

## THE FREEDOM OF RELIGION BILL

The Freedom of Religion Bill, 1978 is a Private Member's Bill moved by Mr. O. P. Tyagi a Janata member of the Lok Sabha. It is therefore not an official Bill even though Mr. Tyagi belongs to the ruling party. Very rarely, if at all, do governments support legislative measures that do not originate from the Treasury benches. But on this occasion there is a disconcerting ambivalence on the part of Government. Referring to Mr. Tyagi's Bill, Home Minister H. M. Patel stated on the floor of the Lok Sabha that while Government had not taken any view on the Bill, they would ensure that the fundamental rights of all religions are fully protected. Praising the sense of nationalism of the Christian community the Home Minister sought to reassure India's Christians that they need have no apprehensions about governmental interference. A report in the *Statesman* of April 3 adds that the "Bill seems to have found disfavour with almost every section of Janata except members of the former Jan Sangh group." Prime Minister Morarji Desai told a delegation of Christians in Bombay on April 1, that the Bill "will not be accepted as it is. Let me tell you that," he said and added "nothing is going to be done to take away the legitimate rights of the minorities."

And yet, the Christian community is restless and have reason to feel anxious. The States of Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and Arunachal Pradesh have already disfigured their statute books with similar legislation. Moreover in the rather murky politics of Delhi a convenient *quid pro quo* cannot entirely be ruled out.

The strength of feeling of the Christian community in regard to the Tyagi Bill is evident from the fact that normally a docile community, they have gone all out to organise morchas, hunger strikes, and blackflag demonstrations. For the benefit of *Freedom First* readers we publish below a representative collection of comments by some leading citizens both Hindu and Christian. Whatever Mr. Tyagi's objective may be, the general reaction has been one of disgust and disapproval of a measure patently aimed at a community whose service to the country particularly in the field of education and social welfare far outstrips its numbers.

### Pitting Krishna Versus Christ

MADHU MEHTA

If the Bill has been introduced for the purpose of preventing forcible conversions, then the existing laws are competent to do it. It is said that foreign Christian missions and other Indian Christian missions, who are carrying on various commendable, social, charitable and educational activities in India are doing that only with a view to lure or induce people to adopt Christianity as their religion and therefore, it is said, this Bill must be passed so that the State can always decide, whether a person who has changed his religion or is likely to do, is doing it as a result of some kind of inducement, force or under threat in the name of God.

There is also talk of some foreign missionaries indulging in anti-national activities with the help of local missionaries.

It should not be difficult for anyone with any experience to visualise how some people, particularly politicians, who thrive by inciting quarrels in the name of religion and God, can exploit the situation for their narrow political and religious ends, once this Bill becomes law.

When we talk of protecting our culture, we must know what are we protecting and what is worth protecting. Are we protecting the followers of Lord Krishna from the followers of Jesus Christ who we fear may induce Krishna's followers to join the camp of Jesus Christ? Is it not a fact that both Christ and Krishna have taught us to love each other, respect each other and not hate or suspect each other?

Can one ask Mr. Tyagi who has moved the Bill: "What is more important to you, restoration of basic

(Continued on page 6)



"the time has come," the  
walrus said,  
"to talk of many things:  
of shoes-and ships-  
and sealing wax-  
of cabbages -  
and kings-"

-Lewis Carroll



## OF CABBAGES & KINGS

### Necrophilic Society

*Freedom First*, has and will always have the greatest admiration and respect for JP and will continue to pray for his health and well being. That does not prevent us from deploring the unseemly hysteria that has been built up around the state of his health and that of another elder statesman, Shree J. B. Kripalani, also in a weak condition at the age of 93.

Since both of them are Gandhians, with a high regard for plain living and plain talk, it seems unlikely that they, if they were in a position to have a say in such matters, would have endorsed the daily pre-occupation of All India Radio and the newspapers with the minute details of their physiological functions. It seems sad but true that, both in the manner of expressing their anxiety for JP's condition, as well as showing their disapproval of the *faux-pas* committed by Government, politicians of all shades of opinion did not hesitate to jump on to JP's sick bed at the Jaslok hospital and convert it into a convenient political platform. This is surely a strange way in which to treat a leader whom they all claim so vociferously to respect.

It is time that we as a nation learned to accept that just as there is a certain dignity about living there is also a dignity about dying, a fact that is perhaps forgotten in these days of modern medicine where the only criterion appears to be to keep a patient alive at any cost by means of drips, transfusions and oxygen, thus reinforcing the impression that a human being is no more than a chemical solution. If we can accept this, we should also be able to accept the passing away of leaders at a venerable age without giving in to what can only be called a voluptuous wallowing in grief, as has taken place so many times in the past.

One has only to think of the death scenes marking the passing of Gandhi, Nehru, and Shastri as also leaders in the South such as Annadorai and Kamaraj to remember to what emotional heights we can rise up on such occasions. This tendency can only be described in the words of Erich Fromm as a necrophilic tendency, which seems almost to be encouraged by the attitude of those in office, who either by following the wishes of the dead leader in having his ashes scattered all over the country or, in succumbing to the wishes of the people, build large and costly mausoleums in memory of a departed leader, seem to encourage this sentiment.

GD

### Banning Cow Slaughter

This is one of those rare occasions when *Freedom First* finds itself in agreement with Comrades Jyoti Basu and E.M.S. Namboodiripad and that too for the right reasons! The issue — cow slaughter. "We would like to look at the issue from the economic aspect rather than the religious aspect. A total ban on cow slaughter will lead to an increase in bovine population — which would strain our slender cattle resources. . . A total ban on cow slaughter will also become a very sensitive issue in this State where there is a large beef-eating population mainly belonging to the minority communities. . . Without in any way meaning disrespect to the ideals you may cherish (tackling unemployment, repairing flood damage etc.) are our priorities. . ." So wrote West Bengal Chief Minister Jyoti Basu to Acharya Vinoba Bhave. *Sunday* of February 11 which carried extracts from his letter, also quotes Mahatma Gandhi: "The Hindu religion forbids cow slaughter for the Hindus, not for the world. The religious prohibition comes from within. Any imposition from without means compulsion. Such compulsion is repugnant to religion. India is the land not only of Hindus but also of the Mussalmans, the Sikhs, the Parsis, the Christians, and the Jews and all of who claim to be Indian and are loyal to the Indian Union. If they can prohibit cow slaughter in India on religious grounds, why cannot the Pakistan Government prohibit say, idol worship in Pakistan on similar grounds? I am not a templegoer but if I were prohibited from going to a temple in Pakistan I would make it a point to go there even at the risk of losing my head. Just as Shariat cannot be imposed on the non-Muslim, the Hindu law cannot be imposed on the non-Hindu."

During the Emergency, Acharya Vinoba Bhave decided to go on a fast to save the cow — if not democracy which was then in the process of being slaughtered. He called off his fast in the light of the then Government's assurances and went to the extent of saying that the question of banning cow slaughter had been largely solved. As a *Times of India* editorial (April 14) points out he credited "a) God, b) his mother, c) Mahatma Gandhi and d) Indira Gandhi," for this achievement. The stubborn refusal of Kerala and West Bengal to legislate a ban has angered the Acharya who at the time of writing is now on the second day of his fast unto death begun on April 21. From his point of view the

solution is incomplete until the two states fall in line.

It is difficult to understand why Vinobaji is in such a hurry when there are a score or more important issues crying for attention. Surely the Gandhian approach of patiently seeking to convert your opponent to your point of view is applicable in this particular case, even assuming the rationality of the Acharya's demand. The point is, can we afford to go on being distracted by peripheral issues like prohibition, language and now cow slaughter. And, in any case, when there has been a recrudescence of communal tensions, is this the time for the Acharya to force the issue?

