

UNHAPPY BOMBAY

A REPORT TO PANDIT NEHRU

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M.B.B.S

With a Foreword
By
the Hon'ble
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FOUR ANNAS

FOREWORD

I have agreed, at Dr. Ranadive's request, to write a foreword to his brochure, on his assurance to me that the facts stated in it have been examined and found to be strictly accurate and are evidenced by eye-witnesses and that there is no exaggeration or hearsay in the matter. If so, I think it is desirable that the attention of the public should be drawn to these facts.

Some of these incidents reminded me of the days when I served on the Congress Committee, appointed in the year 1919, to consider the affairs relating to the Jallianwalla Bagh. I then worked in close association with Gandhiji, Motilal Nehru, C. R. Das and Malaviya. It was then my duty to record the evidence, tendered on behalf of the public, and to assess its truth and accuracy. No doubt, that was in the days of British rule 37 years ago. The present incidents have unfortunately occurred under Swaraj Government, eight years after its establishment and in the year of grace 1956. In both cases, however, the plea of the authorities concerned has been that the use of force was necessary to

prevent the overthrow of the Government established by law, which was the real object of the agitation. If so, it is curious how history doth repeat itself.

I have, however, no doubt that, if the facts, alleged as authentically established as stated above, are brought to the notice of our Prime Minister, he will, in his usual fairmindedness, desire an impartial enquiry, if for no better purpose than to clear the administration concerned of what might otherwise remain as a dark blot on its fair name.

M. R. Jayakar

(M. R. JAYAKAR.)

Poona 4.

Dated: 21-2-56.

UNHAPPY BOMBAY

THE BACK-GROUND

"The Maharashtrians are a virile and patriotic people with a past in which they take legitimate pride. Their achievements form an important chapter in the history of India." (S.R.C. Report p. 110).

The S.R.C. Report was published on the 10th Oct. 1955. A week before the report was actually published, the city was thrown into an atmosphere of unholy suspense. Armed police patrols in batches of about six or more started parading the streets of Bombay. The number of these armed policemen was so plentiful that one could hardly walk half a furlong without encountering a batch of these riflemen in blue. The "cavalry" of this army was provided by truck-loads of armed police who could be seen whizzing past with their rifles in position.

This was the physical part of the show! The intellectual gloom was provided by none else than Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru! Referring to the disturbances in Bombay on the 16th August 1955 in response to a strike call in memory of the martyrs who laid down their lives in the memorable "March on Goa". Panditji is reported to have said in a public meeting "This is a dress-rehearsal of what is going to happen after the S.R.C. Report is out."

This utterance by the Prime Minister had thrown the Maharashtrian Nehruites in a miserable confusion. Did Panditji know what was contained in the Report? Otherwise, why should he have felt that the "virile and

patriotic" Marathas would revolt against the recommendations? Why was this unprecedented show of force made out in certain parts of Bharat and not in others? And above all, like a thief peeping in through a door and then stealthily creeping in, why did the report have to be systematically leaked into unresponsive Maratha minds?

When the report was actually published, the surprise element in it had been completely rubbed off by the daily news leakages that had come out. Its place had already been taken by a feeling of deep frustration and disappointment and the feeling of grave injustice being done.

Whether this feeling was right or wrong is not relevant here. If it was wrong - nobody tried to tell the Marathi speaking people how it was wrong - they would certainly have tried to understand the other view point. Without being partisan or vain, one could safely say that the Maharashtrians, as a community, are mentally at least as good as many others who fortunately seem to have found vantage positions in the ruling clique in this country.

"Advice" has become the most deflated commodity in Independent India. And we were treated with big doses of this from all quarters. Overdoing a thing seldom pays dividends. And that is what has happened to "Advice". Everybody wants the other man to be patriotic, to have a consideration for the nation as a whole, to have a policy of give and take! And the giving is in words and taking in practice! That is why the advice from many quarters fell on deaf ears in Maharashtra.

Maharashtra is also known to be a fertile soil for a just political cause. The famous revolt of 1857 against the British power was born and fostered in Maharashtra from where

It spread towards North, Towards the end of the last century and in the beginning of this century, the extremists became active in Bengal and Maharashtra. The partition of Bengal was opposed tooth and nail by the Maharashtrians. The civil disobedience movements under the guidance of Mahatmaji, received more Satyagrahis from Maharashtra than from any other province, perhaps with the exception of the then North West Frontier Province under the able leadership of the Frontier Gandhi, Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan. The Quit India movement and the parallel government in Satara marked the climax of this revolutionary tradition.

