



College of Economics

Rape of Refugees

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Damdama displaced destitutes who are the latest victims of the Delhi Demolition Squad.

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RAPE OF REFUGEES

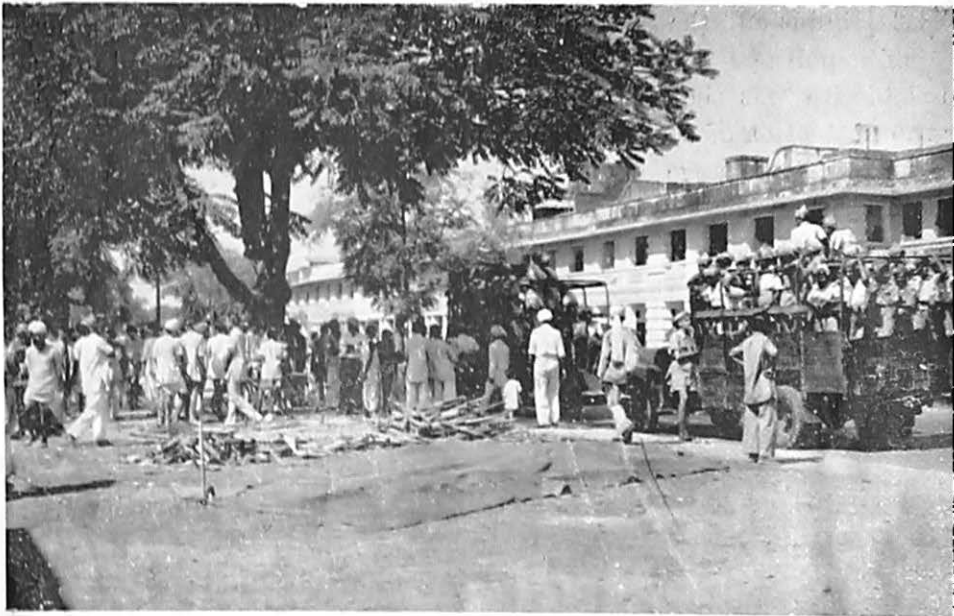
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THE Hindus and the Sikhs of the North-West Pakistan are the victims of a political decision in the making of which they had no part. No plebiscite was held, no safeguards or guarantees were insisted upon for the protection of their life, honour and property. Mr. Jinnah's offer of a planned exchange of population and property was spurned with disdain by the Congress leaders. There was hurry shown only in getting into their hands the reins of Government. With what result? Millions of Hindus and Sikhs became aliens in their own land of birth.



Their shelters demolished these 'Unauthorised' refugees wonder as to who 'authorised' the destruction of their homes and hearths in far away Punjab.

What were their homes and hearths since the world began, became prison houses for them where any further stay meant death, dishonour or loss of their religion. They could, of course, escape all these horrors by following the last course, that of becoming apostates from their religion, but lacs of them preferred perishing at the hands of the assassins to forsaking the faith of their forefathers. Millions of others preferred to trudge the dreary path to strange lands and new peoples for a temporary sojourn, hoping against hope that it would only be a temporary sojourn among their own kith and kin. They became **EVACUEES** at first.



Heaps of debris of the Refugees' shelters on Punchkuian Road, New Delhi, razed to the ground. The Refugees' Night-mare— Police, Police everywhere.

They soon discovered that the vast sub-continent of India was not vast enough to provide them with accommodation for living and opportunities for earning their way. They had to seek refuge in an uncongenial atmosphere and soon came to be dubbed **REFUGEES**. The Government that had shown commendable promptitude in getting them evacuated now showed the same promptitude in forgetting them. The refugees now became **DISPLACED PERSONS**.

But the Hindus and the Sikhs of the North-West are a hard-dying race. They have survived hundreds of foreign invasions of India from the west and they were the last to go down before the invasion of the British from the east. The sacrifices in blood and tears made by them in the Martial Law days and thereafter are unequalled in the history of the freedom struggle.



Ruined homes, if refugees' improvised shelters can be called homes, are ruined once again in Delhi.

It is no use repeating old history but for the fact that history is repeating itself again so far as the displaced persons are concerned, though the second Displacement is being brought about at the hands of their own National Government. Rightly the former cry, with an anguished look at their new oppressors, "*ET TU BRUTE*".

The Delhi Premises Bill now before Parliament shows the way the wind in official quarters is blowing. It is to blow them once again from their moorings and send them scattering far and wide to fend for themselves or to perish in the effort. The displaced persons are considered a nuisance in Delhi and sooner this nuisance is got rid of the better it will be for Delhiwalas and the new rulers.

After all what is the fault of the lacs of displaced persons who made Delhi their home at the time when Government machinery utterly failed to rehabilitate them? In September, 1947 the machinery of both the Central and the local administration had almost crumbled down in this direction. The refugees through their own unaided efforts were able to erect a sort of roofed accommodation over their heads and set up their business here and there. No neutral observer could help admiring the grit and self-reliance of these brave people.



Living in the open after demolition of huts. One refugee girl died of exposure and several others fell ill and, this in RAM RAJAYA.

