

## *The Emergency as Prehistory of the New Indian Middle Class\**

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### **Abstract**

Recent accounts of the National Emergency of 1975–1977 concur that the deviations it represented, while genuine, did not represent any fundamental change on the part of the Indian state, and that the period offers little distinct insight on the post-independence period as a whole. This paper seeks to argue, to the contrary, that the Emergency was a watershed in post-independence history. With its ban on dissent and suspension of constitutional rights, the Emergency sought to suppress all political disturbances to governance. By doing so, it forefronted the problems of postcolonial politics in at least three respects. First, the Emergency demonstrated that coercion was inextricably combined with consent in state-led development. Second, this led to a heavy reliance on practices of communication to redefine coercion and to stage popular consent. Third, in the process, the boundaries of the political were reinforced, emphasizing the friend/enemy difference fundamental to politics. Governance in the aftermath of the Emergency placed an overt reliance on consent over coercion, but in ways that are themselves significant. Categories of culture and community, and related forms of social distinction, gained in importance over earlier developmental distinctions premised on an authoritarian relationship between state and the people. The change meant a shift away from the Nehruvian focus on the economy as the crucial arena of nation-building, involving labour as the key modality of citizenship. Instead, culture and community became the categories that gained political salience in the period of economic liberalization. The mass media were central to this redefinition of the political, multiplying in size and reach, and acquiring market-sensitive forms of address couched in the rhetoric of individual choice. These events, I suggest, are critical to understanding the formation of the new middle class in India, as a category that increasingly defines itself through cultural and consumerist forms of identity, and is less identified with the state.

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## Introduction

The Nehruvian developmental era was idealistic in its effort to transcend the antagonism of anticolonial politics as well as of domestic class conflict. Such idealism resonated well with the fact of single party domination, and with the state's need for occupying the commanding heights of planned development. One outcome however was that, when faced with vociferous internal dissent and serious challenges to its political legitimacy, the mechanisms of assuring political control and of reliably representing popular consent were found to be lacking. The National Emergency of 1975–1977 was such a moment.

Although the Emergency was justified as a response to the threat to national security due to internal disturbances, it brought to prominence a theme already familiar in the post-independence period. Economic development had to be treated as an emergency situation, since the rest of the world was quickly progressing while India was lagging behind. Haste was therefore imperative, and politics was an extravagance.<sup>1</sup> The Emergency's suspension of civil liberties and the ban on dissent was accompanied by forceful state action. A host of actions were targeted as being deleterious for the nation, from economic crimes such as adulteration, hoarding, tax evasion and smuggling, to forms of behaviour not previously subject to state punishment, such as inefficiency, rumour-mongering, lack of productivity at work and over-productivity with respect to procreation. The shutting down of civil society institutions that could channel and diffuse the management of political consent placed an inordinate burden on the state, that it could not, eventually, manage.

Recent accounts of the Emergency seem to concur that the deviations it represented, while genuine, did not represent any fundamental change on the part of the Indian state, and that the period offers little distinct insight on the post-independence period as a whole.<sup>2</sup> This paper argues, to the contrary, that the Emergency was a watershed in post-independence history. With its ban on dissent and suspension of constitutional rights, the Emergency sought to suppress all political disturbances to governance. By doing so, it forefronted the problems of postcolonial politics in at least three respects.

<sup>1</sup> See Chakrabarty, Dipesh. "In the Name of Politics: Sovereignty, Democracy and the Multitude in India," *Economic and Political Weekly*, July 23, 2005, pp. 3293–3301.

<sup>2</sup> See discussion below.

First, the Emergency demonstrated that coercion was inextricably combined with consent in state-led development. Second, this led to a heavy reliance on practices of communication to redefine coercion and to stage popular consent. Third, in the process, the boundaries of the political were reinforced, emphasizing the friend/enemy distinction fundamental to politics.<sup>3</sup> In the aftermath of the Emergency there occurred a profound political reorientation of the existing model of developmental governance. Governance in the aftermath of the Emergency placed an overt reliance on consent over coercion, in ways that are themselves significant. Categories of culture and community, and related forms of social difference gained in importance over earlier developmental distinctions premised on an authoritarian relationship between state and the people. The change meant a shift away from the Nehruvian focus on the economy as the crucial arena of nation-building, involving labour as the key modality of citizenship. Instead, culture and community became categories that gained political salience in the period of economic liberalization.

In the process, there was a redistribution of the places where political conflict occurred, besides election campaigns. In the period leading to the Emergency, industrial conflict was perhaps the key arena regulated by the state where citizens could express dissent and organize collectively in an effort to improve their condition, other than voting. Strikes and other forms of work-stoppage could be violent, but their occurrence fitted into an established understanding of citizens whose form of belonging in the nation was perceived in economic terms, as productive in its outcomes for national development. As such, the task of the government was to mediate disputes between labour and management, and to ameliorate, not thwart them. Each major political party operated a union, and party conflict overlapped with trades union conflicts. After the Emergency, politically significant forms of conflict that occurred around organized labour drastically diminished and thereafter new channels grew for the expression of conflict.

After the return of the Congress Party in 1980, with the brief exception of the textile strike of 1982, unions were no longer granted the same leeway to use industrial conflict to alter the balance of power. Work stoppages increasingly became symbolic events, for example, through participation in actions such as the *bandh*. However, in a change that signalled a shift in both the site and the nature of

<sup>3</sup> See Schmitt, Carl. *The Concept of the Political*. Tr. George Schwab. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1996.

political conflict, 'communal' violence, i.e., violence between religious communities, grew significantly, in terms of the number of incidents reported annually, and the number of dead and wounded recorded.<sup>4</sup>

The contrast between the two forms of conflict is relevant in understanding the transition from the Nehruvian period to that of market liberalization. Strikes were governed by government regulations, and featured state agencies as official intermediaries. As such, they grew out of legitimate forms of negotiation, and even when they led to open conflict, expressed secular identities for whose adjudication there existed specific institutional mechanisms recognized by the state. In other words, this was a form of conflict centred in civil society.

Conflict between religious communities, in contrast, played no part in the developmentalist agenda of the state, except as events to be suppressed. The entities that clashed in such conflicts were invariably private, and lacked official status of any kind. Unlike industrial conflict, where negotiation was the norm and violence was the exception, the opposite was the case with communal violence. Communal conflict made the news chiefly through reports of violence and the disruption of civil order. Gangs, rowdies, and criminal elements tended to feature as key combatants in such violence, engaging in various non-official behaviours in which no government agency could intervene, save the police or the army. In other words, this was a form of conflict centred in what Partha Chatterjee has called political society, a realm of informal negotiation between the state and the majority of its citizens, whom the state lacks the resources to treat on an equal footing with members of civil society.<sup>5</sup> However, the increase in this form of conflict occurred as part of the governing political process, through what Paul Brass has called 'an institutionalized riot system', thus calling Chatterjee's distinction into question, and posing the need to rethink the formation of politics in this context.<sup>6</sup>

The 1980s are widely recognized as being a period of the increasing communalization of Indian politics. Among the causes attributed to this development are the decision by the Congress Party to cultivate the Hindu vote after its defeat in the 1977 national elections, to

<sup>4</sup> See below.

<sup>5</sup> See Chatterjee, Partha. *The Politics of the Governed*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2004.

<sup>6</sup> See Brass, Paul R. *The production of Hindu-Muslim violence in contemporary India*. Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2003.

bolster an electoral base that had shown itself to be unstable. This was more than a decision of the political leadership however. Alongside the state's gradual withdrawal from the commanding heights of the economy with market liberalization, there was an alteration in the ways in which politics was expressed and perceived. The state itself participated in the transfer of legitimacy away from the state to the market, and in promoting the initiative of private forces in economic growth and in nation-building. The mass media were central to the resulting redefinition of the political, multiplying in size and reach, and fashioning market-sensitive forms of address couched in the rhetoric of individual choice. These events are critical to understanding the formation of the new middle class in India, as a category that increasingly comes under the sway of corporate capital, expressing itself through cultural and consumerist forms of identity, and is less identified with the state.<sup>7</sup> This paper examines the context and instances of publicity during the Emergency to show how state imperatives directed at the citizen gradually shifted to the representation of choices that consumers were supposed to express pointing to changes in the way political authority was being conceived and enacted.

### A New Middle Class

I have seen that people with savings do not have the correct avenues for investment. This is particularly true of the salaried and the middle class. They have to invest in bank deposits or units, which do not give very good returns, So more and more middle class people are attracted to my shares. . . . Middle class people are joining hands to build something big. In the process, the country benefits. . . . In 1980 the total resources in the capital market was Rs 100 crore. Last year it was Rs 2500 crore. That shows we had the water but no pumping station. Everybody is now installing pumping stations. Just look at the number of people who have issued debentures. For our Seventh Plan we don't have money for power projects, buildings, railways. There is no money in the government, that is true, but there is money with the public. We can pump that money to a hundred Reliances and build a strong country.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> See Chatterjee, Partha. "Democracy and Economic Transformation." *Economic and Political Weekly*, April 19, 2008, pp. 53–62. See also Rajagopal, Arvind, *Politics After Television: Hindu Nationalism and the Reshaping of the Public in India*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

<sup>8</sup> Dhirubhai Ambani, Chairman, Reliance Group of Industries, interviewed in *India Today* 30 June, 1985, pp. 88–89.

The comment quoted above by the late Dhirubhai Ambani, whose company went on to become the largest in India, expresses a pervasive contradiction in postcolonial state formation. The Indian developmental state's claim had always been that *it* was the most appropriate agency to generate resources to build and manage the national economy. However, a significant portion of state revenue was allocated to state-run institutions employing hardly one-tenth of the working population.<sup>9</sup>

By adopting a mixed economy framework the state and the private sector competed for resources, resulting in a scarcity of capital.<sup>10</sup> If the state adopted a pedagogical stance towards its citizens, Ambani's account neatly reversed the rhetoric and upstaged the state, albeit in a gesture of sanctioned critique. His comment suggests that private citizens were accumulating capital for which adequate investment opportunities were lacking. If individual entrepreneurs were able to mobilize this capital, claiming that in the process they were helping to build the nation, state monopoly over national economic surplus would have to end.

After independence, the state retained considerable powers to regulate the economy, and the ability to borrow money at lower interest rates than individual entrepreneurs. If the public savings of the middle class were to become a more reliable source of investment, it would be for at least two reasons: bank nationalization (in 1969 and 1980) imposed lending restrictions on state-owned financial institutions, and the government made it possible for entrepreneurs to tap into public savings. It is generally agreed that Ambani was influential in opening a mass market for equity-investing that had earlier been confined to brokers and high net-worth individuals, freeing his business and others, from depending on the national banks. In an era when the government's Controller of Capital Issues essentially set the price of equity issues, Ambani applied a logic learned from consumer goods brands across primary and secondary investor markets, releasing multiple debenture and stock offerings and allowing his 'mother brand', Reliance, to boost new offerings, with

<sup>9</sup> See Rudolph, Lloyd I. and Susanne H. Rudolph. *In Pursuit of Lakshmi: The Political Economy of the Indian State*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987, p. 21; Dhar, P.N. *Indira Gandhi, the 'Emergency' and Indian Democracy*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001, p. 382.

<sup>10</sup> See Kalecki, Michal, *Essays on Developing Economies*. Hassocks, Eng.: Harvester Press; Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1976.

satellite brands able to generate, hoard and release capital as required. In a sense he was the harbinger of an entrepreneurial type that learned to think across given boundaries in a controlled economy, and showed its readiness to be global, even as it came of age nationally.<sup>11</sup>

Between 1977 and 1991, the Indian state proceeded markedly to increase the quotient of devolved and delegated forms of authority in economic development, rather than insisting on the superiority of its reasoning and its powers of implementation, as it had done since independence. By the 1980s, as Ambani's observations show, despite being an artifact of state policies, a newly-fashioned investing 'middle class' was acquiring a life of its own. The private consumption of this segment of society would increasingly assume and partly replace the productive role of state investment.