This is an outline of the recent history of these hard to beat down people. Physically, they are puny as compared with the tall hefty pathans of the frontier or the bearded Sardars of the Punjab, or even the Bhayyas of the Utter Pradesh. Intellectually, they are a little below the mathematical giants of South India or Travancore Cochin. They have none of the business tact of the Gujeratis or the dollar greed of the Marwaris. They are good, honest friendly people who earn by their sweat and live. Their mothers tell them the stories of the brave Rani of Jhansi who perished rather than live in slavery and their fathers tell them the stories of Shivaji who rid Maharashtra of the foreign yoke. And as they grow, they read of Wasudeo Balwant, Chandrashekhar Azad, Senapati Bapat, Lokmanya Tilak, Veer Savarkar and Netaji Subhas. And they think and feel how the Father of the Nation "Bapu", as we call him, taught us to be brave and to fight injustice wherever it is brewing.

To say that the movement for the realization of Samyukta Maharashtra with Bombay is directed against any community or against other communities is to show utter disregard for truth. That will be said only by an absolute

dunce or an extremely deceitful person. The Maharashtrians are to a certain extent very quarrelsome. But they specialise in quarelling amongst themselves rather than with a stranger. They can and will live peacefully with others as friends and co-workers in a common task. Apart from cities and towns, there are Gujaratis and Marwaris right through the length and breadth of Maharashtra even in the interior villages, and they control the business interests. And we have all lived peacefully for generations. Even after the most bitter Hindu-Muslim riots in Bombay, the Muslims are, to this day, to be found in all parts of Maharashtra as congenial neighbours.

It was the Indian National Congress, that, as early as 1920 taught us to demand the reorganisation of the country. It was the Congress that told us that the Government of the people must carry on business in the language of the people. It was the Congress Government in power that appointed the S. R. Commission. All that the Marathi speaking people asked for was the unification in one province of a distinct cultural group with common historical traditions, political and economical interests and a common language. The people who do not speak this common language will live as peacefully as the others do and will have as many rights of a democratic citizen as the others have.

In recent years the economic destiny of Maharashtra has remained mainly in the hands of non-Maharashtrians. Now with the advent of freedom and with the winds of democracy blowing everywhere, they feel it monstrous that any individual or group of individuals, deriving no authority from the Marathi people and not responsible to them, in any way should impose their will upon them. The feeling became all the more severe when they say that Maharashtra had been singled out for a separate treatment. Fourteen of the sixteen

provinces were formed on the linguistic basis. Only three and a half crores of the Marathi speaking people were disappointed and did not get their province !

All this was drummed into the ears of the Marathas by all the political parties. Communists and the other leftists have gone all out to rouse the people. The Praja-Socialists, who were wavering in the initial stages and who talked with different voices in different provinces, also lent their support to the movement in Bombay. Congressmen were also not lagging behind.

All political parties came together on the common platform of the Samyukta Maharashtra Parishad for the attainment of Samyukta Maharashtra with Bombay—a thing that became the cherished dream of almost every Marathi speaking man, woman and child. Mammoth meetings were held for the propagation of this ideal.

Shri Shankarrao Deo, known to be one of the most truthful disciples of Gandhiji, was offered the leadership of the whole movement and he accepted it ! That gave a status and austeric to the movement for the creation of a Marathi speaking state with Bombay as capital.

I vividly remember the civil disobedience movements of 1930 and 1932. I have also had the fortune of witnessing from very close quarters the Quit India movement of 1942. And yet I humbly beg to state that the momentum this movement had gathered is as much as any one of these battles of the past.

Public meetings were being attended by audiences of a lac and over. Even meetings in chawl compounds or other obscure places had audiences of 5000 and above. Some of the mammoth public meetings had audiences of three to four

lakhs of people—an honour reserved formerly only for Pandit Jawaharlal. And day in and day out these oceans of humanity were being told to get ready and be willing to sacrifice everything for the struggle that was ahead. The emphasis on maintaining peace was there. People were also told not to damage property or to assault individuals but no body told them what they should do.

