

### GANDHIAN INSTITUTE OF STUDIES

POST BOX NO. 116

Rajghat, Varanasi-1.

(INDIA)

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RAIGHAT, VARANASI-1

Joint Director · SUGATA DASGUPTA

No. 6 (34) PA/Ge 2407 December 3, 1968

Telephone: 2182 Ofice

Dear Mr. Chavez,

It was such a pleasure for me to have met you in your sick bed. I have written out my impressions of tour abroad. I am sending you a copy. You will find some mention of you in this report. Sometime I wish to write a fuller article on you for the Indian press. I shall be grateful if you could send me some biographical materials on you. I have got a file on the Mexican—American movement that you are carrying and when I find some time I wish to sit down and write about the movement and about you. I wish I could do it sitting in the States itself and spend some more time with you. Kindly write to me so that we can get in touch.

I am planning to send to you within a week or so all books on Gandhi as a free gift from my leader Shri Jayaprakash Narayan. We will not forget to send you also a big photo of Gandhi that you wanted.

Yours sincerely,

Social Propher (Sugata Dasgupta)

Encl: as above.

Mr. Cesar Chavez, P.B.No.130, DeLano, California 9325, U.S.A.

# GANDHIAN MOVEMENT IN THE WEST Some Impressions of a Tour abroad

by Sugata Dasgupta

Joint Director
GANDHIAN INSTITUTE OF STUDIES
Rajghat, Varanasi.

This is the tour report of Sugata Dasgupta, the Joint Director of the Gandhian Institute of Studies. He had recently undertaken a round the world tour for a variety of purpose. This particular report records his impressions regarding an aspect of the visit one that shows clearly how Gandhi occupies the mind of Europe and America today

I left India on 22nd September and came back on the 1st of November. During the 38 days I was away, I visited Italy, Sweden, Norway, United Kingdom, U.S.A. and Japan; six countries in all. This report presents some of the highlights of this tour, the purpose being to share with the reader one or two of the major experiences of the traveller. The trip was in the following order: Stockholm, Oslo and London. I thereafter entered the U.S.A. on the 2nd of October by what they call their East Coast at Boston and after a protracted tour of the Continent, left the State from Los Angeles for Tokyo and Calcutta.

#### THE PURPOSE

The purpose of the trip was three fold. First of all the tour was undertaken in answer to an invitation from the Brandeis University. The other two purposes were to deliver a series of talks in a 'coast to coast' assignment organised by the American Friends Service Committee on "Nonviolence and Social Change". The other purpose of the tour, the fourth one, so to say, was three fold. The first was to acquaint myself with the developments in the field of social work research; I also wanted to keep myself abreast of the developments in the area of Peace studies in Europe and America and to establish a first hand acquaintance with the new "revolt" that was then and is still brewing in the West.

I visited accordingly twelve universities and a number of other institutions. The universities and colleges where I lectured included the University of Stockholm (Department of Education), the International Peace Research Institute at Oslo and the Universities of Brandeis, Harvard, Columbia, Howard, Ohio State, Indiana Richmond and Dayton. I also lectured at three colleges which award their own degrees.

I spoke to a group of diplomats hailing from East European countries at Washington on nonviolence and to the Council of Foreign Relations at New York on "Political Developments in India Today". The

Asia Society and the Independence Institute had also invited me for talks.

I had earlier addressed the Institute of Non-violence in U.K. on "Gandhi" and the India-Pak group on 'Jinnah' (Horace Alexander presided) and the "Sarvodaya Gruppen" at Stockholm on "Sarvodaya".

#### "GANDHI" WEST'S NEW CONCERN

The people I met and the events in which I participated in Europe and America have left a deep impression on my mind that the "Gandhi era" is about to begin in the West; and the least that any intellectual or activist looks for in a Gandhian Institute of Studies, such as ours, is therefore a methodological lead for the transmission of the 'know hows' of a nonviolent struggle. Wherever I went and whosoever I met was thus keenly looking forward to the message of Gandhi.

I had first thought that this concern might have been due to the fact that this was the year of the Gandhi Centenary. But when I discovered that most of the people or at least quite a few of them did not even know that this was the Gandhi Centenary year I came to the conclusion that the search for a 'non-violent' method of struggle emanates from the total environs of violence in which the Western World is pitched today. In the context of the harrowing tales of violence Gandhi had become a much sought for truth; a vital need of an emerging society that is relentlessly aspiring for solace and stability.

#### IN EUROPE

I had gone to Oslo to the Peace Research Institute at a time when an international group was present there. They were researchers who had their own 'pieces' of work to do. Being drawn from various parts of the world and assembled for a short period of time they were naturally

busy in completion of their assignments.

