

# Indian conference 'to extend frontiers of democracy'

by  
RD Mathur

THERE ARE STILL some people who believe that the poor people could do with a little bit of stick and dictatorship. But after having lived through that experience personally for 20 months I wouldn't wish to recommend that even for my worst enemies.

It was the poor people who slept on the pavement, who sought in garbage bins something to feed their family, who despite their utter poverty and the inhumanity practised upon them, for the first time by popular vote threw out a dictatorial government. It was a great historic event and it has disproved a lie that was going round the world.

In 1977 and 1978 two great events took place. One was the courageous moral statesmanship of Sadat which brought forth the highest tradition of patriotism and leadership. The second was the restoration of democracy in India. Today the 600 million people of India are once again walking in freedom. But the battle for democracy is far harder than the battle to remove dictatorship.

## Taken for granted

In my lifetime I have had to fight two battles for freedom. One was against the British and one last year. It is very easy to take freedom and democracy for granted, but once you have lost them and experienced dictatorship you realise what precious things they are.

Some weeks ago Rajmohan Gandhi and I were talking with the Home Minister of India. 'The British did many good things in India,' he said. 'They gave us roads, railways, telecommunications.' But in his view the greatest thing the British left in India was the structure of democracy. 'The thing I want to find now,' he told us, 'is how to change the attitude of people so that democracy becomes



RD Mathur

Henderson

an instrument for social, economic and moral change.'

I have come here to search with you how to make democracy meaningful for the millions of Asia. Because, believe this; unless under God's direction we can re-direct the lives of these people into freedom and democracy, Western democracies will also be threatened.

## Instrument for change

I have begun to understand much more what is going on in countries like the Soviet Union, Vietnam, Cambodia. Let us make no mistake, the withdrawal of American troops is not the end of the suffering and misery of the people of Vietnam or Cambodia or Laos. We will not be human beings if the sufferings and the misery of those people do not stir us today. For me the question of freedom and democracy is no longer one that I would like to discuss in an armchair in bars and cafes and canteens—it is an issue that has become alive in my life and in my thinking. If in 1978 we who are privileged to have freedom and democracy are not thinking of the people of Ethiopia, of South Africa, of Laos, Vietnam and Cambodia, and of the struggle to bring back eternal, indivisible values of freedom and democracy across the world, then somehow we are failing in responsibility. We in India only had the nightmare for two years. Let us think of those who are in that dark tunnel and don't yet see the other end.

If in 1977 God could produce a miracle in India and a miracle in Sadat, is it too much to believe that the same God can produce a miracle in the other nations that do not yet have that freedom and that majesty?

You understand freedom and truth only if you compare it with what it means to live in

# NEW WORLD NEWS

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## Destruction of the age of myth SEE INSIDE



Vladimir Maximov and Vladimir Bukovsky listen to questions at the Westminster Theatre forum.

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lies and dictatorship. Many of us have taken these too much for granted. I was one. I thought that having removed the British we had got freedom and that it would stay. I had, with millions of others, to involve myself in the freedom struggle again.

Perhaps 1978 will be the year when those of us who took freedom for granted will re-evaluate our priorities. It may mean a 180 degree shift in our values. It is very easy to get comfortable and to want more and more. Neither capitalists nor Communists have yet produced a society where men have said, 'Now we have enough.' Could this be the year when we say, 'Thus far and no more. We are going to live and fight now for others.'

Hundreds and thousands of men whom we had never met before but whom the common struggle for the liberation of India brought together, now want to see with us in national partnership how to move forward in making democracy the instrument for change.

As we were talking with the Prime Minister of India about this, we said that we wanted to hold an international assembly for Moral Re-Armament in Delhi so that the Indian experience could be used to extend the

INDIAN CONFERENCE contd on p4

## Plays to Delhi

RD Mathur and his colleagues have invited Hugh Williams of the Westminster Theatre to bring to Delhi for this conference and for a campaign in the capital and other parts of the country two plays, *The Forgotten Factor* by Alan Thornhill and *We Are Tomorrow* by Peter Howard. A European-wide budget of £32,000 has been worked out to enable these productions to be mounted and other support to be given to this Indian operation. Those wishing to make contributions can send them to Sir Theophilus Metcalfe, Treasurer, Delhi Fund, Westminster Theatre, Palace Street, London SW1E 5JF. Cheques should be made out to 'Delhi Fund'.



