

CHAPTER IV

INDIAN "STOOGES"

"I have not read any of the (Propaganda) books, I merely sign the bills"—SIR GIRJA SHANKER BAJPAI IN AN INTERVIEW WITH THE AUTHOR IN WASHINGTON D. C.

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"Bengalis have always been dying of famine, there is nothing new in the famine situation"—BAJPAI TOLD HIS COUNTRYMEN.

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I asked Sir Girja Shanker Bajpai, Indian Government's Agent-General in the United States of America, how a man of his talent and culture could agree to publish books and leaflets against Mahatma Gandhi and the Congress. He replied very politely: "I have not read any of the books, nor do I scrutinize any propaganda material. I merely sign the bills." The readers can very well judge this former member of the Governor-General's Executive Council protesting his innocence. Is he paid only to sign? Why does he sign?

Under Bajpai's direct supervision, thousands of pages of poisonous propaganda against India

and her leaders have been published at the cost of the Indian tax-payer. The strong and natural anti-Japanese feeling in America is exploited to describe Mahatma Gandhi and other Congress leaders as defeatists and agents of Japan. The least bit of criticism appearing in any obscure paper in India is eagerly picked up and purveyed to American readers by means of hundreds of thousands of leaflets for the sole purpose of discrediting Gandhiji and the Congress. This is the special responsibility of the department over which Bajpai presides. The air mail brings an unending stream of the right stuff from India where a huge "Information" department is maintained for the purpose. The air mail reaches in a matter of a week.

What is more, copies of anti-Gandhi and anti-Congress newspapers are regularly flown out to America from India and there distributed gratis to a special list of business men, politicians and journalists whose opinion it may be important to cultivate! They also go to the State Department. I myself saw several copies of a journal which is of no significance in India (and no circulation either) in shelves known as the "India Desk" of the State Department. When I asked where they had come from, I was told that they were part of the literature which was lavished upon the Department by Bajpai and Co.

Needless to say, the journal is known for its anti-Gandhi proclivity.

MORE THAN THE PRESIDENT ?

Bajpai's crowning achievement during his regime has been his visit to Canada. There he told the Canadian Prime Minister that there was no food shortage in India and that Indian hoarders were responsible for the famine ; otherwise there was plenty of food in India. He is said to have successfully persuaded the Canadian Government to withdraw its generous food offer to India.

At a meeting of Punjabi farmers held in California he declared that Bengalis had always been dying of famine and there was nothing new or unusual about the famine situation in Bengal. He was hooted and had to leave the meeting.

*India pays Bajpai a sum of 52,000 dollars (nearly two lakhs of rupees) for this kind of work for his country. His salary is free of income-tax. The President of the United States, however, receives only 48,000 dollars. Bajpai has one of the biggest palatial residences in Washington and hundreds of thousands of rupees are spent annually in entertaining British and American "friends" of Britain to sumptuous tea parties, usually held in honour of congenial

*This includes his allowances.

visitors from India, like the Sarma party. While the Indian tax-payer pays for these entertainments, "Indian residents in Washington are seldom invited to these parties.

The Bajpais on their arrival in Washington were advertised in the *Washington Daily News* of July 20, 1942, as owners of a palace near Calcutta. The paper said :

"Sir Girja Shanker is a wealthy man even for India ; his home is considered as one of the finest. In their gardens in India there are 50,000 magnificent rose-bushes, there are acres of lilies. I have been told that the perfume of those gardens in full bloom is something which might have inspired 'Omar Khayyam.' Visitors to Calcutta must include this dreamland in their sight-seeing programme in future."

THIRULINGAM RAMANUJAM !

Bajpai's understudy, T. A. Raman, whose full name is Thirulingam Ramanujam, is the official head of the Indian Information Bureau, established to counteract the truth about India. Raman, while a student in England, is said to have failed to receive financial support from his parents and had to live occasionally on doles from fellow students. He took up a job to report on the activities of Indian students in Britain. He was sent to France, but had to flee from the

wrath of some Indian students in Paris who knew all about him. He was then sent to the United States of America on behalf of the B. I. S., but under the garb of a "staunch Indian nationalist journalist whose journalism is unimpeachable for its accuracy and fair-mindedness." (This appears on the cover of his notorious book, *What Does Gandhi Want ?*)

He was later sent in 1942, on some special mission to India with a diplomatic passport *via* the Pacific. In Hong Kong, Singapore and other British possessions he was officially entertained and taken care of. In India his tour was planned and paid for by the Bureau of Public Information. He always travelled first-class and stayed at the costliest hotels. Raman gave out that he had come to India on behalf of an American newspaper alliance, but the fact is that he never sent a single Press message to any newspaper during all the months that he spent in India. No such newspaper alliance has been heard of.

LIES AND LIBELS

On return to the United States, Raman published two books *What Does Gandhi Want ?* and *A Report on India*. These books were published by B. I. S., but this fact was nowhere acknowledged in the publication. They were said to

have been written in the India Office in London and revised by Miss Harrington of B. I. S. in New York and by Mr. Hennessy. The first book is a collection of garbled extracts from *Harijan*, and indulges in mud-slinging at Mahatma Gandhi. A hundred and twenty-five thousand copies of this book were distributed free in the United States of America. If the publication was an independent one and not British propaganda, Raman by himself could not have done it.

