

# Books

## A RAMBLING COMPENDIUM

**PORTRAIT OF A POLITICAL MURDER** by H. S. Bhatta. Deep & Deep Publications, New Delhi; Pp 176 Rs 35.

The sleek Boeing 707 came to a halt. The yellow Presidential flag, embossed with a scimitar fluttered, outside the pilot's window. Soon the door opened and a tall handsome and meticulously dressed man came down the ramp. The moment was historic. Mr Z. A. Bhutto had come to India, to make peace, on behalf of defeated Pakistan.

His entourage was equally well groomed. They were also all exceptionally young. I remember looking at a young man, sitting next to the President, wearing a matching tie and handkerchief, and sleek buckle-shoes. I asked Bhutto's

Military Secretary, who happened to be standing next to me: "Who is that young man? Is he his Secretary?"

"Not he is Hayat Mohammad Khan Sherpao, the Minister for Fuel and Energy," the gentleman replied.

This was the man who was later blown up in a bomb attack at Peshawar. But at that moment, they appeared like the shining faces of the Kennedy Administration, on the eve of the 'New Camelot'.

In the early years of his administration, Bhutto perhaps did much to pull Pakistan out of the depths it had fallen into after the 71 war. Within the feudal situation existing in Pakistan, he should even be credited with many reforms. But it appears, from whatever one has read or heard, that things turned sour near the end. The rule of law is essentially an English concept, somewhat fo-

reign even to many Europeans. It is certainly not an Indian belief. It seems that in spite of his Berkley and Oxford education, and his years at Lincoln's Inn, Bhutto slowly but surely, strayed away from this British notion. Perhaps in his last few years, he was ultimately possessed, by our own sub-continental code, as laid down in the proverb, "Jis Ki Lathi, Us Ki Bhains".

The wheel came full circle in April, when Bhutto faced the hangman. General Zia has argued, that he introduced the concept of equality before law, and accountability, even for the highest in the land. Others condemn this, as a political murder of a leader of the people. It will take long, to decide, on the rights and wrongs of this event, and an objective judgement will be possible only much later. For the moment, one must confess to an admira-

tion, for the man's courage in adversity, and stubborn will-power. I am reminded of Shakespeare's line on an English King:—

"Nothing became him in life like the leaving it"

Bhutto's hanging is bound to inspire the writing of numerous books. At the moment, the effort is directed towards 'quickies' as this one is. In its 170 odd pages, he has put together, documents such as the judgements of the Lahore High Court, and the Pakistan Supreme Court, along with Mr Bhutto's appeal papers. In addition, there are some rambling chapters on Mr Bhutto's early life and career. The book has no coherence. It is essentially a compendium of documents and to that extent, it can be of some use to those, who wish to study this event at greater length.

— M. S. Gill