WENTY-THREE ago, a patriarch of the Fourth Estate, lan Melville Stephens, former Editor of The Statesman, who was considered to be the 'trendsetter' of bold journalism in the sub-continent, visited Dhaka only for a couple of days. Due to some personal reason he could not meet the journalists of Dhaka. A cryptic message from Rawalpindi alerted the Press Information Department officials that Ian Stephens was slightly indisposed and would like to avoid visitors. And, he does not carry anything himself Though the visit of a 'legend' in the field of journalism later proved to be a memorable one, it was not publicised in the press depriving his innumerable Bengali admirers of the news that the all-time great Editor of the sub-continent was in the

Ian Stephens's muchawaited visit occurred in December 1970 which was a hectic political time for the Bengalis who were on the verge of their final stage of the freedom movement. Surprisingly, a protagonist of Pakistan movement in early and mid 40s and who later became an honorary citizen of Pakistan, lent tacit support to the freedom struggle of the Bengalis. Except writing a small letter to The London Times, perhaps on request of Pakistan authorities, comparing the Bengali freedom movement with the Triest issue. But subsequently he virtually withdrewall support from the Pakistani junta after the military crackdown on the unarmed Bengalis in Dhaka on March 25, 1971.

It was a bright sunny morning of December 18, 1970. A tall and very handsome fan Stephens stepped into the gangway of a PIA plane with a captivating smile; exactly resembling the one that could be usually found on the back covers of his books! In a message to The Statesman (centenary 1875-19751. lan

(with whom Ian Stephens once exchanged greetings through this writer). Mentions were also made of late publicist S A D Fakhruddin Ahmed and Syed Waliullah, both of whom were attached to The Statesman at the time of lan Stephens, and also of Enamul Haq, publicist, who was once invited by lan Stephens to visit his Hertford Street house in Cambridge sometime in 1966. Ian Stephens spoke very highly of A R Shams-Ud Doha, former High Commissioner in London. So far as the knowledge of this writer goes, among lan Stephens's nonexcept the walking stick. . journalist friends included such illustrious persons as Nawab Sir K G M Faruqi, Kt. Nawab of Ratanpur, A H M Doha, ex-IPS and central minister, and Dr Syed Sajjad Hossain. education-

#### Immortal "Shahed" Altaf Hussain, educationist-

turned-journalist-politician, former Editor of "The Dawn". who was also secretary to Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah for some time, and a central minister, perhaps got the highest praise from the pen of Ian Stephens. He wrote: "One of the creators of Pakistan was certainly 'Shahed', for several years a mysterious regular contributor of articles to The Statesman. We published them on our editorial page - where a Hindu contributor's articles also regularly appeared. The extremity of baffled indignation which Shahed's effusions aroused among the more chauvinist of the paper's Hindu readers, and the enthusiasm among Muslim ones, will be almost unintelligible now." Again, in reply to a letter from Prof Nicholas Mansergh, Master of St. John's College, Cambridge, who was also editor-in-chief of the British Government document under the title The Transfer of Power in India 1942-47, lan Stephens wrote:" Yes indeed, 'Shahed' was indeed Altaf Hossain. For good reasons, personal to Altaf, the fact was for

and chappals?"

would be all right for me. If yes-

terday's dead wasp on the

kitchen floor, is, as wasp, utter

nullity, why not lan Stephens?