The people's sentiments were rising and they were eagerly awaiting instructions from proper quarters when the first ugly incidents touched the movement. Shri Shankarrao Deo, President of the Samyukta Maharashtra parishad, was shown black flags at Nagpur by the anti-Maharashtra demonstrators. A few shoes were also hurled at him. Things went from bad to worse at Bombay when Shri S. K. Patil president of the B.P.C.C. addressed a public meeting at the Chowpatty Sands. Sternness is undoubtedly a quality and it is very essential that those who are at the helm of the affairs of people are possessed of it, but when it drifts into arrogance and impudence, it commands not respect and order but hatred and retaliation.

And that is precisely what happened. Instead of trying to reason it out, Shri Morarji Desai warned people of the consequences of the movement and declared that 'Maharashtrians would not get Bombay so long as the Congress was alive,' Shri Patil went a step further, accused the Maharashtrians of being unable to govern and declared that the Marathas would not get Bombay for 5000 years to come. Prior to this, the Bombay Pradesh Congress Committee had sent a deputation to Delhi on behalf of the citizens of this Metropolis of India. The deputationists consisted of people of such poor public status that the B. P. C. C. made only a laughing stock of itself by sending such people. These men enjoyed the confidence only of the President of the B.P.C.C.

Further fury was added to the situation by the virtual dismissal of the Deputy Minister for prohibition, Dr. T. R. Narawane from the Bombay Cabinet. The correspondence between Shri Morarji Desai, the Chief Minister and Dr. T. R. Narawane disclosed that the Chief Minister asked from the latter an assurance that he would not lend active support to the movement for Samyukta Maharashtra. (This was done at a time when Shri Morarji Desai himself had taken sides and was doing propaganda.) If the Doctor had agreed to this, the Chief Minister would have treated all the matter as confidential and no one would have known anything of the deed that was buried! The men in the street started asking each other: "did the other Ministers who are now observing an ominous silence have to give some apology like the one asked for from the Doctor? The Doctor did not bend but probably others did." And an atmosphere of suspicion about the Ministers whom they had elected pervaded the scene. It was very significant that "secrecy" was being indulged in by those who ascended the throne in the name of Gandhiji. "My life is an open book" the Mahatma had often declared and he had done away with all secrecy even while preparing for a show-down with the foreign rulers.

I wonder whether all this can convey even a faint idea of the mass anger that was mounting. The daily parleys the Maharashtra Congress leaders were having with the Congress High Command and the routine news about the failure of the talks added a sort of stimulant to mass hysteria. One often wonders whether the public sentiments would ever have reached the high pitch if the daily news about the negotiations had not embittered the public mind.

In this atmosphere of suspense and frustration, it became known that the Congress High Command had taken a decision to keep Bombay as a centrally administered city.

Before the decision was officially announced, it leaked through the usual sources. It was like giving minimal doses of a highly toxic drug to produce some immunity against any sudden shock. The Times of India wrote significantly that the official announcement was being delayed to allow the Government of Bombay to make administrative and 'Other' arrangements.

What these ominous "other arrangements" were to be everybody knows. Shri N. V. Gadgil, M. P. is reported to have said that when time came, the Maharashtrians would stop the bullets with their chests and not with their backs. Probably the time had come for that. The Maharashtrians had asked for bullets and they would have them.

* * *

After a hundred and fifty years of their rule, the Britishers have left back many things in our land. And it is but human weakness to try and copy the old master. And so did our Chief Minister, Shri Morarji Desai, once an humble servant of the British Government in India. Men who have witnessed the mass arrests of our leaders on the morning of the 9th August 1942 were set wondering whether it was the same machinery working again that, quietly and stealthily, under the cover of darkness, whisked away from amongst the people, a galaxy of the leftist leaders who were trying to keep up the battle for Samyukta Maharashtra.

This happened in the early hours of the 16th January 1956. For full three months and over from the release of the S. R. C. Report, there was no incident of any assault on any individual, any looting of a shop or any other property.

The Government had struck.

The Massacre

It is time that people who claim to rule democratically realised that separating a mass of people from their trusted leaders is the last way of bringing the people to their knees.

Our National Leaders were snatched away from us and kept for years at the Ahmednagar Fort from 1942 to 1945. Did that kill our aspirations for attaining independence? Mahatmaji was arrested several times. Did that ever weaken the Indian national movement? Indian patriots were massacred at Jallianwalla Bagh. What were its effects on the Indian minds? And in 1942 police and military terror raged unabashed in the tiny villages of Chimur and Ashti in Madhya Pradesh. Did that terror come to the rescue of the Britishers in holding on to what was not theirs?

