

Prime Minister opens Delhi assembly



Morarji Desai

ON THE FIRST ANNIVERSARY of his taking office, Morarji Desai, Prime Minister of India, said that the most dangerous proposition for democracy was the idea that it was a luxury for poor or backward people. That sort of utilitarian thinking was at the root of dictatorship.

'We have got to be clear in our mind about the inevitability of democracy in all circumstances, whether democracy is strong or weak,' he said. Short cuts, far from improving the lot of ordinary people had led in the Indian experience to 'rampant evil'. A weakened democracy could be strengthened, 'but if it is given up how can it be made strong?'

The Prime Minister was inaugurating a Moral Re-Armament international assembly with the theme, 'A dynamic, durable and ethical democracy'. 'This particular subject,' he said, 'is of the utmost importance to human society.'

Priority, he went on, must be given to the ethical basis of democracy. Truth could not be established by lies, violence could not be set aside by violence, democracy would never be attained undemocratically. 'If democracy is to grow,' he said, 'it will be by adherence to democratic methods.' Dynamism was needed, but not the kind that was understood as 'driving other people as much as you like'.

Too many people, said Mr Desai, were patient with themselves and impatient with others. 'We have to be patient with other

people and impatient with ourselves,' he said. 'This is what Mahatma Gandhi taught us. This is what Moral Re-Armament wants to spread.'

The Prime Minister told the 500 people at the assembly, including diplomats and representatives from 20 countries, that the main duty of government in a democracy was to see that people became strong and could resist lapses. 'This was proved last year by a silent electoral revolution. It has now made an atmosphere develop such that no government or leaders will be able to run away with the people.'

Introducing the Prime Minister, Rajmohan Gandhi, Editor of the newsweekly *Himmat*, and one of those who called the assembly, said, 'After a period of 19 un-free months we have breathed more freely. Yet the relevant comparison is not between the difficulties today and difficulties during the 19 months—it is between what exists now and what ought to exist.'

Mr Gandhi said that a year ago most of the elected representatives of India took a pledge at Gandhiji's Samadhi to work together in a spirit of dedication and to set standards in personal and public life. 'Each one of those who took the pledge knows in his heart whether or to what extent he has fulfilled it,' he said.

Those who spoke at the opening session were VH Dalmia, a leading Indian industrialist; Mrs Yukika Sohma, senior Vice-

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President of the Asian Womens Association, Japan; Frederik Philips, Chairman of the Supervisory Board of Philips Electrical Industries; Mrs Peter Howard, Wimbledon tennis champion and widow of the British author and journalist; Peter Petersen, Member of the German Federal Parliament; and Kim Beazley, who was 33 years in the Australian Parliament.

Dr Beazley, the former Australian Minister for Education, said there was a fine line between the authority to make decisions on behalf of people and power over people. 'It is so easy to say that power for me is power to do good,' he said. 'We need to be dead certain that our eye is set on the good and not on the power.'

Dr Beazley, who had spent many years in the Australian Opposition, said, 'The true function of an Opposition is to out-think the Government at the point of the Government's successes, and not merely to highlight its failures. Then you have a really dynamic democracy.'

NIGERIA

Theatre or stadium?

Message to India

HH Alhaji Ado Bayero, the Emir of Kano, and the Rt Rev SI Kale, retired Anglican Bishop of Lagos, Nigeria, sent the following message to the Delhi assembly:

'We wish to express our solidarity with you in your bold venture to marry freedom with discipline.

The inner discipline that Moral Re-Armament evokes and a passionate care for others are the surest guarantees for progress and stability in the world.

Your experiment will be a pace-setter for all nations.'

THE DEAREST IDOL, a new play by J Ifoghale Amata, was performed to overflow audiences recently at Abraka College of Education, Bendel State, Nigeria. The actors were all students at the college, calling themselves 'The Moral Re-Armament Association of Nigeria, Abraka Branch'.

Mr Amata, lecturer in English at the college, was co-author of the play *Freedom* which, in its film version, has been seen by several million people across the world. His new play touches a number of issues as hot as those *Freedom* dealt with.

The plot revolves round Chief Idama, who is seeking support for his election to Council Chairman. Being of a minority tribe, he schemes for the support of a majority group by offering his daughter in marriage to a man of the other tribe. To win people of the church he donates money to build a cathedral.

It becomes clear that his daughter will not serve as a pawn in this game. Nor are the church followers happy about the donation

when rumour has it that the money comes from the Chief running a brothel at one of the city hotels.