SVR

### A Return to Tribalism

Bhutto's hanging provided the world press with moments of powerful rhetoric, mourning in the words of *Time* magazine, this "proud but flawed man", while Hoveyda, whose end was more tragic but less dramatic, was relegated to a small paragraph.

And there it seems the matter has ended for the two men. Except for a sense of futility and helplessness at its inability to control the inexorable course of events affecting just a couple of men, the world has no more time to waste over them. General Zia in taking his calculated gamble, that after all people's memories are short and a dead rival is in the long run going to create less problems than a live one, seems for the moment to be right. While in Iran, with the revolutionary courts catering daily to the blood lust of the people by adding fresh names on the menu for the day, nobody is likely to be shedding any tears for Hoveyda.

Nor is there much point now in debating whether these men deserved to die or not. One can only wonder what their death means for the future in Asia where less than two decades ago there was a tremendous upsurge of hope and optimism in countries shaking off their ages old lethargy in casting aside the shackles of colonialism. Even at that time there were fears that these restraining bonds, tragically, were the very ones that held some countries together. "You do not know," explained a former Indonesian foreign minister, "what is the character of a colonial country. We were united against the Dutch. After that we are island against island, province against province, intellectual against intellectual, religion against religion..."

Recent events in Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan appear to have accelerated these forces and one has only to think of the Kurds, the Turkomans, the Baluchis and the Pakhtoons to mention only a few of the major tribes waiting in the wings, to realise how close these areas are to a reversion to the old days of tribal loyalties. All that this can mean in the long run is a return to the days of blood feuds, intermittent rivalries, and the peculiar narrowness of vision and chronic instability which allowed colonialism to flourish in the first place.

It is not impossible to reverse the clock and crawl back into the past. By getting rid of men, who no matter what their faults, did at least try to face the challenges of modernization, these countries will not only make such a return possible, but highly probable.

### Those Alluring Dollars

Leave it to the Americans to spill the beans be it about a nuclear device tucked away in Mount Kailas or Dollars stashed away in the coffers of the Congress. Mr. Daniel Moynihan's book "A Dangerous Peace" has at least had one effect. It has taken the heat off Janata (for the time being at least) and adds yet another 'charge' for Mrs. Gandhi to deal with. If Mr. Moynihan is to be believed (he was U.S. Ambassador in India, mind you) the Dollars were slipped across to the Congress twice — once personally to the lady herself.

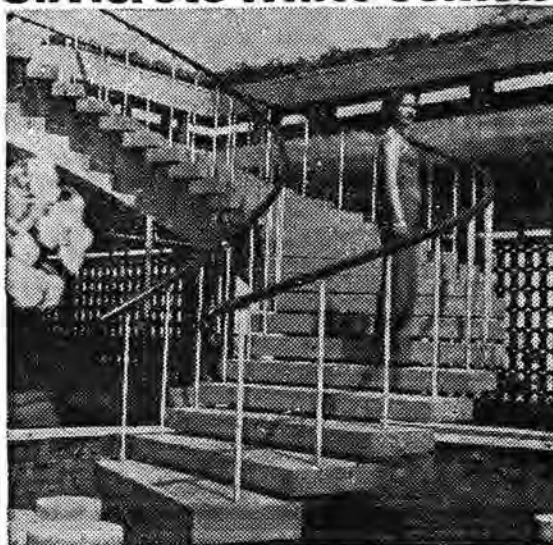
"Mischievous, motivated and absolutely baseless" says Mrs. Gandhi and adds "they are against me" clarifying that the "they" are "a part of the U.S. Administration." The clarification however does not say which "part". Like a knight errant of yore, in rushes her Party's General Secretary Sardar Buta Singh with an attack on Mr. Moynihan who is "a rabid Zionist nursing a grievance against Jawaharlal Nehru, Mrs. Gandhi and the Indian National Congress for their consistent support to the just Arab cause". How did the Middle East come in. We thought the Dollars were to fight communism in Kerala and West Bengal not to buy arms for Arafat.

That foreign money plays a role in the political affairs of a nation is one of those open secrets. It is only a question of whether it is the progressive Rouble or the reactionary Dollar. Some are clever. They get a little of both!

Or, could it be that it is after all part of a clever promotion campaign to ensure that "A Dangerous Peace" becomes a bestseller in India! The Speaker of the Lok Sabha has promised to get a copy soon. *Freedom First* too will get the book reviewed as soon as possible.

SVR

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# BHUTTO—MURDERER OR MURDERED?

K. B. Lam

The inability of the brilliant and almost invincible Zulfikar Ali Bhutto to escape the hangman's clutches has shocked the world almost without exception, even if the event in question was not entirely unexpected. Was the death penalty and the manner of its infliction too ghastly to contemplate? Was it wrong that a former Prime Minister and one whom many contemplated had still so much to contribute, should be treated as a common criminal? Was the objection simply that Martial Law could hardly be expected to deal justly with its main victim and moreover, its chief administrator, prompted by his own survival instinct had a vested interest in the elimination of this man? Can Zia now hold free and fair elections or does he still have to ensure that Bhutto's supporters will not win them? These are questions that require segregation from one another and detached analyses as soon as the emotions will permit.

The mere thought of binding and hanging a human being or pushing him into a gas-chamber is repulsive to many. There are others who feel that the State should never reduce itself to the level of murder and take life but these are themes for a different sort of debate and an analysis such as this has to content itself with, merely, the existence of the death penalty and not question its desirability. In many underdeveloped countries, wherein there is evidence of a high degree of correlation between homelessness and the commission of crimes, there is the view that imprisonment, which by its very nature offers the criminal a roof over his head, is not a sufficient deterrent and have found it expedient to retain the death penalty. Bhutto himself, when Premier, showed little distaste for this ultimate punishment. If all those Heads of State who pleaded in vain for Bhutto's life to be spared, are now influenced to abolish the death penalty in their countries, this would be the greatest bonus to have resulted from Bhutto's execution.

The concept that Bhutto should have received a lighter form of punishment on the ground that he had been an elected Prime Minister or that his skills were indispensable for his country's future is irrelevant and non-egalitarian. In fact, if there had been sufficient evidence to link Bhutto with Mr. Kasuri's death and the trial had not been politically motivated, the fact that no special treatment had been given to a person who had held the highest office in the land would have been a great morale booster to the Pakistani people and to the President and would have served, in no uncertain terms, as a warning to any future leader who may be tempted to evade accountability.

However, the main bone of contention is that, in the first instance this issue originated in Zia's realisation that unless Bhutto was removed from the scene, his own life, let alone position, would be in danger. It was this that made one feel all along that the ultimate punishment would, in fact, prevail and appeals for mercy, from even friendly and important quarters, would be ignored. When Zia usurped power, he allowed the massive anti-Bhutto demonstrations prevalent at the time, to convince

himself that Bhutto's popularity had declined and that when he held general elections, Bhutto and his party would be unsuccessful. When the President became more realistic and sensed a Bhutto victory at the proposed elections, he panicked, knowing that Bhutto, if he returned to power would not spare him and that Bhutto's own constitution stipulated the infliction of the death penalty to any usurper of power. From this moment onwards Zia knew that he had got himself into a position where it was a question of his destroying Bhutto or being destroyed by Bhutto. Apart from the risk involved in permitting the Pakistan's People's Party to contest the election, Zia felt his own life would be at stake as long as there was any breath left in Bhutto. If he had forced Bhutto to go into exile or kept him confined to prison, there was always the chance that Bhutto's supporters in the army and elsewhere may enable him to stage a comeback and thus Zia felt that the only way out for him was to get Bhutto convicted of a crime which could be punishable by death. This determination is emphasised by Zia's assertion, prior to the judgement regarding Bhutto's appeal, that if the appeal was successful, he had other cases in mind to bring Bhutto to book.