Yet despite the scientists' com-

puny personal efforts to under-

stand, the Universe is an

enigma - and seems bound to

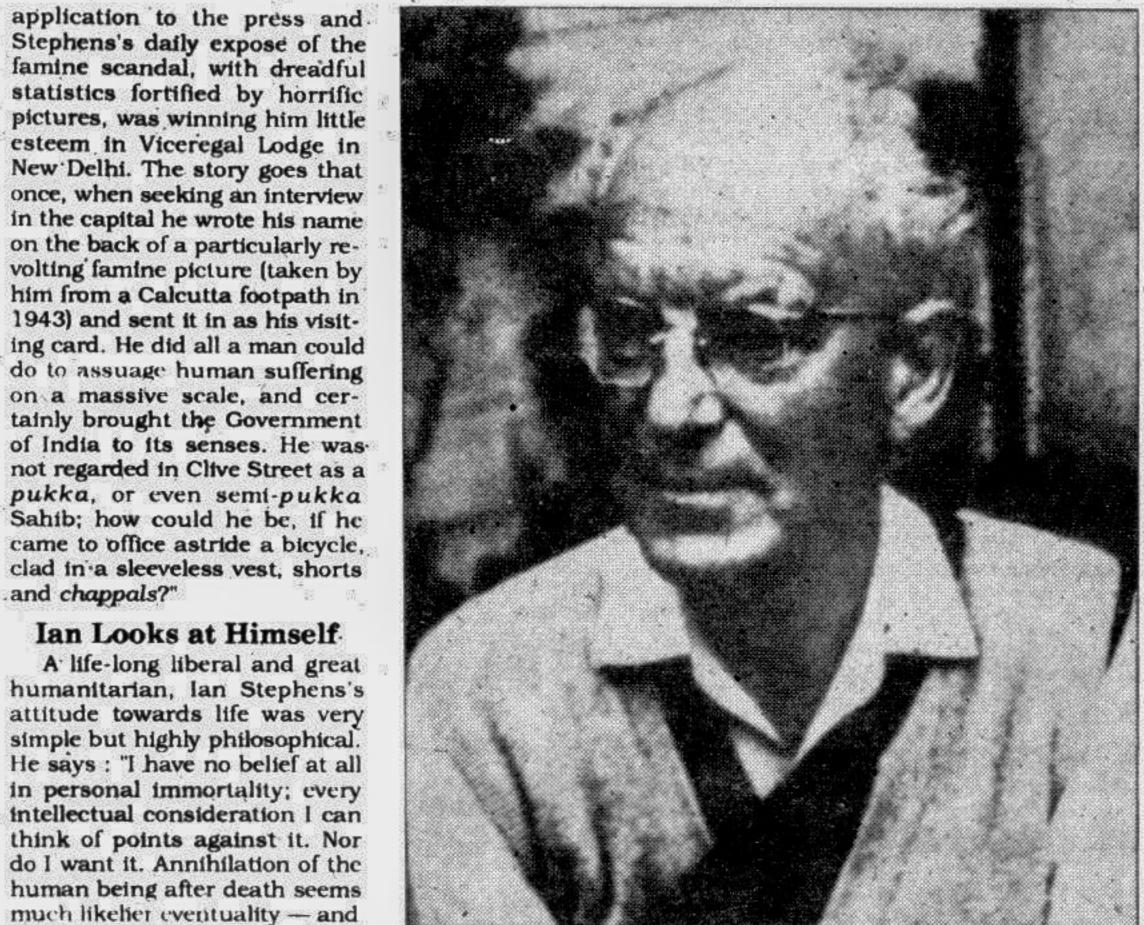
remain so, human beings'

senses are so limited."

plex probes and mankind's

## The World of Ian Stephens A Partial Glimpse

by Abdul Kader



lan Stephens (1803-1984) : Heart remains forever in Bengal

freedom."

Photo: Courtesy- The Stacey International, London

with a wife? Of course, while I was in England on a long leave, my parents, who were worried to see my attitude towards matrimony, invited some pretty young girls to our house in Eastern London, But, I could not decide finally." There were other factors as well. Besides. Roshan (who was later married to the elder brother of Wali Khan of NWFP), Ian Stephens was also in 'love' with Miss Penelope, the daughter of the Cin-C, and "thought about her continuously, and did, at times, toy with the idea of proposing marriage." Also came in his life another lady, Georgie, who was his frequent partner in ball dance. Ian Stephens was a life long bachelor but had an adopted son, Dr Arthur, from

HEN Borts Yeltsin dis-

solved the Russian Pa-

rliament in violation of

the constitution, The Economist

editorial remarked that it was "a

step he was justified in taking."

President ordered tanks to

bomb the White House, killing

more than 100 people in the

worst violence in Moscow since

the 1917 revolution, the Russia

correspondent of the magazine

for understatement has been

one of the magazine's enduring

press, The Economist was anx-

ious to support the West's de-

sire for a rapid integration of

the former Soviet empire into

the global marketplace via pri-

vatisation and IMF-inspired

which coined the term

"privatisation", to describe the

returning "to profitable private

motivation of anything that had

declined through unprofitable

Since its foundation The

Economist has been a staunch

opponent of state intervention

in industry. When under

Britain's 1840 Factory Acts the

factory work hours were limited,

the magazine was shocked by

the "interference of the legisla-

ture with industry, with the

hours of work, with the con-

tracts between masters and

workmen...; to which we are in

These and other gems are

all its shapes and forms decid

put together in a huge volume

The Pursutt of Reason : The

Economist (1843-1993), by Ruth

Dudley Edwards, published (by

Hamish Hamilton, London/£30)

in September to mark the 150

years of this, the world's "most

consistent and distinguished

trade and laissez-faire.