The Chief, his political opponents and his family are soon in a hopeless tangle. Then his son Ifo, studying overseas, obeys an inner conviction to return home.

He tries, sincerely and naively, without much response, to bring order. But as he sees and admits some of his own shortcomings, his and his sister's clean-up campaign starts to take effect.

As Amata puts it in a truly African saying, 'One finger cannot extract lice from the head', so teamwork is found to be more fruitful than a lone effort.

The idols of political power, success, money and sex begin to be dethroned. The audience is left with the uncomfortable question, 'Sacrifice? What am I prepared to sacrifice?'

As visitors, we found ourselves involved in something that had the rousing capacity of a favourite sports event. Actors and audience all took part passionately. When a corrupt politician was thrown out, the shouts of jubilation in the crowd soared like the cheers at a football match. **B and G Jonzon**

WILL AMERICA LEAD A

The President speaks

TWO THOUSAND EIGHT HUNDRED people, many of whom were members of Congress and the Diplomatic Corps and other high government officials, attended a National Prayer Breakfast in the Washington Hilton ballroom on 2 February, at which President Carter, the final speaker, spoke simply but eloquently of his own faith.

'To me, God is real,' he said. 'God is ever present in my life. He sustains me when I am weak and gives me guidance when I turn to Him and provides for me in Christ a perfect example to emulate in my relations with other human beings.'

'My wife and I worship together every night, and often during the day I turn to God to enquire in a personal way,' he said.

The President emphasised that before going to India, he read the Bhagavad Gita. 'I visited the place where Mahatma Gandhi was cremated and thought of his committed life, his knowledge of Christianity and Judaism and his worship of God. I felt a kinship with him and with Indian leaders who have not always been our friends in recent years. There is a thread of faith which runs through all our lives.'

The same God

'Prime Minister Begin, too, I like and respect and admire. In our quiet talks together he showed the fervour of a deeply committed religious man who worships the same God as you and I do.'

'I felt an instant kinship with President Sadat, who never fails to point out that the Egyptians and the Jews worship the same God and are both sons of Abraham.'

'If, in our search for peace and goodwill, we emphasise these ties of mutual faith and hold to the deeply-sought guidance of God, I am confident we can prevail.'

The prayer breakfast and its accompanying occasions were arranged by a committee of 16 Senators and Congressmen. Others who spoke included US District Court Judge John Sirica, Representatives Barbara Gordon and Berkeley Bedell, Senators Mark Hatfield and Harold Hughes, and Marine Corps Commandant General Louis H Wilson. Senator James Allen presided.

A study in revolution

Garth Lean from Britain was invited to be the main speaker at the 'leadership seminar', which was chaired by Congressman Donald L Bonker.

Mr Lean said:

There is a lot of evidence that a religious revival is taking place in the United States. Will it develop into a spiritual revolution—a

revolution which radically affects every aspect of American life and policy and flows out to transform the world?

What can people like us—both here and in our own countries—do to help that to happen?

We in Britain once experienced such a revolution. It took place in the last decades of the eighteenth century, at a time when we were in something of the same position which America occupies today. We had lost a war—against you!—but won some others, and were perhaps the most powerful country then active. It was obvious that, for good or ill, we would greatly influence the future.

But England, during the first half of the eighteenth century was in profound moral disorder. 'The politicians,' says Harold Nicholson, 'were corrupt, the ecclesiastics lax, the middle classes intent only on making money, and the masses of the people licentious, drunken and raw.' The ruling classes, according to another historian, were as profligate and as heartless as those who in France provoked the French Revolution. Yet something happened which not only made a revolution of blood in Britain unnecessary, but resulted in the most far-reaching reforms then going on anywhere in the world. The slave trade and slavery were suppressed, the penal system was reformed, child labour in the factories was abolished, corruption was largely eradicated from public life and 'heartlessness' became unfashionable among the upper classes. And all this, together with the emergence of a non-Marxist Labour movement, is universally acknowledged to have been the fruit of a quiet, bloodless, Christian revolution. Britain, with all her faults, became, in a real sense and for a period, the moral and spiritual leader of the world.

How did this happen? Greatly simplifying it because of time, but not distorting it, I see three stages.

Social problems

1 First, tens of thousands of ordinary people began to find a transforming experience of Christ. They did not just declare for Christ, but became different. As Overton, the great Church historian, puts it, 'selfish men became self-denying, the discontented happy, the worldly spiritually-minded, the drunkard sober, the sexual chaste, the liar truthful, the thief honest, the proud humble, the thriftless thrifty.'

