

DALIT VOICE

[The Voice of the Persecuted Minorities]

Adviser : Dr. Mulk Raj Anand

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No. 23

WHO IS GAGGING THE PRESS IN INDIA ?

The Sept. 3 unprecedented country-wide strike by journalists that closed all newspapers for the day is supposed to highlight the "curbs on the freedom of the press" in Bihar etc. Opposition parties have even accused Prime Minister Indira Gandhi of gagging the press. While we support this struggle for freedom of the press and every other struggle for justice we want to know from our fellow journalists if they are above board. Do they sincerely stand for freedom of the press? When the editors and other journalists shout from housetop that it is the govt. that is curbing the freedom of the press, does it not pre-suppose that earlier the Indian press was free and it is the govt. that is now gagging the press? What we ask our comrades in the press is: Is the press in India really free? Is there anything like "freedom of the press" in India? We say India never had a free press. We are saying this with full responsibility on the basis of our experience of working in India's biggest English daily newspapers in different parts of the country for over 20 years. What we have in India is not "freedom of the press" but the freedom of its owners and the high caste journalists who write in it. We have many glaring cases to prove our point but here we cite the latest and the most important from our angle. And that too a case that happened right under the nose of the top brass of the Indian press right in Washington, "the capital of the world." This very same "national press" of India which went out of the way to give the widest coverage to Indira Gandhi's recent visit to US, with senior correspondents

Poona Pact Day : Dalits along with persecuted minorities all over India & abroad are requested to observe Sept. 24 as the Poona Pact Day— signed over 50 years ago at Poona under the compulsion of a coercive fast by Gandhi and resulting in the existing slavery of India's Untouchables crushed by religion & law. Ambedkar under threat signed the Poona Pact with Hindu leaders only to save the life of Gandhi but called it as a "declaration of war by Gandhi & the Congress against the Untouchables". BAMCEF will launch agitation on this day from Poona itself. CDO is observing it as a Black Day in Kerala. Karnataka Dalit Action Committee, Dalit Cultural Front, Madras, Dalit Panthers have given separate calls. (Read Ambedkar's book, Poona Pact, Bheem Patrika Publications, Nakodar Road, Jullundur, 144 003, India). □

specially taken from Delhi describing every minor event with the minutest detail, was careful enough to completely blackout what the world press considered a major event: the protest demonstration of the Indian Untouchables settled in America on July 29 as she was inside the White House. Dr. Laxmi Berwa, president of the VISION (Volunteers in Service to India's Oppressed & Neglected), Clinton, Maryland, US, with members of the Ambedkar Mission, Canada, Guru Ravidas Sabha, San Jose, California, staged the first-ever White House protest demonstration of Indian Untouchables. He asked us to bring this historic event to the notice of Indians as the entire press deliberately suppressed this news. Dalit comrades living in UK etc., & our foreign friends who after finding the reports in the world press but its total blackout in India, have also written to us expressing their serious concern over the behaviour of the Indian "national press". A press that is so angry over censorship in Bihar etc has imposed self-censorship when it concerns Untouchables. Therefore, we are least surprised by the behaviour of the Indian press on this Washington protest demonstration. We have no reason to believe that the govt. has banned the publication of this news. If there has been any ban it should have applied equally to the earlier UNI news item about "PM Snubs Indian Dalits" (DV no. 22) carried by the *Statesman*. Barring this one newspaper, the entire "national press" did not publish even this report. Therefore, if any report of the protest had been sent to India at least the *Statesman* would have published it. Are we to suspect this news was suppressed at Washington itself by the Indian pressmen?

However, we are happy that the American and the world press gave the widest coverage realising the importance of the event. The prestigious *Washington Post* (July 30) carried a three-column picture of Indian Untouchables' demonstration, captioned: "Indians from Toronto join in the Untouchable caste protest outside White House where PM Indira Gandhi was meeting the President". The three-column report under the heading, "Indian Caste Aims Protest at Gandhi", by Carlyle Murphy, its staff reporter, said Laxmi Berwa, a famous physician-specialist, who is an Untouchable, wrote a letter to Mrs. Gandhi asking to meet her but she chided him and refusing to meet the delegation of Indian Untouchables. "Yesterday morning Berwa and about 20 other Indian immigrants gathered outside the White House while Gandhi met inside with President Regan. Like Berwa, the protestors were members of the Untouchable caste, the lowest rung in Indian society. They were there to register their disapproval of what they see as Gandhi govt's indifference towards the caste". The report then goes on to say that the Indian Apartheid, which is more serious than even the Black problem, is "endorsed by religious precepts of Hinduism". The report quotes a spokesman of the Indian Embassy in Washington trying to whitewash the whole thing by saying that even the Indian Ambassador in US, Kocheril Narayanan, is from the Untouchable caste. So what? we have so many 'Company Negroes'. Virendra K. Chauchry, a New York engineer of the Untouchable caste, dismissed this defence as an eye-wash, says the report. The *New York Post* (July 28) also reported the event