This background, then, lent credibility to the view that the prosecution of Mr. Bhutto took place with the definite aim of obtaining his conviction and sentencing him to death and it seemed very unlikely, in the circumstances, that the trial could be fair. An impartial French lawyer was of the opinion that the case would be almost instantly dismissed in any court in Western Europe. Amnesty International questioned the prosecution's evidence and felt that the case was unfairly conducted. When three out of seven judges — i.e. just under half the number — pronounced Bhutto to be not guilty, even assuming that the other four were politically motivated, the situation cried out for commutation of the sentence as even in such a biased environment, Bhutto's guilt had not been proved beyond reasonable doubt. The President's desires, the lack of sufficient evidence and the extremity of the sentence despite dissensions amongst the judges, give rise to the belief that the whole case was stage-managed and that Bhutto, far from being a conspirer to murder was himself the victim of a conspiracy to murder him.

Pakistan's political future admits to a variety of possibilities ranging from a prolonged period of Zia rule and the holding of farcical general elections to yet another military "care-taker" humbling Zia and eventual disintegration. These are admittedly not very pleasant and in any event, the influence of Martial Law cannot be too healthy if, even in these modern times, religious groups squabble over whether thieves and robbers ought to be deprived of their wrists or merely their finger — not to mention the treatment of flogging as a form of public entertainment.

As an orator, Bhutto was in a class by himself and was easily the most brilliant person to occupy the highest seat in the Indian subcontinent. Amongst contemporary world leaders, only Harold Wilson could match his debating skills. Bhutto must take

# OH NO, CALCUTTA!

Geeta Doctor

In 1896 when Mark Twain visited Calcutta, what impressed him most was the chaotic calm in which people lived. The traffic was so bad that according to him there was a fine of Rs. 10 for killing old grandmothers on the road. Yet, the strangest thing was, as he went on to note in his inimitable fashion, the streets seemed to be "full of grandmothers waiting for a chance to earn Rs. 10."

A friend who just came back from Calcutta remarks that things have not changed one bit and swears that the series of adventures that dogged his journey could not have taken place anywhere else in the world but in Calcutta. His odyssey started on the Bombay-Calcutta flight itself which was at first delayed by four hours and then by another hour inside the plane due to the non-appearance of two passengers who were numbered on the list. Just as the pilot was on the verge of ordering the unloading of all the luggage so that the passengers on board could identify the pieces owned by them, two sheepish looking gentlemen wandered in at last, to be received with a sitting ovation by the rest of the passengers.

This meant that our hero finally arrived at his destination at about eleven-thirty at night, only to find that at the guest house where he was staying the electricity was out for the night. There was no bell with which to summon the watchman, and by the time that gentleman was alerted, so was the rest of the neighbourhood. After which he still had to

climb up five flights of stairs holding on to a candle in one hand.

Early next morning by the time he had found the transport to make the cross country run to the city station to catch the Black Diamond Express, he found that the queues waiting to buy the tickets were so long that without any hesitation he flung himself into the nearest compartment.

"Do you at least have your platform ticket sir?" asked the Conductor, eyeing him suspiciously.

"No" confessed our hero.

"That will be a fine of Rs. 10. You can't get into a train without entering the platform. You can't enter the platform without a ticket. It is not anybody's fault if you can't wait in a line to buy a platform ticket." Thus spake the Conductor. Our hero, clutching his ten rupee platform ticket stood in the middle of a crowded corridor for the next three hours.

At Durgapur, the train stopped half a mile outside the station because a few hundred people had decided to lie down on the tracks in front of it. Students ran through the length of the train disconnecting the vacuum pipes and announced that the train would go no further that day. Passengers, who were in the Ist and IInd class compartments, without the benefit of the thicker plate glass windows of the air conditioned compartments, got in the way of the missiles that were being hurled at the train, by enthusiasts of this form of sport, standing on either side of the tracks. Some got hurt and were bleeding. Others begged coolies at premium rates to unload the luggage and carry it all the way to the station.

The Attendant in the A/c compartment, obviously a veteran of such encounters, immediately took out his "Bhagwad Gita", spread out his duster and sitting in the middle of the corridor, started reciting the verses loudly. As though in answer to his prayers, the Police came in with their rifles, lathis and tear gas, mopped up the crowd, connected the vacuum pipes and the trains started moving again.

By now there was no more water in any of the compartments. The intrepid Attendant calmly took some out of the toilet cisterns to provide tea for the passengers. "The water for the tea is boiled very well sir," he remarked by way of encouragement.

Three hours later, at Barakar, the train again came to a halt. Outside another group of people had decided to take their siesta on the tracks. They did not look like the sort of people who could be disturbed easily. The Attendant took one look at them, and packing up his "Bhagwad Gita" announced before anyone else could, that the train would not be going any further on that line that day.

Our hero could do no more than get off like his fellow travellers and take his choice of bullock carts, an old taxi and what appeared to be mobile mountains of humanity with a small bus underneath. He chose the taxi. Fifteen minutes later the taxi came to a halt. The axle had broken.

"Next time I go to Calcutta, I vowed to carry a "Bhagwad Gita" with me," says our friend. "Also a few candles" we add.

Continued from page 4

considerable credit for Pakistan's foreign policy in the sixties and his consequent friendship with all three major powers and for getting the better of Mrs. Gandhi and India in Simla in 1972, immediately after his country had been humiliated at war. It would be inappropriate to remember him as a democrat and to think of him as a martyr. It is true that he was up against two military dictators but when Prime Minister, he himself was not reluctant to use dictatorial methods. His earlier contempt for democratic practices led to his being one of the chief architects of Bangladesh. Autocrats are said to make one fatal error and in Bhutto's case one wonders why, assuming it is true, he rigged the 1977 general elections when his party would, in any case, have got a working majority, even if a landslide victory was not achieved. Bhutto, no doubt, during his long hours of detention must have pondered over his lack of judgement in assisting Zia to become the army's commander-in-chief. Some may see poetic justice in Zia's ingratitude for, though with different consequences, Bhutto first used his mentor, Field Marshal Ayub Khan, and then wrecked him. He may even have contemplated that across the border, the "dogs" have as yet failed to expose and try Mrs. Gandhi, before whose crime, Bhutto's actions fade into insignificance. He was rarely outmanoeuvred though finally overpowered. His thirst for power remarkable even by a politician's standards notwithstanding, the world has lost a most interesting personality and since the sum total of his crimes, if any, fall short of his eventual punishment, may his Soul rest in Peace.



**THE FREEDOM OF RELIGION BILL — (Continued from page 1)**

human values, as laid down by Krishna and Christ or taking steps that may lead people to fight each other in the name of God?"

To many in this country neither labels nor numbers matter any more. What matters is the quality of a human being. A nation's strength lies in the quality of its people and not in the number of people living in it. The same is true of religion too!

The twentieth century has seen the birth of a new religion, whose one aim is to destroy the faith of people in all religions and to ridicule all moral values. Karl Marx gave birth to that religion and used two evil qualities in human nature, hatred and jealousy to build a communist empire. Today his empire is cracking, as is evident from the quarrels in the communist world. There is a lesson for all of us in this development. It is, that what is built on the foundations of hatred, jealousy, and blind prejudice can neither last nor bring enduring happiness and peace.