in this history

exponent of free markets, free

The magnum opus, a result

of ten years of research and

four years in the writing, sheds

nomic, business and diplomatic

issues of the 150 years recorded

as the philosopher Harbert

Spencer, classical scholar

Arnold Toynbee and one of the

West's most influential com-

mentators on Soviet affairs.

leant Deutscher, have been as-

in 1843 by a Scottish busi-

The Economist was launched

sociated with the magazine.

Such distinguished names

new light on the major eco

edly opposed.

Indeed, it was The Economist

This very British tendency

Like the rest of the business

called it "a scuffle"

characteristics.

shock therapy

state intervention.

And when the Russian

Hongkong. His sarcastic remarks on marriage will, perhaps, speak a lot of this great man. He says: "From what I had learned about it so far not much in practice, but I had known the 'facts of life' from zoology quite early - it was not so very much more delicious than strawberries-and-cream; a bait, lusciously dangled before one by the Creator and by human society for capturing and domesticating the male; something one might manage to do without if one wanted something else more — what I felt I mostly wanted was individual

A Casteless Journalist did not see eye to eye with the Services could not do. And,

conservative, white-coloured ICS officers because of their different outlook towards political, economic and social problems in India. Many years later, the members of the ICS Association in London invited him to be the lone speaker at their annual dinner on Oct 30, "79. While admitting that it was an honour for him, lan Stephens told them: "You will want me, I am. pretty sure, to make this talk a personal one, because the India saw - more or less simultaneously with most of yourself was seen, except for my first seven years, not as you saw it but with a non-official's eyes. I had indeed considered putting my name in for the ICS in 1924. In retrospect, however, I doubt whether I would have adapted well to the ICS. Certainly, my mental attitudes being what they then were - a bit priggish, politically pinkish, Cambridgy, 1 would have a difficult time near the start. Politically, I have always been liberal — as has "The Statesman" - whereas the flavour of Delhi-Simla bureaucracy was conservative. Furthermore, it is the duty of a journalist to meet all sorts of people on a level, totally regardless of class or caste. Previously, like all British employees of the government of India, had been, in effect, a white Brahmin. Contrariwise, as an Assistant Editor or, subse-

altogether casteless, and could not function properly otherwise - which was a relief. I look back on my years with "The Statesman" - 14 of them, as contrasted with seven with the government of India - as much the more satisfying. That they should have included, in '43, a major clash with government over the calamity of the Bengal famine - which earned me lasting ill-will from some importantly-placed officials - was unfortunate but not a matter that at all I regret. I reckoned myself exceptionally fortunate in being able to stay on, which While in India, lan Stephens most British members of the

150 Years on, Voice of Free

quently, the Editor of "The

Statesman", I was of necessity

someone else also stayed on, who now needs to be alluded to: a towering personality, Mountbatten - someone whose catastrophic fate, only a few weeks ago (an IRA-planted bomb killed him while he was on royal yacht), thrust him once again into our minds. It is unfortunate that in Oct '47 - when he had also stayed on - I felt it my duty to clash, totally, with him, on principle, over his and Nehru's decision to accept the accession, to the Indian Union, of Kashmir State. But in that, subsequent events assure me, for they have so profoundly unsatisfactory - that I was right, not wrong.

### Encounter with a President

lan Stephens visited Pakistan, his second home, for the last time in 1977 when Zia-Ul Huq-Bhutto enmity reached climax. Because of very old personal friendship link with Sir Shahnawaz Bhutto, who befriended lan Stephens in Bombay some time in 1931, he had some natural weakness for Z A Bhutto, then an undertrial prisoner, who was also an admirer of lan Stephens and once wrote to him that he had read all his books and had also sent an open invitation to visit Pakistan as an official guest when Bhutto himself was President of Pakistan. It may be recalled that when Ian Stephens was a historian to the government of Pakistan and wrote the history of Pakistan Army, Pakistan's dictator President Zia-Ul Huq was a junior officer then.