(Cont. on page 11)

THE REAL FACE OF R.S.S. & B.J.P.

(M. Chalapati Rau, ex-editor, National Herald)

RSS was founded in 1925 by Dr. Hedgewar, once a Congressman. The RSS, as it was soon to be popularly known, was said to have its constitution, but one of the main charges against the RSS has been that the constitution has never been published. As it is known now it has many undemocratic features, and the most undemocratic one is that the leader is supreme and that he nominates his successor. After the murder of Gandhi and Godse's alleged connection with the RSS, the organisation was banned. When the ban was lifted, the RSS was supposed to have a new constitution which was claimed dubiously to have been the old one. It was associated with communalism in the situation following Partition and with the increasing role it played openly and behind the scenes. This impression has been strengthened by its objective of Hindu Rashtra. The effort now to give it the name of Bharatiya culture has not removed apprehensions among Muslims and other minorities. Even with the constitutional term, "India that is Bharat", Bharatiya culture, is suspect to be Hindu culture, and Hindu has now a communal connotation, though the word came from Sindhu, a name given to the land of the Indus by the Greeks and other foreigners. There are other charges against the RSS. It considers the saffron coloured flag of the Peshwas as the national flag, that its leaders mainly come from Pune & Nagpur, that it believes in Varnashrama Dharma while deluding dalits & adivasis, that it was apologetic about the Emergency, that the RSS can be considered fascist because of its constitution, its Feuhrer principle, and its record. Several of the communal riots continue to be attributed to it by its opponents. J.S. (now BJP)

was started by Dr. Shyam Prasad Mukherjee, earlier of the Hindu Mahasabha, as a secular party opposed to the Congress. But it became identified with the RSS soon after this death and for a long time the association was close and undisputed. The JS needs the organisation of the RSS especially for elections, and whatever the explanations, they remain closely inter-linked. If there are differences, they may be over the domination by leaders from Maharashtra and over the constitution of the RSS. BJP phenomenon was essentially a product of the Partition. Whatever the responsibility of fanaticism for the murder of Gandhi and for the communal killings, it exists as a force against secularism, occasionally assuming the attitude of fighting against over-secularism. THE TWO NATION THEORY: If the RSS is still opposed to a state of the conception of Gandhi and Nehru and does not accept that, in spite of Partition, India's culture is composite, it can be considered a danger to the unity of Indian society, based on many diversities. It cannot yet be easily decided whether Hindu communalism or Muslim communalism was more responsible for the distrust between the two major communities & the subsequent developments leading to the Partition and the orgies of communal violence. But it has to be admitted that majority communalism is the greater danger and that it is for the majority community to take the initiative to create confidence in the minority

communities. Whatever appeal the RSS-Jana Sangh had to the Hindu mind after Partition, particularly in combating the Two - Nation Theory, cannot be said to have been wholly lost. The Constitution contains many guarantees for the minority communities which have multiplied in various fields and are breeding a sense of grievance among Hindus who, divided into various communities like dalits and backward communities, are nursing new grievances in certain sectors that India has a small place for them. If this feeling becomes real, it will help the RSS-BJP which can claim that if political parties try to cater to the minority sentiment to capture the minority vote, it is for it to uphold the cause of the Hindus and capture the Hindu vote. The RSS-BJP's fatal weakness is that it has no economic appeal. It has not bothered much about economic issues. Economic issues can become absorbing only in a secular atmosphere. Caste is still smothering class, and class is not emerging from caste. The broad struggle that has taken place leading to isolation of the RSS-BJP has for the moment smothered social and economic issues and the election will be fought more on political issues like democracy than on economic issues, though inflation is nearly destroying the economy and the present drought may lead to famine conditions. **RSS INFILTRATION IN GOVT :** Secret RSS documents narrate the extent of the RSS infiltration into various Govt. and semi-Govt. organisation ; education, social welfare and relief funds funnelled to the RSS-led associations, pro-RSS textbooks pumped into the educational system and the face-lift given to the RSS image through official patronage and pro-