The state's newfound rhetorical modesty regarding economic development and market liberalization, and the overt transfer of functions from state to private forces, has invariably been described in pragmatic terms, for example, as the only available means of responding to the bottlenecks imposed by a corrupt and inefficient bureaucracy.<sup>12</sup> Economic arguments have dominated, comparing rates

<sup>11</sup> Before long Reliance could claim to be India's first global company, although only a fraction as old as its national competitors. The literature on Reliance is sparse, and the business press in India tends to tread lightly when covering the company. The only volume I am aware of on the topic is by Hamish McDonald (*The Polyester Prince: The Rise of Dhirubhai Ambani*. Sydney, Australia: MacMillan and Co., 1999). Reliance became known for its mastery at using government connections, and in paying no income tax until 1996, when a 'minimum alternate tax' of 12 per cent was imposed on company profits. *Ibid.*, p. 61. My thanks to Nandan Maluste in Mumbai, for sharing his recollections with me about Reliance equity and debenture issues during the 1980s and 1990s. Telephone interview, July 2008. It should be noted that, consequent on the 1969 nationalization of the major banks, the share of debentures in borrowings of the 365 largest public limited companies grew four times between 1975–1976 and 1987–1988 (i.e., from 7 per cent to 28 per cent of borrowings), while the relative importance of bank credit was nearly halved during the same period (i.e., from 53 per cent to 32 per cent of borrowings). See Chandra Shekhar, *Political Economy of India*. New Delhi: Institute for Studies in Industrial Development, Vikas Publishing House, 1992, pp. 100–101. The former prime minister lists no source for this data in his book.

<sup>12</sup> For example, Ashok V. Desai, economic advisor in the Ministry of Finance's Department of Economic Affairs from 1991–1993, when asked about his belief in a market-based system, remarked, 'Liberalism is not so much an ideological issue for me, it is more a practical issue. I might perfectly well be a fire-eating socialist in, let us say Germany, simply because bureaucracy works there. Here the bureaucracy does not work, it is extremely corrupt, it is extremely inefficient, and that's why I am for elimination of bureaucracy in trade policy by means of zero tariffs.' Balasubramanyam, V.N. *Conversations With Indian Economists*. New Delhi: Macmillan, 2001, p. 165.

of growth in public and private sectors in the periods before and after reforms began, and dwelling on how the unaffordable and rent-seeking character of state regulatory efforts hampered growth. However, the political dimension of these economic arguments tends to be glossed over by advocates of liberalization. Those critical of liberalization, on the other hand, have usually argued that latent political inputs skew outcomes, and that the Nehruvian developmentalist state, which had an inclusive mission, abandoned its course. In such accounts, market reforms were a way of jettisoning state responsibility to the poor and of affirming an elitist stance thereafter.<sup>13</sup>

Public reasons for liberalization were centered largely on the economic criteria of efficiency. I suggest, however, that the shift involved a significant modification of political regime. The envisioning of the middle class as the humble hero of national development, capable but lacking privilege and deserving of assistance, was something new. In this understanding, the middle class disturbed the *status quo* only to improve it. It seemed to formulate a strategy for national economic improvement, i.e., what the state was meant to do, but from civil society. 'Middle class' in this instance was only partially a descriptive term. In addition it was a proxy for state strategy, and a heuristic to indicate its changing relationship with civil society, that was increasingly mediated through corporate capital and staged through technologies of mass communication.

Relevant historical literature on the Indian middle class reflects concerns regarding economic transition and the possibility of establishing national autonomy through the process of industrialization.<sup>14</sup> In other words, the state itself creates the conditions for a new middle class formation, that in turn distances itself from the state, or from what the state used to stand for. It examines the contradictory entailments of a colonial project of state formation, where a middle class was engendered by the British to emulate themselves rather than the native aristocracy. Although the middle class was designed to function as a governing intermediary *vis-à-vis* the majority, it went on to become nationalist.<sup>15</sup> This literature can be distinguished by

<sup>13</sup> See, *inter alia*, Ghosh, Jayati. 'Liberalization Debate', in Terence J. Byers ed., *The Indian Economy: Major Debates Since Independence*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998, pp. 295–334, 329–331; Vaidyanathan, 1995, pp. 71–96.

<sup>14</sup> Kalecki, 1976; Raj, 1973, pp. 1189–1198; Stein, 1991: PE9–PE20.

<sup>15</sup> For example, Misra, 1961; Seal, Anil. *The emergence of Indian nationalism: competition and collaboration in the later nineteenth century*. London: Cambridge University Press, 1971.



regarding class formation either as a continuous process with only superficial changes in cultural and political alignment, or as one marked by 'fractured modernity,' involving a structural fault-line between colonial and native worlds requiring to be negotiated.<sup>16</sup> In addition, there is a growing interest in the middle class as a key propellant of social and political trends, and as offering a window into a given national context, especially as a term of comparative analysis across developing countries.<sup>17</sup> This paper aims to contribute to these efforts by pointing to the historical interlude of the Emergency, which separates two different phases of the Indian middle class, the former being under the hegemony of the state, and the latter, increasingly assertive, but disenchanted with erstwhile forms of politics, defining itself through cultural and consumerist forms of identity.

The Emergency witnessed an unprecedented escalation of claims by the state to command and direct the nation towards progress and development. In Indira Gandhi's view, a degree of coercion in the national interest was within the rights of the state, and although the intelligentsia was bound to object, she was scornful of their power to affect her rapport with the masses. After the Emergency was instituted, the sense of tumult previously conveyed by the press abruptly subsided. The Press had been censored and Mrs Gandhi confirmed her view that the protest had been confined to the press and did not reflect the real situation. She did not take the press seriously because she saw it, quite reasonably, as representing but a small fraction of society. In 1971, for example, total newspaper circulation was estimated at nine million, in a population of 548 million (see Appendix One). In the 1971 elections, the press, which was dominated by business interests, opposed Mrs Gandhi for her nationalization of the banks and abolition of privy purses, and proceeded on the assumption that the Congress would lose. Despite the campaign against her, Mrs Gandhi's party won a landslide victory due to her pro-poor economic programmes, and adroitly conceived publicity that responded to the opposition's slogan of *Indira Hatao* (Remove Indira) with a phrase that turned out to be galvanizing, *Garibi Hatao* (Remove Poverty).

Once elections were declared in January 1977, the critical campaigns conducted against the Congress in opposition rallies and in the press turned voters against Indira Gandhi. Unexpectedly,

<sup>16</sup> Joshi, 2001.

<sup>17</sup> Jaffrelot, Christophe and Peter van der Veer eds. *Patterns of Middle Class Consumption in India and China*. New Delhi: Sage, 2008; Fernandes, 2006.

left and right-wing groups came together to oppose the Congress, led by Jayaprakash Narayan and the Jan Sangh respectively. Press coverage of emergency 'excesses' was copious. Even before voters went to the polls, Mrs Gandhi was both distancing herself from the Emergency and apologising for it, claiming variously that the government had been infiltrated by the Jan Sangh in order to discredit it, and that the sterilization campaign had been taken too far by underlings. Nonetheless, the Congress was completely expelled from state assemblies across North India. Its all-India seat total plunged from 352 in 1971 to 154 in 1977; its share of the popular vote declined much less however, from 43.7 per cent to 34.5 per cent.<sup>18</sup> Public opinion, as reflected in the press, had been shown to alter the outcome of an election, and for the first time, the ruling party had been decisively ousted from the Centre. (The four southern states, together with Assam, voted for the Congress, but nowhere else did the Congress win.) Thereafter it was seen as more prudent to offer the members of the press and arguably, the urban well-to-do in general, more incentives to cooperate, rather than subject them to governmental fiat, perhaps on the assumption that the seat of public opinion lay with these segments of society.

Thus, the Emergency itself may be said to have brought to a crisis the era of the developmental state, with its assurance that planners and policy-makers could assess what the people wanted and dictate accordingly. It showed the limits of the state's capacity to govern without actively and continuously seeking and winning popular consent. The rhetoric of the state became more self-conscious as it sought new *loci* of authority in support of its activities. The invocation of the middle class as a sanctioned actor, and as the favoured agent of growth, development and democracy is a feature of the post-Emergency period. 'Middle class' became a proxy for state reason, ventriloquizing arguments and designs of those at the helm of government and a force for criticism when government views were ignored or overlooked in the political process. The complementary era of market liberalization, involving new arguments pertaining to the economy and bringing together issues of need and utility and the manner of their administration, highlighted the relatively autonomous domain of public opinion as an emergent second layer of the state that was, however, not distinguishable *as* the state.

<sup>18</sup> Butler, David Ashok Lahiri and Prannoy Roy, *A Compendium of Indian Elections*. New Delhi: Arnold Heinemann, 1984, p. 112.

## The Emergency

The Emergency of 1975–1977 was the high point of state centralization, when every government decision was shifted beyond the reach of normal mechanisms open to legislative discussion, official procedure or public lobbying, and instead shrouded in executive privilege under the claim of the extraordinary circumstance of a threat to national security. With all due process and civil liberties suspended, and all manner of free association stifled to safeguard the nation from its ‘enemies,’ the state operated with little customary intervention from journalistic commentary, political opposition or social protest.

Typically regarded as initiated by a dictatorial ruler, and concluded thanks to the will of the electorate, the Emergency’s aftermath led to widely circulated literature virtually unanimous in its view of the Emergency as an exceptional period of despotic rule effectively reduced to a sequence of events whose beginning and end, cause and cure, could be contained in a simple narrative.<sup>19</sup> The Emergency thus became part of the myth of the Indian nation in which the people asserted their indomitable spirit against a host of obstacles, from foreign domination to native tyrants. The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), for example, identified as the core of the resistance to the Emergency,<sup>20</sup> described the 1977 Congress defeat as India’s ‘second freedom struggle’.<sup>21</sup>

Other recent revisionist literature has rejected the idea that the Emergency was exceptional, stressing instead its continuities with the rest of post-independence history. Three recently published volumes, by Bipan Chandra, P. N. Dhar and Emma Tarlo respectively, make assumptions along these lines.<sup>22</sup> The underlying argument is most clearly articulated by Bipan Chandra and dictates that the Emergency was a period of ‘flirting with authoritarianism’ that, however, aimed to preserve the *status quo* and thus did not inaugurate a radically new politics, either fascist or totalitarian. He argues that neither the JP<sup>23</sup> Movement nor the Emergency reflected structural tendencies of the

<sup>19</sup> For example, Nayar, Kuldeep. *The Judgement: the inside story of the emergency in India*. New Delhi: Vikar, 1977.

<sup>20</sup> Dhar 2001, p. 264.

<sup>21</sup> Thengadi, Dattopant. ‘Preface—Lamp at the Threshold’, in P.G. Sahasrabudde and Manik Chandra Vajpayee, *The people versus emergency: a saga of struggle*. Tr. Sudhakar Raje. New Delhi: Suruchi Prakashan, 1991, pp. 11–46.

<sup>22</sup> Chandra 2003; Dhar 2003; Tarlo 2004.

<sup>23</sup> Named after its leader, Jayaprakash Narayan.

Indian economy or polity; in this sense they were 'epiphenomenal', and campaigns such as 'sterilisation' and 'slum demolition' popularly identified with the Emergency were not intrinsic to it. They defined its excesses and not its character, which was authoritarian, bureaucratic and extra-constitutional, according to Chandra.<sup>24</sup>

Unless authoritarianism is disclosed as functional to specific interests, it is presumed in such accounts to lack enduring salience. Politics is reduced to the economic or social ends it serves, and is understood to have no significance in itself in these arguments. Such explanations ignore the fact that the opposition to the Emergency rejected the ruling party, and by implication the existing state regime. This opposition represented a challenge to the developmental state's attempt to monopolize politics, and showed that control over communications did not necessarily result in popular consent, even when backed by state power. In other words, political consent did not necessarily develop in the spaces designated for it by the state. It is clear that the lesson was absorbed by the state; opinion was seldom assumed to be a matter of mere transmission in subsequent governments. However, the statist orthodoxy of Chandra's account was reflected in official responses to the Emergency after the defeat of the Congress Party, perhaps as a means of shifting the blame for the surrender of the state machinery to its leader and her coterie.

The critical term for assessing the Emergency, propagated by the Shah Commission of Inquiry and reproduced in the press, was 'excesses' set against an unspecified standard of normalcy.<sup>25</sup> The most spectacular 'excesses' of the Emergency were however, not distinct to the period, but existed before it and continued after it. The bureaucratic culture as revealed by the inquiry commission only confirmed that concerns of accountability and legality seldom interfered with the giving and taking of orders in government.<sup>26</sup> The idea of 'excesses' used to assess the Emergency's distinctiveness

<sup>24</sup> Chandra, 2003, pp. 262–272. For Dhar's arguments see Dhar, 2003, pp. 263–268; for Tarlo see pp. 21–61, 218–225. Each of them questions the exceptional status granted to the Emergency and point to its continuities with post-independence tendencies before and afterwards. Tarlo, for instance, points to the persistence of popular memories of sterilization as defining the Emergency, but also acknowledges that sterilization campaigns predated that time (2003, p. 91n).

<sup>25</sup> Shah Commission of Inquiry. *Interim Report*. Delhi: Controller of Publications, 1978.