However, as desired by lan Stephens, the government of Gen Zia-Ul Huq also extended an invitation to him to acquire some first-hand knowledge of so many "extraordinary, unforeseen and mostly horrid things. had happened". It was monthlong visit. Although Bhutto's appeal was heard in Lahore High Court, where lan Stephens was present one day as an outsider (later he said, he was shocked to see the broken health of Bhuttol to witness the proceedings, yet as a veteran journalist he had his own method of probing the whole conspiracy against Bhutto. Beforegarriving Pakistan (Dec '76 -Jan '77) he prepared a 4-point questionnaire for Gen Zia-Ul Huq, who was supposed to meet' the guest who was none else than lan Stephens! As characteristic with him, and on tactical ground, Ian Stephens passed on the questionnaire to the foreign ministry so that

President Zia-Ul Huq could give his views on each of the four questions. Briefly they were: (1) When Gen Zia-Ul Hug displaced Bhutto (very politely) under martial law in July 1977 and assumed supreme power, he declared he would hold general election within 90 days. Now he says that election could not be held before the autumn of '79 which would mean a lapse of 550 days. Can people have much faith in the General's assurances henceforward?

(2) It was Bhutto, who made Gen Zia-Ul Hug Chief of Staff, uplifting him to it over the heads of several generals sentor to him. Some gratitude for that favour might have been looked for, but cannot be said to have been shown.

(3) Not wholly without reason, it could be asserted that General Zia, in reverse, 'rigged' the Supreme Court. For he displaced the judge who, not long before, Mr Bhutto had made Chief Justice.

(4) And General Zia's action

might be construed as sinister for this reason: that, not long after the aforegoing event, he made himself not only Pakistan's Chief Martial Law Ad\* eministrator but her President accepting the resignation of Mr Fazle llahi. The consequence which seems awkward - is that, if the Supreme Court should shortly declare Mr Bhutto guilty of his alleged conspiracy to murder, and if Mr Bhutto were to appeal against the sentence imposed; his appeal would go to General Zia-Ui Huq. Such a tough questionnaire was not acceptable to a dictator like Zia-Ul Huq. It now became certain that there would not be a meeting with the Pakistani President. lan Stephens however discussed these matters with many importantlyplaced people but he did not get satisfactory replies from any one. Suddenly Zia-Ul Huq changed his mind and allowed an interview with lan Stephens just an hour before his plane left Pakistan for London. Later, lan Stephens recollected about this historic meeting: "A handsome man, physically very fit; clear-skinned; that curious pigmentation under the eyes is much less noticeable than in the photographs! Obviously very able, he spoke well and, within his own frame-work of ideas, seemed utterly sincere." Two years later, while addressing

the members of Pakistan Society in London in the Committee Room of the British Parliament

Continued on page 10



This cartoon was published in the Amrita Bazar Patrika on January 27, 1945 with the caption: "Ian Stephens, whose mild manners and speech belie the thrust he is capable of dealing with his pen."

Stephens recalled his Dhaka visit in the following words "During the autumn of 1970 I was passing through the subcontinent en route to Hongkong. Some one in Dhaka had heard I was in transit; and when I disembarked there, I was puzzled to see five or so grey-haired Bengali gentlemen advancing towards me across the tarmac. 'Don't be alarmed,' said one of them, 'we just wanted you to know Mr Stephens, that we have not forgotten what The Statesman did for us Bengalis during those terrible times in 1943. I felt deeply moved almost to tears.

lan Stephens, though miscalculated by his Winchester housemaster by keeping a perfunctory note for the in-coming housemaster that "lan was good for nothing except farming, was one of the brilliant products of Cambridge University, getting firsts in natural science and history which were unusual combinations. Besides journalism and literature, lan Stephens excelled in other fields also. He had a wonderful zest for life. In course of this short article, this writer, however, intends to focus briefly on certain unknown aspects of his life. leaving aside his achievement as a journalist or litterateur, or as behind-the-scene political negotiator before and after the Partition.