**NOT LONG AGO** I had occasion to take part in a literary symposium held as part of the Venice Biennale, where the work of the so-called dissident writers was discussed. The symposium was opened by Alberto Moravia, the Italian author, a writer well-known outside his own country and particularly in the Soviet Union.

In the course of a speech lasting some 15 minutes, this respected literary figure touched on the widest possible range of topics and problems, ranging from Soviet editions of Kafka and Joyce to the features displayed by class-based cultures. In the space of these few minutes, he managed to define his attitudes to revolution in general, and to its beneficial effects on history in particular, and to unmask the bourgeoisie and its imaginary achievements, recounting his last visit to Moscow to members of the audience, making a survey of Euro-Communism in passing, and so forth. Overwhelmed by their gratitude to the renowned writer for not being afraid to appear at a meeting on a subject repellent to the average Western intellectual, nobody at the meeting noticed that their guest utterly failed to touch on the chief subject on the agenda, dissident literature itself.

If I quote this isolated but extremely characteristic example, it is as an illustration of that pattern of terminological communication which for some time now has formed part and parcel of information disseminated in the West through the mass media, in scientific discussions and in political polemic. 'Right-wing', 'left-wing', 'imperialism', 'neo-colonialism', 'exploitation', 'democracy', 'dictatorship', 'reaction', 'progress'—these are roughly all the limited cliché key-words needed by these intellectual businessmen to break into the fragile storehouses of modern psychology.

### Fearsome taboos

This 'birds' language', as it might be called, of totems, ritual symbols and clan passwords has been used to take the place of any serious effort at human conversation, dialogue or discussion here in the present day, at the same time providing spiritual comfort to the enormous number of small-minded people who do not wish to think independently or assume responsibility for anything.

This double-dutch frees all those who so wish from any sense of spiritual or civic duty, and proposes in its stead a world of cosy stereotypes where an individual can explain anything he wants to himself without having to trouble his conscience or intellectual apparatus with real-life decisions of any concrete nature.

In this way, society has gradually been developing a system of obligatory incantations and fearsome taboos which, if they are infringed, lead to various forms of civic and political ostracism. The atmosphere of psychological terror which is appearing as a result is already giving birth, in every sphere of public life, to the bitter seed of the

Auschwitzes and Gulags of the future. Eloquent witness to this is to be seen in the history of Eastern Europe in the second half of the nineteenth and early years of the twentieth century.

This is probably the reason why it was there in the East that the Word, heralding the advent of an era of spiritual and social rebirth, first began to be heard. It is the East, and Russia in particular, which, after passing through all nine circles of the hells of the totalitarian temptation, has now begun, through the efforts of the best of its sons, to explode the very core of the myths of ideology, overthrow the idols of yesterday, sweep the remnants of political altars from the face of the earth and restore true import and meaning to words, concepts and facts.

### Memory restored

Paradoxical though it may be, it may be the good fortune of history, or rather Providence, that this inhuman doctrine first attempted to take root in Russia. For it is my firm conviction that of all nations it is the Russian nation which is least capable of imbibing any rational teaching. For in the space of 60 years, Russia, which is religious to its very marrow, has not only managed to all intents and purposes to eradicate from itself the mortally destructive temptation of Communism, but has succeeded, through the heroic efforts of the best of its sons, in restoring both the thread of history that was almost lost and a broad panorama of the events of the past. *The Gulag Archipelago* is not just a great work of art but is a restoration to a people of its memory.

'We are not from the left-wing camp, we are not from the right-wing camp, we are from the concentration camp,' says Vladimir Bukovsky. And the most sophisticated theses of the intellectual establishment of the West are shattered on the rock-like baldness of Bukovsky's position. It is not for nothing that these words have been taken up by the so-called movement of the new philosophers in France as their ideological battle-cry.

It would be difficult to single out a single sphere of human activity where that painful process of reassessment, initiated in the East, was not reflected one way or another, a process to rethink the worth of what were yesterday unshakeable beliefs, a process to bring back a sense of historical memory, a process to come back again to the true ideals of humanism: truth, charity and justice.

First and foremost this process bears witness to a general feeling that there are changes close at hand in the modern world, changes which I believe are fundamental.

We stand at the threshold of a complete transformation of the political, spiritual and even geographical map of the world. And in the final analysis the direction which the changes that stand before us will take, whether these are to be for the better or for the worse, depends on our courage, on the degree of solidarity linking us, and on our personal sense of responsibility.

