who invented the fatal word “Axis” for Italo-German alliance in 1936. After his official visit to Germany towards the end of September 1937, Mussolini became a



*Hitler and Mussolini :
Chips of the same block*

convert to 'Hitlerism' to the extent that he himself initiated the antisemitic campaign in Italy which he had earlier termed as "stupid and idiotic". Another proof of his fickle-mindedness came to the fore when, on behalf of the Italian Jewish community, a Fascist professor of philosophy went to him to protest against his policy of anti-semitism, the despot assured him. "I entirely agree with you. I don't believe in the least in this stupid anti-semitic theory. Whatever I am doing is entirely for political reasons".

In 1934, Mussolini had forestalled Germany's annexation of Austria but in 1938 he became a supporter of Anschluss and never disclosed the fact that Hitler had carried out the coup in Austria without even bothering to consult him—his Axis partner.

His Women

Mussolini's blood boiled by his lust for women when he was hardly 16. It was at this time that an unkempt comrade took him to an "unnameable house" where he was initiated into the practice of love by a prostitute. About another affair he writes in his autobiography. "I took Virginia up the stairs, threw her into a corner behind a door and made her mine." Virginia felt humiliated and complained that he had violated her honour but soon she reconciled and they were lovers for three months. Later, when he took up a teacher's job, he found a satisfactory mistress, a lush

20 years-old wife of a soldier who was away at a distant military camp. With her he made love "violent and jealous" in his own words.

While in Switzerland, Mussolini became friendly with several Russian and Polish women refugees and with one of them, a medical student, he had "intimate relations" and spent "unforgettable evenings." In 1906, he had an affair with a school mistress which came to an end on his transfer to Tolmezzo where he was sleeping with Luigia, an inn-keeper in the best lodger tradition and he had a fight with her husband. He calls his one-year stay at Tolmezzo as "a year of moral deterioration". He wrote sentimentally at the end of the autobiography, at the age of 28, "I have loved many women."

In 1909, Mussolini returned to live with his father who was running an inn with the help of his mistress-widow, Guidi, who lived there with her three daughters Augusta, Pina and Rachele. Mussolini was madly in love with Augusta who disliked him and in his presence announced her decision to marry a grave-digger. Humiliated and dejected at being summarily rejected, he turned his attention to Rachele, who was only 16, then. One night, after he returned from the theatre, where he had taken Rachele, he summoned his father and Rachele's mother and threatened to shoot Rachele and himself with the loaded pistol he brandished. At this, the parents consented to their marriage. He took Rachele with him to a separate lodge and started living with her as man and wife "bound by no official chains, either civil or religious," in his own words. But his father and Rachele's mother did not hear of their wedlock. Rachele gave birth to Edda, their illegitimate daughter on September 1, 1910. It was about this time Benito's father died.

At the end of 1912, when Mussolini was nominated as the editor of 'Avanti', he moved to Milan leaving Rachele and his daughter behind at Forli and after some time he stopped visiting her. In reply to Rachele's letters, he sent small post-cards saying that he was very busy. Rachele was a strong rustic woman. She arrived at his office with the child in her arms and summoned him out. He showed affection towards her and asked her to go back to Forli until he had found a house. But Rachele was determined. She told him in a firm voice, "I should not dream of it. Now that you are earning 500 lire a month and could keep us comfortably, you must have us both here with you". She said she would undertake to find a house and in the meantime she and the child would live with her friend, Signora Agosti. 'Agosti!' he exclaimed. Agosti came of a good Forli



*Mussolini (left) and
Rachele (right) :
the old age blues*

family and had been accused of killing her lover who had refused to take her, and after her acquittal had settled in Milan. Mussolini was terrified at the mention of Agosti's name but agreed reluctantly. Agosti found a house for Mussolini and prevailed upon him to resume family life. Shortly afterwards, when Rachele's mother came to live with them, Mussolini and Rachele were still unmarried. They were married in a civil ceremony at the end of 1915 and, a few months afterwards, their second child was born.

Mussolini was avoiding Rachele because, shortly after joining Avanti, he had started a terrific love affair with Margherita Sarfatti, the paper's art critic. The affair endured for six years. At Milan, while he was living with Rachele, he met Ida Dalser in 1913 who came from Sappada, near Trento, and was planning to open an institute of health and beauty. Mussolini apparently promised to marry her and when she became pregnant gave recognition to the child in advance by a notary's act. The child was born on November 11, 1915, and was registered in the name of Benito Albino Mussolini. Whatever his promise to Ida Dalser, he married Rachele a few weeks after the birth of the child. Ida visited Mussolini on December 18, 1915, in a hospital where he was recovering from jaundice, taking the baby with her. Although he had married Rachele the day before, he still promised Ida that he would regularise their

relationship.” Judging by a certificate of the Milan Town Council, dated 21, 1916, the marriage with Rachele was kept a secret, since the certificate stated that “the family of soldier Benito Mussolini consists of his wife, Ida Dalser, and one son and is entitled to receive 7.70 lire on the first Monday of every month and 2.45 lire on subsequent Mondays”. A letter from the army on February 25, 1920, addressed to Ida also speaks of Mussolini as her husband. Relations between them had been stormy. In one of his letters, he wrote to her, “My dear, please do not add to my worries. I’ll come at 8 this evening and we’ll talk about everything. Keep calm. Your loving Benito.”

Ida persisted in her attempts to make Mussolini provide for her and the child and succeeded in getting an order from a Milan court for a monthly allowance of 200 lire. Ida’s ego was badly hurt when she learnt about Mussolini’s marriage with Rachele. She stormed into the courtyard of his office with the child on her hip and dared Mussolini to come down. Mussolini finally came out on the balcony and pointed a pistol at her saying furiously, “This must be stopped”. He was restrained with difficulty and the police took Ida away.

In 1926, when Mussolini had already become Italy’s dictator, Ida tried to see his minister, Fidele, to ask him to intercede with Mussolini for the removal of police surveillance from her, but she was arrested on the charge of “hostile intentions towards the ministry.” She was declared mentally deranged and put in the mental hospital at Pergine. Later she was confined at a hospital in Vennice until her death in December 1935. Her son was left with a friend for a time and then made a ward of a man called Giulio Bernhardt. He died in a mental hospital on July 25, 1942.

Mussolini’s most enduring love affair was with Claretta Patacci who not only lived but also died with him and hanged upside down after her death by the side of her lover. It is a highly exciting and thrilling romantic tale.*

Whimsical Man

He was a man of irresolute character and he was easily swayed by the despotic manner in which Hitler conducted himself and the business of his government.

His whims knew no bounds. He forbade marriages with the nationals of other states and proclaimed the need for economic autarchy. He

* Read our title ‘Romances of Great People’ for more details.

obliged the party leaders to take part in violent physical exercises, such as leaping across a fire and over a fence of bayonets. He assembled the ministers in shorts and forced them to take part in swimming competitions at which, stripped to the waist, he acted as judge. During conversation with his ministers, he would fall into frenzy and his ministers and attendants would say. "He is going mad!" Bocchini, the police chief, once said to Mussolini's son-in-law and his foreign minister, Count Ciano, "Mussolini should have drastic treatment for his syphilis can't you see that he is in a permanent state of excitement?"

Mussolini was never a religious man, yet he was extremely superstitious. He did not dare to throw away the sacred objects which women and nuns gave him from time to time, and always wore round his neck a scapular given to him by his mother.