paganda in the official media. The facts are proved by charts and tables. Chitpavan Brahmins are very tough. Deoras assisted by the Maharashtra group of the RSS and many from the powerful northern belt, has firmly advised them not to be afraid of either threats or political isolation. The RSS itself was born out of an atmosphere of threats and tensions ; "we have faced worse" they were told. "But the Guruji (Golwalker) had warned us 40 years back that we must be prepared for the worst". He bluntly told them that the moment the RSS changed its character, style of functioning and ideals, it would lose its very existence. All that the Jana Sangh leaders could wrest from Nagpur was the assurance that the RSS leadership would consider certain minor changes without affecting its character in any way. (Courtesy : *Link*, Sept. 23-1979) □

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U.S. DALITS' S.O.S. TO INDIRA : HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN INDIA

(Dr. Laxmi Berwa, President, VISION, Maryland, USA)

As Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, the emancipator of the Untouchables, wrote : "For the ills which the Untouchables are suffering, if they are not as much advertised as those of the Jews, are not less real. Nor are the means and the methods of suppression used by the Hindus against the Untouchables less effective because they are less bloody than the ways which the Nazis have adopted against the Jews. The anti-Semitism of the Nazis against the Jews is in no way different in ideology and in effect from the Sanatanism of the Hindus against the Untouchables". This outcaste created by Hinduism is more than 2,000 years old and today about 20% of Indian population is Untouchable, about 150 million or 6 times the population of Canada. They are not allowed to drink water in villages as it pollutes. They are landless slave labour in villages where 80% of India lives. They are carriers of human excreta on their head or dead animals. They are not allowed to revolt or they are crushed, killed, burnt alive and their women raped. Last year there were 15,000 attacks on Untouchables reported (*The Toronto Star*, Jan. 11, 1982). They live in constant fear of attack by other Hindus. Their good clothing or good living cause serious concern and resentment among Hindus. The press and media are totally partial and controlled by the high caste Hindus. What we hear is only 5% of what really takes place. Police and judiciary is controlled 98% by the Hindus. Before 'Independence' the Hindus were blaming the British for the conditions of the Untouchables. Now after 33 years of India's Independence, the slavery and dependence of landless Untouchables has increased more and so have the atrocities and killings. *The Globe and Mail* writes, (Dec. 3, 1981) : "Although the outrage of Deoli was particularly horrifying, it was by no means a rare occurrence. Murderous beatings, and gang rapes of Untouchables are reported several hundred times a year, and less news worthy humiliations are every day happenings". The worst attacks have recently taken place at Deoli, near Agra, where 24 people including 7 women were slaughtered because of refusal of forced labour and demand of justice. Two small boys were pinned against the wall and shot dead. Six weeks later five armed men at dusk entered the village of Sadhupur, near Deoli & started to shoot. In 15 minutes they killed 10 people like rabbits, including five women and two children. The powerful Hindu landlord system is the backbone of the ruling party and they, in turn, control to a great extent, police and judiciary. "The climax of injustice and police brutality was obvious in Bhagalpur, Bihar State, in 1980 & 1981 when policemen were found to have blinded 33 Untouchables by destroying their eyeballs and practically they got set free". (*The Globe and Mail*, Jan. 15, 1982). In South India, near Madras, 42 Untouchables, men, women & children, were packed in a house and roasted alive recently and the govt. could not do anything to protect them. Three years ago mass slaughtering of Untouchables and Buddhists took place in mid-west India &