The very jacket of the book betrays the racket. It says: "No one is better able to give us the answer to these questions (about Mahatma Gandhi) than the brilliant Indian journalist, T. A. Raman, at one time with Gandhi as one of his *entourage* and one of the leading journalists of India." It adds: "Raman joined Gandhi's staff at the Round Table Conference; thereafter he was constantly in touch with Gandhi and other Indian leaders, following them to India, where he became a close associate of Gandhi. It was Mr. Raman, who persuaded Gandhi to make his first and only gramophone record."

I knew that the above passages contained as many lies as there are words in it. But I have, since my return from America, made further verification from those who were on Mahatma Gandhi's staff in London during the

Round Table Conference in 1932, and who are still in close touch with him. Here are the facts. No one regards Raman either as a brilliant or leading journalist. He was never in Gandhiji's *entourage*. He was already in London when Gandhiji went there for the Round Table Conference, but he did not join his staff even for a day. He tried to associate himself with the staff, but made no headway. The reference to the gramophone record is a piece of remarkable audacity, because he nearly came to grief over it. I have the facts first hand. He made persistent efforts to get Gandhiji to speak for a gramophone record. Gandhiji was reluctant. But the staff arranged with Raman for a royalty which was to be devoted to some public constructive activity in India. Gandhiji was prevailed upon to spare time to make the record, and the famous talk on "God" was the result. Thereafter Raman became increasingly scarce at the Gandhi Camp in London. Whenever he was asked to produce a written document from his principals about the royalty, he would plead excuses. Finally, when matters reached the point of exasperation, he produced a letter stating that a royalty would be payable on sales in India. A racket rehearsal! All the sales in America and other countries were excluded. Raman had won. Gandhiji, when ap-

proached, said he did not care to pursue the matter. Raman bid Gandhiji good-bye for ever after that. But no wonder the jacket of the book proclaims him the highest authority on Gandhiji.

WHOSE COMPLIMENTS

Copies of the two books were not allowed to reach India, but they were sent by air to the British Ambassador in China for free distribution in that country. Many copies of both these books were sent out "with the author's compliments." They were indubitably sent from the British and India Information offices in Washington, but under a cover wearing the publishers' name and address :

Here are some specimens from Raman's book, *What Does Gandhi Want?*

"Sir Stafford Cripps detected a tendency in the public to gloat over Japanese successes."

"Gandhi's statements about China have never had the fervour of Nehru's and Rajagopalachariar's. That should largely be attributed to the difference, that Gandhi does not feel the warm glow of admiration that most of us feel for China's epic resistance. Gandhi who praised Petain for surrendering does not thrill to heroism like that."

"Gandhi, through the columns of *Harijan*, played up every petty grievance, trumped up every half-true complaint and branded them as sinister evidence of imperialism; e.g., the commanding of river boats, etc."

"Gandhi is not all India or even 'all his party'."

Finally, Rishi Raman can also quote scriptures. He sermonizes :—

"And Indians who want their country to be free and, therefore, are determined that this war shall be won, must reconcile themselves to a final break with Gandhian perversions of their country's policies during the war. Their consolation for opposition to one who has done so much for the nation will be the words of the Blessed Lord Krishna, words which apply exactly to Gandhi today—

*"When thy mind shall escape from this tangle
of delusion,*

*Then wilt thou rise to indifference as to what
has been heard and will be heard."*

AMERICANS SPOT HIM

All this time Raman was ostensibly working as a staunch Indian nationalist. Then how did the Information offices come to take interest in

the free distribution of his books? Even after the publication of his books Raman went on touring the United States as an 'independent' lecturer, but was hooted everywhere by American audiences. At a debate between Dr. Anup Singh, Secretary of the National Committee for India's Freedom, and Raman, an American lady asked Dr. Anup Singh: "Is it a fact Raman is a British agent?" Anup Singh replied: "Why not ask Raman?" The lady thereupon asked Raman: "Are you in the pay of the British?" Raman replied: "No, they simply sponsor my lectures." The lady laughed and said: "That is all I wanted to know. You don't represent your country."

On another occasion a lady rang up the Indian Information Office and asked a secretary if Raman was employed by them. Prompt the answer came: "Oh yes, he is."

When the secret became well known, Raman was openly employed in the Indian Information Office as its head and was registered as a propaganda agent, according to the rules of the U. S. Government. His appointment, however, was kept a close secret in India for six months. Now Raman has lost face.

R. S. SARMA AND THE REST

In the last three years no less than 30 propa-

gandists, including the Sarma Mission and various army and navy officers, have been taken to the U. S. A. to present the British and Indian Government angles to Americans. Sir R. S. Sarma, who met me in Egypt in April, 1944, on his return from the United States, confessed to me personally that the Americans were so well-informed about British rule in India that no British or Indian propagandist could fool them. These people merely make a laughing stock of themselves.

A radio programme manager in a mid-west American town told me that H. G. Misra, a member of the Sarma Mission, was sponsored by the British (at the Indian tax-payer's expense) to speak from his station. The radio manager, out of his sympathy for India, thrice asked him, 'What does India want?' so that the American audience might know of India's aspirations for independence. But Misra simply replied: "India wants to help the war effort." This radio manager told me that he gave three opportunities to Misra to say that India wanted independence, but Misra had not the courage to say so. He concluded: "I could not put the words into his mouth."

I attach no significance to British propaganda in America, and especially that carried on by the Indian 'quislings,' but I feel it my duty to

ask the members of the Central Legislature and the Indian Press to protest strongly against the waste of millions of the Indian tax-payer's money for defaming India. Britain spends four crores of rupees annually to defame us in America. Let her also run the Indian Agency at her own cost. Why should India pay for it ?