Obviously it is very difficult, even if it is



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## The destruction of the age of

by Vladimir

A speech given last week  
'Freedom and  
sponsored by the Friends

possible, to predict the course of these changes, but one thing is clear and can be stated with absolute certainty—that we are now living through a time when the myths of ideology are being crushed, that there can be no coming back to them, and that the new heaven and the new earth are at hand.

### Points made by Maximov in answer to questions from the audience:

Often people in the West argue about how many people are taking part in the democratic movement. It seems to me this argument is without any foundation, for whether they are small in number or many, only these people can change the situation in a totalitarian society.

What is happening in Russia is characteristic of any people that has been through a cataclysmic and tragic experience. Unfortunately man is weak, and he turns to God when things are bad. When things are going well, he tries to forget Him. For our peoples, things have been so bad for 60 years that it's quite natural that they should turn to spiritual things.

What appears in literature is always a reflection of what is going on in society, and I would say that the great majority of our writers are religious writers or at least have a religious theme in their work.

Obviously there can't be statistics for a spiritual re-awakening. This is even more true of our country where everything is a secret, even, let's say, the number of shoe shops in a town. One can only argue about how deeply rooted this process is.

Heinrich Boell, of Germany, who won the Nobel Prize for Literature, praises Vladimir Maximov as 'one of the most important writers in the world today'.

Victor Sparre, Norwegian artist and close friend of many leading Russian dissidents, comments in the manuscript of a new book he has written that Maximov is 'the cement which holds together the powerful Russian personalities who make up the dissident movement'.

Maximov edits 'Kontinent', a review which he and Solzhenitsyn founded in 1974.

# ction of the f myth

ir Maximov

ek in London in a series  
d the Media',  
of the Westminster Theatre

I've been through a great many painful experiences, but somehow through it all I never lost my faith in man. In the most awful circumstances, where it seemed that man had simply become a wild beast, there was always one person who held out his hand to me. It was as if it was a rule of life. And from this I have the conviction that it is impossible to destroy man. He can be silenced or blinded for a time, but he can't be destroyed utterly.

Freedom is primarily an internal characteristic of man. And freedom of an external nature can only be real if man is free within himself.

Once a member of the US State Department approached me with a request to publish his article, but asked that his name should not appear on it because it might cause him difficulties at his work. At that moment I received an article from his exile by Anatole Marchenko, signed with his full name. And I asked this person, 'Tell me, who do you think is free, you who live in the West, or Anatole Marchenko in exile in the Soviet Union?'

Slavery begins within the human soul, and only after that spreads out into the forms of a totalitarian state. I have noticed this tendency in the West that people are afraid to speak, and perhaps to act, in certain situations. This is how the Gulag begins, all you need to find is the men to man the watch-towers.

Once it happened that my good friend, Naum Korzhavin, the poet, appeared before a group of students of left-wing opinions. And one very self-confident young man who stuck his hands in his pockets, said, 'Tell me, what do you think freedom is?' And Naum Korzhavin, never short of a reply in these

situations, said, 'When you have lost it you will know that you have lost it.'

I consider myself a Christian and therefore the greatest sin is the loss of spiritual hope. If I were to lose hope I would be lost as a person, so despite my external gloomy appearance, I am nevertheless an optimist.

If we are to speak from a Christian position, the Saviour gave us a choice, He gave the possibility of choosing between good and evil. Someone else's experience can't necessarily turn away an evil. But someone else's experience can help people to understand what they themselves must do and how they themselves must act.

But once again I come back to the point that we can't talk about countries or states, we must talk about the individual. It is not without reason that it was said that the 'Kingdom of God is within us'. For this reason, we do not need to call on people or states to do things, but we must call on individuals to take individual action, and I feel this is what your movement is all about. If we address ourselves to peoples or to states, then the individual may well not hear. But if we address ourselves to every individual, then the whole nation, the whole state, has heard.

We must always remember that the Soviet leaders are people and that however low they may have fallen, something good may come out of them as people.

Somebody very wisely once said that in our time the person who knows how to speak, speaks in a quiet voice.

The opposition movement in Russia covers an enormous range of opinions from extreme nationalism to extreme religious feeling, but nevertheless nine-tenths of these people when they speak out, speak out against violence.

Workers here need to understand that the people who lost the most in the revolution were the workers.