In 1912, one reporter noticed that before going up to rostrum to deliver a speech, Mussolini kissed a hunchback to bring himself good luck.

The correspondent of 'La Giustizia' called Mussolini "hysterical and neurotic." He admits this fact about his character in his autobiography, which he described as the memoirs of "an adventurous and stormy youth". In these memoirs, he confesses that he suffered from a "ferment of restlessness", and that "I have an unsettled, untamed temperament which is the slave of popularity. What has the future in store for me?"

Mussolini said to Fernando Mezzasoma, one of his closest friends and confidants, and his minister of popular culture, "I am not a statesman. I am more like a poet, and a mad poet at that Hitler and I have surrendered ourselves to our illusions like a couple of lunatics. Everything was always different from what we had expected. We hoped we would be able to split Russia off from the Allies, and we failed. Then we put our hopes in a new weapon.

"Now we are condemned to a life of falsehood in order to ensure that our people shall follow us, and we are trying to create a myth by means of an epic resistance. That is our last hope : to create a myth.

"We have been snatched away by a hurricane of frenzy. We all are going mad."

Mezzasoma in a letter to a friend writes about the Duce (Mussolini).

"He lives by dreams, in dreams. We, who are faithful to him and stern soldiers, do not think of him as such. He has not the least contact with



Mussolini's (left down) head resting in the lap of his beloved Petacci (left above)

reality. He lives and functions in a world which he constructs for himself, a completely fantastic world : he lives outside time. His reactions, his enthusiasms, his breakdowns have never any relation to life; they come at any moment and without any definite reason.

“He fights for his fantastic world and feels that it is momentarily slipping from his hands because any contact with life disillusions him.

“He regards falsehood as the best means of creating a life for himself outside the normal bounds. For that matter he says that falsehood is the actor’s art, and when applause breaks out he is happy.”

Shoot me in the Chest

Ultimately, the myth was exploded, the crowds vanished and the crazy despot was taken by his compatriots to the gate of Villa Belmonte along with Claretta Petacci, his faithful mistress—more faithful than his wife—by his side, by his compatriots. He was made to stand near the gate. Petacci darted in front as though possessed of Mussolini crying, “No. He mustn’t die”, and the next moment she fell to the ground without a sound. Mussolini faced the gun, and the moment for him to create a myth by

means of an epic resistance had arrived. Holding back the lapels of his coat, he said, "Shoot me in the chest." These were the last words he spoke and the next moment he fell to the ground, his head resting in the arms of his beloved, Petacci—on April 28, 1945.

In the early morning of April 29, the mud-splashed corpses of Mussolini and Petacci were strung upside down from a girder in front of a petrol station at Piazzale Loreto. Later, Mussolini's body was cut down and given a secret burial in the Musocco cemetery in Milan from where it was stolen the following year by neo-fascists and handed to the Franciscan monastery of the Angelicum at Pavia. In 1957, it was given into the care of Donna Rachele who had it buried at Predappio under a tombstone on which was carved the emblem of the Fasces, symbol of his days of power. ■ ■



Joseph Stalin

Of all the dictators of the socialist vintage, Joseph Stalin will be remembered as the most ruthless and cruel. He ruled over Soviet Union for a long time after Lenin and concentrated all powers in his hand. Anyone who dared to differ with him was sent packing to the other world through one of the many devious ways that he had devised and perfected over the years. Next to outright death was the dread of expulsion to one of the concentration camps in Siberia—a penalty worse than death. Stalin's death and Khrushchev's ascendance marked a watershed in the history of Soviet Union and the legacy of Khrushchev is being taken to its logical end by Gorbachev. But can the scars left by Stalin on the body-politic of Soviet Russia can ever be erased?

Amongst the crazy despots and diehard autocrats of all times and all nations of the world, Joseph Stalin, the communist dictator of the Soviet Union, shall be remembered in the history of mankind as one of the most brutal eccentrics and the hated, yet one of the most powerful despots who were dreadful even in their death.

Joseph was born Joseph Vissarionovich Dzhugashvili on December 21, 1879, in Georgia. His father, Dzhugashvili, was a Gori cobbler and an alcoholic. His mother was a powerful woman who did the cleaning and laundry at the house of a rich widower, called Ignatashvili. Stalin's schoolmates believed that the old man was his real father. His mother used to berate and hit his father when he drank too much. She was an extremely religious and devout lady. She and her employer, Ignatashvili, were responsible for putting Stalin into the Russian Orthodox seminary at Tiflis. She wanted him to be a priest. But he was not cast to be a man of God and belonged to Satan. He was expelled from the seminary on charges of indiscipline and brutality.

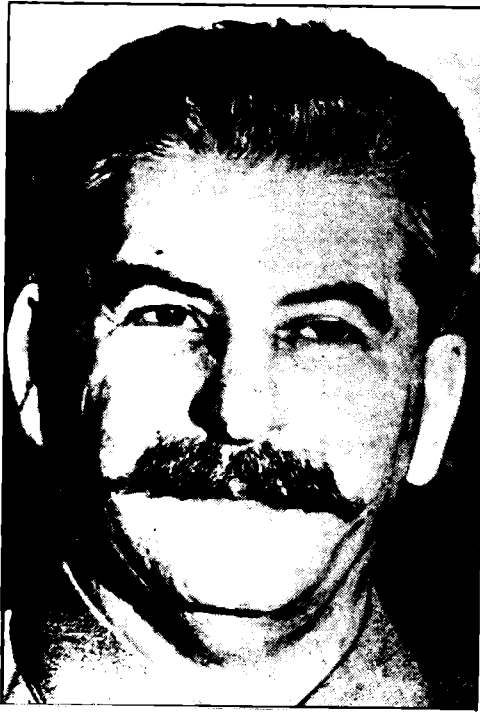
Stalin's mother, to the end of her years, was full of scorn for what he had accomplished and for the clamour and worldly glory. She was about 80 when she died in 1936. She was the only person in the whole of the Soviet Union who told Stalin to his face that he was a barbaric despot and a most unworthy son. Just before her death, Stalin went to see her and she told him : "What a pity you never became a priest." She was right in

the sense that Stalin could not make to the priesthood of God but after all succeeded in becoming the high priest of the Satanic cult of barbaric violence and despotism.

Stalin's father died in a drunken brawl after some one stabbed him with a knife. He never liked his father who beat him mercilessly and never gave him anything while his mother took him with her to Ignatashvili who gave him clothes to wear and food to eat. Stalin hated Ignatashvili for only one thing—that he wanted to give Joseph to God. Perhaps, he had a premonition that Stalin, if not given to God, was bound to cause untold sufferings to millions of his countrymen and torture and kill other millions. He was right. Stalin chose the other course and joined the fledgling Bolshevik faction of the Social Democratic party in 1904 after his expulsion from the seminary, serving as an itinerant organiser and propagandist. Shortly after the 1917 October Revolution, he was named the General Secretary of the Communist Party's Central Committee. This position allowed him to place his henchmen and allies in key positions within the expanding Soviet bureaucracy and to position himself so as to take control of the party after Lenin's death in 1924.