## His Old Bengali Friends

Although a septuagenarian then, Ian Stephens opened flood gates of his past memories and talked almost like a chatterboxt He recollected fond memories of Maulana Mohammad Akram Khan, who he referred to as "Akram", and Altaí Hossain ("Shahed" of The Statesmanfame). We also talked about Abdul Wahab, former Dhaka Correspondent of The Statesman

## First Lady Bumped into

The universe is an enigma: Ian Stephens

portrait from The Statesman, Delhi.

many years a well-kept secret. I

can't specify the year (between

1937-42) I became aware of im-

portant new contributions to

our editorial page - fortnightly,

I think, by an able, obviously

well-informed, and representa-

signing himself 'Shahed'. They

Muslim League; and, as the

League, though under-repre-

sented in the Indian press, then

ing and seemed to be a rising

force, I thought them well worth

our publishing. And, I was

sharp annoyance expressed by

the Congress party enthusiasts

at their appearance. During the

strenuous summer of 1941.

Arthur Moore took 'long leave

for travels abroad and

Wordsworth, as acting Editor,

soon stopped taking Shahed's

articles, replacing them by con-

tributions from Humayun

Kabir, a talented young man

but known to be pro-Congress,

subsequently a minister in

Nehru's cabinet. Rather

shocked, I had deduced that

Wordsworth had somehow been

got at'. Exasperating to many

Congressites though Shahed's

contributions must certainly

have been, they did represent

the views then held by many or

A Colleague's Pride

Stephens, his onetime col-

league, Marvyn Hardinge wrote

in the centenary volume of The

Statesman: "I think with pride

of lan Stephens, the editor,

when I joined the paper, and his

unremitting campaign to relieve

the Bengal famine of 1943. The

tide of war in the Far East was

flowing strongly in favour of

Japan, the nationalist press

was fearlessly challenging the

Defence of India Rules in their

While paying tributes to Ian

perhaps most Muslims ....

had substantial popular back-

Nobody During 30s Ian Stephens was in 'great demand' in Delhi-Simla circles of elites, because "I was good in 'ball-room' dancing, Edwardian style. I did very tive polemical Muslim writer much enjoy it, and meeting pretty girls - among those, to reflected the view-point of the my surprise, being a Westernized Parsi from Hyderabad, very attractive, Roshan Faridoonji, whom I was much of." Now, a little glimpse from his historic dance with India's foremost lady, Lady Willingdon, wife of the Governor General Lord Willamused by periodical evidently ingdon. He writes : "Very formidable a person though Lady Willingdon was known to be, I grappled her unhesitatingly with India's foremost lady. and found that her rather bulky, hard-surfaced and presumably much croseted body. pressed against mine, moved rhythmically and well. We suited one another. Other couples seemed to scatter for safety, as we whirled around. bumped her into nobody. And, I could at least flatter myself that I had been a more fitting partner for her than was the Maharaja of Patiala," who was her partner in the first half of the

## dance.

On our first meeting at Hotel

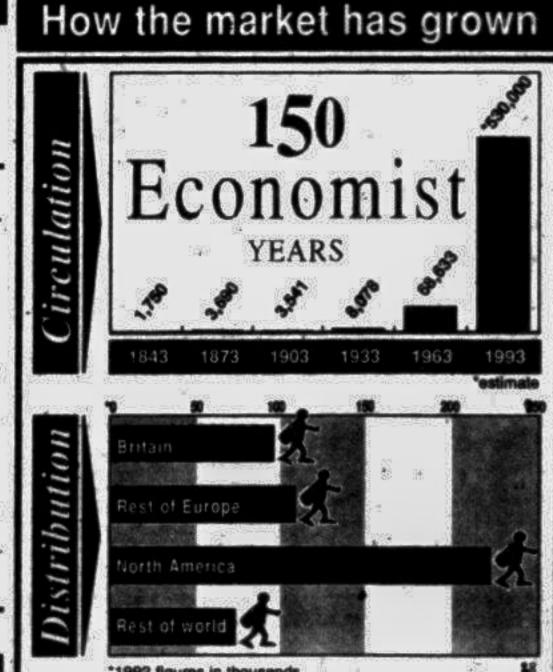
## On 'Facts of Life'

Intercontinental (now Sheraton) (perhaps naively!) enquired about his family life, including number of children, a routine subject for Bengali gossip! At once he burst into laughter and said, "Oh, what shall I do with a wifel During my hectic days in the Statesman, particularly during Second World War, riots and subsequent Partition I used to sleep in my office room in the Statesman building. Those were the turbulent days in the subcontinent and what could I do

# Trade Becomes More Vocal

## Daya Kishan Thussu writes from London

Since its inception in 1843, 'The Economist' has been a champion of free trade and private capital. From a small circulation of 1,750, mainly among the business elite, it now sells more than half a million copies, 80 per cent of them outside Britain. At a time when market forces again dominate the global agenda, Gemini News Service reviews a new book published to mark 150 years of the world's most influential magazine.



nessman, James Wilson, with £800 of his own money and £500 lent by a friend. Wilson's practical experience in business had strengthened his belief in free trade and the free-market.