If a few impoverished and neglected Hindus or others adopt Christianity and accept Jesus Christ as their God, one need not worry about it, for what is really important in today's world is that faith in God should not be allowed to be destroyed by the unwise actions of those believers in God who go on quarreling with each other in the name of God. It will be a great tragedy, if that were to happen.

**An Unwise Bill****RAJMOHAN GANDHI**

A change of religion, or indeed several such changes during one's lifetime are a right guaranteed by our Constitution. A thousand men may deplore the conversion of X from Christianity to Hinduism or vice-versa, but X has a right in a democracy such as ours to go through it, or, if he wishes, to change his faith again in the future or become an atheist or a propagator of atheism. Giving to thousands of government officials (and therefore to their political rulers) the power to decide that a particular conversion is not genuine, which is what the Bill would in effect do, is a hazardous proposition.

Individuals, including leaders, seem frequently to change their parties, perhaps, in some cases, under pecuniary inducement or a threat. There is no special law to prohibit such changes in political loyalties, howsoever deplorable they may appear to be. All Indian citizens have the right to their political beliefs without state interference. Their equally important right to believe in and belong to the religion of their choice should not be threatened, directly or indirectly.

As far as Maharashtra is concerned, his (Mr. Tyagi's) Bill would lead to demands for action under it against Hindus who seek to welcome back into their fold the Harijans who have turned Buddhist, and against Buddhists who strive to enlist more Hindu Harijans in their ranks. "Nor shall any person abet any such conversion" is a phrase that would have the effect of turning a change of faith into a dangerous step inviting punishment at the hands of the State and social isolation.

I believe that the passage of Mr. Tyagi's Bill would be a remedy worse than the disease. State intervention in matters affecting an individual's innermost beliefs is not the answer to the problem of insincere conversions. The Janata Party, elected on the slogan of human liberty, ought not to endorse Mr. Tyagi's private Bill. Weight also should be given to the consideration that, whatever its motives, the Bill is creating ill-feeling between communities.

*Himmat, March 30***Violates A Fundamental Right****GEORGE MENEZES**

In terms of the Bill a Police Inspector would have powers to arrest Mother Teresa for a cognizable (non-bailable, mind you) offence if her compassionate work amongst the dying and destitute were interpreted as "inducement" to follow the teachings of a man whose greater compassion resulted in his willingness to die on the Cross. I too could land in jail for two years if Ramesh, who is dying of cancer, were to heed my advice to light a candle at the Wednesday services at St. Michael's Mahim.

The fact of the matter is that the Bill violates the Fundamental Rights enshrined in Article 25 and 26 of the Constitution and would seem even to violate Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Why then such a Bill when the Indian Penal Code already provides for forcible conversions?

Let it be clearly understood that as Christians we also believe that forcible conversion militates against the very dignity of man which Christianity upholds. The Magna Carta given to the Catholic Church by the Second Vatican Council says: "The Church forbids that anyone should be forced to accept the faith or be induced or enticed by unworthy devices, as it likewise strongly defends the right that one should not be frightened away from the faith by unjust persecutions."

I believe that while on paper the law may seem innocuous, the interpretation given to the law could cause considerable harassment. Under the Act an Inspector of Police has been vested with the powers to judge one's conscience. Further, the law questions the right of a Christian to preach the gospel. The tribal's simplicity is used as argument against his right to self-determination. If a case is made out to keep them in primitive life-style, this is not out of a nice regard for traditional culture but because that simplicity and under-development make them easy prey for social and commercial exploitation.

What concerns the Christians more than anything else is the misuse unscrupulous officials can make of such legislation. In Arunachal Pradesh where a similar Bill was recently passed, the law is already operating with unbelievable consequences.

According to reports coming from Arunachal Pradesh, Christians are being asked to sign a statement renouncing Christianity before being given Government jobs and contracts. A spokesman of the Christian community in the Union Territory said that the Arunachal Administration has issued what is called

"Internal Instructions" that no Christian should be given jobs, contracts, licences, etc., until he has made a written statement renouncing his faith.

*Sunday Standard, April 15*

### Threat to Communal Harmony

A. WILLIAMS, S. J.

The Bill makes even our daily practice of religion illegal since "to profess, to practise and to propagate the religion of one's choice" can be considered as alluring or inducing others for conversion. For example, the celebration of festivals like Christmas or Ramzan can be rendered illegal in our free and democratic country because of the Freedom of Religion Bill since such celebrations, with an overflow of goodwill to all, may provide to many, inducement or allurements for conversion. The Bill thus takes away the basic human rights of the religious minorities who are also Indian citizens, destroying the very nature of our democracy.

The Bill poses a great threat also to communal harmony. It tries to assume that the people are forcing one another to convert. If it is so, how is that people, irrespective of their religions, flock to the institutions managed by the religious minorities? It is a wellknown fact that religion is no barrier at all for the minorities like Christians to serve the nation. The Bill now tries to force the religious communities to limit their services only to the people of their own sects and tries to make them communal and narrow-minded.

Christians oppose this bill so vehemently because they do not want to "widen the gap" between themselves and the non-Christians and it is indeed a great pleasure to serve the people irrespective of

their caste, colour, creed or language and Christians do not like to be deprived of this fine spiritual pleasure. For example can we imagine the agony of Mother Teresa if she is asked by the Government following the spirit and the letter of the Bill to serve only the Christians?

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To Be Published Very Soon

## INDIA SAYS "NO" To NATIONALISATION

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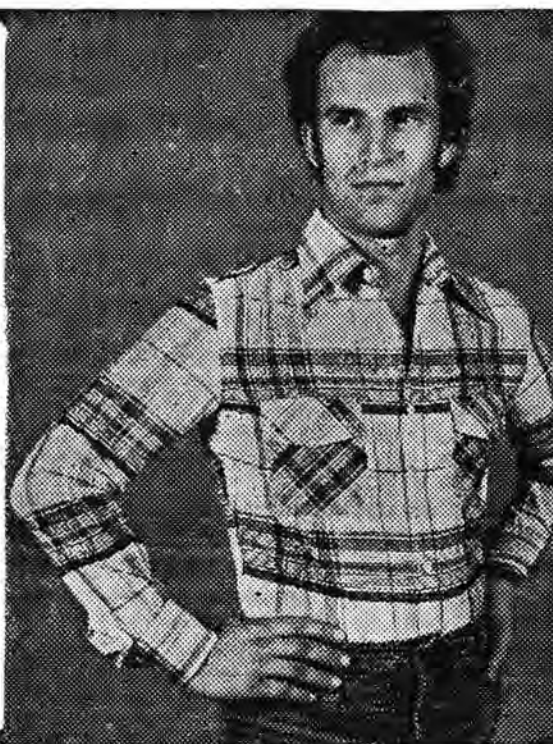
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# THE GREAT TAX REVOLT

K. S. Venkateswaran

Few other forces in recent times have approached in importance the pressures exerted by the coming of age of the taxpayers of California. The groundswell of support and enthusiasm generated by "Proposition 13", the campaign for drastic reduction in property taxes in America's most populous state last year, threatened to assume proportions of a twentieth-century Boston Tea Party, and not without reason. Culminating in the momentous referendum of 7 June 1978, in which Californians decisively sliced \$ 7000 million off the tax revenue, the movement underscores a significant trend in fiscal thinking which could have far-reaching repercussions throughout the world.