For full six days the people of Bombay were being treated to the taste of rifles, tommy guns and revolvers.

I have been an eye witness to many of the gruesome tragedies that have occurred during the week, I have collected reliable and authentic information about many other incidents from responsible and non-partisan eye witnesses. The sudden and unexpected arrests of the leaders were followed by a spontaneous strike and suspension of business by the entire working class of the city. Not a single textile mill or factory or workshop could be found working. Even the white collared gentry who go to offices struck work. The shops and markets observed Hartal.

On the 16th January 1956, the first day of the present disturbances, there was no looting, arson or [stone throwing. The police opened fire on a crowd at Mughhat (Thakurdwar) in Central Bombay resulting in the death of Bandu Gokhale a young student who was supporting his family and learning

in the matric class. Mrs. Rukminibai Salvi who along with her son was standing on the footsteps of her residence also received bullet wound in the firing. Both Mrs. Salvi and her son received gun shot wounds. Eight others received bullet wounds on that day.

There was no untoward show of mob frenzy before the leaders were arrested. Till this time people had behaved with commendable restraint.

Tuesday, 17th January, dawned in an atmosphere of great uncertainty. The news of the previous day's firing was agitating peoples' minds. A feature of this day was that one could see everywhere black flags on housetops, streets and on cars. People were seen wearing black ribbons to demonstrate their disapproval of the centre's decision to rule Bombay. A mass meeting was held at Shiwaji Park in the evening and it was attended by over two lakhs of people. The atmosphere became more tense towards the evening, as news came from Belgaum that the police had opened fire on the demonstrators there killing, four people.

The total suspension of activities in central and north Bombay that had been affected since the 16th took a grave turn on the 18th. All the mills, factories and educational institutions continued to observe Hartal. Eight Socialist legislators and six Congress legislators resigned their seats from the Bombay Assembly. By noon virtual battles were raging between the armed police, homeguards and the people. The outcome invariably was that the police opened fire resulting in a big number of casualties. One wonders if ordinary policemen or Jamadars were given the discretion to open fire because they very often resorted to firing when the situation could easily have been controlled by a little clever handling. And whenever they resorted to firing, they

did it so ruthlessly that life became almost impossible for inhabitants of the locality. I remember that even in the days of the British rulers constables could not open fire unless a J. P. or a Magistrate was present on the scene and ordered firing. But even this common decency was not observed here. I have seen two Sub-Inspectors of Police who were, as if drunk with power and were shooting indiscriminately with the cool calloutness of a Chengizkhan.

On Wednesday, 18th January, I had started for my dispensary when an acquaintance came running and told me that a man had been shot dead by the police and another was seriously wounded. I went to the place of occurrence which was nearly half a furlong from my residence. A respectable resident of the locality, Shri. V. G. Mohile, Bar-at-Law, was standing there. He was an eye-witness to the firing. He told me the atmosphere was quiet when the police officer opened fire.

Mutanna, the man who died was sitting on a cot and chewing tobacco. When he fell dead with a bullet wound on his head, he had tobacco in one hand and chunam in the other. Another man who was chatting with him was seriously injured.

It is surprising that this was not a solitary instance, firings and lathi-charges started simultaneously almost all over Central and Northern Bombay. People started gathering at every corner and discussing the brutal assaults. They started jeering the armed police cars that were parading the streets; and shouting Pro-Maharashtra slogans. At several places such crowds were fired at. At least in the Dadar area which later developed into a storm centre, there was no case of arson or looting till about 11 A.M. on the 18th. And yet there were several cases of the crowds being fired upon. It is also very

noteworthy that the police resorted to firing as almost the first remedy. Lathi charges were not tried unless as a corollary to firing and tear gas was not used at all. Mass anger rose to unprecedented heights due to the provocative firing and then started a fustillage of stones and brick-bats from all directions on the police and homeguards. What followed was a virtual loot and arson by the people and a ruthless massacre by the police. By noon, people started attacking and breaking open shops.