Megalomania

Stalin was a self-centred man. He was obsessed with power for power's sake. His sole aim was to be recognised as the sole successor of Vladimir Ilyich Lenin—the sole interpreter of Lenin's heritage and the maker and moulder of the Soviet history. To him collective leadership within the party was an impracticable myth which never existed in history. He agreed with Marx and Lenin in treating the history of mankind as history of class conflict and class struggle but, contrary to the Marxian thesis, he held that leader, not the party, emerged as the expression of class and , therefore, history of mankind was the history of its leaders—Alexander the Great, Caesar, Napoleon and Stalin. Dictatorship of the proletariat meant to Stalin dictatorship of the leader who emerges as the expression of the proletariat. He regarded himself as the leader. This amounted to his personal dictatorship. Democratic centralism, one of the cardinal principles of Marxism-Leninism, was transformed by him into despotic centralism. Thus, Stalin became to himself the symbol of Communism, the proletariat, the revolution, the state, the nation and the people of the Soviet Union at large. Anything or anyone that threatened, disobeyed or disowned him or was contrary to his plan and design was anti-revolution and guilty of treason and, therefore, liable to elimination. This line of thinking made Stalin a crazy and an eccentric despot.



Joseph Stalin



Nadya

He had become intolerant and, as soon as he suspected that someone was not favourable to him, “a psychological metamorphosis came over him,” according to his only daughter, Svetlana. She says : “This was where his cruel, implacable nature showed itself. The past ceased to exist. The years of friendship might as well never have been. He could wipe it all out at a stroke and (the victim of his suspicion) would be doomed. ‘So, you have betrayed me’, some inner demon would whisper. He could not go back. He could not even remember. In his cold-blooded way he cared about only one thing—does he admit his mistakes now.”

Lenin’s Testament

Lenin knew that Stalin was not the right man to lead and guide the destiny of the nation. He once warned : “This chef will cook only peppery dishes.” Lenin in his last testament described Stalin as : “Inordinately coarse and brutal, he is also capable of taking advantage of his power to settle personal disputes. One must consider replacing Stalin by another

Secretary-General who having the same qualifications would be pleasanter enough in his dealings with his subordinates.”

Lenin, after dictating his last testament to his secretary, asked her to put it in an envelope, seal the envelope, and hand it over to Stalin with clear instructions that the seal was to be broken only after Lenin was dead. But the secretary showed an advance copy of the testament to Stalin who asked her to destroy it but when told that there were four more copies of the testament stored away safely. Stalin agreed to accept the sealed envelope. The contents were never made public but because the seal was broken and the testament read at the politbureau meeting, its contents later leaked out, were printed and distributed amongst senior partymen. But those who possessed the document were tortured and finally eliminated by Stalin’s police—N.K.V.D.

Stalin never excused Lenin for his criticism of him and when Lenin lay mortally sick, Stalin kept a close watch over him and held him like a prisoner. It is also commonly believed that the doctors who attended on Lenin were Stalin’s men and either Lenin was not given a proper medical treatment or he was deliberately ill-treated with the set purpose of hastening his end. To some extent, Lenin was revenged when Lavrenti Beria, the chief operator of Stalin’s torture machine, did to Stalin exactly what Stalin had done to Lenin.

Top Leaders liquidated

At the time of Lenin’s death, the party control was in the hands of Stalin. He soon set upon the course of consolidation of his power. The first victim of his lust for power was Leon Trotsky, a close associate of Lenin, one of the key leaders of the October Revolution and a brilliant military strategist who founded and organised the Red Army. Stalin knew that he was no match to Trotsky as regards intelligence and qualities of leadership. He, therefore, isolated Trotsky and, in January 1929, he was successful in manipulating the expulsion of Trotsky from the Soviet Union by the politbureau, despite resistance from Bukharin and Rykov.

Stalin was not content with Trotsky’s expatriation. He decided to finish him. He organised several attempts on his life and ultimately succeeded in having Trotsky assassinated in his study at Mexico, where he was living in exile, by Ramon Del Rio Merkader on August 20, 1940, with a pickaxe. Merkader was a Spaniard who spent his old age in Moscow, drawing a Soviet pension, till he died of cancer, in Havana in 1978.

Stalin was a bloody murderer. After having exiled Trotsky, he

classified the party leadership, functionaries and rank and file into four categories—(1) his rivals, (2) his opponents, (3) his supporters and (4) the docile. In the first category, there was only one man, Sergei Kirov, who was ironically enough, a great friend of Stalin and a staunch Stalinist. Kirov was a highly popular Leningrad activist and first secretary of the Leningrad Party District. Stalin was all praise for Kirov until 1934 when at the 17th party congress Stalin received 300 negative votes and Kirov only 3 for the membership of the Central Committee. This alarmed Stalin. As Kirov was getting more popular with the party, he decided to get rid of him.

After his participation in the Central Committee meeting at Moscow from November 25 to 28, Kirov boarded a train for Leningrad on November 29. He reached Leningrad safely and attended his office on December 1, 1934. In the afternoon he left his room and started for the third floor to see Michael Chudov, second secretary of the Leningrad Party District. As he stepped into Chudov's office, he was shot dead by one Leonid Nikolayev, a party member. The assassin was caught on the spot and handed over to Stalin's police to be shot and silenced.

Having, thus, got rid of Kirov, Stalin conceived a plan to take advantage of Kirov's assassination to get rid of his top-ranking opponents in the party. He told the people and the party that behind Kirov's murder, there was a vicious widespread conspiracy hatched by certain top party leaders in collaboration with foreign imperialist powers. He charged top men like Alexei Rykov, Soviet Prime Minister; Nikolai Bukharin, head of the Union Movement Ministry; Genrikh Yagoda, chief of the security police, and Mikhail Tomsky, member of the politbureau, of involvement in the conspiracy to murder Kirov. They were also accused of working as agents of foreign powers. Tomsky lost nerve and the will to live. He shot himself dead on August 22, 1936. Bukharin and Rykov put up a strong resistance. They were ultimately arrested during the Central Committee meeting in March 1937. They were brought to stand trial and were hanged in March 1938. Along with them, more than 4,000 members of the party were shot without trial.

The list of Stalin's victims is very long. He was brute enough to kill those who happened to be closest to him, men like Sergo and Grigory Ordzhonikidze, and Gen Sewyon Budenny, because he thought they knew too much, Grigory Ordzhonikidze was poisoned and Stalin made a great show of sorrow at his victim's death. He visited his house, paid



Stalin did not spare even his mentor Lenin

homage to him, consoled his widow, posing as a true friend, and ordered a state funeral for him.

Terrible Famine

Human life was of no consequence to Stalin. In 1933, when Soviet farmers opposed collectivisation of farms and refused to sell their produce to the state at a low price, Stalin ordered seizure of the farms and the farm produce. Red Army was engaged in seizing foodgrains. He, then, banned the sale of foodgrains to the rural population. This was done deliberately to cause famine conditions in order to bend the farmers. This terrible famine of 1933 caused the death of 7 million rural folk. Earlier in 1930-32, more than 15 million peasants were uprooted from their homes, and lands, and they were deported to the Arctic region. At least a third of them perished of cold and hunger. During the 1937-38 purge 8 million party workers were arrested and sent to Gulag labour camps of Tundra and Taiga. Of these unfortunate millions, one million were butchered outright and several millions died in labour camps. Mass graves have been discovered outside Minsk, the Byelorussian capital, where, accord-

ing to an investigation, 300,000 skeletons were unearthed. The region has five such mass execution and burial sites.