<sup>26</sup> It was symptomatic that while Justice Shah sought to express shock and indignation at the testimonials of erring officials, the courtroom audience responded with laughter and mockery.

was generated in the context of a successor regime (the Janata Party, 1977–1980) that sought to limit the crisis stemming from public knowledge of the bureaucracy's wholesale capitulation under Indira and Sanjay Gandhi. Very quickly, the democratic afflatus from vanquishing the Emergency resolved into business as usual under a new government. Within three years, the Congress returned to power, whereafter there were no incentives to remember the Emergency; the Shah Commission report itself was soon withdrawn from circulation.

The Emergency had confirmed the Caesarist character of the Indian state at the time; in D. K. Barooah's words, 'India was Indira and Indira was India'.<sup>27</sup> Although the government ostensibly aimed to serve the people as a whole, it demonstrated its intention to do so by presenting the image and words of Indira Gandhi. No mention was made of popular choice or preference to be expressed; public opinion was subsumed into the will of the state, although its existence was presumed. And during this time, government expenditure on propaganda increased greatly, mostly through the Directorate of Audio-Visual Publicity.<sup>28</sup>

The unprecedented attempt to shape public opinion, however, granted it a level of political importance it had not previously had. Once the link between the people and the leader was severed with Indira's defeat, it could not easily be reclaimed again. The statist character of Emergency-era politics was seen to be unsustainable and was followed by more deliberately populist forms of governance. Thereafter the conditions under which state publicity was shaped no longer remained internal to the state but had to engage the terrain upon which public opinion was reproduced. Consent had actively to be sought and won. As a result the overt role of opinion leader was one that the state understandably became reluctant to occupy following the Emergency.

<sup>27</sup> Guha, Ramachandra. 'The Emergency: Dictators' Defence', *India Today*, 3 July, 2000. <http://india-today.com/itoday/20000703/view.html>. Accessed 21 July, 2010. For discussion, see Chatterjee 1997, p. 62.

<sup>28</sup> The information and publicity budget, excluding radio and television, for the Information and Broadcasting Ministry rose from Rs. 11.9 cr. in 1974–1975 to Rs 14.55 cr. in 1975–1976 to Rs 18.7 cr. in 1976–1977, or by 58 per cent in two years. The major rise was due to expenditure in the Directorate of Audio-Visual Publicity, from Rs. 2.66 cr. to Rs. 3.51 cr. to Rs. 5.15 cr., or by 93 per cent across the same years. Government of India, Publications Division, '*Mass Media in India*', White Paper on Misuse of Mass Media, 1977, p. 60.

The political circumstance of the National Emergency both demanded and confirmed the need for an escalation of rhetoric; the state assumed a function of prime mover, taking over and directing the institutions of civil society, or claiming to do so. The state was required to justify its role as it had never done before, without the excuse of a war against China or Pakistan, as had been the case in previous national emergencies. (The wartime emergency of 1971 was still in force, one observer noted, rendering the 1975 event a 'double emergency'.<sup>29</sup>) What this meant was that the state had to adopt a stance of mobilizing the population, without any corresponding popular activity that might have had unpredictable results.

Although most accounts describe the Emergency as a break from what had preceded it, the period can be seen as the high water mark of the developmental era in a specific sense. The state's mission of managing economic growth and providing social welfare was never conveyed in so public and insistent a fashion before, nor were those who crossed its path prosecuted with greater zeal. In the effort to overcome stagnant industrial productivity, a plan was announced to throw open the public sector 'to the rough and tumble of market forces; they should neither claim, nor be given, any special privileges. . . .'<sup>30</sup> The chief critics of state management of the economy in the past, namely private business, achieved profits that surpassed all previous experience (see Appendix Two). Meanwhile, strikes and lockouts plunged to historic lows (see Table One, Figure 12), a point discussed further in the next section.

The Emergency enacted a spectacular fashioning of the economy as a site for collective participation to invigorate a national body requiring stimulation because it had become weakened over time. A range of populist policies were announced that promised welfare for groups ranging from the rural poor—e.g., freedom for bonded labour and from money-lenders—to housing plot allocations for the urban poor in return for 'voluntary' sterilization, to cheaper textbooks for college students. Whether due to failures of implementation or of political will, or due to the influence of the Prime Minister's son Sanjay Gandhi, whose constituency has been identified as specifically middle class,<sup>31</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Franda, Marcus. *India's Double Emergency Democracy* (Pts I, II and III). American Universities Field Staff Reports, vol. XIX No. 19, 1975.

<sup>30</sup> T.A. Pai, *Economic and Political Weekly*, 13 September, 1975. Pai, T.A. 'Public Sector in Our Developing Economy', *Yojana*, vol. XIX no. 8, 15 May, 1975.

<sup>31</sup> Dhar 2003, pp. 329–330.

it is the high price the state exacted in return for benefits granted to the poor that eventually came to distinguish the Emergency.

Coercion directed at the bodies of the poor through slum demolition and sterilization was central to the programme of national revitalization. The spectacle of violence was pedagogical, distinguishing between those whom the violence corrected and those for whom it illustrated the correct lessons. It affirmed the character of a national body being enhanced through the 'shock therapy' of the Emergency. This was an upper caste body, residing in sanitized and beautified urban spaces, denuded of the pollution of poor, lower castes who generated unhygienic conditions that endangered the lives of their betters.

While the Emergency sought to maximize economic growth, it simultaneously involved a concern for quality over quantity, and for the proper aesthetic form to condition and regulate mere substance. Degraded practices of production existed in abundance and depleted the strength of the nation insofar as proliferating poor bodies uselessly consumed resources to generate sickness, not health. Defiant of prevailing national ideals, these resistant bodies were especially dangerous, and needed to be neutralized for the collective welfare of the nation. Stern measures, such as sterilization campaigns, were thus believed to be imperative and undertaken on a war-footing, if national economic and social gains were to be consolidated.

Outlined in these terms, it is striking the extent to which this programme anticipated elements of what became familiar later with the rise of Hindu nationalism from the late 1980s onwards, even though national development was cast in overtly secular and scientific terms. The parallel was a programme conceived in militaristic terms. It inscribed specific plans onto people treated as part of the material surface of society, re-arranged and eliminated aberrant entities, and conscripted its best elements to help implement these designs. Alarms regarding Muslim plans to violate family planning norms and overtake Hindus were preceded by more general alarms about viral population growth that had to be curbed at all costs. While family planning was presented as a generally applicable norm, in practice it was directed at the poor, and it invoked the small nuclear family ideal already widely prevalent in urban upper caste families.

'Urban beautification', the operative euphemism for slum demolition, as well as family planning policies, long predated the Emergency. But between 1975 and 1977 they acquired enormous power as publicly-declared state imperatives. State-directed violence

enacted and confirmed sanctioned forms of knowledge and exemplified their superior moral status. Although at first it appeared to be secular, and later Hindu, violence was treated as necessary and productive during and after the Emergency. It contributed, ultimately, to the formation of a middle class that regarded such violence as legitimate, as law-making and law-preserving, enacted on its behalf, and on behalf of the nation as it ought to be.

Government policies since independence had been structurally biased towards the more affluent classes, proportionately favouring college over primary education, public sector over private sector employees, and drawing revenue disproportionately from indirect taxes borne by the poor.<sup>32</sup> What occurred after the Emergency was not the rise of a purely autonomous literati so much as the rapid growth and development of forces that could not only influence public debate but claim to stand for the public itself.<sup>33</sup> For example, the press became more politically assertive, launching successful campaigns to defeat repressive legislation such as the Anti-Defamation Bill and the Bihar Press Bill.<sup>34</sup> Prominently, communications media of all types grew enormously following the Emergency, a development Robin Jeffrey has ascribed to 'political excitement'.<sup>35</sup> With the state remaining the

<sup>32</sup> Rudolph and Rudolph 1987, pp. 296–298; Fernandes 2006, pp. 21–22. See also the editors' Introduction in Baviskar, Amita and Raka Ray (eds) *Both Elite and Everyman: The Cultural Politics of the Indian Middle Classes* (Routledge, forthcoming)

<sup>33</sup> A crucial development in this context was the decision taken by the Hindu nationalist the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh to enter the larger political process, and forsake mere 'character-building', which had been its chief focus since 1925. See Rajagopal, Arvind, *Politics After Television: Hindu Nationalism and the Reshaping of the Public in India*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001, pp. 30–71, esp. pp. 51–63.

<sup>34</sup> Sharma, Mukul. 'Media and Governance', *Seminar* No. 514, 2002. <http://www.india-seminar.com/2002/514/514%20mukul%20sharma.htm>. Accessed 21 July, 2010.

<sup>35</sup> For example, the circulation of all newspapers and periodicals increased from 34.08 millions in 1976 to 50.92 millions in 1980, to 64.05 millions in 1986, reflecting growth of 49 per cent in four years and nearly 100 per cent in ten years. In the case of television, it was more dramatic. There were 0.479 million sets in 1976, growing to 1.55 millions by 1980 and to 11 millions by 1986, tripling in four years and then increasing by nearly 22 times in ten years. Television at this time was entirely state-controlled; its revenues increased from Rs. 7.7 millions in 1976–1977 to Rs 80.8 millions in 1980–1981, to Rs. 602 millions in 1986, i.e., growing by more than ten times in four years, and nearly eighty times in ten years. Government of India. Publications Division. *Mass Media in India*, 1977, 1981, 1987. Also see <http://www.ddindia.gov.in/About+DD/Commercial+Service>. Accessed 21 July, 2010. For discussion on 'political excitement' see Jeffrey, Robin. *India's Newspaper Revolution*, Oxford, 2000, p. 51.



principal source of revenue both for print media as well as itself being the monopoly in the case of broadcast media (at least until the 1990s), it can be argued that the growth of the media pointed to a form of state influence that was now mediated through the market.<sup>36</sup>

Where the middle and upper classes were concerned, after the Emergency of 1975–1977 the state more often sought to avoid exercising authority in its own name, at least in matters that did not concern national security. Previously, claiming the eminence of its wisdom and demonstrating the force of its will had been commonplace.<sup>37</sup> Earlier, austerity could be demanded and coercive measures regularly imposed across a majority of social classes, although the brunt always fell on lower classes of course. Such tendencies were prominent during the Emergency, and were denounced by the Opposition, and apologized for by the Congress in the two months between the suspension of the Emergency in January 1977 and the national elections held in March that year. Even during the latter half of the Emergency, but more so after it, the government found it prudent to avoid overtly coercive measures on the urban well-to-do, and realized the merits of a ‘carrot-and-stick’ approach. A combination of persuasion and incentives for compliance, on winning consent rather than demanding obedience, came to characterize the government’s relationship with a section of the polity that recently had demonstrated the unthinkable, namely, the ability of the electorate to unseat the ruling Congress Party.

### **Emergency messages to the nation: publicity and middle-class formation**

Economic planning had existed before, but it had never been brought home in quite this way, seeking to incorporate citizens and staging campaigns to demonstrate that efficiency was indeed the watchword,

<sup>36</sup> Owner-editors constitute crucial nodes of influence in this process. More than three-quarters of newspapers are owned by individuals rather than by joint stock companies. See Sharma, 2002, *ibid.*, for discussion.