How indiscriminate the firing has been could be described by a few incidents. A friend of mine, Shri D. Telang was talking to me in my dispensary. Meanwhile, some students came running saying that there was very wanton firing. We thought we should go and pacify the people and the police. Meanwhile a young student with a bullet wound in the chest was brought to my dispensary. So Shri Telang left alone to pacify the crowds leaving me to treat the student. Within a few minutes another batch of students came telling me that Shri Telang himself was hit by a bullet. The student for treating whom I remained behind was Shri Atmaram Panvelkar, a fair, medium built lad of about 16 years. A bullet had hit his chest and passed out through the back. I gave him what medical aid could be given and sent for transport. I rushed out to the neighbouring road where firing was going on. Within about 20 minutes we had picked up half a dozen casualties, all severely wounded,

At this stage I was lucky to have come across a particularly polite and dutiful police officer, who was on patrol in a police van with armed police. I stopped the van and the Officer lent me a helping hand. With the help of a social worker, Shri Upendra Vaidya, I put the six casualties in the police van and drove them to the Municipal Hospital, Sion.

By the time we reached the hospital, one man, a robust mill hand about 45 years in age, had already died. He had received a gun shot in the head and his brain was bulging out! Shri Atmaram Panvelker, the young student referred to above died in the hospital the next day.

It is not possible for a single individual like me to have been an eye-witness to the conflagration that had caught almost the greater part of the city in its grip. Neither would any honest citizen deny the fact that there was looting and arson on a large scale. It is not possible to picture in words the ghastliness of the whole tragedy. The extent of the shooting as well as the method of shooting were both shocking. Perhaps one might get an idea of what happened when one is told that not less than 450 people received gun shot wounds!

I have stated above that even under the foreign rule, ordinary police Officers did not have the authority of resorting to firing. Another feature of firing in those days was that as far as possible the firing was below the waist. This could perhaps be verified from the results of the various firings during those days. Unfortunately this below the waist rule was also not applicable in this case. Probably the no-waste-rule was applicable here. Every bullet must kill and not be wasted! The number of casualties who received bullets on the head (brain), chest, abdomen and other vital parts will testify to what I say. On the 18th January I removed fourteen casualties to the hospital, ten of these had bullet wounds above the waist. In a survey of the various city hospitals found that this proportion was almost the same all through the total casualties.

In a short report like this, it is not possible to write in detail about the harrowing tales of every individual who had to taste our Swadeshi bullets. I shall cite only a few cases

to show how anybody and everybody could have been a victim of this atrocious "bundobast".

A poor working class family was staying in a small tin hut off the Bhavanishanker Road in Dadar. This hut is atleast 300 yards away from the main road. The police entered a school compound near the hut and opened fire from there. A bullet came through the corrugated tin wall of the hut, hit an old man, Shri More, who was drinking his tea in the hut, pierced through the other wall of the hut, then hit the son-in-law of the old gentleman, and then hit young Subhas Borkar, nine year old grandson of Shri More. When these victims were picked up by the relatives and the neighbours and they started for the hospital, they were stopped on the road by armed homeguards who ordered them to march back because there was curfew. The people had to return helpless. Some volunteers then managed to secure a car and reach the three victims to the hospital. Young Subhas, the little child of 9 years, died on reaching the hospital.

Similar is the case of Shri Niwrucci More who left his house with his son Laxman to buy some things for the son, both the father and son were killed during the firing.

I have already referred to Mrs. Rukminibal Salvi and her teenaged son, Dinakar, who were standing on the footsteps of their home when both were hit by bullets.

Gajanan Mane, Dhondu Seetaram, Kedar Mangal, Rodrick Peter D'Souza, Ambaji Narayan, Laxman Ramji, Pandurang Bapu, Vasant Navle, Tukaram Shetty, Fulchand Badri, Kashi-nath Jadhav, Rama Sudkya are all young kids between the ages of ten years and sixteen years. Each one of them has received a bullet wound. There are many more lads with bullet wounds and probably some of them will be rendered incapable for any physical labour for their life.

Elvin Salvi, a fourteen year old student was shot dead at Parel:

Probably to make up in age for these young lads, the police have shot many old men and (I hang my head in shame,) atleast some old women! I have in my possession a fairly exhaustive list of old men above the age of sixty years, who, after having had the singular fortune of spending the evening of their life in Free India, had to face the ordeal of bullet wound injuries in this old age. On the very strength of their age, each one is incapable of doing any violence or violent movement even if he intends to do so. I saw atleast two old ladies with bullet wounds and another one who was bleeding profusely from her scalp and nose due to what she described as baton hits and kicks from a Police Officer whose name she disclosed to me. This lady also is well past sixty.