Vengeance

By 1937, the Soviet Union was gripped in terror. The purge snowballed so swiftly that it was no longer feasible to place nameplates outside the doors of department heads at the newspaper, Izvestia. Those who arrested the people were being themselves arrested, the interrogators were interrogated. The Russians lay crushed at Stalin's feet. Over 20 to 30 million people died so that Stalin could consolidate his power. This was, and done in a systematic way in accordance with his philosophy of life : "To choose one's victims, to prepare one's plans minutely, to slake an implacable vengeance and then go to bed . . . there is nothing sweeter in the world." The ruthlessness that emanated from the top spread to the village level until it left no one in the Soviet Union untouched. As the great writer, Boris Pasternak, said : "There is not a single thinking adult in this country who has not thought that he might get shot."

In 1937-38 alone, Stalin's repression machinery liquidated 40,000 officers of the Red Army. He systematically destroyed the scientific intelligentsia. His Chief Procurator Andrey Vyshinsky's job was to drown the truth in a sea of lies and half-truths, using foul and violent methods against his victims in the dock and mocking those lawyers who attacked the legal principle he worked by, namely that the confession of an accused was in all cases sufficient ground for conviction. For Vyshinsky, confession was "the queen of justice, and it did not matter how it was obtained," The other man who assisted Stalin in his eccentric and brutal acts was Beria who was once the First Secretary of the Communist Party in Georgia. He was a born spy and provocateur. Stalin's daughter Svetlana says about his association with her father : "In a good many things, Beria and my father were guilty together. At some point, unfortunately, they also became spiritually inseparable . . . Beria was more treacherous, more practised in perfidy and cunning, more insolent and single-minded than my father. He flattered my father with a shamelessness that caused old friends . . . to wince with embarrassment."

Svetlana writes of Stalin's purges : "In those years, people vanished like shadows in the night. Could my mother have halted the terrible process had she lived ? I doubt it. She would never have been a match for Beria. Even had she summoned up strength to leave my father, her fate



Lavrenti Beria



Leon Trotsky

would have been even worse, because he would surely have taken his revenge." Svetlana is right and perhaps she has tried to conceal the fact that revenge had already been taken and her mother had to die a premature death. "All Beria had to do was bring him (Stalin) the record of the interrogation in which X (the victim) confessed, others confessed for him—worse yet—X (the victim) refused to confess," says Svetlana. Confession or no confession, the result was the same torture and death.

Destroyer of his own Family

Stalin was in true sense an eccentric and a paranoid. He would suspect even the best intentions of his near and dear of evil designs. He saw enemies everywhere.

He married Yekaterina Svanidze when he was in his twenties. Yekaterina died in 1910 under mysterious circumstances, leaving behind a son named Yakov, only 2 years old. He married again when he was 38. His second wife, Nadya, was 16 at the time of her marriage. She had a sort of sentimental attachment to Stalin because she was told when she grew up that he had saved her from drowning in the sea when she was only 2. She came from Baku.

From Nadya Stalin had two children—Vasily, a son, and Sevetlana, a daughter. Nadya was an intelligent and kindhearted woman, Stalin was not pleased with Svanidzes, with Aleksandra and Maria, the sisters of Stalin's first wife, with her brother Aleksandra Svanidze and his wife Maria Korona, and also because she was tender with Stalin's son by his first wife, Yakov, who loved and respected her greatly. Nadya was also critical of Stalin's association with Beria and his violent and brutal ways.

Stalin never wanted Yakov to stay with him at Moscow. He bullied Yakov and picked on him. Yakov was so upset that in 1928 he tried to commit suicide. In despair over Stalin's refusal to have anything to do with him, Yakov went to the kitchen and shot himself. But he escaped with a minor injury, the bullet going right through. Stalin was moved. He made fun of him and sneered : "Ha ! He couldn't even shoot straight !"

Nadya was terribly upset over Yakov's attempt to commit suicide. She had been all along contemplating to leave Stalin. Earlier in 1926, she had once left him and taken her children to her parents. She worked there in an academy. She never told her colleagues or her students who she was. She refused to use her husband's official car. She was a disciplined woman but once she exploded at a public reception and that was the end of her life. On the 15th anniversary of the October Revolution, she had gone to attend a banquet where Stalin, already drunk, said to her : "Hey, you ! Have a drink." She never touched alcohol, and Stalin knew it. She felt slighted at the casual manner he addressed her. She exploded. "Don't you dare talk to me that way" in front of everyone. She got up and returned home.

She had dared the bloodiest of men whose name had become a symbol of terror and murder. The next morning she was found lying beside her bed in a pool of blood with a toy pistol in her hand that her brother, Pavel, had brought her from Berlin. The body was cold. It was a perfect cover-up for murder. Beria had succeeded in taking this revenge upon her. She had addressed a long letter to her husband at her return from the banquet. It was full of reproach and accusations. It was not purely personal; it was partly political as well.

On Nadya's death when Stalin went up to her coffin at the civil leave-taking ceremony, he remained there for a moment, then suddenly pushed it away, turned on his heel and left. He didn't even go to the funeral. He never went to visit her grave.

Yakov left for the front the day after the war started with a German



A family photograph. Prominent among them are Stalin's son Vasili and daughter Svetlana (sitting in the front row) and Stalin's wife Nadia (second from left in the middle row).

attack upon Russia. His wife, Yulia, along with their daughter, Gulia, 3, stayed at the Stalin household. At the end of August, Stalin got the news that Yakov had been taken prisoner by the Germans. Instead of being moved by paternal love and pity for Yakov, Yulia and Gulia, he began speculating in his usual mean manner : "someone had tricked Yakov and betrayed him intentionally. Might not Yulia have been a party to it ?"

In September, he ordered that Yakov's daughter could stay at his household but Yulia shall have to leave as she seemed dishonest. Soon, thereafter, Yulia was arrested and she remained confined in a jail until the spring of 1943, when she was released, as nothing could be established against her. Stalin refused to exchange Yakov for one of the German prisoners of war. He was later shot dead by the Germans.

Stalin was not happy with the relatives of his two wives who were no more. He got Aleksandr Svanidze, Stalin's first wife's brother and Aleksandr's wife Maria Korona along with Stanislav Redens, the husband of Anna, Stalin's second wife Nadya's sister, arrested in 1937. In 1938, Nadya's brother Pavel went to Stalin to plead for his colleagues in



Stalin's son Yakov



Stalin's daughter Svetlana

the army. Stalin got all of them finished and when Pavel received the news he dropped dead in his office after a heart attack. Stanislav Redens was shot dead in 1938. Aleksandr refused to confess or ask forgiveness of his sister's husband, Stalin. He was shot dead in February 1942 at 60. When Aleksandr's wife Maria Korona, who was in another prison camp, was told that her husband was executed, she too dropped dead following a heart attack.

In 1948, Pavel's widow, Yevgenia, was accused of spying and poisoning her husband and thrown into jail along with Anna Redens. Both were given 10 years. They were released in 1954 after Stalin's death.

Abel Yenukidze, godfather of Nadya, Stalin's second wife, was purged in 1937 and finally shot dead. I.G. Morozov, father of the first husband of Svetlana, Stalin's daughter was also arrested and incarcerated. Svetlana too was on the verge of extermination when she told her father that she was in love with Kapler, a Jew. "Love?" he screamed and slapped her twice. Stalin hated Jews. On March 2, 1943, Kapler was in his room when two of Stalin's policemen entered and took him straight to the dreaded Lubyanka prison. He was charged with spying for foreigners, and sent to north for five years. After completing his term, he was forbidden to go to Moscow but he did go to Moscow where he was apprehended and

sent to Urals again for five years to work in mines. In March 1953, he was taken once again to Lubyanka in Moscow and freed in July 1953 after Stalin's death.