Promoted by the flamboyant figure of ultra-conservative businessman Howard Jarvis, who has made tax-slashing a personal crusade for the past fifteen years, the California rebellion was the successful culmination of a calculated campaign that had been going on for some years in the United States. The first signs of a middle-class, seething against a system, which it perceived as being increasingly indifferent, manifested itself in the overwhelming response which the attempts to place tax-reduction initiatives on the ballot, elicited in early June last year. At the end of the 150-day signature-gathering period prescribed by the state law, the crusaders in California successfully collected 1.2 million signatures. The remaining 300,000 came later, bringing the total to 1.5 million which, incidentally, constituted 24 per cent of the actual voters in California's 1974 election. (Earlier in 1977, Jarvis, United Organisation of Taxpayers had made an unsuccessful attempt to place their property-tax amendment on the ballot — their petition fell short of the prescribed minimum of 500,000 signatures.

The main thrust of the Jarvis campaign which marshalled wide popular support was the persuasive argument that government had become overblown, self-indulgent and insensitive to public opinion. "The purpose of a free government is to enrich the people, not the bureaucrats," trumpeted the irresistible Jarvis. This did not fail to tap a vein of deep and real anger. Jarvis' thunderous orations found an echo in the liberal economist Walter Heller who, writing in the *Wall Street Journal*, observed: "Clearly, the governments the country over need to be brought to book, they need to deliver more per dollar of tax, and they need to deliver excess tax dollars to the taxpayer."

On the other hand, the opponents of Proposition 13, who not surprisingly constituted a majority of those directly or indirectly dependent on state funds, let out a full-throated cry, tinged by hyperbole, that reduced tax revenue on state welfare provisions may cause serious social problems. The doomsday prophecies of these opponents were reflected in their repeated assertions that passage of the initiative would mean "chaos". The implication of these assertions, according to one observer, was that existing levels of spending and patterns of taxation are not

merely acceptable but somehow inevitable and indispensable. This argument, which has been forcefully countered by the well-reasoned pronouncements of eminent economists, seemed to have lost its sting among California voters. As George F. Will noted in a recent article, "California voters set their faces like flint and said to their government approximately what a constituent recently said to Republican Henry Reuss. The constituent stopped Reuss, a high octane liberal, in the Milwaukee airport, and said, 'When you go back to Washington, don't do anything for me. I can't afford it.'"

One of the leading exponents of the tax-cut theory of economic stimulation, Prof. Arthur Laffer, has a ready answer to much of the criticism that has emerged from the detractors of the California revolution. According to Laffer, a healthy economy demands a healthy productive capacity and a high employment rate, in the achievement of which low taxes are an important factor. "The nostrums of the past have failed," he says, "lowering tax rates cuts inflation because it produces more goods." He contends that the more conventional counter argument about low taxes provoking inflation by spreading spending money around, has been thrown into the limbo of exploded fallacies by the experience notably of Britain in the recent past. His thesis is best illustrated by a chart known as the Laffer Curve which seeks to identify a point of optimum revenue by driving people and companies away. On revenues beyond which higher taxes bring in less Proposition 13, of which he has been identified as an ardent advocate, Laffer has this to say: "My best guess is that the expansion of business activity caused by the reduction in property taxes will yield an additional \$3 billion in revenue to the State in the first year."

Much the same idea has permeated the pronouncements and writings of one of our own leading taxation experts, Mr. Nani Palkhivala, whose persistent advocacy of lower tax-rates has, woefully enough so far failed to touch a responsive chord in the heartless Indian bureaucracy. Mr. Palkhivala's unshakeable conviction that "the *sine qua non* of an economy which fosters enterprise and promotes savings and investment, is a reasonably low tax structure," forms the central theme of his admirable little book *The Highest Taxed Nation*. At a time when direct taxes in this country have been raised to blighting heights, Mr. Palkhivala's observations have an imperative relevance:

"It is well recognised that a high level of taxation is not disinflationary but positively inflationary, because if the solution to the problem of inflation is more production, then a very high level of taxation which reduces the margin of saving and the amount available for investment is a potential inflationary force. Further, it destroys all cost consciousness as it destroys all ethics consciousness; a company has as little incentive to econo-

mise when 70% of its expenses are met by the Government, as a citizen has to work when it is more profitable to evade tax on Rs. 20 than to earn Rs. 100."

Not insignificantly, the active participation of the Nobel Prize-winning economist Milton Friedman added a dimension of respectability to the California revolt. So widespread was the interest and enthusiasm generated by the renowned monetarist's support for the Jarvis campaign that opponents of Proposition 13 immediately rallied many economists to oppose Dr. Friedman. About four hundred of them in fact issued a public statement in an attempt to persuade voters that chaos and misery would ensue if the proposals are passed. The gist of the message, as *The Times* (London) correspondent Richard Davy, pointed out, was that: "Tax revenue would be virtually frozen while costs of services would continue to rise. Landlords would not pass on relief to tenants. Increased reliance on state revenues would reduce local control. The business climate would be damaged."

All the same, Dr. Friedman's own response to the California triumph is noteworthy. "The sweeping victory of Proposition 13," he says, "will be heard throughout the land. The 'brewing' tax revolt is no longer brewing. It is boiling over. Despite a massive campaign against Proposition 13 by the establishment — the public refused to be bamboozled this time, as they had been so often before while watching taxes mount and governmental services deteriorate. This time, the scare tactics simply produced a backlash."

It is scarcely surprising that Dr. Friedman's independent efforts in the direction of limiting tax burdens should elicit an equally favourable response. Two weeks before the California referendum, some 200 members of the National Tax Limitation Committee, founded among others by the renowned economist himself, deliberated on the problems of designing satisfactory constitutional amendments, tactics to be followed in getting them enacted and sharing information about movements in various states. "To politicians around the country, the message from California should be clarion clear," avers Dr. Friedman. "The wave of taxpayer protest can carry politicians who learn to ride it to the highest offices in the land. However, they had better heed to the other half of the California message as well. The public is getting sophisticated. It will demand performance and not merely promises."

One of the most curious aspects of the California rebellion is the unintended propulsion to the fore of a controversy over who really constitute the "middle class". This much-banded term has been the subject-matter of considerable discussion and debate among academicians and laymen alike. That it is not susceptible to precise definition has led many critics to deride it as being misleadingly equivocal. Russell Baker, writing in the *International Herald Tribune* almost a year ago, opines that "the definition of what the middle class is not can be extended until we are led to conclude that it is the only politically influential non-existent force in American society. Economically, racially, culturally,

and ideologically, the middle class does not exist. In fact, the spectrum of people who think of themselves as middle-class embraces most of the political groupings that routinely fight each other for power."

However that may be, there can be no gainsaying that the Californian experience has thrown up a plethora of issues which transcend considerations of regional or national importance. While the idea of tax-limitation may not be a panacea, it surely need not be a gimmick either. The lessons which this great and commanding movement holds forth for countries like India are worthy of greater attention, especially at a time when, in the words of one eminent economist, "the government's fiscal policies make it impossible for the nation to breathe freely." We would do well to bear in mind Grover Cleveland's admonition that "the lesson of paternalism ought to be unlearned and the better lesson taught that while the people should patriotically support their government, its functions do not include the support of the people."

## Letter

### Frisking St. George

If GD, who happens to be always at the right place at the right time, was present when an attempt was made to frisk Mr. George Fernandes, she might have been able to tell us how the question of a security check arose at all if Mr. Fernandes like all other ministers had used the VIP lounge and had been taken, without any check of any kind, straight to the aircraft in a VIP limousine. (*Freedom First*, March 1979)

Obviously, in GD's democracy there is no room for an unconventional minister like George who uses the transit lounge and travels in the airline's bus to the plane like other "ordinary mortals".