This revival began almost immediately after George Whitfield and then John and Charles Wesley accepted the Holy Spirit's way for that age, instead of stubbornly holding to their fixed ideas of what was proper. It focussed first in a willingness to preach in the open air. The quiet little Oxford teacher, John Wesley, had in his own words been 'so tenacious to every point of

order and decency' that he thought 'the saving of souls almost a sin if it had not been done in a church'. But one day, after reflecting that the Sermon on the Mount was 'a pretty remarkable precedent of field preaching', he 'submitted to be more vile and proclaimed in the highways the glad tidings of the gospel'. In six months he was in the middle of an awakening. The working classes of Britain came alight. Of course, he was attacked in almost every Episcopal church for 40 years, and he and his men were subjected to every sort of physical persecution. But riding their horses hundreds of thousands of miles, he and they turned the tide for Britain.



2 Phase two was one of consolidation. George Whitfield, who won so many in America as well as in Britain, once said in a moment of despair, that he had spent his life 'weaving a rope of sand'. 'My brother Wesley acted wisely,' he added. 'The souls that were awakened under his ministry he joined in classes and thus preserved the fruits of his labours'. Wesley put it more pungently: 'Preaching like an apostle, without joining those that are awakened and training them in the way of God is only begetting children for the murderer.'

So, while in no way wanting to undermine the position of the Church of which he was always a loyal member, Wesley everywhere formed classes and bands, what we today would call groups. In them men and women prayed and read the Bible, but also were honest before God and with each other about their hopes, their fears, their needs and their failures. They held each other to the highest. They also sought God's direction on the ethical and social problems of their daily life. The Tolpuddle Martyrs, the originators of our Christian trade union movement, were one such group.

The people in these groups—and they appeared in all denominations and at all levels of society—became the foot soldiers of the great reforms. They, for example, created the grass roots public opinion which made the abolition of the slave trade possible when William Wilberforce and his friends carried that fight into Parliament.

SPIRITUAL REVOLUTION?

3 Phase three of the revolution occurred when this floodtide of Christian living began to alter the policy of the country. By the last two decades of the eighteenth century, the Christian uprising of the people was more and more affecting some of the young men coming to leadership in the nation. William Wilberforce is a good example.

Wilberforce entered Parliament along with his friend, William Pitt, both aged 21. Within three years, Pitt was Prime Minister and Wilberforce, by now Member for Yorkshire, the greatest county in England, was at his side on the front bench. They lived in the same house and were, it was said, 'exactly like brothers'. Wilberforce, according to Pitt, 'had the greatest natural eloquence of anyone he ever knew'. He was also the darling of London society and the Prince of Wales said he would go anywhere to hear him sing. He was charming, lively, wealthy and popular. Trevelyan says that he could have been Pitt's successor as Prime Minister 'if he had preferred party to mankind'.

For just when London and Parliament were at his feet, Wilberforce was converted. He started rising very early, praying and listening to God, and writing his thoughts down in a notebook. One morning he wrote: 'My first years in Parliament I did nothing—nothing, I mean, to any purpose. My own distinction was my darling object.' And another day he added: 'God Almighty has set before me two great objects, the suppression of the slave trade and the reformation of manners'. Both were achieved in his lifetime. It took him 20 years to get the very profitable slave trade abolished, and it was only on his deathbed that he heard that slavery itself was to end. But, meanwhile, the change in the tone of the public life was extraordinary, and others, like Lord Shaftesbury, were to carry on where he left off.

Great reforms

What I want to emphasise today is that he did not achieve these things alone. He gathered round him an inner group, consisting of anything from six to ten MPs from both parties, as well as some writers and clergy, a director of the East India Company and a former Governor-General of India. Each had found—and asked the others to help him deepen—the Christian experience which Wilberforce had experienced. They met regularly—often continuously—in what they called their cabinet meetings, and historians state that 'no Prime Minister had such a cabinet as Wilberforce could summon to their assistance'.

These men initiated the first great reforms which began to appear on the statute book—the reforms which kept Britain united and which even Marx once said prevented his kind of revolution in the country.