How unsafe the life of an ordinary citizen was in these Police days could be seen from a few incidents. Shri Mohadikar, a respectable gentleman, was standing in the balcony of his house on the first floor with his little daughter. A bullet that came from the road went past him—pierced through the window and hit the wall in his bedroom.

Rama Babaji, an old man of sixtyone years, received a bullet injury when standing in the balcony on the third floor.

Anant Mahadev, a young man, received bullet injury while sitting in his hut. He came out of the hut to go to the hospital when he received a second bullet,

At Arthur Road, a bullet went inside a hotel.

Rama Sudkya, a young boy of fifteen received a bullet in his axilla in his own house; the same bullet went out and hit another man in the neck, killing him!

Chellam Mayarmellu also received a bullet on his leg while in his own house.

Mohan Kishandas received a bullet while standing in the balcony on the second floor.

Shri B. N. Mehta was standing at the Dadar railway station to proceed to Borivli, when he was hit by a bullet while on the platform.

Shri Harnam Singh, a toy seller was in his room on the third floor of a building in Koliwada when he was hit in the chest by a bullet.

Ganpat Pandurang Gide was sleeping in his house when a bullet came and hit him in the hip.

Appa Dhondu was standing in his own tenement at Parel when a bullet hit him in the left shoulder.

This list also will go on swelling if I record all the instances where bullets have pursued peaceful people into their own houses even on the second and third floors. I have given only a few of the many many such cases. This should also be enough to impress that such instances were not rare or exceptional or accidental! When a number of such instances have been shown it becomes imperative to investigate into them and bring the culprits to book!

How many bullets were fired? It is not possible to give the number. But I have on record some cases which show in what rapid succession the bullets were coming, one after another. Rambhau Sonu Pujari, a young man aged 24 years was returning to his residence after purchasing some biddies. He received a bullet on his hand: he tried to hold the injured hand with the other hand when a second bullet hit the other hand. Before he could do anything else, a third bullet hit him on his leg.

Shri Bajanlal Ahuja, Proprietor of the Sindh Dairy Farm, opened the door of his dairy to let in one of his servants who had gone out. A bullet came and killed the servant on the spot. Before Shri Ahuja could pick up the man who fell down, a second bullet came hitting Shri Ahuja himself just above the eye.

Shri Namdeo Kamal, the cleaner of a Parsi School Bus was taking his food inside the Bus, The bus itself was parked in the compound of a private bungalow. A bullet came and hit something near the bus. Before Namdeo could realize what was happening, a second bullet came and hit the bus, went through the body of the bus and hit the cleaner in the abdomen. This one is still in a precarious condition.

What were the type of the bullets used? There seems to have been a controversy about this. An old and trusted Congressman has made an allegation that Dum-Dum bullets were used. There are many others who say .303/- rifles which are very powerful and generally used for shooting big game were used. My own impression is that the police, the homeguards, the special police were all using different types of weapons. And at least some of the weapons used were very disastrous and the size of the bullet was abnormally large. If an impartial inquiry is held in this matter it will be possible to get hold of some bullets which must have been extracted from the bodies of the unlucky victims.

It has been recorded here that the police were opening fire without any J. P. or Magistrate ordering it, the firing was very wanton and indiscriminate, even children and old men were fired upon, and that even people who were in their houses were injured. One incident was however a climax to all this tale of reckless killing. I have yet to hear of a similar instance from elsewhere where people who claim

to be educated and cultured refuse to give a helping hand to a dying brother.

This happened on the 19th January, 1956. The orgy of looting and shooting was in full swing. We had organized a few volunteers who were picking up the wounded and bringing them to fixed centres for rendering first aid. These volunteers had picked up four casualties with gun shot wounds and brought them to my dispensary. I rendered them what medical aid could be given in a dispensary and wanted to remove them to hospital. Meanwhile, the curfew was imposed. I failed to get a transport to carry these wounded to the hospital. At this stage, a Police Officer came and asked me to close my dispensary as the curfew was on! I requested for a transport to carry the wounded to the hospital. I was given a blunt "No", I enquired what I should do with the wounded. I was told "leave them on the foot-path"! I wasted an hour more in search of an ambulance. A few yards from my dispensary a number of police trucks which had brought armed police to the area were lying idle. In sheer desperation I went back to the same Officer again and asked him for permission to use one of those trucks to carry these four wounded people to hospital. And yet to my utter dismay, he refused again; "My transport is not meant for these people", he told me. I had learnt at the cost of those four ailing brethren that freedom had yet to percolate through many layers and there were still Officers who acted in the style of the old blood-thirsty tyrants.