Perhaps GD will also provide us with a list of "all the better known history books" in which the Emergency is "buried" — lest we forget, as Mrs. G would like us to do!

S. A. A. PINTO

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# WORLD NEWS

## No Maths

Dr. Yuri Orlov, the Soviet civil rights campaigner sentenced to seven years in a labour camp, has now been forbidden to send out any notes relating to his scientific work.

A specialist in quantum theory, Dr. Orlov has been told that his permitted monthly letters to his wife must not contain anything the camp guards cannot understand.

A report in *Nature* last month about Dr. Orlov's plight was illustrated by a set of handwritten mathematical equations he had sent out of the camp. This, apparently, infuriated the Soviet authorities.

Richard Beeston, *The Daily Telegraph*, March 30

## No Solzhenitsyn

Joseph Zisels, 31, A Russian engineer, was sentenced yesterday to three years in a labour camp for distributing books by Alexander Solzhenitsyn, letters in defence of jailed Soviet dissidents, and details of people confined in psychiatric wards. He was found guilty of slandering the Soviet Union.

Dissident sources in Moscow, reporting the Ukrainian trial, said Zisels told the court he had chosen his way of life, that of opposition to violence and lies. He had only managed to take a few steps along the road, but he was happy to have made his choice.

*The Daily Telegraph*, April 6

## No Bell-Bottoms

Chinese newspapers are pouring scorn on support for human rights, foreign fashions among the young, and "the ridiculous notion that socialism is not as good as capitalism."

The papers say some young people are becoming "intoxicated" with foreign ideas and risk "falling into the quicksand of bourgeois decadence."

"They long for bourgeois life-styles," said the *Peking Daily*, "and all they think about is wearing weird clothes and foreign outfits, turning and twisting, rocking and rolling."

The press campaign against foreign influence is having only limited success. It has put a strain on casual contacts between Chinese and foreigners, but many Peking youths still ignore recent official attacks on bell-bottom trousers and Western hair-styles.

The *Workers' Daily* said some young people were "unable to recognise the fact that the socialist system is superior and the capitalist system corrupt."

It invited readers to help the problem by contributing articles on the theme "Socialism is good."

There is no set format for articles," the paper said. "You can use your own words to describe personal experience, changes in our country, or the successful completion of projects to show that socialism is superior."

"Those comrades who have visited capitalist countries can use their experience to compare the socialist and capitalist system to prove that socialism is far better than capitalism."

"Articles should be lively and interesting, the language simple and the meaning clear. They should not exceed 3,000 words," said the paper.

Nigel Wade, *The Daily Telegraph*, April 10

## No Foreign Boy-Friends

Chinese people in Peking say they have been forbidden to meet foreigners except on official business. Instructions are reported to have been issued prohibiting informal individual friendships.

Crowds of young people mobbed foreigners in Peking last November, asking questions for hours about freedoms and living conditions abroad.

Officials initially turned a blind eye as Chinese visited foreign diplomats and journalists in their flats or accepted invitation to restaurants. These contacts were banned before the beginning of the Peking free speech movement late last year.

Chinese girls have been detained by police for having boy-friends among foreign students living in Peking or for going to dances arranged for foreigners at the Chinese-run International Club.

Nigel Wade, *The Daily Telegraph*, April 11

## No Turning the Other Cheek

A Vicar urged his parishioners yesterday to fight the good fight against criminals with physical force.

The Rev. Roy Adair, a former prison chaplain and vicar of St. Katherine's, Belle Vue, Wakefield, wrote in his church magazine that he doesn't believe in turning the other cheek to villains.

"If a man breaks into your home, he isn't thinking of your welfare or your health. Therefore, in my books, I would say 'Use all the strength you have to put him out.'"

"Obviously, you would try every non-violent means at your disposal in an attempt to calm an intruder. But when all else fails, what responsible person wouldn't use his or her head, hands and feet — all gifts from God for our protection. There is a difference between meekness and weakness."

*The Daily Telegraph*, February 17

## Skeletons from India

India has ended its ban on the export of human skeletons for medical education. Under new laws, skeletons can be exported by agents who produce a police certificate, and show where the skeletons were obtained.

The country was the largest exporter of human skeletons until 1976, when the Government imposed a total ban after widespread reports that skeletons were being taken from graveyards.

*The Daily Telegraph*, March 30.

## Book Review

### WITH WEST BENGAL CHIEF MINISTERS

By Saroj Chakrabarty; Orient Longman,  
pp. 550 + 21; Price Rs. 50.

The author, Mr. Saroj Chakrabarty had the unique privilege of being on the personal staff of the Chief Ministers of West Bengal for thirty years beginning with Dr. B. C. Roy in 1947 and ending with S. S. Ray in April 1977. Out of these he served the first fourteen and half years with Dr. B. C. Roy. The story of those years he has already covered in an earlier volume entitled *With Dr. B. C. Roy*. The present volume covers the period from 1962 onwards when he had to serve under a succession of Chief Ministers, beginning with Mr. P. C. Sen and including such diverse personalities as Mr. Ajoy Kumar Mukherji and Mr. Jyoti Basu.

The volume saw "the light of the day" because, as the author has stated, the present Chief Minister, Mr. Jyoti Basu threw "his weight in its favour." Under his direction, the Government of the State not only granted permission for the publication of some official documents but also granted a subvention to enable the author to publish the book. It must be stated, however, that the help has not affected the objectivity of the volume.

The book is sub-titled "Memoirs 1962 to 1977." But there is hardly anything of "memoirs" in it. The author has kept himself studiously behind the curtain. Throughout the five hundred pages of the book there may not be more than half a dozen places where he has mentioned his own reactions. Otherwise, it is a straight record of political and other developments in the country and the State seen from the ring seat of a Chief Minister's personal secretariat. The view from the ring seat is not, however, materially different from the view that an intelligent observer of events would get from newspaper reports, the only difference being that the former is fortified by some extracts from relevant official documents like correspondence between the Prime Minister and the Chief Minister.

During the fifteen years that the book covers many important events took place, such as, in the international field, Chinese aggression and wars with Pakistan and liberation of Bangla Desh and, in the national field, the decline of the Congress, its resurrection under Mrs. Indira Gandhi and its collapse after the Emergency, the rise of Marxists Communists in Bengal, the growth of Naxalities and their cult of violence. The events are faithfully portrayed and the reactions to them of the successive Chief Ministers are truthfully recorded, many a time with quotations from official records. But there is no attempt at analysis, nor is there any investigation of the basic causes of the developments. The book presents a picture of the events that took place, but does not provide any key to an understanding of their causes and consequences.

Amongst the document quoted in the book, of more topical interest are the intelligence reports about the activities of Naxalities and other militant groups and of the factions in which they were divi-

ded, and the correspondence between the then Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi and the then Chief Minister of Bengal, Mr. S. S. Ray. It appears that the relations between the two were very close and that Mr. Ray was often consulted on a variety of matters relating to Bengal as well as the country as a whole. Later those relations were spoiled by her son, Mr. Sanjay Gandhi who began to meddle in Bengal Congress affairs and went to the extent of building up factions against Mr. Ray. The book makes it clear that, in contrast to others in similar positions, Mr. Ray never paid any court to Mr. Sanjay Gandhi.