Svetlana fell in love again with a Jew, Grigory Morozov. Stalin said to her angrily: "To hell with you. Do as you like", and gave her permission to marry Grigory on one condition that he never set foot in the Stalin household.

Lived in constant Fear

Stalin constantly lived in fear. He lived in an apartment on the first floor of the Senate building. It had walls nearly five feet thick and highly vaulted ceilings and floors.

Whenever Stalin travelled by train, it used to be a special coach and no one was allowed on the platform. He was extraordinarily security-conscious and virtually a prisoner of the system he had built around him.

Dreadful at Death

Stalin was able to keep his power till the end of his life. The end came early in March 1953. On the night of March 1, he had a stroke and was unconscious. He was found lying on a rug on the floor at 3 a.m. on March 2. He had lost his speech and the right side was paralyzed. He lay unconscious but he opened his eyes once in a while. The hemorrhage gradually spread to the rest of the brain. His breathing became shorter and shorter. The complexion of his face changed and became dark. His lips too turned black. The agony of death was terribly painful. He literally choked to death. Everybody watched him die but nobody dared do anything to help him. There was not much left to do. At the last moment, he suddenly opened his eyes and cast a glance over everyone in the room. Svetlana says: "It was a terrible glance, insane or perhaps angry and full of fear of death He lifted his left hand as though he was pointing to something above and bringing down a curse on us all. The gesture was full of menace. The next moment, after a last effort, the spirit wrenched itself free of the flesh."

The dragon was dead and the curse lifted from the entire nation's head. What a deliverance, what a relief, that even the wretched and condemned man's own daughter says: ". . . . I realised that a deliverance of some kind was under way It was a release for me and everyone else from a burden that had been weighing on the minds and hearts of us all."





Idi Amin

The diabolic deeds perpetrated by Idi Amin are legion. But what gives a particularly inhuman edge to these acts is the element of sexual perversion that was a part of it. Suffering from a venereal disease himself, Amin revelled in perpetrating sexual torture on his opponents. To cap it all, he was a cannibal and openly proclaimed his preference for salted human flesh. His former Health Minister vouchsafed that he would often visit hospital morgues to taste human blood and flesh. Could Satan be more evil than Idi Amin?

Idi Amin, better known as Uganda's Hitler, was born in 1928 at Koboko, the smallest country in Uganda's West Nile district. His father was a marginal farmer. His parents separated at his birth and he had a distraught childhood. His mother was what used to be described as a camp follower. After some time, she started living with a man about her age. In 1954, she moved into Jinja barracks to live with Corporal Yasin, a clerk in King's African Rifles. The corporal was in his early twenties and about half her age. She practised witchcraft and Yasin got tired of her and turned her out. A few days later, Yasin reported sick and before he could be medically examined, he died.

Like his parents, Idi Amin became a Muslim. He first served as a labourer at the sugar plantations owned by the Mehtas, the millionaire entrepreneurs from Gujarat in India, who were the first Asians to be expropriated and thrown out of Uganda when Amin assumed power.

Amin joined the king's African Rifles in 1946 as an assistant cook. He was six feet, four inches in height and one quintal in weight. He became Ugandan heavyweight boxing champion and held the title for nine years. His officers found him obedient, though a bit short in grey matter.

After he became a sergeant, he was caught in bed with a colleague's

wife and pursued naked down the street. His military records showed that he had venereal disease. As a corporal fighting the nationalist Mau Mau in Kenya in the 1950s, he established a sadistic record.

Only six months before Uganda's freedom from the British rule early in 1962, he was deputed to disarm the Turkana tribals in north-west Kenya. Instead of disarming them, he completely destroyed the Turkana village and buried the tribals in mass graves after murdering them. The Commander-in-Chief recommended Amin's court martial but ironically enough Prime Minister Dr. Milton Obote, who was later overthrown by him on January 1971, saved him, ignored the warning of the British Governor, Sir Walter, who told him in clear terms. "I warn you, this officer could cause you trouble in the future", of which Obote wrote later, "I remember that warning word for word, except for the word could.....I have some doubt whether Sir Walter said could or would".

Obote ignored not only the warning of Sir Walter but, also a motion passed by Parliament to suspend Idi Amin and order for inquiry into the charges that he had embezzled the proceeds from gold and ivory from the Congo nationalists to the tune of £17,000 which amount he had deposited in his account with his bank in 1966. Obote, who had suspended the 1962 constitution and had become President on April 15, promoted Amin to the rank of the Chief of Army staff within 19 days of the Parliament motion.

The Coup d' etat.

President Obote had gone to Singapore to attend the Commonwealth Conference when on January 25, 1971, Radio Uganda played martial music throughout the morning. Then at 3.45 p.m. (East African time) there was an announcement that the army had taken over the reins of the government in its hands and the civilian government of Dr. Milton Obote had been superseded. In this broadcast, Amin was not mentioned. Thirty minutes later, in another broadcast, it was announced that Amin had been asked by the armed forces to take over the administration of the country.

This led to the establishment of one of the most diabolical, unscrupulous and insane despotisms in the annals of world history under a man who was not only uneducated, uncivilised and mentally a crack but also a cannibal and a brute savage capable of playing vulgar jokes at the cost of others lives and honour, and an idiot whose idiosyncracies did not end even with the end of his power.

A Savage

In September 1972, Amin sent a cable to the United Nations Secretary-General, Dr Kurt Waldheim. "Hitler was right about the Jews, because the Israelis are not working in the interests of the people of the world, and that is why they burned the Israelis alive with gas on the soil of Germany".

This statement shows clearly his preferences in the matter of means and methods of dealing with his opponents or the people he disliked because of a whim or tribal rivalry and intolerance. West German Chancellor Willy Brandt angrily denounced that statement as 'an expression of mental derangement.' His mental derangement was manifest in his large-scale massacre of his own countrymen. He hardly ever used discretion while referring to senior and widely respected statesmen of other nations, e.g., in August 1972 he told President Julius Nyerere of Tanzania in a telegram: "I want to assure you that I love you very much and if you had been a woman, I would have considered marrying you, although your head is full of grey hair, but as you are a man that possibility does not arise." Similarly, when President Richard Nixon was in the midst of the Watergate crisis, Amin sent an outrageous telegram to him: "Get well soon from Watergate".

He was a brute capable of adding insult to injury. While he was ejecting 40,000 Asian citizens from Uganda and seizing their assets, he cut one of the most savage jokes at them in a speech in August 1973: "Some Asians in Uganda have been painting themselves black with shoe polish. Asians are our brothers and sisters. If anyone is found painting himself with black polish, disciplinary action will be taken against him."

Amin had the capacity of using most vulgar and uncivil language for his own countrymen. While addressing Ugandan students in Kampala, he said: "I am told that venereal disease is very high with you. You had better go to hospital and make yourselves very clean, or you will infect the whole population."

And this advice was given by a man who had himself been suffering from syphilis which had made him into the manic-depressive that he was.

At a meeting of the Organisation of African unity, Amin startled the attending heads of African states by demonstrating how to suffocate people with a mere hand kerchief.