thousands of Untouchables were axed and burned alive. In fact, the Constitution of India had abolished untouchability 30 years ago but the Govt. of India failed totally to implement it & the Indian Govt. is completely ineffective in safeguarding its poorest of the poor, the Untouchables. As one social scientist writes :- "The Govt. of India has been activity-oriented in abolishing Untouchability rather than goal-oriented". The result is that 150 million masses are no more secure than before. The most recent incident was on June 12 in Puliangudi village (Tamil Nadu) where six Untouchables were murdered and 100 huts were set on fire. In the July 16, 1982 issue of *India Aboard*, a journal serving the Indian community in America and Canada, a reputed journalist and author of several books, Kuidip Nayar, wrote in the 'Opinion' column : "Harijans have little protection from attacks". The fact the Chief Minister of UP resigned tells us about the complete anarchy in that State. India Govt. completely and totally failed to protect the helpless Untouchables, Buddhist and other minorities in India from the violation of the Human Rights and other atrocities being committed daily by the Hindu majority. The *Washington Post* reported on front page (Jan. 3, 1982) : "Untouchables are still India's outcasts and are still persecuted despite Indian reform effort", number of atrocities against the Untouchables has tripled in the three years beginning in 1976 and are continued to climb in 1979. In the latest report (1980) of the Commissioner for SC & ST for year 1978-79, he says that "the malady appears to be deep rooted and requires more drastic steps to attack it." It is to be made clear that we three dalit organiza-

tions have nothing personal against Mrs. Indira Gandhi. We had demonstrated against Morarji Desai when he came as Prime Minister to U.N. Headquarters in June, 1978. It should be emphasized that the Untouchables problems are a particularly severe example of the problems that are also faced by many other (like Buddhists, Christians, Muslims) minorities in India. So far as violation of human rights and atrocities are concerned, within a period of 10 years, 52% of all wage-earning Untouchables had to work as landless agricultural laborers— up 34% since 1961. VISION sent a letter to the Prime Minister on June 14, 1982 regarding the recent carnage of the Untouchables in UP & TN stating its concern and wanted to meet her in Washington. However, she replied : "It does not help for those who are living in affluence aboard to comment on situations about which they have little knowledge". Thus there was no other option left for us except to protest and demonstrate our concern. The free world owes a duty to the Untouchables as it does to all suppressed people to break their shackles and set them free and help restore human rights to them. Therefore, we ask all our American and Canadian brothers to join with us : 1. To protest and condemn Indian Govt. for having failed to safeguard its weakest masses and stop these human rights violations immediately. 2. We demand full compensation to those families who have been victims of human rights violations. 3. We demand rehabilitation of these minority masses from villages to district level on national basis and provide them full protection, security and survival by land distribution through independent federal ministry for them 4. We demand

the appointment of U. N. Human Rights Commission to inquire into the conditions of these poorest of the poor masses — the Untouchables and other minorities. 5. We urge U.S. and Canadian Govts. to ask the India Govt. to provide full details of the facts on this issue and stop the grants to India if these human rights violations are not stopped within six months, for no U.S. citizen and Canadian would like to be part of a regime which cannot protect the poorest of its poor. 6. All agencies in America who issue funds and grants to India especially World Bank, U.S. Agency for International Development, who have budgeted \$ 87 million for India for the coming year, must put a clause that 15-20% of this amount must be for dalits and other minorities. And may we, Americans and Canadians remind the Hindus what the Untouchables think in the words of Thucydides when he said, "It may be your interest to be our masters but how can it be our's to be your slaves". The most barbarous killings of the innocent Untouchables by high caste Hindus at Deoli, Sadhupur, Puliangudi & other places like Marathawada and Gujarat raised an outcry not only in India but also in the international scene. We strongly condemn these atrocities as an inhuman act on the part of the Hindus & hold the India Govt. responsible for not safeguarding the poorest of the Indian people. It is not merely a gross injustice to the poor, but also a flagrant violation of human rights which should be condemned by every responsible Govt. and every responsible citizen anywhere in the world. We demand that the India Govt. allow the United Nations Human Rights Commission to inquire into the conditions of the suppressed minorities in India and submit the recommend-

ations which should be obligatory on the India Govt. for their proper implementation. Since most of the laws at international level borrowed by the India Govt. are for the poor below the poverty line and as 90% of the Untouchables form this group which really never gets any benefit out of these laws, we demand the Govt. of India should allocate special funds equal to 20% of the national Budget for their needs through a special Ministry to be set up by the Govt. of India to look after the interests of these people. We demand that 18% of job reservation and other benefits must be promulgated by the private sector which control the large amount of Gross National Product. This can be only done at the behest of the India Govt. It is obvious that Government and Public Sector programmers have failed miserably, a fact obvious from the Scheduled Caste Commissioner's Report and many other knowledgeable sources. Unless the Private Sector takes interest and joins the hand with the India Govt. the gap will be widening more in the future. Implement and enforce the protective rights granted in the Indian Constitution, otherwise the best of the legislative pieces have absolutely no meaning. The Scheduled Caste Commissioner's Report's recommendation must be implemented and enforced especially of separate Ministry at the Centre. Prosecute people who are allowed to literally get away with murders. Separate electorates for the dalits because joint electorate system has failed to bring in the true representatives from these communities. Liberal gun licensing policy for the dalits to protect against the atrocities and arms must be provided for these people's protections. The birth day of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar be declared a national holiday. (See also page 10) □