<sup>37</sup> The exceptions are of course significant, e.g., Nehru’s decision not to present Ambedkar’s Hindu Code Bill *in toto* before Parliament. He introduced the legislation piecemeal in anticipation of conservative objections to it. See e.g., Ambedkar, B.R. Statement of Resignation as Law Minister, 10 October, 1951, in Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar, *Writings and Speeches*, Vol. 14, Part Two, Section IV. Vasant Moon (ed.). Education Department, Government of Maharashtra, 1995, pp. 1322–1326.

and that the government meant business in its attempt to set the economy right. Not 'bread and circuses', but the claim of a galvanized economy became the legitimation for the Emergency and, above all, a spectacle for collective edification. Until now the reasons of state had often appeared inscrutable, with planning conceived and implemented far above the heads of ordinary people, and few benefits materializing before them in their own lives. T.A. Pai, the Minister of Industry and Civil Supplies, in his valedictory address given on 28 January, 1975, at a New Delhi seminar organized by the Forum of Financial Writers, addressed the frustrations of the ordinary citizen in terms that indicate that what was to come only a few months hence by way of developmental rhetoric was not without precedent:

Life is still so burdensome to vast sections of the country's rapidly rising population that their weariness cannot be taken for unquestioning resignation or submissive despair. The common people do not and need not understand the sophisticated language in which the intellectuals here and elsewhere expound the philosophy and dynamics of planning. They must feel the fruits in order to perceive it and when the fruits are a mixed bag, their faith in planning is bound to turn cynical. Sacrifice is no doubt, essential at every level but the enjoyment of a reasonable portion of fruits of planning, now and then, should not be looked upon as evidence of unpatriotic indulgence. Such enjoyment helps reduce the tension and the sense of insecurity, which now grips large sections of the population.<sup>38</sup>

The state of the economy did not allow the fruits of planning to be distributed very far or in very great measure. But if this were not possible, the visualization and dramatization of the economy at work for the common people's benefit would surely enthuse, uplift and infuse them with correct thoughts for the success of economic development. A Planning Commission document spelt out the steps taken, and the effects it wrought:

The [Annual Plan 1976–1977]...takes into account the new sense of discipline and dynamism brought about by the declaration of emergency and the launching of the New Economic Programme in the early part of the year 1975–76... Besides continuing the anti-inflationary measures initiated in the middle of 1974 a number of other measures were adopted particularly after the Emergency to ensure price stability. These included [a] crack down on economic offenders—black marketeers, profiteers and smugglers, restricting the use of unaccounted funds, statutory requirement of exhibition of prices and of stocks of selected essential commodities by traders, mandatory display of weight, measure and identity on pre-packed

<sup>38</sup> Pai, 1975, p. 25.

commodities and banning of sole selling agencies in certain industries such as vanaspati, sugar, paper and cement. These measures combined with the dehoarding operations undertaken by the Government on an extensive scale led to change in the psychology of both the consumer and the traders resulting in the sellers' market turning into a buyers' market in various essential commodities.<sup>39</sup>

Insofar as the claims of the Emergency centered on the economy, their veracity is uncertain, as indicated below. Nevertheless, these measures constituted the face of the Emergency to a considerable extent. National advancement could best be calibrated in economic terms. That is, it was at the level of the economy that the nation's condition could be made transparent, with numbers measuring its progress and demonstrating the truth of the claims made.

The people's welfare ('more food for more and more') appeared through an arithmetic produced by the state. The figures registered national progress, and the streamlining of a public system to distribute food confirmed the existence of good governance. In fact, the increased agricultural production was attributed to a good monsoon rather than to government policies *per se*.<sup>40</sup> Nevertheless, advertisements published at the behest of the government's Directorate of Audio-Visual Publicity promoted the theme, albeit in different ways (Figures 1 to 4).<sup>41</sup>

The 'shock therapy' of the Emergency, provoked by the lack of collective discipline, had borne results and the nation was enthused once more. If for Lenin, communism equalled the power of the Soviets plus electrification of the country, here it was the state that linked the villages with 'power' and made the spirit of adventure manifest in the nation again. If the achievement was an enhanced sense of well-being among people, it still needed to be demonstrated so that citizens could know and be assured that the nation was indeed on the move and in the right direction, too. This envisioning of the nation, mirroring the work of the masses back to themselves, depended on the state as the vital intermediary able to gather the necessary knowledge and convey it.

<sup>39</sup> Government of India. Planning Commission. *Annual Plan 1976-1977*. New Delhi, 1976-1977, pp. 1-2.

<sup>40</sup> The positive influence of the monsoon was acknowledged by the Planning Commission during the period. *Annual Plan 1976-1977 ibid.*, p. 1. For discussion, see Toye, J.F.J. 'Economic Trends and Policies in India During the Emergency', *World Development* vol. 5, no. 4, 1977, pp. 303-316, esp. p. 304.

<sup>41</sup> *Seminar*, December, 1975. Government of India, Publications Division, *Economic Survey*, New Delhi, 1975-1976.

**NATION ON THE MOVE**

# More food for more and more

This year, the food output is expected to reach the all-time record figure of 114 M. tonhes.

The public distribution system in India has been streamlined and is now considered the best in the world.

**IRON WILL AND HARD WORK SHALL SUSTAIN US**



*For a free booklet on FOOD please write to:  
Distribution Manager D.A.V.P. B Block,  
Kasturba Gandhi Marg, New Delhi-110001*

davp 75/456

Figure 1. 'More food for more and more'

Effectively, the state appeared on both sides of the equation, directing the people on one side and, on the other, representing results on behalf of the nation. The focus on the economy alleviated the potential for mystification and tautology, however. Economics offered a privileged form of knowledge for testing the accuracy of claims because it could

NATION ON THE MOVE

# Manifold rise in power

Our power generating capacity touched 19 million KW in 1974. In 1947, the total capacity was 1.3 million KW.

Today 1.5 lakh villages are electrified; 2.44 million pump-sets have been energised in the farms. This year, another 2.6 million KW will be added to our capacity.

**IRON WILL AND  
HARD WORK  
SHALL SUSTAIN US**

*For a free booklet,  
Please write to:  
Distribution Manager, D.A.V.P.  
'B' Block, Kasturba Gandhi Marg,  
New Delhi-110001*

davp 75/449




Figure 2. 'Manifold rise in power'

**NATION ON THE MOVE**

# Towards reduction of inequality

The income-tax exemption limit has been raised to Rs. 8,000 (it was Rs. 6,000); this brings relief to 7 lakh tax-payers. Side by side, new assesseees have been discovered; last year 1.33 lakh persons were served notice for payment of income-tax.

Today there is ample encouragement for personal saving (savings up to Rs. 4,000 a year are totally tax-free) and there is punishment for those who seek to cheat the State.



**IRON WILL AND  
HARD WORK SHALL  
SUSTAIN US**

davp 75/484

For a free booklet on  
**TAXES FOR DEVELOPMENT**  
please write to:  
Distribution Manager  
D.A.V.P. B Block, Kasturba  
Gandhi Marg, New Delhi-110001

Figure 3. 'Towards reduction of inequality'

distil the many-sided qualitative issues concerning popular well-being into quantitative ones.

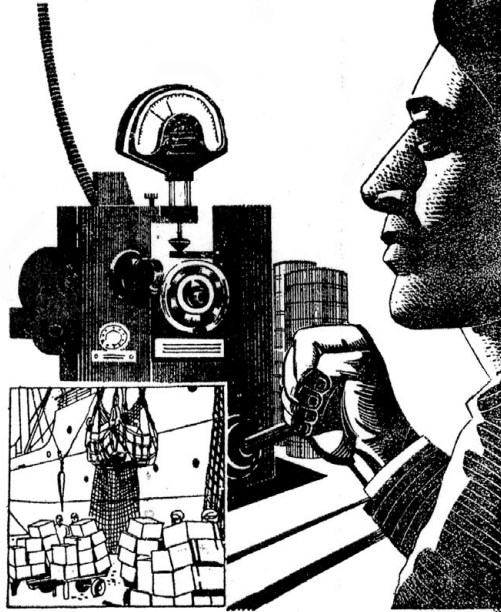
This tactic of clarity carried its own risks. For example, government propaganda claimed that while inflation had reached an annual rate

**NATION ON THE MOVE**

# Rapid rise in exports

India's total exports have gone up to over Rs. 3,300 crores. Ten years ago, it was only Rs. 805 crores.

Quality control has helped to build a better image of Indian goods abroad. Engineering goods earned Rs. 353 crores last year through exports—a new record.



**IRON WILL  
AND  
HARD WORK  
SHALL SUSTAIN US**

*For a free booklet on  
FOREIGN TRADE  
please write to:  
Distribution Manager  
D.A.V.P., B Block, Kasturba  
Gandhi Marg,  
New Delhi-110001*

davp 75/499

Figure 4. 'Rapid rise in exports'

of 32 per cent in 1974, it was transformed into a negative rate within a year.<sup>42</sup> Figures published by the government's Central Statistical

<sup>42</sup> *Yojana*, November, 1975.

Organization suggested that the reversal was exaggerated, however.<sup>43</sup> Claims of ‘more and better agricultural inputs and credit facilities for farmers’ were later assessed to be nebulous, and if the Emergency’s ‘New Gains’ included the statement, ‘Strikes, lock-outs and bandhs disappear’, working classes whose discontent had been so prominent until recently could hardly be expected to approve.<sup>44</sup> Strikes and lockouts did decrease (see Table One, Figure 12); meanwhile, those sectors of business enjoying access to the right ministers flourished, and corporate assets reached record levels (Appendix Two).<sup>45</sup> The income tax exemption limit rose from Rs. 6000 to Rs. 8000, giving relief to 73 lakh middle-class persons.<sup>46</sup>

Economics could be a proxy for state reasoning but it could not always inspire assent in the common man or woman who might be left out of the reckoning.<sup>47</sup> It remained to directly address and exhort ordinary people, then, and to urge their participation in the success of the Emergency rather than relying on data whose correspondence with peoples’ experience was uncertain. Generating popular consent for governance without relying on material inducements or political coercion was not a skill the state had sought to develop after independence. The state seldom, if ever, sought to test the effectivity of its propaganda outside election campaigns, which involved a very specific form of communication, requiring a binary choice on the part of its addressee—either they voted for the candidate, or they did not. This structure of communication tended to carry over to its developmental propaganda, where consent tended to be assumed—by virtue of the party having won the elections—and directives issued, with little attempt to draw the audience into what lay behind state reasoning.

When engaging in exhortation, the government offered messages as good advice framed in such a way that one was expected to agree and, perhaps, pass the word on. Appearing as images but conceived as text, they presented the very model of statist diction (Figures 5, 6, 7). The event was the occasion of their pronouncement, rather than of their performance. The nation was ‘on the move’ and there was much to be done. ‘Less talk’ meant ‘more work’, so there was little need for

<sup>43</sup> Toye, 1977, p. 307.

<sup>44</sup> *Yojana*, September 1975.

<sup>45</sup> *Economic Survey* 1975–1976, pp. 12–13.

<sup>46</sup> ‘Plus and minus points of Emergency’, *Blitz*, 26 June, 1976, p. 9.

<sup>47</sup> Dhar 2003, p. 266.



## UNLICENSED RADIO/TRANSISTOR/TV SETS

### voluntary disclosures scheme

- Have you got a transistor, Radio or TV set without a licence?
- If so, here is an opportunity to regularise your possession.
- You can now get a licence without paying any surcharge.
- You need not produce evidence of purchase or transfer for such a set. The Post Office will accept the date of acquisition of the set as given by you.
- You can also renew your old licence with retrospective effect without paying any surcharge.
- This concession is available upto April 30, 1977.
- Penalty : Prosecution and surcharge.

### REMEMBER

### IT IS ILLEGAL TO POSSESS A WIRELESS/ TRANSISTOR OR TV SET WITHOUT LICENCE.

The fee for additional sets, now disclosed, will be Rs. 15/- and not Rs. 3/- during the concessional period. It will, however, be Rs. 3/- for subsequent renewals.

If the cost of your radio set does not exceed Rs. 150/- a cash memo is necessary for getting concessional licence of Rs. 7.50.

davp 76/942

Figure 5. 'Unlicensed radio/transistor/tv sets'

discussion. There were, however, warnings (Declare 'any unlicensed transistors/TV sets'; 'Smuggling is anti-people') and reminders that themselves could be warnings ('Be Indian, Buy Indian')

Where the advertisements go beyond articulating a programme of a vision, they are of course, more complex (Figure 8).