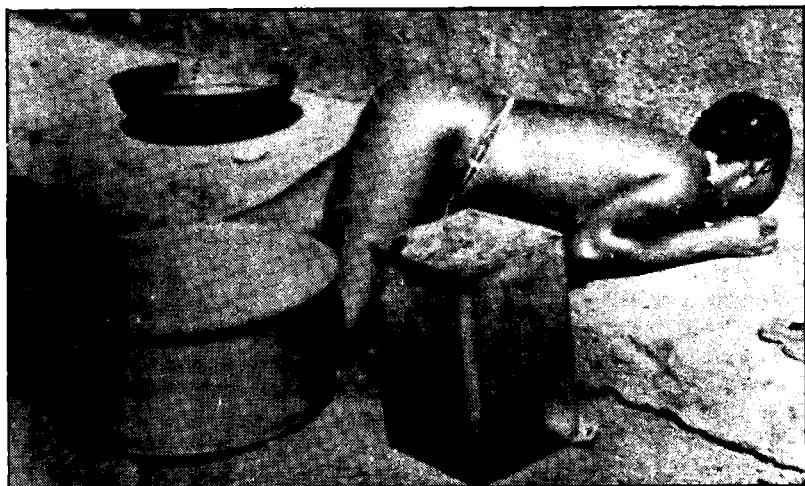
Idi Amin : from boxer to dictator

Ghastly Murders

Simultaneously with the coup, an era of ghastly murders began in Uganda. The first on the list was the Chief of the Army staff, Brig Hussein. He was captured by the troops loyal to Amin and taken to a maximum security Prison where he was clubbed with rifle butts and kicked in the presence of horrified jail warders. The dying officer was then loaded on to an armoured military vehicle, driven out of the prison and beating with rifle butts was resumed.

Hussein succumbed to the ghastly treatment meted out to him. His body was decapitated. His head was put on Amin's table, where he harangued it. Then it was kept in a fridge overnight.

Amin ordered some of the men he suspected of disloyalty to be thrown behind the bars at Makindye prison. At dusk, a group of army officers would enter the barrack where these people were kept and started beating them mercilessly. Their bellies were gashed with curved knives, and before dawn their corpses were loaded on a military carrier and dumped at various sites. The next morning the prisoners in the adjoining cell were ordered to clean the floor of the barrack with scrubbing brushes and water. According to an eye-witness "the blood on the floor was a



Brutal murder after a rape

quarter of an inch thick. There were pieces of skull, teeth, brain tissue and dozens of empty shell cases.”

Amin is a criminal. His methods of killing innocent people have been truly heinous. At his behest, 32 senior military officers were herded in one room around which explosives were packed and detonated, killing all of them. The loud noise of explosions was explained as detonation of damaged bombs.

Amin suspected a full battalion of disloyalty. The soldiers and officers were ordered to be ferried to Kartuma Falls where they were systematically bayoneted and their bodies thrown into the falls. Their relatives were killed likewise and women raped by gangs of Amin’s soldiers. He thought it was an act of piety—feeding crocodiles on human bodies.

Amin’s sadism knew no bounds. Colonel Meseura Arach, Commander, first Infantry Brigade, was tortured and beaten to death. His private organ was severed and pushed into his mouth at Amin’s orders. In August 1972, he startled the world by ordering Asians inside Uganda to quit. Most of the Asians were rich businessmen and landlords. They were expropriated and treated brutally as they left the country they had served for about a century. Some were killed and others were harassed, manhandled, robbed and a few raped also.

On September 21, Amin's troops were ordered to the Chief Justice of Uganda, Benedicto Kiwanuka. The troops burst into his chambers and dragged him away at gunpoint. He was taken to Amin in whose presence his ears, nose, lips and arms were cut from his body, his private parts also were cut and pushed into his mouth. The Chief Justice writhed in agony for two hours before he died. His body was consigned to flames.

The list of Amin's victims is endless and the total number of the Ugandans done to death by him stands at 2,00,000 according to most conservative estimates. Many were pounded to death with sledgehammers, and others bled to death, their stomachs slashed.

The Interior Minister of Uganda Basil Bataringaya was being urged upon by Obote to leave for Tanzania but he did not do so as he could not leave his 96 year-old father and nine children behind to be butchered by Amin in his stead. Amin finally ordered him finished. He was dismembered alive, decapitated and his head was put on display on the top of a pole. James Buwumbo, a brother of deposed President Obote's wife, was dragged from his car in Kampala's main street and he was never seen again. Joseph Mubiru, Governor of the Bank of Uganda, was kept in a cold water tank till he lost consciousness. His head was chopped off and dressed to be placed at Amin's table as a paper weight. Frank Kalimuzo, Vice-Chancellor of Makerere University, was taken away from his office and killed.

Amin adopted most brutal and unheard of techniques of killing people, e.g., cutting the victim's flesh and forcing him to feed on it raw or roasted until he bled to death. He adopted most horrible and primitive methods of torture, too terrible to describe e.g., sticking bayonets through the victim's anus or genitals, or women raped and their reproductive organs set on fire while they were alive.

A Cannibal

Amin has been not only a brute murderer but also a cannibal. According to his former Health Minister, when the body of the erstwhile Chief of the Army Staff, Brig Charles Arube, was brought to the hospital morgue, Amin entered the morgue alone and asked the Medical Superintendent to stay out and shut the door of the morgue tight. Amin remained in the morgue for a few minutes. He took a knife from his pocket, dug it into Arube's corpse, tasted his blood and swallowed a piece of his flesh raw.



Elizabeth (right) fled Uganda to save her life from Idi Amin (left)



He was extremely fond of human flesh. Once he was telling a group of his officers about how monkey meat was served to him during his state visit to Zaire. When he saw that his men were horrified to hear that, he stunned them by telling that to say of monkey meat, he ate and relished human flesh too. It was a cruel irony of fate that except one of the men present there, all others were to be murdered by Amin and their flesh was to be devoured raw by him later. Amin was fond of human flesh and leopard meat, but he preferred the saltish taste of the human flesh more than the leopard meat.

A Debauchee

Amin has been a debauchee too. His harem was full of women during his Presidency and he sired hundreds of children purposefully. He thought of leaving behind him a whole tribe known by his name.

Officially Amin had only four wives. The first, Sarah, known as 'Mama Maliam', was married to him in 1958. The second, Kay, was the daughter of a Protestant clergyman. The third was Norah and the fourth Medina. He would keep all his children with him in the presidential palace. He misused the Muslim law on divorce on March 26, 1974, when

all of a sudden in a public function he divorced his first three wives—Maliyam, Kay and Norah—by repeating the word talaq three times. He was so engrossed with his fourth wife, Medina, that he neglected the other three who established illicit relationships with other men. Kay was so full of venom that in order to take revenge upon her husband, she became pregnant by her lover. Amin was so incensed that he put them behind bars and killed their lovers. Maliyam and Kay escaped and fled from Uganda and Norah was murdered by him. She was dismembered and her breasts were severed from her body while alive. Then he got her corpse stitched, covered it by a sheet up to neck called her children and told them that their mother was a whore.

Medina also met the same fate. She was beaten by him in 1977 so severely that she had a deep cut at her temple and a miscarriage. It was the time when he forcibly married the famous Ugandan danseuse, Sarah, who was already married to another man and had a child from her husband. Amin ordered Sarah brought to him, proclaimed that he had sired Sarah's child and married her according to Islamic rites. He got Sarah's former husband 'finished'.

Sarah was so terrified of Amin that she would begin to tremble at Amin's sight. Hardly any Ugandan young woman could boast that she had not fallen a prey to the lust of Amin or his men vultures.