Letters to Editor :

Mrs. Devaki Atmaram Rajurkar, Bombay : DV is a bold and inspiring journal to awaken the dalits.

D. S. Chinnadorai, National General Secretary, YMCAs of India, New Delhi : I read your meaningful journal & impressed by your report on the Mandal Commission. Even though you have been emphasising the issues pertaining to minorities, you have been very objective, and you have also not lost sight of the totality of the country. Hope and pray you will keep it up. I find it very valuable and informative to read DV though small in size but great in service to the minorities.

Narendra Patti, Poona : I read almost every important English journal published in India. As days pass I find them going from bad to worse. The new journals are nothing but pornography. Barring perhaps one or two, we have no journal that discuss people's problems. *Economic & Political Weekly* is too highbrow. *Mainstream* is good but not always. That leaves DV alone in the field. Our English-reading population forming 2% of India's population looks too much obsessed with sex, sports, films, gossip, religion, violence astrology— eternal pursuit of pleasure. Since this 2% is the cream of the 10% of Indian Ruling class, it is but natural that their thinking is perverted. DV is the only journal that deals with issues. The difference between DV and others is that DV makes me think and act while others make me stop thinking. The Ruling Class wants exactly this—it does not want the people to think. But it will definitely not like DV. Hence it may do its best to finish DV. But revolutionary sections will surely support

it. Hence you may have hard times. But success is certain. Keep it up.

Dr. Velu Annamalai, Texas, USA : I want your permission to use your writings in my articles to local press. I have read most of your books. I am amazed at the amount of knowledge you have acquired to write such authoritative things packed with facts. More than that I admire your courage to put these cold facts in black and white. It is your books and the DV that made me to correct many of my ideas. You deserve all support because helping you is helping we dalits ourselves.

Gautam Chakraborty, Watford, UK : We learnt about the high caste assault on Veeramani, DK leader, from DV No. 20. Please convey our sympathy and solidarity to Veeramani.

Ms. Ceceilia Irvine, Scotland : Believe me I have thought of you many times every day since I left India. Our silence does not mean out of sight out of mind but a deep perplexity about the human predicament on so vast a problem of the Indian Untouchables.

P. R. Kuppuswamy, advocate, Karur, TN: You ask in your editorial, DV no. 21: Will not a slogan such as 'Be Hindu Buy Hindu' amount to anti-national activity? In TN, RSS has gone to the extent of openly inciting Hindus not to allow Christian preachers to Hindu areas, asking them to erase Christian slogans, not to let out houses to them and not to buy any thing from Muslims and Christians. RSS has written all over the walls: Give Money for Reconversion, Donate liberally to bring back converts to mother religion. These are the people who aliege foreign money coming for conversions.

Syed Ahamed Khansahèb, Lucknow : In schools in UP, Maharashtra etc., some

Hindu teachers write on school blackboards saying: "A Muslim eats at least seven cows during his lifetime. So if you kill one Muslim, you will be saving seven cows. Therefore, kill at least one Muslim in your lifetime". Such anti-Muslim poison is injected into young minds. How to stop this?

E. V. Chinniah, editor, *Praja Bandhu*, Nellore, AP: Minister Makwana said in his presidential address to the All-India Anusuchita Jati Parishat in Delhi that he was against supplying arms to dalits for self-defence. It is the duty of the govt. to protect the dalits, he said. Very amusing argument. The govt is expected to do so many things for the poor. Is it doing its duty? If it fails to protect even the life of dalits, then what should become of those who are being killed, raped and houses burnt? Should they submit to these criminals? How can anybody help those who do not help themselves? Why no atrocities committed on other minorities like Sikhs, Parsees, Muslims? Even the then Home Minister Zail Singh had agreed to supply arms to dalits. But Makwana is against it. Is this the attitude of a leader who wants to lead dalits?