In the last month or two there have been signs that workers are taking part in our movement.

The most important thing we have to do is to support the democratic movements in Russia and in Eastern Europe, for in doing that we are also supporting and defending ourselves.

In our rather small circulation journals and newspapers, we are trying to define what we mean when we say democracy.

Not long ago I was indirectly involved in the preparations in the defence of Anatole Sharansky. I was really very alarmed because the talk was really all about the fate of a man. There was a circle of Western intellectuals sitting there, and they were saying, 'We won't sit down with so-and-so. I

won't be seen on the platform with so-and-so. If so-and-so comes, I shan't come', etc. In other words, *The Gulag Archipelago* is already there internally. All they need is the machine guns.

Whereas in our movement, you have the liberal Andrei Sakharov, the Communist, General Grigorenko, the priest, Father Dudko, and the nationalist, Shafarevitch. We all sit down at the table together and discuss our problems, this is what we understand by democracy. What we observe in the West I recently described as pluralistic conformism. Every group wishes to have a monopoly on the truth. Whereas in our movement there is no final truth but there is a search for the truth, and everyone takes part in that search.

I was astonished by the narrowness of thought (in the West), by the fact that people seemed to be so fixed to the earth, that there was no breadth in their thinking and that they were entirely occupied in nothing more than day-to-day problems.

However, this was only the first impression. As time went by, I began to see that everywhere there was somebody with a hand outstretched. And this is an indication that man is not dead either there or here, and this is the source of my optimism.

The most dangerous ideological myth is the one that says that man is finite. There are several such doctrines, but Marxism is probably the most prominent of these. A doctrine that preaches that man is finite takes away his responsibility. A man who has the sense that he is only living once is capable of doing anything, even of committing crimes. It seems to me that Marxism made the greatest progress, if one can call it progress, in teaching this, and this is why it is such a dangerous teaching.

The direction that these changes (in the world) will take depends entirely on us. First of all, it's quite obvious that our totalitarian structure is an organisational one. And the decline and fall of such an organised state will have the most dramatic and wide-ranging consequences for the whole world. For this reason we must support the democratic tendencies in the society so that only they can take over as the decline comes about. Only people like Sakharov, like Grigorenko, like Bukovsky when he was in the Soviet Union, will be able to take hold of the situation and manage it in the right direction.

If the reverse takes place the result will be anarchy, and the anarchy will undoubtedly spread to the whole of Europe. That's why I say that when they support the democratic tendencies in the Soviet Union, Westerners are in fact defending themselves.

Everything that has been said tonight comes down to one thing, the fact that man is being reborn again and being reborn into spiritual life. The consequence of this is that each one of us when he gets up from his seat here and goes about his business, must do what he can to facilitate the development of this process.



**THE BLACK AND WHITE BOOK, the handbook of moral revolution, is now available in 26 languages from Grosvenor Books, 54 Lyford Road, SW18 3JJ**



# Experiment with Untruth

MANY BOOKS have now appeared in India about the recent 20-month period of Emergency. 'Michael Henderson's *Experiment with Untruth*\* is not only the latest book on the Emergency,' writes the Jan Sangh weekly *Organiser*, 'it is also one of the best.' Prime Minister Morarji Desai, presented with a book by the author, said he thought the title 'very appropriate'.

This 250-page 'unofficial white paper', as it is called by the publishers, Macmillans India, is a description of the moral issues which confronted the Indian people between the declaration of Emergency on 25 June 1975 and 21 March last year when democracy was restored.

*Experiment with Untruth* has a foreword by Rajmohan Gandhi and was launched in Delhi at the end of 1977 by George Fernandes, Minister of Industries. 'I hope,' said Fernandes, 'that this book will succeed in making people responsible for what needs to be done immediately to see that what we had to go through for 20 months is not our lot again.'

## Standard work

Speaking at this launching occasion the Indian Additional Solicitor-General, Soli Sorabjee, said that the author had written the book 'at a time which tried men's souls'. He had been moved to write by the brutal suppression of human liberties 'when the press was gagged, the courts barred to the citizens seeking justice, and when people dreaded the midnight knock on their doors'. 'These are matters we tend to forget,' said Sorabjee. 'Michael Henderson has distilled the events of these days into a very readable book.' It was a work of 'thoroughness and scholarship'.