In February 1974, the illiterate Amin was invited to deliver the convocation address at the Makerere University. All of a sudden, his eyes fell on Elizabeth Bagaya, a senior officer in the Uganda Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Elizabeth was young and beautiful. He called her to the rostrum, announced that Michael Ongoga who had replaced Wanume Kibedi as his Foreign Affairs Minister was thenceforth dismissed and Elizabeth Bagaya was the new incumbent of the prestigious office.

After a few hours, Ongoga was done to death by Amin's goons. Amin made advances to Elizabeth but she resisted. In order to win her over, he deputed her to lead a delegation to the U.N. General Assembly. When she was in New York, Amin conferred the nation's highest honour upon her. Upon her return to Kampala, she visited Amin and as she came out of his office, she was proclaimed dismissed on the charge that while returning from New York she was seen in a compromising position in a toilet at Charles D' Gaule Airport of Paris. Elizabeth knew what this could mean. She fled from Uganda and thus saved her life and honour.



Ongoga, the Foreign Affairs Minister, was murdered by Amin's goons.

Out but Alive

Ultimately, Obote succeeded in toppling Amin in 1979. But he escaped arrest and fled to Saudi Arabia in a transport plane with some of his children. He had pumped huge amounts of money and other valuables into his account with foreign banks. He treated the Bank of Uganda as his personal cashier and large parts of foreign exchange were appropriated by him and invested in Arab nations during his more than 7 year rule. On the basis of those financial resources, he has been living like a king at Jeddah in Saudi Arabia first in a suite at the luxury Sands Hotel and then in a guarded remote villa outside the city.

On January 3, 1989, Amin arrived in Zaire on a forged Zairean passport. There he was apprehended by Zairean officials, who questioned him about his activities in Zaire. He is learnt to have told them that he wanted to get back to Uganda via Kinshasa. Later, he was expelled from Zaire via Dakar in Senegal where Saudi officials were reported to have refused to let him board a plane to Saudi Arabia. Thus he was sent back to Zaire accompanied by one of his sons.

In the meantime, the Uganda government wanted him extradited to Kampala where he could be questioned about massacres and human rights abuses. The Zaire government ruled out that possibility yet they admitted that Amin's presence in Kinshasa was an embarrassment to Zairean President Mobutu Sese Seko who had close links with him when he was the President of Uganda.

Towards the end of the month, Saudi Arabia was reported to have allowed Amin to return in response to requests by African leaders made on telephone to King Fahd. Mobutu is reported to be one of the African

leaders to have made such a request and King Hasan II of Morocco another.

King Khalid of Saudi Arabia had granted him political asylum on the condition that he would not meddle in African politics. Amin's violation of this condition has irked the present king, Fahd.

Idi Amin is a crazy, whimsical man. In 1981, one fine morning, he rang up a London daily demanding to see the Queen of Great Britain. Since then he has been trying to enter the Western Nile province of Uganda, where he hails from, raise a loyal army and once again capture power in Kampala. The January 3, 1989, move may be viewed in that light. ■ ■



Jean-Bedel Bokassa

After seizing power, Bokassa unleashed a reign of terror on all those who had ever dared to raise a finger against him. One of such gruesome incidents of repression was the massacre of more than 100 students ranging between the ages of 8 and 18 on the fateful night of April 18, 1979. But the most repulsive of Bokassa's activities was his habit of eating human flesh for which he had an obsessive liking. Was he really a human or a beast?

Jean-Bedel Bokassa's name, like Idi Amin's, arouses much revulsion. Except for his savagery and his eccentricities, he was one of Africa's most forgettable head of state, a tragi-comical figure who was never able to come to grips with the problems facing his impoverished country, the Central African Republic, which he converted into Central African Empire with himself as its emperor.

Bokassa was born in 1921 in an extremely poor family of French Central Africa. His father was executed for his German loyalties by the French and his mother died when he was six. He had a skimpy education at missionary schools and grew up as an admirer of Napoleon. He espoused conservative Western values and showed no fondness for Communism. Like Napoleon, he dreamt of becoming the emperor of his country.

At 18, Bokassa enlisted in the French Army in 1939, fought in World War II and was profusely decorated. He rose to the rank of Captain and in 1962 was transferred to the Central African Republic Forces, which he helped set up.

The French granted freedom to their former colony in 1960. It was proclaimed a republic and Bathelémy Boganda was elected its first

president. Boganda died in an aircrash in 1961 and his nephew David Dacko was brought in as the new President. It was Dacko who entrusted the task of reorganising the republic's army to his distant cousin, Bokassa, in 1962 and later appointed him as the Chief of the Army Staff.

An ungrateful Bokassa betrayed the President as well as the Constitution of the republic and took control of the Central African Republic on New Year's day in 1966, overthrowing President Dacko. He gave proof of his eccentricity immediately on assuming power after the coup, when his first words were "Vive la France"—long live France. On the death of Charles de Gaulle, Bokassa went to France and sobbed at the funeral, "Papa, Papa". He had to be helped away from the grave.

Rule By Assassinations

Immediately on ascending to power, he started eliminating all those he suspected could pose a threat to his position and power. He began with the killing of his two personal assistants, Col. Banza and Capt. Malendomia, the very officers who had helped him in the overthrow of President Dacko. He promoted himself to Colonel, then General and finally to Marshal. He bestowed numerous decorations on himself to display which he needed a special jacket. In 1972, he proclaimed himself President for life.

Bokassa banned the only organised opposition which existed at that time—the Movement for Democratic Evolution of Central Africa led by Abel Goumba—and assassinated the entire opposition leadership one by one. He raised a new political party under himself named as the Movement for Social Evolution of Black Africa, as a political facade to his despotic military rule.

Instead of attempting to remove the abject poverty of his people and glaring economic inequalities amongst his countrymen, he issued an order that thieves would have an ear cut off for each of the first two offences and an arm for the third. When the stringent and sub-human device failed to accomplish its intended purpose, Bokassa personally supervised a 10 minute beating with clubs and rifle butts of imprisoned thieves. Three died on the spot and 43 were maimed. The brutality did not end there. All the victims of his whim were later put on public display. "It's tough," he remarked to a horrified newsman, "but it's life". When Kurt Waldheim, U.N. Secretary-General, protested against the atrocities to witness which he had invited the Press and other special guests, Bokassa responded by calling Waldheim, "a pimp" and "da colonialist".

The Dark Night

The true picture of the beastly despot began emerging in the second week of May 1979 when Amnesty International, an organisation given to the protection of human rights throughout the world, revealed the ghastly story of the murder of 100 school children belonging to 8 to 16-year age-group in one single night on April 18, 1979, soon to be corroborated by Bokassa's conscientious ambassador to France, Gen. Silvestre and Bokassa's exiled eldest son, Georges.

It all began with an order issued by the despot enjoining upon all primary and secondary school boys to buy and wear special uniforms approved by him. The uniforms were to be purchased from authorised stores. The uniforms cost \$165 each. Poor parents were not in a position to purchase such high-cost uniforms. The order was widely criticised and boys revolted against it. They demonstrated and police fired upon them indiscriminately. Bangui was the main centre of student resistance. When the police failed to suppress the resistance, Bokassa asked his close friend, President Mobutu of Zaire—the despot who killed Congo's great nationalist and democrat leader, Patrice Lumumba, in the wake of his country's liberation—to send troops. It were these crack Zaire units which crushed the youth revolt, killing hundreds of men, women and children.