To Mr. Ray at least the declaration of the Emergency did not come as a surprise. He was visualising the necessity of a step like that for over six months. This will be clear from a letter, quoted in the book, which he wrote to Mrs. Indira Gandhi as far back as 21 January 1975. In continuation of a discussion that he had with her about the time for the next General Election he rejected May and September/October of 1975 and recommended February 1976. While making that recommendation, he advised: "On the political front, some drastic action has to be taken. Democracy does not mean that there should be permissiveness in every sphere. There has to be discipline and law and order strictly maintained. We should, therefore, take powers to ban such organisations as the R.S.S. and the Ananda Marg. The irresponsible and malicious Press has to be controlled. Activists of extremist, communal and lawless parties have to be detained. The selection here has to be carefully made and planned properly." (P. 467). This is exactly what Mrs. Gandhi did after imposing the Emergency. This also explains Mr. Ray's support to the Emergency. According to him, as expressed in the words of the Governor, Mr. A. L. Dias in his address to the Bengal Assembly delivered on February 21 certain forces of disruption and chaos were "trying to raise their ugly heads to bring about anarchical conditions in the country" (P. 468). In the writings about the Emergency, little attention has been paid to this grave disorder that was growing in the body politic.

All in all, *With West Bengal Chief Ministers* is a useful publication which will be of great interest to students of the politics of that important era 1962 to 1977.

V. B. KARNIK

### FACE TO FACE

By Ved Mehta; Oxford University Press; pp. 300;  
Price Rs. 22.50

Among the multitude of admirers of Ved Mehta, I could easily place myself as an ardent one. His style of writing could never be more expressive and *Face to Face* was no disappointment. As the title would suggest, it is his autobiography. Only after turning the first few pages of the book, does a reader realise that Ved Mehta was blind from the age of three and then the interest in the book is further heightened.

Hailing from a Punjabi family, Mr. Mehta belong-



ed to one of those better placed Indians during the British Raj. The first part of his book recounts the crippling attack of meningitis which left him sightless for the rest of his life. Though blessed with a father who was a doctor and a high ranking government official at that, Mr. Mehta had his share of 'surmas' and other anointings from his mother who was not so educated. His family lived mostly in Northern India and his father's job was transferable. It took them to many places. What perhaps made the author an individual and not just a vegetable like many blind boys in India, was his father's unstinted determination to educate him. This determination brought the author to the Dadar Blind School at the young age of five.

After a rather uneventful story of his childhood which the author narrates most impressively, the book turns to the political ferment that was then prevalent. Based at Lahore during the forties when religious hatred was brewing in the Sind and the Punjab, the author's family was not spared the change for the worse. The city rocked with arson and loot, rape and butchery. The author with his sisters and brothers boarded the train to safety and spent a few months in Bombay awaiting the safe escape of their parents. The parents arrived minus the glorious past, the huge mansion and other property. Once reunited, it was an uphill task both materially as well as psychologically to get adjusted to a divided India.

It is this section of the book which is most gripping. I have often wondered as I have walked past the so-called former refugee camps in Bombay about the shattering experience the refugees must have had to leave behind everything and go to a land with only memories and a shaken spirit to start life anew. This very state, the author brings vividly before the reader. His description of the innumerable nights of hiding in a small room — each moment pregnant with tension and uncertainty; the political meetings which would fan the explosive situation; the subsequent stream of refugees crossing the border; people killing their wives and daughters before the miscreants could disagree them; the squalor of the refugee camps; of the victims whose limbs had been chopped; of those who had lost their dear ones can send a chill down the spine.

All through, the author's efforts to acquire more knowledge had been frustrated. But determination goaded him on and at last an American school accepted his case. The third part of the book deals with Mr. Mehta reaching the United States; his years at the Arkansas School for the Blind and then the years at the University of California. America offered him what his motherland had denied him — an opportunity to learn.

The author has no pretensions about his rather idle childhood, his arriving at the age of 15 into a different culture or his contacts with various people at the University. That perhaps makes the book more readable. Despite his sightlessness, nowhere does the author sprinkle a bit of self-pity. Far from it. The book ends quite abruptly — in fact too abruptly for an engrossed reader to realise that it has come to an end.

VRUNDA MOGHE DEV

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## DISPATCHES

By Michael Herr; Picador (Pan Books First British Edition); pp. 206; Price Rs. 20.25

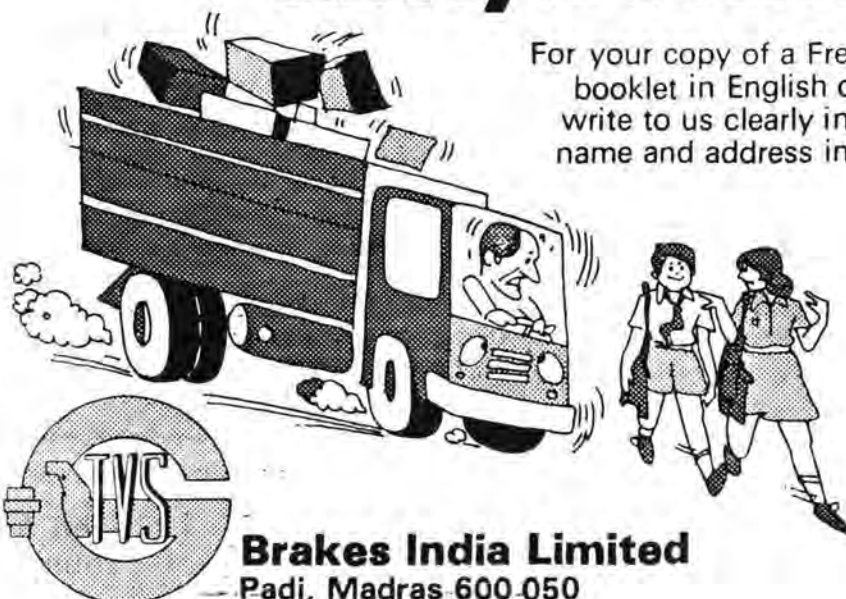
Michael Herr is a free lance journalist who was deputed by *Esquire* as its Special Correspondent in Viet Nam in 1967/68 during the famous Tet offensive and the siege of Khe Sanh. This, his first book, is dedicated to his parents which is rather surprising; having read the book one would have thought that the American Marine or one of the more honest and dedicated correspondents like Sean Flynn would have been more appropriate. Herr's *Dispatches* recorded in six chapters under the headings "Breathing In; Hell Sucks; Khe Sanh; Illumination Rounds; Colleagues; and Breathing Out" are as a result of two years spent in embattled Viet Nam where he savours, hates and accepts as inevitable the sights and sounds of combat in a scenario, that anyone but an American would normally find difficult to understand. By reading these *Dispatches*, non-Americans could now understand better the problems of that war. During this period as Special Correspondent of *Esquire*, Herr, unlike the majority of his press colleagues, was not fettered by tiresome restrictions of Board of Directors who demanded a certain pro-establishment slant in reporting the war. Nor was he required to file copy as others did, after every official press briefing more often than not doctored for home consumption and far removed from actuals. As a result, he has been able to strike a very realistic chord that captures in words, the blood and guts and confusion of the Viet Nam war in all its nuances, in the mould of his

illustrious predecessors of the stamp of Ernie Pyle, Hemmingway and Linklater.