His banker son-in-law, Walter Bagehot, and successive editors upheld the free-trade ideas that Wilson had set forth when he fought for the repeal of Britain's protectionist Corn

Laws. Soon after its launch the magazine argued against the anti-slavery drive to restrict imports from countries employing slave labour. The belief that the market itself was the moral absolute continued into the mid-1980s, when it opposed sanctions against the apartheid regime in South Africa.

Its history is dotted with several other instances of insensitivity to human suffering. Dudley Edwards recalls how during the time of the Irish famine (1845-49), which claimed one million lives and led to large-scale emigration, Wilson wrote about "the great sacrifice" which England had made to help Ireland.

Similarly, the magazine was consistent champion British colonialism. "Colon-

ialism, bolstered by an often exaggerated idea of the relative harshness of other colonial regimes, was defended," she writes, "with both moral and pragmatic arguments, and it swept along people of all classes and most political persuasions."

Walter Bagehot, the magazine's most famous editor, wrote in 1865: "We are pre-eminently a colonising people. We are, beyond all comparison, the most enterprising, the most successful and in most respects the best colonists on the face of the earth," ruling with "mildness and invariably with liberality."

Most of the Indian coverage during the colonial period, writes Dudley Edwards, "when it was not focusing on finance, ruminated about how to make the natives see reason."

Replacing such imperial zeal has been an unflinching support for United States actions around the world. From the Cold War to the Gulf War, the magazine has been a consistent champion of American policies. Running a vigorous campaign to back the US invasion of Vietnam, The Economist's Foreign Report, writes Dudley Edwards, looked "rather like a

propaganda sheet for the CIA." Friends of the US have been well-treated by the magazine, For instance, it once called Indonesian head of state General Subandrio Suharto, who is believed to be responsible for the killing of up to a million people, "at heart be-

interpreting the world in a way the Americans like has tangible benefits. In 1958, The Economist sold less than 10,000 copies in North America, Today it sells nearly a quarter of a million copies - half of its global total.

This partisanship sits uncomfortably with The Economist's famous rule of anonymity, which has over the years placed writers with a vast range of affiliations (anarchists, Marxists, imperialists, pacifists) under the same label of "our correspondent."

Women journalists were considered good value for money. "You could get a first class woman for the price of a second-class man," Geoffrey Crowther, one of its great edi-

tors is quoted as saying. Fifty years ago Crowther described the aims of The Economist thus: "To be sensible without being heavy, to be lively without being silly, to be origi-

nal without being eccentric." An example of this was in 1987 during the Spycatcher affair. In the copies distributed in Britain, the Books and Arts section began with a page that was blank except for a section heading, a review title, 'My Country, Wright or Wrong, and the details of the book in a box in the middle of the page:

"The Economist has 1.5m readers in 170 countries. In all but one country, our readers have on this page a review of 'Spycather', a book by an ex-MIS man Peter Wright. The exception is Britain, where the book, and comment on it, have been baned. For our 420,000 readers there, this page is blank - and the law is an ass."

Despite such disagreements the magazine has always been close to those in power. Wilson, the founding editor, became Financial Secretary to the Treasury under Gladstone's Chancellorship and was supported by the government. When the magazine wanted to close down its loss-making Latin American edition in the 1960s, the British government helped to subsidise the edition. However, The Economist managed to enrage its business readership by its opposition to the 1956 Sucz invasion.

. At the time of its latunch The Economist sold only 1,750 copies. During the nineteenth century the magazine had a limited circulation of nearly 3,000, written by businessmen for businessmen. Ironically from Wilson's death in 1860 until 1928 it was owned by his widow and six daughters. But the fortunes of this famous business magazine have grown with the spread of capitalism.

Today it is printed at six sites around the world and sells more than half a million copies, more than 80 per cent of them outside Britain.

With the Financial Times now owning 50 per cent of the magazine, The Economist has become Britain's most prosperous publication. And given the global drive towards privatisation the voice of free trade is likely to grow even more vocal.

DAYA KISHAN THUSSU ts Associate Editor of Gemini News

Service.