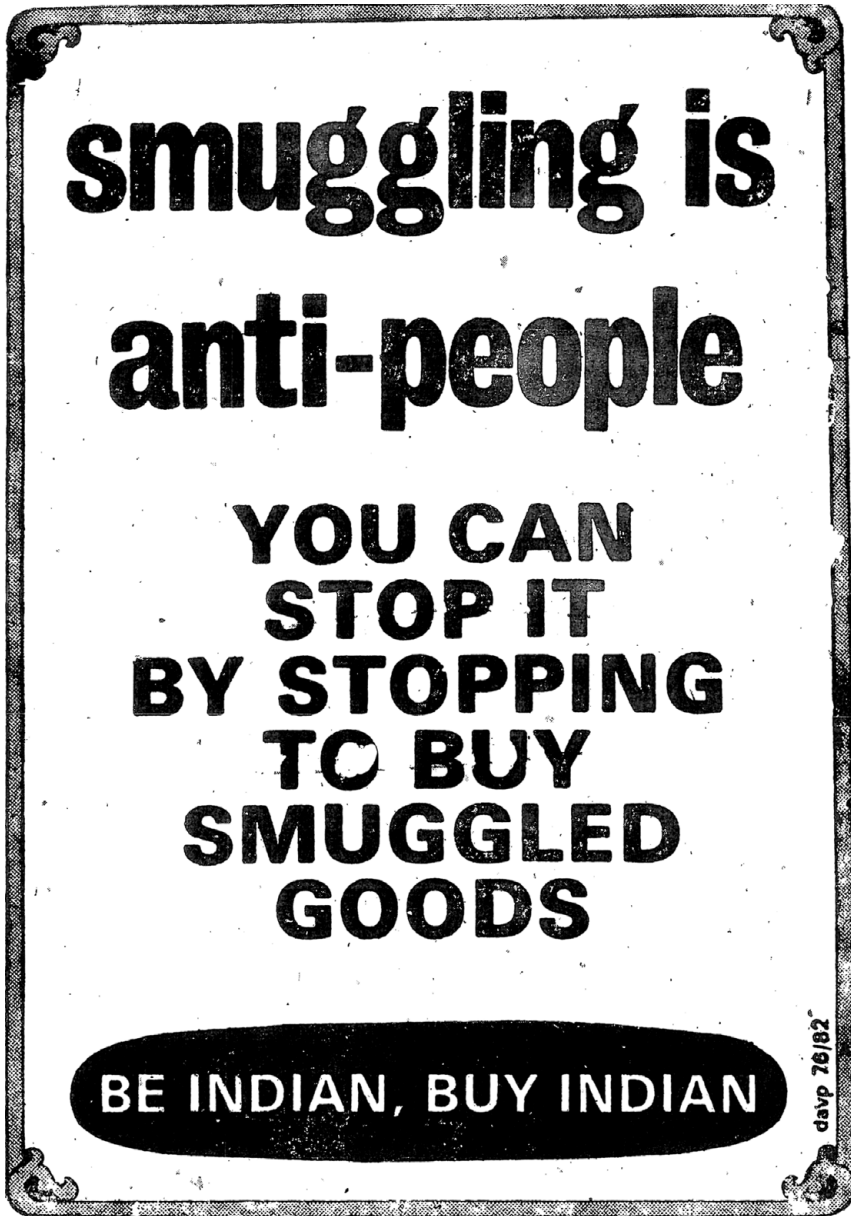


Figure 6. 'Smuggling is anti-people'

This message from the Prime Minister moves from the announcement of a time to posing a 'situation' that is *the* situation, which will improve. 'This task', then, is presumably improving the

**Be Indian,  
Buy Indian**

India produces a wide range of consumer and other goods. Quality-wise, our goods compare with the best produced anywhere in the world. Four of the highly industrialised nations of the world, viz., Japan, U. K., U.S.A. and U.S.S.R. account for one-third of our exports. By buying Indian-made goods, we strengthen our economy and create employment opportunities.

**‘Develop greater pride in Indian products and Indian skills’**

—Smt. Indira Gandhi

6607/76/57

Figure 7. ‘Be Indian, buy Indian’

situation, although it is not clear; no task has been named. The message goes on, ‘In this task our people... will give us their full support, so that the country will be strengthened’. The strengthening of the country is a desirable end but it is not the task itself, only a result of ‘our people’ giving their full support to the unidentified task.

The message offers a series of *non sequiturs* involving several resonant nouns and adjectives (‘time, unity, discipline, confident, people,

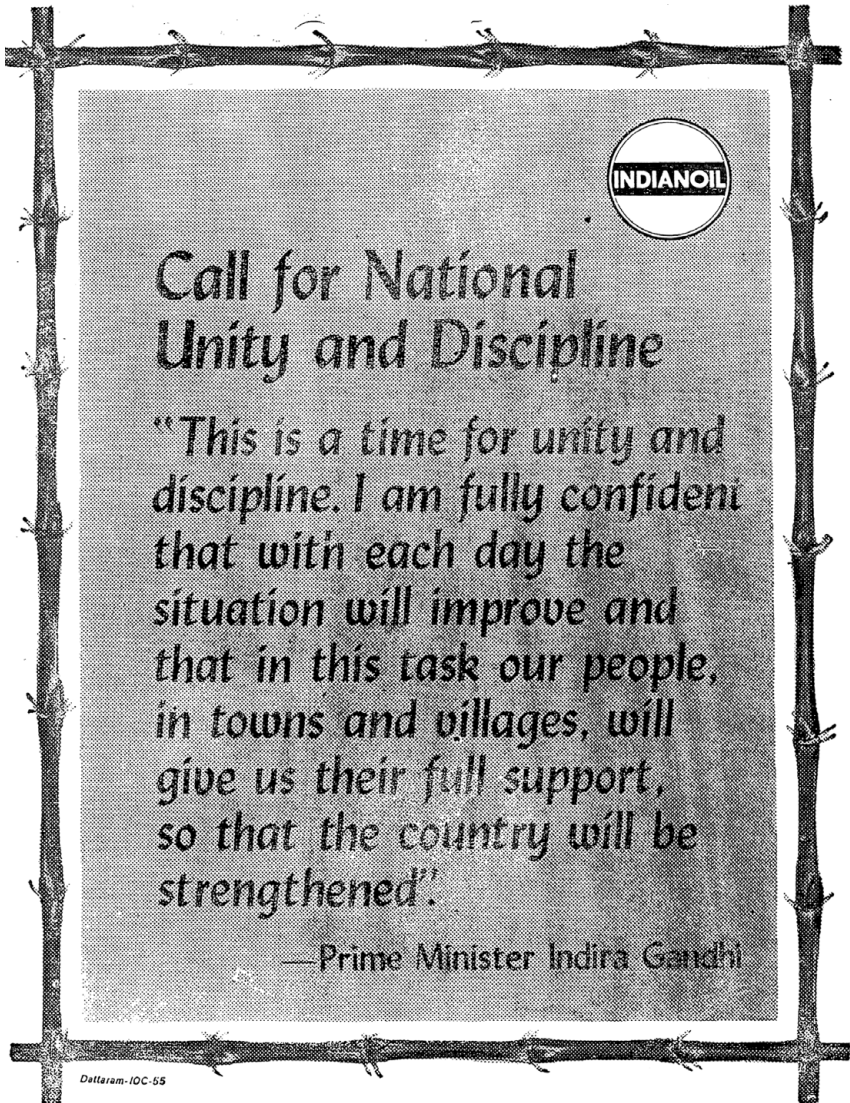


Figure 8. 'Call for national unity and discipline'

full support, country, strengthened') while remaining reticent, and obscuring how they are joined together. As a communication invoking the Emergency, but not naming it, it seeks to convey the sense of a wartime atmosphere when the urgency and immediacy of what needs to be done is so obvious that it need only be gestured to. But of course it was not wartime and the threat, if any, had been to the Prime Minister

herself and not to the country; she is the figure that fills in the blanks in this statement and makes it cohere. She sizes up the situation, defines the task and, presumably, ensures the country is strengthened.

Here is another message, with a picture of the Prime Minister looking relaxed, indeed for an emergency, conveying, no doubt, her confidence at being on top of a difficult situation (Figure 9). Her head is tilted to one side, her eyes are crinkled and she is smiling fondly as if looking at an intimate friend. The message beneath her photograph is more of an admonition than an endearment, however.

In a single sentence the imperatives cascade and overlay each other—production, distribution, socialism, holding our country together, each phrase more important than the previous one. The main priority is presumably signalled in the last directive, to hold ‘our country together’. The final sentence is still more urgent than its predecessor: ‘Let’s get ahead with the job of nation-building’—which is again something more than the previous tasks, perhaps the sum of all of them taken together, although it is also left undefined. The ceaseless motion conceived in these statements is presumably meant to be deliberate and planned but the quick succession of indistinct directives poses a question as to whether the goal is much more than inducing submission to a series of vague but non-negotiable orders.

These messages also raise the issue of voice. Erving Goffman argued that the mere fact of speaking tells us little about how the speaking person is related to the spoken language: he or she might be the mere animator of speech that is attributed directly or indirectly to one or more authors or principals, as opposed to performing what he called ‘fresh talk’. As people speak they also offer various indications of the way in which they are connected to their speech, and this has implications for how one might understand both *what* they say and *who* they are. For instance, if someone announced that as a bureaucrat he or she has always done as they were told, and would never dream of questioning the orders they receive, they thereby indicate that they are not necessarily the principal or the author of their speech, but instead an animator, a downstream and second or third order conveyor of words, putting speech into circulation while exempting themselves from authorial responsibility.<sup>48</sup>

To follow Goffman, are the quoted texts expressing the statements of a principal or of the animator of the speech in question? As quotes

<sup>48</sup> Goffman, Erving. *Forms of Talk*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981, p. 144.

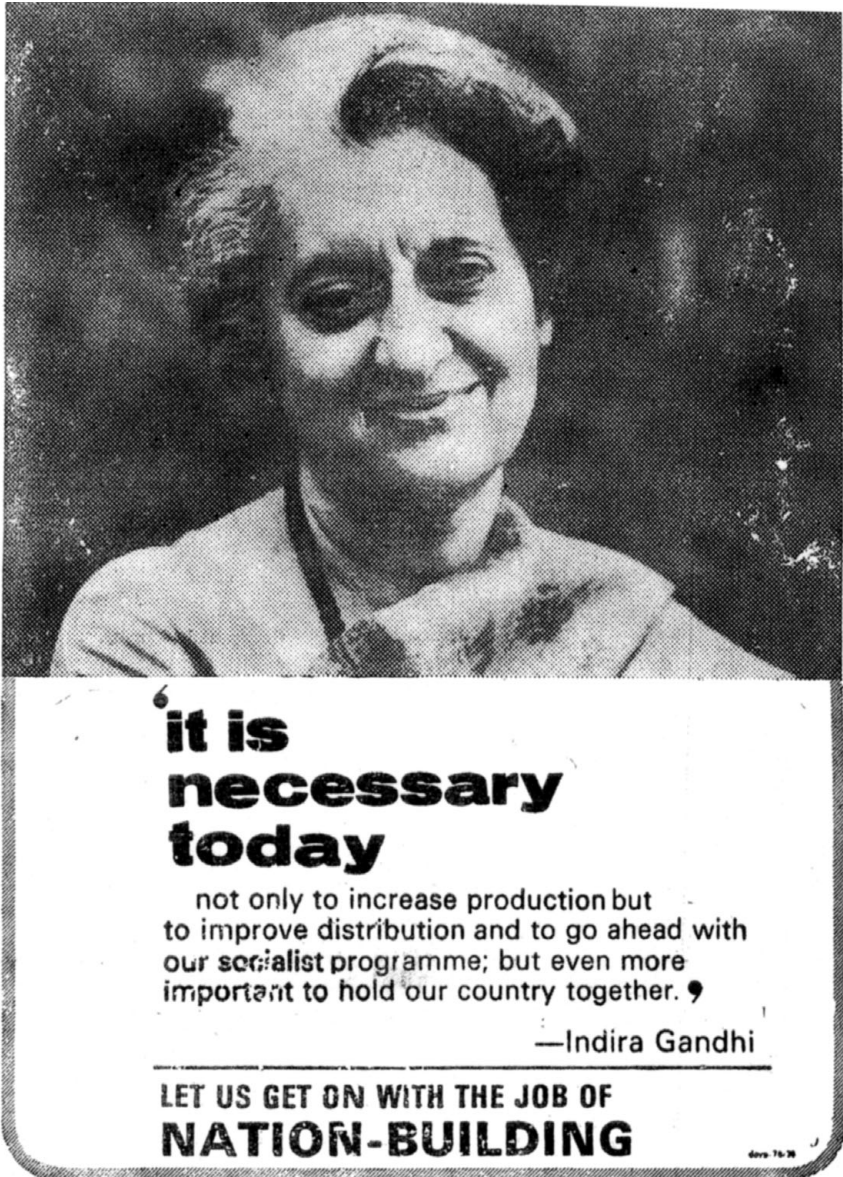


Figure 9. 'It is necessary today'

from the Prime Minister, they are presumably in the first category. But in fact they have all the signs of being the latter, as if they were half-remembered dicta, allegiance to which could be demonstrated by the repetition of select phrases, even if they were out of context, or

missing some of the verbal tissue in which they were conceived. The content of the message, what the animator of the speech wishes her audience to do or think, is in any case not very clear, beyond seeking the attention and allegiance of its hearers through a succession of escalating claims indicating that rejection may carry a high cost.