Most of us today think of modern war as a push button affair with the emphasis on the weapon and other sophisticated gadgetry. By doing so, we tend to forget that conventional war, inspite of the availability of such a variety of sophisticated weapons in national arsenals, involves the man behind the rifle or gun or the collective of a helicopter. Herr, in his *Dispatches* issues a timely reminder to prove this point that in Vietnam, it was the "grunt", "spade", "gook" and "dink" who mattered and not the thousands of tons of bombs, defoliating agents, helicopters, bombers etc. One classic incident perhaps reflects Herr's thinking — that of Luke the Gook — a youthful N.V.A. sniper who kept surfacing from his hideout inspite of mortar bombs, recoilless rifles and the dreaded, soul destroying, suffocating napalm. Even after such devastating treatment, Luke the Gook reappears, opens fire and is cheered by the Marines he has been sniping at!

To understand this book the Indian reader must be acquainted with the American idiom developed in the sixties during this war which gave birth to soul and rock music. Although the reviewer is a retired service officer of 36 years standing who fought and served alongside American troops in Italy under Mark Clark and the Japanese Occupation under MacArthur and who has been an avid reader of Military History, he was puzzled by Herr's constant use of the term "grunt". A check made in an American dictionary of slang proved unproductive. By a process of deduction (after going through half the book) came the realisation that a "grunt" was an U.S. Marine/foot soldier in the Vietnam war and

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a "spade" a black U.S. Marine/Infantry man. It would have been advisable for the author to have included an anthology of American slang used in Dispatches for non-American readers explaining terms like "Lurp", "tiger suit", "tits on a bull", "load", "candy ass", "boonies" *et al.* A sketch map covering the war zone would also have helped.

The story is woven expertly, professionally with one individual's experiences deftly woven into the next to highlight a point. His turn of phrase is often exquisite like; "your brain is already about the consistency of a soggy quiche lorraine"; or "so gaunt and tired and underfed that he could have brought out the Jewish mother in a Palestinian guerrilla"; or "a cross fertilization of ignorance"—very expressive, very telling and to the point. Herr uses the four letter word and its various derivatives not vulgarly but to hammer home the desperation and frustration of the fighting man and the War Correspondent. It would appear that Herr's meaty language is meant to shake one out of one's complacency — those who are far removed from the paddies and the jungles and the mountains and the rain and the invisible but omnipresent VeeCee of Viet Nam.

Herr proves many points in his Dispatches. The corruptness at all levels, omnipresent fear and cold courage, camaraderie, the yawning gap between the man in the field and those in high command and the manner in which men and material are manipulated to meet national "aims" and political whims without displaying the slightest consideration for the man in the bunker or trench, or for the Lurp patrolling deep in no-man's land, or for the Chinook helicopter pilot swooping down on to exposed LZ on missions of Mercy or for medics braving fire to minister to the wounded or for the ARVN and for the South Vietnamese Marines. These unfortunates are mere pawns on the chessboard of war politics. And manifest throughout is the ever pervasive air of corruption, especially in Saigon, where even the small Indian community is brought into focus for deft manipulations in the exchange racket. Such is war as Herr saw it not only in the flesh pots like Saigon but in offensive and defensive operations.

Herr's perceptive pen brings out by inference tragically and pointedly, the difference in approach between Regulars and conscripts, especially in attitudes. And these events, described so frankly, explain the why of My Lai; whereas this one solitary example of brutality in the slaying of defenceless women and children hit the headlines, Herr's Dispatches mention the possibility of many more. Example — MACV Information Officer in a press briefing refers to things like a "discreet burst" (of fire) which tore an old grandfather and two children to bits, or "friendly casualties" (like My Lai) or what an American Soldier of the 1st Infantry Division said about Americans treating the Vietnamese like animals: "well, you know what to do to animals... kill 'em, hurt 'em and beat 'em so we can train 'em... we don't treat the Dinks no different than that." "We had to destroy Ben Tre to save it". Yet, Herr lovingly describes the sacrifices made by some Americans to save Vietnamese lives. Such was the Vietnamese war which brought out the beast in man and the best.

Maj. Gen. E. D'Souza, PVSM (Retd.)

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## WITH MANY VOICES

"The deep

Moans round with many voices. Come, my friends,  
'Tis not too late to seek a newer world."

—Tennyson

In Delhi, on the day when the Prime Minister, reaffirms his commitment to the concept of mixed economy, one of his ministers demands nationalisation of industries.

G.D. Birla, *The Times of India*, April 2,

As a creed with which Europe and American has to do business, Islam has begun to make Marxism look decidedly familiar and manageable.

*The Guardian*, April 9

While strikes in general are deplorable, the ones we are involved in, be we civil servants, lorry drivers or hospital porters, are, naturally, an exception to the general rule.

Anthony Arblaster, *The Guardian*, April 9

The politicians of classical Greece understood the difference, when they drew their distinction between demos, the people, and ochlos, the mob. It was ochlocracy that swept Ayatollah Khomeini back from Paris to Teheran.

*The Economist*, February 17

Contempt proceedings and motions of privilege may keep papers from printing the truth about Legislatures for a while, but will they make people believe that the pus oozing from the Legislatures is perfume?

Arun Shourie, *The Indian Express*, March 27

Mr. Vajpayee quoting Kabir in Peking: "What can be done tomorrow should be done today and what can be done today should be done straightway." Alas, that is precisely what the Chinese did.

N.J.N., *The Times of India*, March 11

When the baleful tide of socialism eventually recedes, historians will rack their brains to account for its rise and spread in the first place.

*The Daily Telegraph* quoted in *The Statesman*, March 11

I am unswerving in my respect and adoration for politicians, but more and more am I persuaded that most of them are off their crumpets.

James Cameron, *The Guardian*, April 9

"I request you to report my words correctly. If some one does not do so then I will exclude him from the press corps and offer him a more manual work."

Alexei Kosygin, *The Times of India*, March 15

Mr. Morarji Desai is a nice man and he is educating his ministers but even Lord Brahma cannot educate an unwilling pupil.

G.D. Birla, *The Times of India*, April 2,

Sikkim was added to the Indian Union in a hurry.

Morarji Desai, *The Times of India*, April 10,

"Soldiers should not run away."

Idi Amin, *The Daily Telegraph*, April 4.

I have a strong conviction and feeling that I have done the right thing and I have a done what is good in the interest of Pakistan.

Gen. Zia Ul-Haq, *The Indian Express*, April 7,

"They persecute the people. They arrest the people. They issue orders. They oppose us. They are against our appointments. Our day has been turned into night."

Iran's Prime Minister, Dr. Mehdi Bazargan in a reference to the 'Committee of aides' around Ayatollah Khomeini, *The Times of India*, March 2, 1979.

Our Prime Minister is a man of God. What is the point in discussing politics with him?

G. B. Gupta, *The Statesman*, March 11, 1979,

## The measure of achievement



99 years ago, we were a single, simple dyeing unit. Today, our textile complex is one of the largest in the world. In 1977, sales crossed the Rs. 90-crore mark.

Our manufacturing facilities are very modern and highly automated. We have one of the largest loomsheds—2,160 automatic looms under one roof!

We were the first cotton textile mill to install the revolutionary ultra high speed Sulzer shuttleless weaving machines in India. The first to produce terry towels on automatic jacquard looms. And one of the first to install a rotary screen printing machine.

Our fabrics are exported to all the sophisticated fashion centres in the world. In 1977 alone, exports exceeded Rs. 17 crores. Taking our total export earnings since Independence to Rs. 193 crores—which is one-tenth of India's exports of cotton textiles! This export performance has earned for us, over the years, several awards:

- The Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry 1972 Award for pioneering export achievement.
- The Government of India Award for outstanding achievement in export promotion for 1972-73.
- The Government of Maharashtra Directorate of Industries Prize for best export performance for 1973-74.
- The Texprocil Award for outstanding export performance in 1976-77.

How's that for achievement?

**BOMBAY DYEING**