This was all the fruit. The root of the tree was the group of men themselves with their commitment to put God first in everything. They all forsook the ladder for the Cross. They put their ambitions, their financial security, their human desires and preferences at the foot of the Cross and did not take them back again. They submitted their plans and all their characteristics to each other's scrutiny and sought the direction of God upon them together. Each regarded it as 'truly friendly frankness' when another pointed out his faults and helped him to face them in the light of Christ's commands and forgiveness. Without this honesty and commitment, everything else would have collapsed. You cannot have a spiritual revolution on the cheap.

God's last chance

I speak with some personal knowledge of the power of such united Christian living because—under the inspiration of a great American, the hundredth anniversary of whose birth comes this year—I have been privileged to work with such groups of people for over 40 years. That American, Frank Buchman, faced Oxford students like my wife and myself with the moral imperatives of the Sermon on the Mount—absolute honesty, purity, unselfishness and love—and taught us the obvious, but to us amazing, fact that God will guide ordinary people who dare to listen and obey. His recipe for team-building was biblical. 'If we walk in the light as He is in the light, then we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.'

Honesty. A fellowship of sinners. A personal and united gift of freedom and victory.

Then Buchman threw us out into the world—to tackle the troublespots together. First he told us to go and change, in Christ's power, the most difficult men in our college, home town or nation. Then he sent us further, and today we operate in places like Rhodesia, Ireland and the Middle East. 'God so loved the world that He gave His only Son...' he would emphasise. 'Thy will be done on earth as in heaven.'

Of course, my friends and I have made, and make, mistakes. But whenever we in Moral Re-Armament have held to these principles, extraordinary things have happened. After seeing God at work reconciling warring families, races and communities, succeeding where every human effort has failed, I cannot for a moment believe that the Holy Spirit is less available or God less powerful than in biblical times or in the days of Wesley and Wilberforce. Public affairs are, of course, vastly more complicated. We have made them so. But people, who are so often the root of the problem, and God Himself, the source of the answers, are the same.

One of your poets wrote that America is God's last chance to make a world. Certainly it looks today as if she is, at least, God's best chance to remake a world, which ecologists and military alike regard with such gloom and doom. Perhaps that is why there is this mighty stirring of the Spirit in this country. Let us both pray and work that it becomes nothing less than the greatest revolution of all time whereby the Cross of Christ may transform the world.

No longer a Cross

CHARLES COLSON, the former Nixon Personal Counsel who wrote 'Born Again', addressing a luncheon following the seminars, said that he brought both good news and bad.

'The good news is that, where *Time* some years ago proclaimed on its front cover "God is dead", it now states just the opposite,' he said. 'A Gallup Poll, seven years ago, found that just 16 per cent of those questioned found God important in their lives; in their latest poll it was 60 per cent.'

'The bad news,' Mr Colson stated, 'is that these same polls—and other evidence—show that religion is having less and less influence on daily living. Immorality and division are on the increase. We are living in the most evil-centred period of history.'

This, continued Colson, was an indictment of our Christianity. 'We need,' he

said, 'to stand naked before Christ and accept His absolute values.'

Garth Lean later commented: 'Why is morality falling and division increasing, even as religious concern is rising? It is the lack of a sufficient degree of honesty and purity in us Christians. There is not enough of the Cross in those of us who say we are converted. Some remain a slave to smoking or sex, even when free from other things. Often the Zacchaeus touch of restitution has been lacking, the restitution which vouches for our sincerity, which makes us fruitful and which "brings salvation to this house".'

'What is needed, if we are to love Christ and our country worthily, is a hurricane of honesty and purity in government and the big corporations, in the trade unions, the professions and all our daily lives.'

'There is no longer any Cross in professing the name of Christ in America. The Cross comes when we apply honesty and purity so drastically that we become dangerous to evil.'

Prison and beyond

'I NEVER THOUGHT I would have this opportunity,' said a mother who had just escaped from Ethiopia, speaking in London recently. 'There were moments when I gave up. But I have experienced miracles.'

She described how, some years ago, she had picked up a book of Moral Re-Armament. 'I started it in the morning and I did not stop until I had finished it at three o'clock the next morning.' That day she rang two people working with MRA and asked them to come. 'This is not what we are living in this home,' she told them, and talked honestly. Faith began to grow.

It led her into work helping destitute people in her area. The military government (Dergue) accused her of helping the guerrilla forces opposing them, and imprisoned her. 'The experience I had there I will never forget,' she said. 'I felt the need of MRA as never before.'

'In the darkest moment the guards were saying they were going to kill me. I prayed. I said, "God, are you going to forsake me?" Then I thought Christ was there with me. Suddenly, a phone call came, and they all

went out, leaving me to go back to my cell.