In the examples cited here, questions of public interest and of national security merge together so that matters that might ordinarily be discussed under the former rubric reappear under the latter. Executive intervention and public participation seem simultaneously to be required; there is a reluctance to accept any distinction between the two. Although presumably authorized, even if not authored by the Prime Minister, the statements quoted above give some insight into the forms of authority circulating through the Emergency, enabling it to win recruits, transmit orders and parry questions. Speech was hardly autonomous here, of course, but was accompanied by the threat of force.<sup>49</sup>

Personal authority and communication by word of mouth were the indispensable means of upholding and reproducing the inherited legacy of a massive, impersonal state apparatus. A personalized method of management and surveillance was favoured to maintain political authority, with loyal subordinates creating a tacit chain of command, and informal, spoken exchanges providing a crucial layer of communication that anchored government policies. The lack of accountability and of transparency were two essential accomplices of this mode of governing, devised not by deliberate planning but as a pragmatic response to the exigencies of retaining power. The coercion implied was offset by a method that inspired loyalty. Without an objective record of information, only the threat of force could ensure organizational coordination, although this could be disguised by a culture of fidelity and obedience. P.N. Dhar, who was in the Prime

<sup>49</sup> Force was abundantly actuated: over 100,000 detainees, at least 43 dead in jail or while in police custody, 700,000 rendered homeless due to demolitions, perhaps 400 killed in police firing against those resisting demolitions, over 8 millions sterilized in a single year under the family planning programme, over 1600 deaths due to sterilization. Again it should be stressed, the Emergency is continuous rather than exceptional in relation to post-independence history as a whole. The availability of these figures is a result of a set of conjunctural political developments that sought to bestow an exceptional status on the Emergency as an undemocratic phase. The importance of those efforts, and their implications for subsequent politics, are beyond the scope of this paper. Government of India. Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, *Family Welfare Programme in India, Yearbook 1978-1979*, New Delhi, 1980, p. 66.



Figure 10. 'Maintain internal security'

Minister's Secretariat during that time, indicates the effort to convey the right messages in Emergency-era slogans:

... H.C. Sarin, a retired member of the Indian Civil Service, paid a casual visit to my office. He said he had come to see the prime minister but thought he would say 'hello' to me as well. He was carrying a bundle of papers which, he said, contained his suggestions about a fresh set of slogans that would popularize the Emergency regime and explain its rationale. He also mentioned that he was the author of slogans that had appeared soon after the declaration of Emergency. The only thing I remember about the slogans was their emphasis on the need for discipline. While on the subject he said, 'You know, P.N., the impression about you is that you have lots of brains but what you do not have is the *danda* [stick] in your hand that your job requires.' This was said in a bantering tone and we both laughed.<sup>50</sup>

Effective performance was believed to require grasping the *danda* in one's hand, but in this case as Dhar remarks, 'The only thing I remember about the slogans was their emphasis on the need for discipline'. When it came to persuasion about the need for discipline, the event was noted; the effect was lacking.

Figures 10 and 11 show flamboyant echoes of some of the most notorious programmes and legislation of the period.

These slogans are examples of genre-crossing, government propaganda reanimated as consumer advertising. The virtue of these advertisements, from the perspective of the Emergency, was that they freely chose to reflect what was already given as a condition. In the repetition of Emergency signage where it did not have to

<sup>50</sup> Dhar 2003, p. 320.



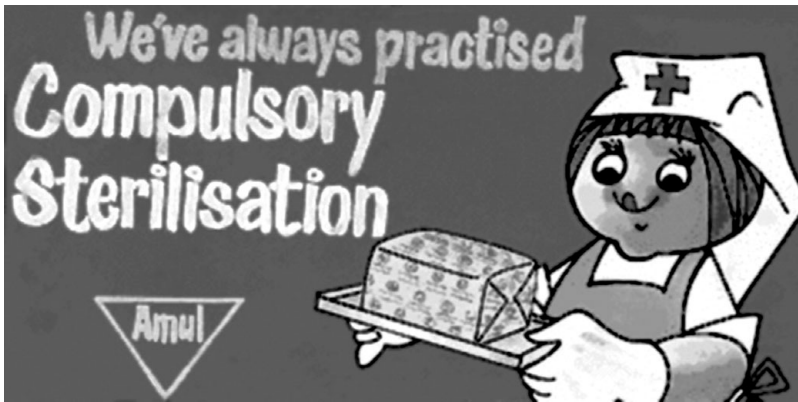


Figure 11. 'Compulsory sterilisation'

be repeated, in the shift of context from state proclamations to fast moving consumer edibles, are we witnessing the increase of influence through spatial extension or its weakening through dislocation? Given that agreement was the only permissible public response to state speech of the time, these billboard messages adopted the position of animator, subordinate in relation to the principal author of the words, i.e., the government. The already well-known status of the quote is signalled through size and colouring, so that in a sense the billboards are staging a response to these slogans. But to engage with the truth or falsehood of these messages as government propaganda is largely beside the point. The presentation of the images suggests that they are undergoing a status shift, from legislation, policy or opinion into symbols to be bodily incorporated for individual enhancement. Even in the second order publicity for the Emergency, government policy is 'laminated,' to use another of Goffman's terms. The impress of the user's intentions could not be visible except through adornment or wholesale envelopment. The commodity image appears here as interface technology, between the repressive apparatuses of the state and the emergence of cultural and consumerist forms of identity.

What is interesting, of course, is that during the Emergency, while populations and the management of life become the *locus* of state action in the guise of improving the health of the nation via family planning, the poor bore the brunt of these efforts. As advertisements for a product sold to the urban middle classes (arguably Amul Butter's constituency in 1976–1977) these messages are also about a eugenic sense of class identity, signalled by the pink-cheeked girl and the

comfortable juxtaposition with slogans that were so ominous for dissidents and for the economically weaker sections of society.

### The waning of Labour politics

The Emergency is perhaps the high water mark for leaders who rose to political power on the strength of their trade union militancy, the last major figure in this respect being George Fernandes.<sup>51</sup> Thereafter, unions only infrequently came to be regarded as yielding significant political capital, and state intervention in labour disputes increasingly took the side of management rather than labour.<sup>52</sup> The figures for strike and lockout activity give an indication of the diminishing returns of labour conflict and the declining problem posed by labour militancy (see Table 1).

With the dominance by business interests over the means of publicity, it is not surprising that strikes were seldom presented as an occasion for solidarity; rather, news reports presented them as disruptive of a consensus whose actual form remained unexamined.<sup>53</sup> By contrast, communal conflict could receive coverage sympathetic to Hindus, for example downplaying Muslim losses and highlighting aggression against Hindus even when Muslims were largely the victims of such conflict. The Emergency is a period when the data for all overt conflict shows a steep drop—but beginning in 1977, and in the years following, communal riots grow in number and gain enormously in intensity, signalling the increasing importance of caste and religious

<sup>51</sup> Fernandes, in 1974 presented a picture of militancy when he told railwaymen that they could make the country starve if they chose to strike work for a period of fifteen days, and later was implicated in the Baroda Dynamite Case; he went on to become Union Minister of Industries in the Janata Government. For Fernandes' speech to railwaymen, see *The Hindu*, 30 March 1974. Cited in P.N. Dhar, *Indira Gandhi*, p. 242. My discussion here on industrial conflict owes an enormous debt to Gautam Mody of the National Trades Unions Initiative (NTUI), New Delhi; the usual disclaimers apply.

<sup>52</sup> See E.A. Ramaswamy, *Worker Consciousness and Trade Union Response*. The government's favouring millowners in the textile strike, as the textile industry experienced technological shifts, amid a broader wave of de-industrialization, signalled the change most immediately, pp. 18–57. See also Van Wersch, H. *The Bombay Textile Strike, 1982–83*. Bombay, New York: Oxford University Press, 1992, esp. pp. 8–65.

<sup>53</sup> For an argument along these lines see Goldman, Robert and Arvind Rajagopal, *Mapping Hegemony: Television News and Industrial Conflict*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex Press, 1991, pp. 209–217.

difference as sites for inter-party political competition, and the increasing investment of political parties in communal conflict.<sup>54</sup>

What deserves to be noted here is the different orientation of the state with respect to this violence, that is, the mode of engagement of the state when it confronted disputes of various kinds, say, labour disputes as opposed to communal disputes. In the case of labour, the Indian state, from the time of the Independence Movement, had retained an interest in the advancement of trade unions, which were seen as an extension of nationalist political activity, and of political parties. Whereas in many countries, state arbitration was a last resort when business and management could not resolve their differences, in India it usually became the first resort, with political leaders often eager to advance the interests of their constituents amongst trade union workers. While this meant that union strength depended on their relation to political parties, the shop-floor became to some extent a site of inter-party competition, while engaging in labour conflict was a means of political advancement, especially for aspiring non-Congress political leaders.

Behind this fact lay the organizing activity of the All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC), the Communist Party of India's trade union wing. Until the formation of the Congress-affiliated Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC) in 1946, AITUC was, in terms of its membership size, the principal labour union in the country. Against the recommendations of the first Indian Labour Conference of 1951, which advocated bipartite negotiation between management and labour, various amendments to the Industrial Disputes Act (promulgated in its initial form in 1947) ensured that labour dispute resolution was shifted from the factory gates to the corridors of power where worker militancy became remote from its outcome. The result of these efforts to bureaucratize industrial dispute resolution, spearheaded by INTUC, was to increase rather than to diminish the likelihood of strikes, as workers, often led by the powerful AITUC, sought to reassert influence over negotiations.

The relatively high incidence of strikes in the post-independence era, at least until the Emergency, points to the unsuccessful attempts of the

<sup>54</sup> This is not to regard workers and citizens as passive elements in elite political designs, but to point to different political emphases that gain importance, for reasons we need to inquire into. See Dipesh Chakrabarty on the ambiguous loyalties of workers given their ties of class and community, in his *Rethinking Working-Class History: Bengal 1890–1940*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990, pp. 198–218.

TABLE 1  
Industrial Disputes 1970 to 2007

Year	No. of Strikes	No. of Lockouts	Total no. of disputes	No. Workers Involved in Strikes	No. of Workers Involved in Lockouts	Total No. of Workers Involved	No. of Mandays Lost in Strikes	No. of Mandays Lost in Lockouts	Total No. of Mandays Lost
2007	182	145	327	282,910	57,528	340,438	1,078,561	3,502,080	4,580,641
2006	209	209	518	631,885	109,959	741,844	3,938,926	17,622,293	21,561,219
2005	227	229	456	2,722,784	190,817	2,913,601	10,800,686	18,864,313	29,664,999
2004	236	241	477	1,274,000	137,000	1,410,000	4,830,000	19,040,000	23,870,000
2003	255	297	552	1,011,000	805,000	1,816,000	3,210,000	27,050,000	30,260,000
2002	295	284	579	900,386	179,048	1,079,434	9,664,537	16,921,382	26,585,919
2001	372	302	674	488,596	199,182	687,778	556,276*	18,204,044	18,204,044
2000	426	345	771	1,044,237	374,062	1,418,299	11,958,694	16,804,427	28,763,121
1999	540	387	927	1,099,240	211,455	1,310,695	10,625,171	16,161,685	26,786,856
1998	665	432	1,097	800,778	488,145	1,288,923	9,349,108	12,712,876	22,061,984
1997	793	512	1,305	637,480	343,787	981,267	6,295,365	10,676,024	16,971,389
1996	763	403	1,166	608,673	330,631	939,304	7,817,869	12,466,934	20,284,803
1995	732	334	1,066	68,259	307,100	375,359	5,719,961	10,569,608	16,289,569
1994	808	393	1,201	626,326	220,103	846,429	6,651,054	14,332,028	20,983,082
1993	914	479	1,393	672,024	281,843	953,867	5,614,515	14,686,138	20,300,653
1992	1,011	703	1,714	767,484	484,741	1,252,225	15,132,101	16,126,643	31,258,744
1991	1,278	532	1,810	872,482	469,540	1,342,022	12,428,333	13,999,759	26,428,092
1990	1,459	366	1,825	1,162,303	145,560	1,307,863	10,639,687	13,446,483	24,086,170
1989	1,397	389	1,786	1,158,107	206,147	1,364,254	10,695,112	21,968,265	32,663,377
1988	1,304	441	1,745	937,291	253,742	1,191,033	12,529,895	21,417,030	33,946,925
1987	1,348	451	1,799	1,494,589	275,288	1,769,877	14,026,081	21,332,291	35,358,372
1986	1,458	434	1,892	1,444,397	200,485	1,644,882	1,883,648	13,924,580	15,808,228
1985	1,355	400	1,755	877,945	200,855	1,078,800	11,486,803	17,752,663	29,239,466
1984	1,689	405	2,094	1,726,330	222,699	1,949,029	39,956,861	16,068,379	56,025,240

1983	1,993	495	2,488	1,166,502	293,963	1,460,465	24,921,446	21,937,018	46,858,464
1982	2,029	454	2,483	1,190,554	278,475	1,469,029	53,113,000	22,502,000	75,615,000
1981	2,245	344	2,589	1,260,977	327,027	1,588,004	21,208,000	15,375,000	36,584,000
1980	2,501	355	2,856	1,660,851	239,482	1,900,333	12,018,000	9,907,000	21,925,000
1979	2,708	340	3,048	2,714,318	159,257	2,873,575	35,804,000	8,050,000	43,854,000
1978	2,762	425	3,187	1,690,090	225,513	1,915,603	15,423,000	12,917,000	28,340,000
1977	2,691	426	3,117	1,912,427	280,788	2,193,215	13,410,000	11,910,000	25,320,000
1976	1,241	218	1,459	550,477	186,497	736,974	2,799,000	9,947,000	12,746,000
1975	1,644	299	1,943	1,032,609	110,817	1,143,426	16,706,000	5,195,000	21,901,000
1974	2,510	428	2,938	2,709,838	144,785	2,854,623	33,643,000	6,619,000	40,262,000
1973	2,958	412	3,370	2,358,206	187,396	2,545,602	13,862,000	6,764,000	20,626,000
1972	2,857	386	3,243	1,474,656	262,081	1,736,737	13,748,000	6,796,000	20,544,000
1971	2,478	274	2,752	1,476,203	138,937	1,615,140	11,803,000	4,743,000	16,546,000
1970	2,598	291	2,889	1,551,530	276,222	1,827,752	14,749,000	5,814,000	20,563,000

Notes: \*Figures in Annual Reports and Yearbooks are rounded off and may vary slightly from reports (Indian Labour Statistics) that give exact figures.