B. Parameshwara Rao, president, All-India Ambedkarites Conference, Hyderabad: I am very much impressed by your writings. We fully endorse your views. I am sending you the draft resolutions to be considered by our conference. Pl. go through it and give your views. You are helping a great movement and therefore, become an indispensable part of it.

Sudhir Ranjan Das, general secretary, West Bengal SC/ST Welfare Council, Calcutta: We convey our heartiest thanks to you for the work done which is absolu-

tely necessary for the cause of the dalits. We are writing to our members to become subscribers to DV.

J. R. Antwal, chairman, Federation of P. & T. SC/ST Employees, New Delhi: As a punishment for working for dalits I have been transferred to Bombay. This is the fate of all those who espouse the cause of India's poorest of the poor. I am transferred to the Bombay Telephones with the intention that if Antwal is away, the irregularities, anomalies, discriminations committed by the high caste officers against dalits will not be exposed. It is only Antwal who is responsible for exposing the high caste treachery in the P & T. They were disgraced & pulled up by Parliament. My stand was upheld by Parliament. Let not these Hindu traitors responsible for my transfer think that just because I would be away, the P & T dalits would suffer injustice in silence. Never. The fight will go on. Justice is on our side. We only want supporters like you. If you are on our side we have nothing to fear.

Prachand, Vizag, AP: I have become old. But behold DV is swinging me to the days of the youth. My hearty congratulations. Send me all old issues of DV and a list of DSA books.

Prem Kumar, Nagercoil, TN: A serious trouble is brewing here. We are sure to be attacked shortly. Because many dalits in KK dt. are educated, economically better off than Hindus. Besides, we have a big Christian population. This has generated lot of jealousy among Hindus (Chaliyas) who can no longer boss over us. They therefore, are planning attack on us. Soon KK dt. will plunge into a major caste war paving the way for dalit liberation. □

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This is an appeal to renew your subscriptions.

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ANTI-DALIT STAND OF WEST BENGAL GOVT. CONDEMNED

(Our correspondent)

Calcutta: The West Bengal SC/ST Employees Welfare Council and the Bengal SC and Tribes Federation state council meeting held here on July 24 in resolution

Dalits Go to Human Rights Com.

GENEVA, Sept. 1 (Reuter): An Indian physician living near Washington has told the U.N. Human Rights sub-committee here that violence against Harijans in India has increased in recent years but the govt. has done little to protect them. The Constitution abolished untouchability 30 years ago but the Govt. of India "failed totally to implement it & is completely ineffective in safeguarding its poorest of the poor", Laxmi Berwa, who heads a Washington-based group monitoring treatment of Indian minorities, said here yesterday.

(Times of India, Sept. 2.) □

condemned the anti-dalit stand of the Marxist-led Jyoti Basu Govt. for not conceding the legitimate demands of the dalits. While they were demanding appointment of one-fifth of the Ministers belonging to SC/STs in the State Cabinet, to be in proportion to their population, Chief Minister Jyoti Basu took only one Cabinet Minister and another as Minister of State. The meeting demanded that constitutional reservation be introduced in the coming panchayat elections. About 400 delegates representing 16 districts of the State attended the meeting. A five-member presidium comprising Dr. A. K. Biswas, S. R. Biswas, N. N. Mondal, S. C. Roy, and Harihar Biswas, was in charge. Sudhir Ranjan Das & Issac C. Turkey, general secretaries of two organisations, submitted their reports. At an earlier meeting they demanded the inclusion of Ambedkar's life history in school textbooks, and renaming the Park St. in Calcutta after Dr. Ambedkar. It also invited the attention of the govt to the prevalence of widespread atrocities and torture of Untouchables in the State. □

Editorial : (Cont. from page 2)