Bokassa nominally rescinded the order regarding uniforms, but was adamant about his fiat which he insisted upon to be carried out whatever the price. He had a vested interest in the sales of the uniforms, which were produced and sold exclusively by a factory owned by Bokassa himself, formally in the name of one of his wives. The uniforms had already been stitched and their sale would have brought millions to the despot; otherwise the entire investment would have sunk.

An irate Bokassa issued an order on April 18 that all the students who had resisted the uniform edict should be arrested and finished. As the soldiers did not know whom to arrest but had to carry out the order, they rounded up boys in the streets, from in front of their parents' houses and even from within the homes. They threw them into trucks where they were beaten with truncheons and clubs spiked with nails. In the course of the trip to the central prison, the children who talked, who protested or who were unruly, were made to shut up with a pistol at the temple. Death was instantaneous.

One of the soldiers who was in the truck and who later escaped to France, told Gen. Silvestre at Paris that the survivors of the trip were put into small cells, "some of them died of asphyxiation. Order was given to bury them in the night". The soldier further said; " They gave us sacks. We went to the cemetery and chased out the guards. Holes were dug and the bodies were thrown in and covered with dirt."

A Paris daily reported on May 21, 1979, quoting a witness who had returned to France, that Bokassa was personally present at the Nagaragba prison during the two nights when the massacre was carried out.

The witness was a French woman who narrated what one survivor told her. According to her, "he was arrested in the middle of the night, thrown in a truck and taken to the outskirts of Bangui town. When he arrived in the town, Bokassa was there. He asked the children to lie down and ordered a soldier to drive a truck over them.

"The soldier began to cry. He had his own children of the same age. Another soldier was made to drive the truck. The bodies were then taken to the prison. The sole survivor regained consciousness at about 3 p.m. Two soldiers were present. One wanted to kill him. The second stopped the first and allowed the boy to flee. The bodies were buried between the river and prison."

The soldier who had refused to drive the truck over the children was shot by Bokassa himself.

Bokassa's exiled son, Georges said in a statement : "The unanimous denunciation of the massacre at Bangui, which I personally am convinced is true, marks the beginning of the end of my father. The best thing for him, if he does not want to be killed, is to retire."

Former Central African Premier Ange Patasse also confirmed reports that Bokassa personally took part in the massacre of the school children in Bangui. He branded Bokassa as "the executioner of the people."

A Cannibal

Bokassa was not only a brute but also a cannibal like Idi Amin. He ordered the flesh of children murdered on the dark night of April 18. It was cooked for him and he ate it with relish.

Crazy Emperor

In 1976, Bokassa's party, MESAN, proclaimed the country fan



empire with Bokassa as the emperor. A new constitution replaced the old one and it provided for a "hereditary parliamentary monarchy" with an elected national assembly to which the government was responsible. But the assembly could be dissolved at will by the emperor who was the supreme head of the armed forces.

Before his coronation, he ordered that a research into the coronation ceremony of his hero, Napoleon, in 1804, be carried out in its minutest detail. A two-ton gilded throne in the form of an eagle-in-flight was made in the French town of Dreuz by a firm specialising in ceremonial gear. The biggest item was his crown, featuring emeralds and rubies and as many as 8,000 diamonds, topped with a 138-carat diamond, done by an established jeweller in France on the pattern of the crown Napoleon wore himself. Bokassa had 13 uniforms embroidered by the same French firm which had tailored these for Napoleon. His coronation robe weighed about 15 kg. and had 785,000 pearls and 1,222,000 beads stitched into it.

To plan and oversee the coronation arrangements from the housing, boarding and medical facilities for 3,500 guests from 43 nations to the construction of triumphal arches, 23 committees were appointed. His Rumanian wife, Catherine, stayed in Paris for weeks making sure that the considerable and complicated orders arrived on time.

Bokassa along with the ministers of his Imperial court personally attended to the minutest detail of the coronation plan. The state government purchased 60 Mercedes-Benz cars to carry his guests about .

Eight white horses had been imported from Belgium to pull Bokassa's ornate coach to the cathedral where 80 little princes and princesses, who lived in their own palaces, and his 14 wives began two days of circus-like extravaganza that was televised live to the world via satellite.

Bokassa was crowned at the Bokassa sports palace next to Bokassa University on Bokassa Avenue not far from Bokassa statue. On this occasion, all his wives were present but the title of empress was bestowed upon Catherine alone who sat next to Bokassa on his imperial throne.

At the time of his coronation, the eccentric despot was a Christian, although he had no scruples about religion. He converted to Islam twice. Though vast majority of his countrymen is predominantly Christian, yet Bokassa passed a law making polygamy permissible. He himself had 14 wives and had 28 children from one of them.

In his early career in the French army as an NCO, he was sent to Vietnam, where he became intimate with a local woman and had a daughter by her. When he became the President, he wrote to the government of Vietnam about it and requested, for the return of his daughter. She was traced and sent to Bangui where she was accorded a royal welcome. Later, she was married off to one of the important officials of the realm. After some time, the government of Vietnam realised that it had made a mistake and the girl sent to Bokassa was not his real daughter. They informed Bokassa accordingly. He was also informed that his real daughter too was traced. Bokassa asked for her, too, to be sent to him. This girl was also received in the capital with royal fanfare and she was also married off to another high government official.

Bokassa the Bandit

Emperor Bokassa was not a friend of his people, but a bandit. The Central African Republic has been known for its vast resources of rich uranium and ivory. He established his personal monopoly over these natural resources and raised several companies of his own to trade in these items. He was highly cautious about his monopoly. When his eldest son, Georges, obtained a licence to collect ivory and sell it, Bokassa took it as a challenge to his monopoly rights in the field and he not only exiled Georges, but also stripped him of his title—Crown Prince—by an imperial decree.

Bokassa was selling his country's uranium solely to France. France needed the uranium for its ambitious nuclear programme and this made

it bribe him and close its eyes at the brutalities perpetrated by him against his people.

Bokassa, in gross violation of the U.N. resolution and to the utter displeasure and dismay of African states, established trade relations with South Africa and obtained from it monetary aid to the tune of Rs. 225 crore rupees, most of which siphoned off to his foreign bank accounts. He lived on this money like a monarch when he was overthrown and forced to flee his country in 1979.

The crazy monarch thought he was making history. When he was asked how his poor country could have afforded to spend millions on his coronation, he replied; "A great history cannot be created without sacrifice. Empires are a vital part of traditional African life."

Deposed

In September 1979, Bokassa was overthrown by the deposed President David Dacko. He had to run for life and flew in his plane to Paris and asked for asylum in France. The French government refused to accede to his request and he kept sitting in his plane for 24 hours, arguing that since he had served in the French army he had a right to stay in France. The French President, Giscard d'Estaing, who had been reported to have received diamonds worth \$ 300,000 as a free gift from Bokassa earlier, was under personal obligation to help him during the time of his distress. So, he arranged asylum for Bokassa in Ivory Coast, from where he was expelled in December 1983 and later accepted by France.

The Central African Republic had been putting pressure upon France for Bokassa's extradition. Ultimately it succeeded in getting the cannibal back into his native land.

Bokassa used to boast that he was the life Emperor of Central Africa and wanted only one thing, to return to his country. Early in June 1986, he, in a fit of eccentricity, announced his departure for Central Africa and actually flew in. He was promptly arrested and placed under heavy military guard. He had already been tried in absentia in a court of law in September 1979 after his overthrow and sentenced to death. On his return to Bangui, he was once again tried in a court of law and his death sentence confirmed. ■■



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