2007 data source: Indian Labour Journal, Vol. 49, No. 3, March 2008. Gol, MoL&E, Shimla, page 261. Table A.3.1. Provisional statistics.

2006 data source: Indian Labour Journal, Vol. 48, No. 3, March 2007. Gol, MoL&E, Shimla, page 277. Table A.3.1. Provisional statistics.

2005 data source: Statistics on Industrial Disputes, Closures, Retrenchments and Lay-offs in India During the Year 2005, Gol, MoL&E, Labour Bureau: Shimla, 2005, page 20. Table A-I & A-II.

2003-04 data source: Annual Report 2005-06. MoL&E, Gol. Shimla 2005, page 38. No table number given.

2000-02 data source: Indian Labour Yearbook 2004. Gol, MoL, Labour Bureau, Shimla: 2004, p. 115-1/6. Tables 4.06 & 4.07.

1996-1999 data source: Indian Labour Yearbook 1999. Gol, MoL, Labour Bureau, Shimla: 2001, p. 111-112. Tables 4.06 & 4.07.

1993-95 data source: Indian Labour Yearbook, 1995. Gol, MoL, Labour Bureau, Shimla: 1997, p. 79, Table 4.06 & 4.07.

1983-92 data source: Indian Labour Yearbook, 1993. Gol, MoL, Labour Bureau, Shimla: 1995, p. 67. Tables 4.06 & 4.07.

1982 data source: Indian Labour Statistics 1982-86. Gol, MoL, Labour Bureau. Shimla: 1991, p. 360. Table 10.1(a).

1971-81 data source: Indian Labour Statistics, 1980-81, Gol, MoL, Labour Bureau, Shimla: 1987, p. 257. Table 10.1(a).

1970 data source: Indian Labour Statistics 1978, Gol, MoL, Labour Bureau, Shimla: 1987, p. 263. Table 10.1(a).

1983 data includes 57 strikes, 159534 workers involved and 13378000 mandays lost due to Bombay Textile Strikes. (Note b in Indian Labour Yearbook 1982-86, p. 360. Table 10.1(a).)

1982 data includes 59 strikes, 170748 workers involved and 41401000 mandays lost due to Bombay Textile strikes. (Note a given in MoL publication below the table.)

state to control labour, and of the strength of union activism that succeeded in overcoming efforts to thwart their aspirations. This is an index of the quality, scope and extent of political dissent that was allowed or had to be accommodated because there were not yet the political conditions for its containment. Nevertheless, the fact that strikes were a means for unions to wield their strengths and achieve their goals, pointed to the existence of what was *de facto* a sanctioned political field in which labour was a legitimate political actor, one that could win considerable gains, as indeed was witnessed across the 1950s and 1960s.

It was perhaps the mark of a 'soft state,' that confronted its problems by partially yielding to them, that had to endure a degree of labour militancy as the cost of maintaining what passed for order. But this was not all. Labour occupied a specific place in the Nehruvian imagination. Labour was the human element in a system of economic production, and the counterweight to the drive for profit that was its own end. The principal avenue of such attention was the institution of the labour union, which of course covered only a fraction of the working population, but a substantial section of the organized sector. Government attention to unions did not necessarily mean they prospered or became strengthened; but it was an affirmation of the developmental state itself, which after all saw itself as the anchor and connecting point of the different segments of the population. If the nation was imagined as an economy, it was through the state that labour and capital came together in a productive way<sup>55</sup> and, of course, in a secular developmental state, it was also the point of connection between different religious communities.

The two strikes that book-end the Emergency, the railways strike of 1974, and the textile strike of 1981–1982, make clear the sea-change that occurred in the position of labour, and the drastic diminution of labour's bargaining power with the unwillingness of the state after the Emergency to entertain labour as a meaningful interlocutor in industrial relations and in economic development. The Emergency itself was a turning point, signalled by a significant drop in the occurrence of strikes and lockouts (see Table 1 and Figure 12).

If we disaggregate these figures, lockouts form the greater part of the man-days lost during this period (Table 1 and Figure 13), indicating that increasingly, management not labour was responsible for work stoppage. Interestingly, the number of workers involved in these trade disputes does not fold into the picture of long-term decline of industrial conflict. The number of workers involved in strikes in

<sup>55</sup> Deshpande, 2000, pp. 48–73.

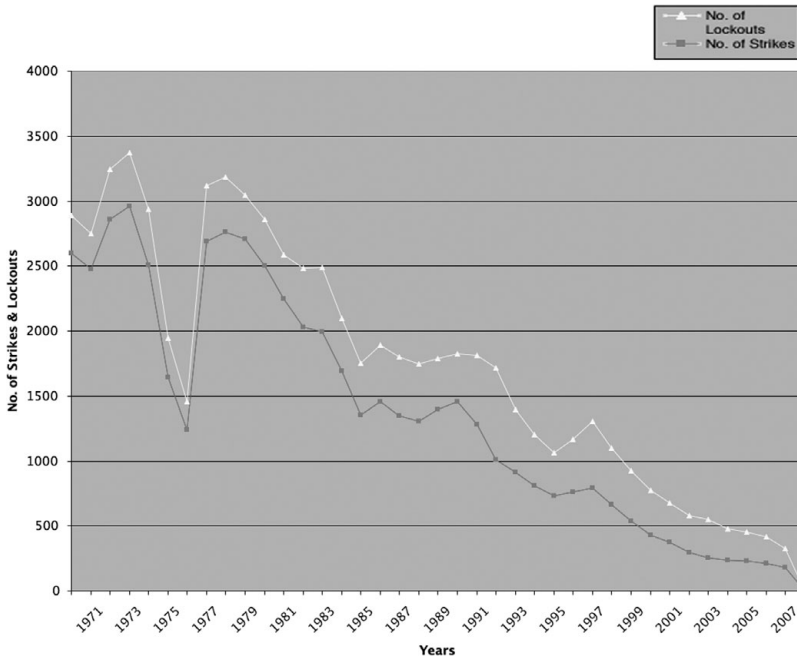


Figure 12. Industrial disputes in India 1970–2007. No. of strikes and lockouts.

2005 is 2.9 millions, more than the number involved in strikes during the year of the railways strike in 1974, 2.85 millions, for example, although the number of man-days lost in 2005 is a third of that figure (Table 2 and Figures 13 and 14).

After the Emergency, the incidence of labour militancy drops, and again, if we disaggregate the figures, man-days lost are almost entirely due to lockouts. Business houses are allowed increasing freedom to engage with labour on their own terms, and are free to declare lockouts with little intervention by the state. Strikes increasingly involve more workers, but they are shorter, and acquire a symbolic status rather than exhibiting the political muscle of unions in the production process. The nature of the negotiation between labour and business also changes, with monetary compensation becoming much more important than political power or workers' rights. Increasingly, workers appear willing to give up their ability to influence shop-floor practices in return for cash benefits, while businesses wield the threat of casualization over workers to compel them to accept such conditions.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>56</sup> Ramaswamy, E.A. *Worker Consciousness and Trade Union Response*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1988, pp. 212–239.

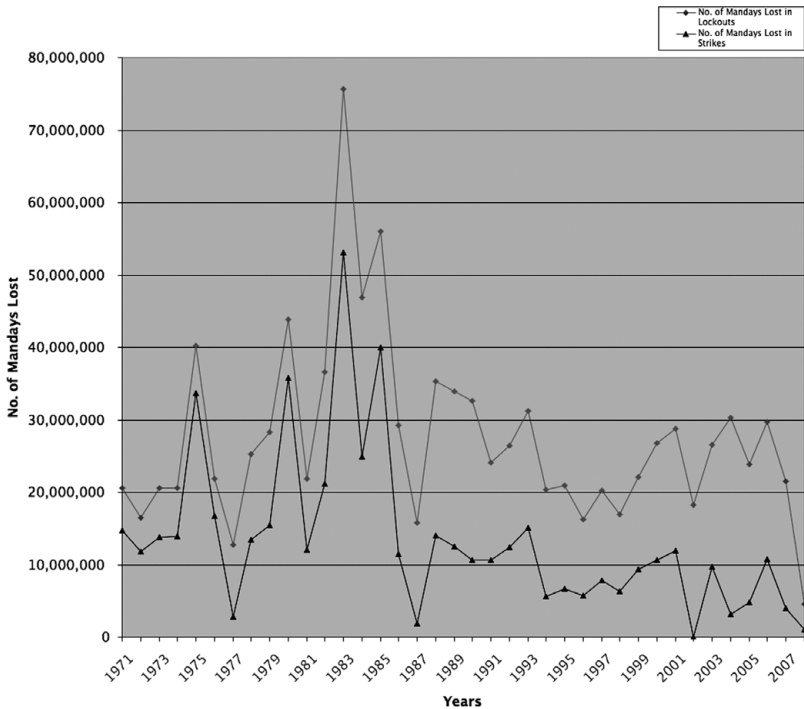


Figure 13. Industrial disputes in India 1970–2007. No. of Mandays lost.

A change in the character of the political regime occurs, and the Emergency is a watershed in this change. It is as if the state steps back, appears to devolve agency to businesses, and to a hierarchical Hindu society, increasingly presenting itself as external to the cultural and economic processes going on. It is an interested party, an enabler, rather than the necessary point of connection through which the disparate elements of economy and society (labour and capital, religious communities) were joined.

Thereafter, we see that the incidence of communal riots increases quite steadily for a decade or more (Table 2). There occurs a transfer of political violence from labour to religious communities and specifically to communal activity.<sup>57</sup> If labour was a key category for the developmental state's conception of the national economy, it became a political category by virtue of that fact, as well as a site of political contestation, where opposition figures challenged ruling

<sup>57</sup> Rajgopal, P.R. *Communal Violence in India*. New Delhi: Uppal Publishing House, 1987, pp. 16–17.



TABLE 2  
*Number of Communal Incidents and Persons Killed and Injured in these Incidents During 1954 to 1985*

No.	Year	No. of incidents	Persons killed	Persons injured
1	1954	84	34	512
2	1955	75	24	457
3	1956	82	35	575
4	1957	58	12	316
5	1958	40	7	369
6	1959	42	41	1344
7	1960	26	14	262
8	1961	92	108	593
9	1962	60	43	348
10	1963	61	26	489
11	1964	1070	1919	2053
12	1965	173	34	758
13	1966	144	45	467
14	1967	198	251	880
15	1968	346	133	1309
16	1969	519	673	2702
17	1970	521	298	1607
18	1971	321	103	1263
19	1972	240	69	1056
20	1973	242	72	1318
21	1974	248	87	1123
22	1975	205	33	890
23	1976	169	39	794
24	1977	188	36	1122
25	1978	230	110	1853
26	1979	304	261	2379
27	1980	421	372	2691
28	1981	319	196	2613
29	1982	470	238	3025
30	1983	500	1143	3652
31	1984	476	445	4836
33	1985	525	328	3665

Source: Rajgopal, P.R. *Communal Violence in India*. New Delhi: Uppal Publishing House, 1987, pp. 16–17.

party hegemony. Labour militancy and violence were the signs of such contestation. The growth in the incidence of communal violence points to a parallel phenomenon, namely religious identity as the new salient category where consent was increasingly sought and contested. There is a noteworthy difference, however. The attempt to control labour was uneven and unstable, and constantly confronted by the attempt by workers and opposition leaders to challenge the terms of their categorization by the state—i.e., as docile partners fortunate to have