Economically, the refugees have enriched Delhi. A good majority of them consists of artificers, artisans, small-scale manufacturers, cottage workers and those who make things with their own hands with scanty tools and implements. They are engaged in the production of goods and services in demand in the community and have by their competition and resourcefulness, helped the consumers to get things at cheaper rates. In view of dwindling production in the country and restriction of imports, it is an anti-national act to dislocate and throw out of work, even for a short period, all such persons engaged in the indigenous production of the necessaries of life.

The promise of providing these people with alternative accommodation is only a promise on paper. Can and will the Delhi Administration provide them with alternative accommodation both for abode and business at an equally suitable place where they can earn their living? And can the Central Government build houses for labour and displaced persons, even in the distant future, with paltry production of less than a million tons of steel against our present requirements of 2.5 million tons? Will not all such plans, however laudable they may be, end in smoke like the expensive experiment of pre-fab housing factory on which a crore of rupees has been wasted so far?

The displaced persons in Delhi, now threatened with eviction, have sunk in the building of shelters for themselves a sum estimated at not less than Rupees one crore. The Government have wasted a crore of taxpayers' money. Are they now going to inflict a loss of another crore of rupees on the unfortunate refugees who have already lost so heavily?



**Refugees are being forcibly removed to be dumped,
they do not know where.**



Dropped on the wayside several miles beyond Delhi—the refugees use the trunk of the tree as a hanging ward-robe and what a disappointment to the powers that be they still smile :
Blow, blow, Thou Winter wind,
Thou art not so unkind
As.....

The Chief Commissioner of Delhi, Mr. Shankar Prashad, bewailed, in a meeting of his Advisory Council on the 15th of January, 1951, the fact that as much as 197 acres of Government land in Delhi, worth about Rupees 2 crores, was under the unauthorised occupation of the refugees. When he spoke he should have remembered the other side of the ledger too. The refugees now at Delhi have left behind property worth hundreds of crores of rupees and lands stretching over hundreds and thousands of acres for the sake of freedom which alone has enabled an Indian at such a young age to become the Chief Commissioner.

Whether it was in self-defence or by way of complaint against undue interference from above—he said that he had received instructions to remove the squatters and unauthorised occupants of lands four times in the past but every time the removal was postponed—only he can know.

But the displaced persons living in Delhi now know it for certain that gods that be have made up their mind to make them homeless and shelterless once again and the campaign has been launched in the depth of Winter to make the refugees realise fully not only the vigour of Law but also the rigour of Winter. The law is not yet passed but the enforcement of it in anticipation has already started. Contemptuously indifferent to the demand of reason and humanity, the Delhi Demolition Squad marches on. Hundreds of smashed houses, stalls and shops on Faiz Bazar, Queen's Road, Karol Bagh, Moti Nagar, Subzi Mandi etc. mark its triumphs. The "Ugly" spots in Delhi mar its beauty according to the Delhi Administration, but in reality are an eyesore to those in authority, because these depict a true picture of what sub-human existence the refugees are leading in the Capital of India. After their removal, will not the foreign visitors and Embassy staffs get the impression that the Government of India has succeeded in fully solving the refugee problem? Out of sight out of mind. The refugees are already out of the mind of the new rulers.



Desolation in Delhi—Not an earthquake but a man-made quake has produced these ruins of the homes and hopes of these Pursharthies.

They will also be now out of sight. But does the ostrich always succeed in avoiding danger by burying its head in the sand? The wrath of the people is sure to make itself felt at the new elections when the present rulers will find themselves hard put to defend their acts of omission and

commission which have ruined the prosperous people of four Provinces. Would you as a member of Parliament or as a Minister, entrusted with executive power over the lives of millions, be a party to doing things which the Father of the Nation would never have tolerated? Did not Mahatma Gandhi say: "As I imagine the Lahore resolution in practice, I see nothing but ruin for the whole of India"? How the words are proving prophetic! "To secure justice for the Hindus and Sikhs was the function of the Government" according to Mahatma Ji. But Mahatma Ji is no more and in a Secular State, the very talk of justice for the Hindus and the Sikhs is taboo. Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru is the Government of India at present. The refugees can only hope and pray that their appeals for justice and fair-play will find an echo in his heart.



**Refugees ruined at the hands of Authority
are given succour by the refugees' own relief societies.**

Is not this what Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru once said: "My vision of a free India is something bigger, more magnificent than just political freedom. It is a freedom in which 400 million people can live the life which a man should live, in which every individual in India should have the door of opportunity open to him, in which every person gets his necessaries of life"

As a political leader, in the words of Lenin, Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru "is not only responsible for the way he leads but also for what is done by those he leads. Sometimes he does not know that, often he does not want that ; but he is responsible all the same". Was it not in connection with some such state of affairs as prevails in Delhi at present that the Great Bard of England, said in the Rape of Lucrece :

"The patient dies while the physician sleeps ;
The orphan pines while the oppressor feeds ;
Justice is feasting while the widow weeps ;
Advice is sporting while infection breeds."

The rape of refugees has already taken place in Pakistan, why ruin them again in Hindustan ?

A. N. B.



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