'There were moments when my interrogators and I forgot where we were and found ourselves talking about Christ, and they forgot who I was and went on talking and talking.

'The young man who had accused me falsely still followed me in prison. He continued to say to me, "Say you have given money to the guerrillas and then you will be free." I had the thought one morning, "Forgive this guy whom you used to hate." I went to him and I said, "I used to hate you but I think I was wrong. I forgive you. It is because of this situation that you and I are here." He did not say a word but it touched his heart.

So many injuries

'My husband used to send me notes in prison saying that our friends here were praying for me. That gave me courage that I would one day get out. This encouragement gave me hope. I never thought prison life would be that bitter. I realise that even though I have freedom, I must care for the prisoners, materially and otherwise.

'I was freed again after six months, and reunited with my husband and family. Without a faith to sustain us we would have gone insane, or our lives would have been

made unbearable by fear.

'Then God told me to leave.' She described the miracle of her escape. With her two daughters she stayed for some days in the area controlled by the liberation front. They were about to go on when her daughters told her they had decided to remain with the front and fight.

'It was very painful for me,' she said. 'We discussed for two whole nights. They said, "We have to fight for our country. Then we will continue our studies." For the first time we spoke like friends. We prayed together and that was that.

'Please pray for Eritrea, for Ethiopia. It is a terrible time—the war, the famine, and so many injuries, and no heart or soul at all. No consideration for human lives. I hope the people of faith find courage again.'

'In all the dangers and hardships, the most painful thing was leaving her daughters behind. She honours their decision. But she is concerned that many of the youth see no place for God in their struggle. 'The liberation fronts are disciplined and they sacrifice. They aim to build a new society in the villages. But when you do not have the love of God in your heart, you are not complete. How can we help them see that Christianity is more revolutionary?'

HPE

The plea which concludes the above article must provoke thought among all sincere Christians.

In a revolutionary world, the need is for revolutionised people.

The following article appeared recently in 'The Rhodesia Herald':

Call for personal changes

Herald Reporter
WHATEVER changes there are going to be in a future Zimbabwe, they will create a better nation only if everyone recognises the need for personal change, to help us prepare for the future of Zimbabwe. "No man changes a better they will better

WHATEVER CHANGES there are going to be in a future Zimbabwe, they will create a better nation only if everyone recognises the

need for radical personal change, writes the Acting President of the University of Rhodesia Students' Representative Council, in his newsletter.

Mr Jos te Braake wrote: 'We live in historic times. This year could see the change-over from Rhodesia to Zimbabwe. Are we ready for that change-over?'

Mr te Braake said: 'A critical task lies before us as students; we need to prepare ourselves and to help our community to prepare for radical changes in the political structure of Rhodesia.

'No matter what the changes are going to be, they will only create a better nation if every one of us recognises the need for radical personal changes,' he wrote.

Materially, the opportunities for advancement were astronomical in a developing country.

'The scientific age has produced incredible revolutionary changes to our mode of life. But what about man himself? We need to revolutionise men.'

He added: 'We need men free of dishonesty, greed, lust and hate. Men willing to set aside their pride and ambition, to cross over the oceans that divide us in boats of forgiveness to bring hope of new life based on the power of God.'

Mr te Braake said this was not a 'romantic dream' but 'a dynamic reality which is shaking nations by their very roots'.

He said men of action in many other

countries had realised that the ultimate challenge was to revolutionise man.

'When I personally considered this idea of creating a modern man, I discovered that I had some cleaning up to do first.'

Mr te Braake said: 'Relations with people close to me were clearly not as they should have been and I have to admit that I sometimes find it difficult not to assume an attitude of superiority towards others, especially towards blacks.

'I know these attitudes are wrong and that only with God's help will I be able to face up to them honestly and overcome them.'

THE RHODESIA HERALD also carries several articles about the visit of ARK Mackenzie, former British Minister for Social and Economic Affairs at the United Nations, Patrick Wolrige Gordon, for 16 years Member of Parliament for East Aberdeenshire, and their wives, and Conrad Hunte, the West Indian sportsman. An interview with the two wives, 'who are visiting Rhodesia with their husbands for Moral Re-Armament', finishes by quoting Mrs Mackenzie: 'I am convinced that if you seek, God will show any person what to do, providing you are willing to face the truth about yourself and your country'.

For the second time the African National Council (Zimbabwe), led by Joshua Nkomo, has shown the MRA film, 'Freedom', to a training seminar of 70 of its officials.