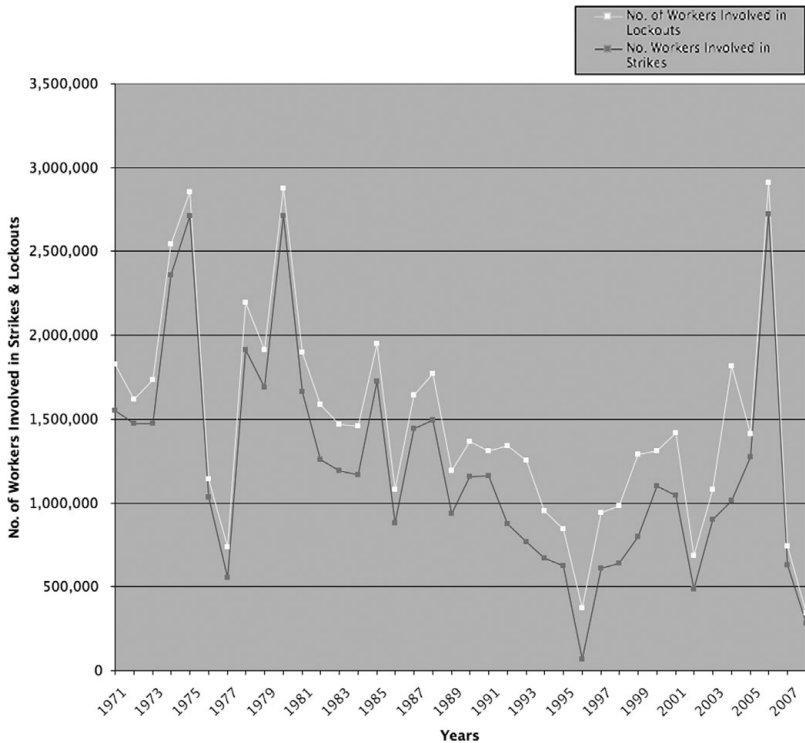


Figure 14. Industrial disputes in India 1970–2007. No. of workers involved in strikes & lockouts.

a place at the negotiating table. In the case of religious communities, the state was seemingly external to them, an ineffective arbitrator at best, attempting it might seem to quench the flames of sectarian passion which burst out in society for reasons that had apparently little to do with the state itself.

## Conclusion

The political crisis in response to which the Emergency was declared in June 1975 transformed into a different kind of problem thereafter. All challenges to the state appeared immediately to subside with the mass arrest of the members of the opposition and the suspension of civil liberties, including the imposition of press censorship. As the state exercised its right to surveil, direct and, if necessary, monopolize the communicational space of civil society, the question could be posed as never before: *what is the state, and where does its authority come from?*<sup>2</sup> The

state itself both posed the question of its own authority and offered a succession of answers. The state's developmental mission, of course, was always declared to be its chief basis of legitimation, pursued to enhance the national good. This is expressed in purely economic terms at first, and over time, as requiring popular participation and 'voluntary' involvement, dependant on particular forms of bodily discipline and civic hygiene. A rhetoric of consent arose alongside the increasing coerciveness of policies, notably of family planning. It is noteworthy that where the character of political power had an avowedly bio-political intent, to curb reproductive capacity, individual participation was labelled as inherently consensual and voluntary.<sup>58</sup> This marked the passage of power from a statist, developmental model to a disciplinary form more reliant on cultural and consumerist forms of identity.

Historically, this sequence of events was followed by the anointment of the middle class as the preferred vehicle of economic growth and national advancement. The changed model of power takes the small nuclear family, characteristic of the more affluent classes, as its norm. Coercion exercised on behalf of family planning norms is both witnessed and experienced as defending a particular imagination of the modal family type already realized in more well-to-do urban groups. The consuming middle class that precipitates in the later period of liberalization as a full-fledged political actor is to some extent constituted through violence enacted in defence of its biological and civic norms. The growth and influence of this class illuminates the intersection of a new kind of economic nationalism with a resurgent Hindu cultural nationalism, i.e., the support for market-led economic reforms joined to the view that the perceived failure of Nehruvian developmental policies could only be redressed by declaring Hindu majority rule.

In 1989, Ashok Rudra argued that in India the intelligentsia had emerged as a ruling class co-opted into the industrial bourgeoisie's alliance with the landowning elite. His conception of the intelligentsia

<sup>58</sup> Vicziany, Marika. 'Coercion in a Soft State: The Family-Planning Programme of India: Part I: The Myth of Voluntarism', *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 55, No. 3, Autumn, 1982, pp. 373–402; and Vicziany, Marika, 'Coercion in a Soft State: The Family-Planning Program of India: Part 2: The Sources of Coercion', *Pacific Affairs*, vol. 55., no. 4, Winter 1982–1983, pp. 557–592; Tarlo 2003; Tarlo 2004; Connelly, Matthew, 'Population Control in India: Prologue to the Emergency Period', *Population and Development Review*, 32 (4): 629–667, 2006; Connelly, Matthew, *Fatal Misconception: The Struggle to Control World Population*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008.

included white collar workers in public and private sectors, educated professionals such as doctors, lawyers, journalists and teachers, politicians, and trade union leaders. Manual workers like sweepers, drivers, gate-keepers, scavengers, and fourth class government employees like peons, maintenance workers and technicians were excluded.<sup>59</sup> His analysis reflects a problem in the literature on the political economy of Indian development, namely, a tendency to focus on statics and not dynamics, to theorize models of class identity and position without indicating how they change. Classes mutate over time. Although Rudra's analysis indexes the expansion and a certain maturation of educated middle classes in the post-independence period, questions of historical period and of the instrumentalities of political process are absent from his account, as is an appreciation of how the state and social classes interact and modify each other in the process of governance.<sup>60</sup> However, what Rudra calls 'the rise of the intelligentsia' can be read as the formation of a new middle class, whose opinion stands for public opinion as a whole.

Although Rudra's terms and assumptions require revision, his analysis is relevant to the arguments discussed in this paper. His focus on a ruling class assumes an instrumental conception of power, in which dominating classes oppress the dominated. The intelligentsia occupy an ambivalent position in his argument, since they rule despite being co-opted. In fact, they can be seen to represent a new and embodied form of power as illustrated in the new middle class. Here power is more usefully seen as productive, as shaping a given socio-political formation, infusing its subjects with purpose and volition, rather than as constraining individuals and achieving its ends against their will. Power is exercised through the body and is not limited to the circulation of ideas and opinion but includes modes of civic comportment (personal and environmental hygiene) and dispositions of biological capacity (family planning), cultural attitudes and practices of consumption. The list of occupations Rudra provides for the intelligentsia excludes manual and less educated workers, even within the salaried classes, and in the Indian context carries upper caste connotations. Rather than adding a new member to the ruling class coalition list, Rudra's essay points to the emergence

<sup>59</sup> Rudra, 1989, p. 144.

<sup>60</sup> Patnaik, Prabhat, C.P. Chandrasekhar and Abhijit Sen, 'The Proliferation of the Bourgeoisie and Economic Policy', in T.V. Sathyamurthy (ed.) *Class Formation and Political Transformation in Post-colonial India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996, pp. 55-79.

of a form of power not directly located in the developmental state as before but appearing in civil society and expressed in cultural and political terms but enacting a state-like authority.

In the period leading up to the Emergency, the state had courted the masses. For example, bank nationalisation and the abolition of privy purses in 1969 bolstered Indira Gandhi's pro-poor reputation and allowed her to overcome election campaigns against her. National savings schemes at favourable rates of interest drew on government coffers to bolster the savings of the thrifty, and in effect constituted a subsidy to middle classes, although theoretically they were open to all. After nationalization, banks were asked to extend credit to the rural and small scale industries (SSI) sectors, the latter continuing the Mahalanobis strategy of protecting SSIs. Bank loans to these sectors offered the prospect of financing industrious entrepreneurs and stimulating grassroots capitalism. However, the loans had to be sanctioned by nationalized banks, which constituted political patronage, and created access for politicians to finance capital on a scale previously not possible.

Such populist policies continued incrementally during the Emergency but concentrated on those who had access to finite amounts of cash: through public distribution systems (whose benefits flowed largely to urban middle classes), and savings schemes and bank loan schemes as mentioned above. The attempt by the state during the Emergency to bring the population that was beneath the level of the market within its purview, and engage them in its developmental policies, was carried out through a combination of heavy propaganda and forceful policy implementation. The latter included cash incentives to the poor for the relinquishment of their fertility rights, a transaction that was formally consensual, but meant the non-reversible exchange of long-term capacities for modest, short-term gains, and relied on the vulnerability of the poor to such appeals. Such measures were thus not too far removed from the openly coercive sterilization highlighted as Emergency 'abuses' by the Shah Commission.

After its return to power in 1980 the Congress Party paid far more attention to the need to generate consent, via a middle class, promoted and identified with state policies that, over time, increasingly favoured a consumption-led model of growth. What occurs in its wake is a growing separation between the command economy and public opinion, so that the latter began to appear, increasingly, as autonomous, and as capable of effectuating the work that is required

to be done, by itself, without any assistance from the apparatuses of the state. In other words, the kind of work the image is presented as capable of performing, changes.

Accompanying this redefinition was a shift from economic populism to cultural populism, from policies in which pro-poor programmes were significant, to policies where the new emphasis on a middle class was accompanied by appeals to religious and cultural identity. Certainly there was nothing inevitable about the forms of politics that developed after 1980. But in retrospect, some of the crucial groundwork for this shift can be discerned in the events of the Emergency.

### Appendix One

#### Daily Newspaper Circulation 1975–1980:

1975	93,83,000
1976*	
1977	106,72,000
1980	145,31,000

#### Figures for circulation of all periodicals:

1970	293,03,000
1975	338,22,000
1976*	
1977	374,37,000
1978	408,50,000
1979	464,49,000
1980	509,21,000

\*In 1976, the full year of the period of the Emergency, circulations of newspapers dropped, according to S.C. Bhatt, who worked in the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, reflecting perhaps popular sensitivity to the prevalence of censorship, but also indicating that newspaper reading itself depended to some extent on political excitement, as Robin Jeffrey has suggested.<sup>61</sup> (I have been unable to get the figures for this year.)

On the other hand, news coverage of Emergency abuses was prolific in the eight weeks prior to polling in March 1977, and the figures indicate greatly increased circulation following the relaxation of Emergency.

*Source: Mass Media in India* (Annual Publication, although some years it is Bi-annual). New Delhi: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.

<sup>61</sup> S.C. Bhatt, 'The Indian Press: Achievements and Shortcomings', in *Mass Media in India 1989–1990*, p. 23.

## Appendix Two

TABLE A:  
*Growth in the Assets of Monopoly Houses Assets (Rs. Cr.)*

House	1972	1977	Percentage Increase
1. Birla	589.40	1070.20	81.6
2. Tata	641.93	1069.28	66.6
3. Mafatlal	183.74	285.63	55.4
4. J.K. Singhanian	121.45	267.31	120.1
5. Thapa	136.16	215.92	58.6
6. I.C.I.	135.21	209.97	55.3
7. Scindia	107.73	200.04	85.7
8. Oil India	104.04	199.95	92.2
9. Bhiwandiwalla	45.91	189.44	312.6
10. Bangur	125.26	188.24	50.3
11. Larsen & Toubro	79.03	185.91	135.3
12. Sri Ram	120.77	179.77	48.9
13. A.C.C.	124.36	168.86	25.7
14. Kirloskar	86.46	160.96	86.2
15. Hindustan Lever	77.87	143.59	84.4
16. Khatau (Bombay)	75.44	138.82	84.0
17. Sarabhai	84.44	136.96	62.3
18. Walchand	99.47	132.81	33.5
19. Macneil & Magor	64.80	132.55	104.6
20. Mahindra & Mahindra	58.49	125.49	114.3
Total for the 20 houses	3071.98	5401.70	75.8

*Source:* Department of Company Affairs, Ministry of Law, Government of India, 1978.

TABLE B:  
*Growth in Indirect Tax Revenue (Rs. Cr.)*

Year	Direct tax revenue	Indirect tax revenue	Total	Share of Indirect taxes in total (per cent)
1948-1949	239	363	601	60.23
1955-1956	255	558	813	68.63
1960-1961	420	1040	1460	71.23
1965-1966	775	2273	3048	74.57
1970-1971	1091	3864	4955	77.98
1972-1973	1183	5253	6436	81.62
1974-1975	1460	7429	8889	88.58
1976-1977	2657	9580	12237	79.40

Increase in tax revenue between 1948-1949 and 1976-1977 = 11476

Increase in indirect tax revenue between 1948-1949 and 1976-1977 = 9217

Ratio of extra tax revenue raised by indirect taxes: 80.4 per cent

*Source:* *Commerce*, 27 March, 1976 and Supplement to *RBI Bulletin* October 1977. From *Focus: Handbook of Statistics*. Communist Party of India (Marxist). New Delhi, 30 November, 1979.