under the headline : Gandhi snubs plea by Indians in DC. The *Washington Times* (July 30) frontpaged a picture of Mrs. Gandhi with Reagan on one side and a three-year-old Untouchable boy demonstrating before the White House holding a placard, "Down with Indira govt.", on the other side. Next day it also carried a letter of Dr. Berwa congratulating the editor for giving equal treatment to the two Heads of State and the demonstration of commoners. So much for the sense of fairplay of the American press. The Indian capitalist-controlled, high caste-dominated press— which was fully represented at the time Mrs. Gandhi met Reagan at the White House and hence witnessed this historic demonstration on behalf of India's 20% slave population— however chose to suppress this news. So much for the "tolerance" of the Hindus and the "freedom of press" in India. And it is this very same press that is now making all the noise that Mrs. Gandhi is gagging the Indian press. The Washington blackout of the White House protest by Indian Blacks is a fit case for the Press Council to take up. Dr. Berwa in his letter published in the *Washington Times* said : "I was demonstrating because Indira Gandhi turned down our request to meet her and express our concern for the atrocities suffered by the Indian Untouchables." Such an unpleasant news that the Indian Ruling Class is torturing its Untouchables, so carefully concealed from the world outside, unfortunately got international publicity— thanks to Dr. Berwa and other brave members of the VISION— & naturally the Ruling Class having been perturbed did everything to keep this news from not reaching at least India. How long can it boast of its non-

violence? We are thankful to the *India Abroad*, a journal run by Indians in US, for publishing this news (July 30) under the heading "Indira Rejects Harijan Plea." We are also happy to note that Charles McC Mathias Jr., a US Senator, has written a letter to Dr. Berwa promising to take up the issue of torture of Indian Untouchables with Mrs. Gandhi. This is the first time in the history of Indian Untouchables that their problem is getting the attention of the world press. This became possible because the VISION and other Untouchable organisations in America decided to stage a protest demonstration. We fully realise the difficulties of the govt. in its efforts to solve the problems of the Indian Untouchables. The Untouchables are not the victims of govt. system but that of Hindu social order blessed by the Hindu religion & its 33 crores of gods. As its "free press", is not free when it concerns dalits and minorities, their representatives settled abroad can do a lot to take up their cause by emulating the example set by VISION and others. We have any number of civil liberty walas, human rights heroes. Why not a single Tarkunde or Arun Shourie has protested? Why not a single political party, not even CPM, CPI, took up this issue? Why not a single journalist organisation like Indian Federation of Working Journalists, Editors Guild etc. is worried about this all-round conspiracy of silence when it concerns Untouchables? Who is gagging the Press?

Communal Reserve Bank

Madras : Over 100 dalit employees here launched an agitation before the Reserve Bank here on Aug. 11 to denounce the anti-dalit stand of its communal management. M. G. Mohan presided over the meeting which passed 8 resolutions. □

TEMPLE AGITATION LAUNCHED IN T.N.

(Our correspondent)

Madras : Dravida Kazhagam launched its State-wide "boycott temple" agitation on Aug. 24 to press its demand to stop caste discriminations in the appointment of priests. The Maharajan Commission appointed by the TN Govt. had upheld the demand of the shudras and Untouchables to become temple priests—a job so far reserved for Brahmins only. DK general Secretary, who was earlier seriously injured in a high caste assault (DV no. 20), led the peaceful agitation at Madras. In different parts of TN, rationalists & other low caste people picketed temples asking devotees not to enter as caste discriminations are practised inside. Reports reaching here said the agitation received wide support from the low castes who for the first time came to know of this mischief. Hindu "sacred scriptures", temples, archakas, the whole lot of rituals and festivals are designed to enforce discriminations against low castes in general and women in particular. They thanked the DK for highlighting this mischief and educating them. DK has also published in its mass circulated Tamil daily, *Viduthalai*, with facts and figures the 'domination of Brahmin priests' in different temples owned by the govt. District-wise figures of Brahmin & non-Brahmin priests are given. □

Lakhs of Dalits Arrested

Several lakhs of dalits and their allies participated in the agitation on Sept. 6, the opening day of the Maharashtra State legislature, demanding renaming of the Marathwada University after Dr. B. R. Ambedkar. According to the suppressed police figures, over 10,000 courted arrest in Bombay alone as they marched in procession to the legislature hall in Bombay. In other parts, police used violence to force dalits out of train and buses bound for Bombay. The earlier plan that 5 lakh dalits must come to Bombay was thus foiled by the police who resorted to indiscriminate arrests in different parts of the State. Sholapur saw the worst police violence on dalits who were dragged out of the trains & beaten up. Even women with babes in arms were not spared. *Times of India* reported that over 20,000 dalits left Aurangabad city to participate in the Bombay agitation. The first-day agitation is thus considered a big success to Dalit Panthers who will continue this agitation without break. Meanwhile, RSS and their sympathisers in the Marathwada area have started counter-agitation opposing the change of name of the university. Violence on dalits has begun. □

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