There has not been much of tear gassing during disturbances. But when it was used, it was used so that the consequences were disastrous. A Chawl was flooded with tear-gas to such an extent

both about a year and a half old were completely choked. Both the children were brought to the K. E. M. Hospital but died before anything could be done for them.

Dr. S. M. Charegaonkar, an ophthalmic Surgeon was assaulted by the police while he and his volunteers were giving medical aid.



This is a rough account of what happened in Bombay during that week of Police Raj. I have not the slightest desire to protect or guard those who joined in loot and plunder. But all peace loving citizens must agree that if ruthless repression is carried on in the name of law and order, it will breed the seeds of hatred and disorder and disturb the peaceful life of this city. We would bend on our knees for a special appeal to the non-Maharashtrians of Bombay. With a few exceptions of vested Interests they are not opposed to the claim of Maharashtra over Bombay. But systematic attempts are being made to spoil relations between the Marathi speaking and non-Marathi speaking population. It is a simple rule in Physics that every action has an equal and opposite reaction. If utmost repression in the form of shooting, lathi charges, mass arrests and so on is carried on against the Marathi people, the action is bound to have equal and opposite reaction. In the absence of proper guidance the reaction is very often misdirected. This misdirected reaction would again be a cause to be put down with an iron hand any just and legitimate and peaceful movement.

We would appeal to all thinking and freedom loving people to judge the Bombay firing on its merit. Those who joined in arson and other lawless activities shall be tried and dealt with properly. But who is to bring to book those who caused this ugly episode in the city? It is the bounden duty

of those who claim to rule over us with popular support and democratically to answer a few queries to our satisfaction :—

- (i) Firstly, why was a show of military and armed might kept up for months inspite of there being not a single act of violence ?
- (ii) Can the Government deny that from the very beginning police and homeguards were shooting to kill ? An alarmingly large percentage of the casualties have received bullet wounds above the waist. Does this not show the "shoot to kill" Intention ?
- (iii) The Police firing was not in "self-defence". If the firing was in self-defence the number of casualties on either side would have compared favourably. Here is a comparative study of the damage.

Analysis of dead.

	Dead	Bullets	Tear Gas	Stab Wound
Police	...	Nil.	Nil.	Nil.
People	...	76	72	2

The comparative study of the wounded is even more interesting.

	Bullet Wounds etc.	Lathi charge stone throwing	Acid Burns
Police	Nil	About 18 in all admitted in Hospital 100 treated outside	

People	320	Approx. can not be judged.	About 20
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I have arrived at this figure of 320 bullet wounds as follows :

K. E. M. Hospital	...	154
B. Y. L. Nair Hospital	...	25
Podar Hospital	...	59
Municipal General Hospital	...	14
G. T. Hospital	...	37

I did not succeed in getting the number from the J. J. Hospital but I have calculated it modestly at 50. I could not get figures from the Harkisondas Hospital.

It is not possible to say how many people received lathi and cane injuries. Apart from the hundreds who were treated at the various hospitals (this number itself is well over 600) there are thousands of others who received lathi injuries and were not treated at all or treated by private practitioners.

THE AFTERMATH

Who tried to quell the disturbances when the city was a virtual tornado? Not a single Congressman. Those who had made explosive speeches and asked the people to stop the bullets with their chests and not with their backs, those who asked for noble deaths and those who talked of licking the ministries at the first available opportunity, were no where to be seen. The Communists could very safely escape responsibility because they said their leaders were behind the bars. The Praja Socialists are, as at any time, a house divided within itself. But Shri S. M. Joshi, the Maharashtra P. S. P. Leader who was in the city was carrying on a non-violent crusade for peace. At one stage, he saved a Police Officer from a very angry and hostile mob. Shri Nana Sawant a Socialist worker was another peace missionary. The Chief Minister and the Governor issued appeals from cosy homes.

Most of the newspapers and other 'personalities' came out with scathing attacks on the people for their acts of loot and arson. Mob frenzy and violence must be condemned and put down. There could not be two opinions about it. But why could anyone not pick up the courage to blame the police as well and expose their atrocities?