Last week, Cushrow Irani, Managing Director of the *Statesman*, reviewed the book in *Himmat*. 'Experiment with Untruth,' he wrote, 'will remain a standard work long after the current "instant histories" have been forgotten.'

Irani, one of India's leading newspapermen, says that the book was written with a great deal of feeling and is extremely well documented: 'Every conclusion is supported by a wealth of evidence painstakingly put together.' The book was to be 'highly com-

mended for not mincing words'. Irani goes on, 'The book abounds in quotations but they are well chosen and very apt. If nothing else, as an anthology of quotations on the Emergency it serves a very useful purpose. But *Experiment with Untruth* is much more than that.... No one can quarrel with an important conclusion expressed in Rajmohan Gandhi's words that the "two major gains of the Emergency were: 1) the unity forged among the Opposition parties and 2) the fact that in their humdrum lives the Indian people had at last found a cause."'

Throughout the book, concludes Irani, the lesson is hammered home: 'Untruths will be exposed sooner or later and the basic goodness of man will be re-established. The warning to those experimenting with falsehood is clear enough and the triumph of truth over falsehood is brought out extremely well.'

## Removing cynicism

Author Michael Henderson concludes an article in the *Sunday Standard*, India's largest paper, with the words, '*Experiment with Untruth* is dedicated to those men and women who against all odds were on the side of truth. Their example may help remove the cynicism about public life that needs to disappear as thoroughly as the Emergency which nurtured it.'

In the book Henderson devotes several chapters to the role of the press during this period. He describes the courage of *Himmat* during the Emergency like this:

6 This paper, which according to Jayaprakash Narayan has 'been keeping the flag of democracy high', had as its Chief Editor Rajmohan Gandhi, a grandson of the Mahatma. The *New York Times* (8 August 1976) had a headline 'Indian editor, grandson of Gandhi, protests curbs on freedom'. And VK Narasimhan described his courageous conduct' of *Himmat* as 'one of the brightest episodes in Indian journalism' (*Democracy Redeemed*).

Twice *Himmat* took the Censor to court to test the legality of his actions towards the paper. It also ran the gauntlet of many harassments experienced by other papers.

The campaign against it started after publication in the paper of an eye witness account of the arrest of Gandhi at a prayer meeting with JB Kripalani and others at his grandfather's *Samadhi* on 2 October 1976. The Censor objected to three articles and Gandhi was asked to deposit Rs20,000 as a security of future good behaviour. The offending paragraphs included the words of the Mahatma, 'The restoration of free speech, free association and free press is almost the whole of Swaraj.'

Government advertising, like Air India, was withdrawn, first one press was threatened with confiscation if it did not stop printing *Himmat* and then others succumbed to



At the launching of *Experiment with Untruth* in New Delhi: (R to l) George Fernandes, Minister of Industries, Soli Sorabjee, Additional Solicitor-General, and SG Wasani, Managing Director of Macmillans India.

pressure too, and asked the paper to move on. Finally *Himmat* appealed to its readers for money to buy its own press and their response made it possible.

Rajmohan Gandhi wrote, 'Especially when there is a climate of fear, a journalist has a duty towards his vocation, towards his conscience, towards truth and towards his country to throw a light on injustices. How are rulers to be helped if this is not done? How do the ruled find hope if no one does it?' (*Himmat* 16 July 1976)

A selection of Gandhi's articles on press freedom and democracy were printed and published in London during the Emergency and distributed around the world (*A Writer's Duty* Grosvenor Books).

\**Experiment with Untruth* by Michael Henderson (Macmillans India). Copies of the Indian edition are available from Grosvenor Books at £3.75 plus 60p postage.

## INDIAN CONFERENCE contd from p1

frontiers of freedom and democracy. A conference like this could uplift us from the pettiness that is entering our national life, and help give a new national ethic and direction to us all. The Prime Minister said that he would be willing to inaugurate such a conference.

I have come here today knowing that no nation or no people can do alone what needs to be done. But if today those of us who have a common belief and heritage combine together then maybe we in this centenary year of Frank Buchman can begin to see the fulfilment of his prophetic words on his dying bed, 'Why not let nations be governed by men governed by God?'

I want to see that 'Thy Kingdom come' is no longer just a slogan but an active commitment in which ordinary men and statesmen are daily involved. This need no longer be something which is just written in the Bible, but can become a reality on earth.

This article is based on talks given this month at the MRA Assembly in Caux, Switzerland, and at the Westminster Theatre, London.