By the 21st the violence, looting and stone throwing had come to a stop. The city hospitals were full with bullet wound patients. The police now started a new offensive. The curfew was still in force over the greater part of the city. And the police decided to utilize the curfew to the best of their abilities. They had probably noticed the areas which were trouble spots during the week's disturbed conditions. From 21st onwards police squads have been raiding clubs

and buildings during the curfew hours. The police suddenly come in big batches-sometimes as many as sixty and more policemen at a time-and surround a building or a chawl. Then they rush in and start hammering anyone they come across. Then they take away a few inmates and the raid is over. I have visited a few such chawls where the people had to undergo this ordeal of a police raid. The pathetic tales that I heard from the women-folk and others made me wonder whether I was living in the first city of a democratically governed country. I have seen lathi marks on the bodies of women, children and old men. In one case I saw a full shoe mark on the back of a child barely seven years old. Whether this sort of vengeance indulged in by petty police officers is likely to set things right, I leave it for our Prime Minister to judge. One thing I must impress that even educated people who have seen this type of police excesses feel that the police could not have done it unless they had a support from the Home Minister. Will our popular Ministers inquire into these happenings and share their responsibility for the high handed behaviour of our guardians of law?

Was the police violence in proportion to the mob violence? Or did they try to make a mountain out of the molehill of disturbances and then try to crush it? Let us take for the time being the Government figures as the correct figures. Seventy-two people died of bullet wounds, two of stab wounds and one of stone-throw and other injuries. Of those admitted in hospitals, over 350 are for bullet wounds and a very small number for other injuries. What does that show? Who was on the offensive?

Part from helping to restore peace in the city, some Savitri went on adding fuel to the fire that was raging about these and miscellaneous reports regarding the situation.

were kept circulating by certain people and some newspapers which have unfortunately a wide circulation. The "Evening News of India" belonging to the Times of India Group came out with a headline "constable stoned to death." This news was totally false but the paper did not have the decency to apologise for this false news the next day. "The Janmabhoomi" a Gujarati daily—owned by a concern where Shri Shantilal Shah, Bombay's Minister for Labour and Health is all in all, published a report saying that the "Calcutta Mail via Nagpur was attacked by a mob of rowdies at Thana Station resulting in stab wounds to several Gujarati passengers and death of two passengers on the platform"! This also was a completely imaginary episode? The Free Press Journal published letters saying that Gujarati women were being molested, a Gujarati lady was stripped off her clothes and thrown in fire. That newspapers which claim to be responsible should publish such scandalously false items without even making an attempt to verify the truth is amazing. This was not done by oversight. The Free press was doing this mischief deliberately. They also published the picture of a burning bus in their issue of the 19th January. This very paper had published the same picture in its issue of the 22nd November after the disturbances of the 21st November! Was any powerful hand organizing all this misdirected, melancholy propaganda? I have contacted scores of people from all communities and requested for at least one authentic report of any woman being molested. So far I have received none.

The newspapers that have been writing such fantastic nonsense are enjoying government patronage. And those who tried to stress the Maharashtrian view point are facing the Government wrath. On the 27th January, in

the early hours as usual, four editors of pro—Samyukta Maharashtra Weeklies were taken into custody and removed to unknown destinations.

The denial by the party in power to accept a defeat inflicted by the people is the death knell of democracy. And every true Indian must search his heart and ask dispassionately. "Is that what is happening in Bombay?" I am not a politician. But is it correct in a democracy, that if an overwhelming majority of people want a thing, they have a right to get the thing, even if the wisest man in the land feels that what they are asking for is not in their best interest

The Bombay Municipal Corporation has given its verdict. The municipalities and local boards all over Maharashtra have given their verdict. The legislators were prevented from giving a verdict in the assembly, but most of them have expressed themselves outside the house. The people have expressed themselves through the democratic channels. If they are to be ignored, it will mean a negation of democracy.

This is the gist of the problem. The relations between the various communities have undoubtedly become strained. That bitterness will have to be cleared up. This can be done by honest citizens who love their neighbours and not by the armed men who are still parading the city. I am proud I have scores of Gujarati friends and there has been no misunderstanding with even a single one. The misunderstandings are being created—they don't "occur" and true citizens will prevent any such mischief.





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