When I arrived at Oslo, a discussion about "Czechoslovak" action was then on. 'How far was this action a truly non-violent one as sanctioned from the Gandhian point of view or how far had the action deviated from that path' were some of the queries raised at these informal meetings. I recalled at that time a discussion that we had at Rajghat prior to my departure from India on the same subject in which Dada Dharmadhikari had taken a leading part. Almost the same points of view, almost the same type of concern were uppermost in the minds of the Peace researchers at Oslo as well.

Galtung, who had been to Czechoslovakia, raised some points with me. He had it that there were certain obvious deviations from the Gandhian approach at Prague. For instance he said, "the Russian soldiers were spat at; drinking water was refused to them and at some places young boys and girls used abusive language for the incoming soldiers. Such acts could not have been", said Galtung, "sanctioned by the Gandhian concept of non-violence".

I am not going into the merit of the thesis now. What I have in mind in mentioning these facts is only to show how great and sophisticated was Galtung's concern about the designs of a non-violent struggle:

Two or three important facts which were mentioned in this connection by 'Whyte', Galtung and Blum and were later published in newspapers were interesting. It had then become quite known that a few of the Russian soldiers had, during the encounter, deserted their tanks when they were confronted by Czechoslovak boys and girls lying down around them; what was more important was that while these soldiers, shocked and demoralised, were running away, a few of them were even shot at by their fellow men. The general reaction to this at the peace lobby in Europe was that Prague. would, like Viet Nam, create a germinal process of disorganisation and mark the beginning of an internal revolt in Russia. The people who were

shot at and hurt, it was believed, will, when they return to Soviet Russia, turn against the system. There were others who attributed the revolt of the four eminent Russians, who had gone to prison protesting against Czechoslovak action, to the moralising role of the Prague incident.

#### PEOPLE AND THE GANDHI CENTENARY

In Oslo, there was another interesting incident. The Indian Embassy and the Norweigian Government had set up a Gandhi Centenary Committee there. Whan I arrived at Oslo I was informed about it by Ingrid Galtung and Sonja Leid. While the former, Johan Galtung's wife, was a research fellow at the I.P.R.I., 'Leid' belonged to the Peace She and her husband are stage actors who raise their own money and spend it for peace work. Sonja Leid told me that the Gandhi Centenary Committee was composed of Norweigian businessmen who trade with They further stated that the Committee was formed at the instance India. of the UNESCO although it was actually set up by the Indian Embassy and the Norweigian Government and more by the Indian Embassy than by the Galtung, both Johan and Ingrid, agreed with Sonja and so did the office of the W.R.I. All of them were unhappy at the way the Centenary Committee was brought into being.

I was at Oslo on the 27th September and the first function of the Centenary year had then been fixed for the 2nd of October. The Peace Bureau had decided that since the meeting was going to be held in a posh place with the king inaugurating and only of the rich men of the town leading the show they would boycott the event. I was startled at the decision and struck by their sincerity:

I rang up the Indian Embassy and found that the officers there, unaware of these feelings, were simply jubilant about their own plan of celebration. The First Secretary, indeed, tole me how things had been arranged and whether I would like to stay on for the event! I then informed the Secretary of what the Peace Bureau had planned and that the boycott, I told, was going to be a serious one. The Peace Bureau and the War Resistors International had indeed planned that they would set up a soap box outside the hall and when the king begins to speak somebody will

announce through a microphone: "Gandhi does not live here, he lives in such and such slum, and we have arranged a meeting there, where we should now go".

The Peace groups had objected to the composition of the Committee. They felt that a Gandhi Centenary Committee should not be composed only of rich businessmen but must turn for help to the leaders of the underdog. 'Peace workers' instead of 'business leaders' should have, in their opinion, been included in the Committee. Most of them were also of the opinion that the design of the Centenary was illconceived and that they owed it to their people to put up a token resistance.

As I represented my own feelings to the 'First Secretary' of the Embassy that the Centenary Committee should be reorganised, he protested and said that the Committee was set up by the 'Norweigian Government' and the Indians, be it the representatives of the Embassy or people like me, had no business to intervene. When I reported to him, thereafter, what the Peace Bureau had planned to do the First Secretary sat up. The events thereafter moved at a quick pace. Both of us entered the room of the In the conversation that ensued two things became evident. The first was that the position of the First Secretary, that the Centenary Committee was set up by the Norweigian Government without any advice of the Embassy, was untenable. For most of the names of the personnel of the Committee was supplied by the First Secretary himself. dor, who had recently joined, turned out to be a most reasonable person and he immediately suggested that the Committee should be reconstituted. Later in the evening I found, to my pleasant surprise, that the resolution to reorganise the Committee was quickly given effect to. . Sonja and Galtung were contacted by the end of the day and a major tragedy was I left Oslo the next morning. averted.

There are many who feel that it was a great mistake to ask governments, be it the Government of India or any others, to take the sole initiative in setting up Centenary Committees. Even in India, Governors are heading State Centenary Committees and the establishment naturally keeps the laymen away. The incident at Oslo bears it out that officials

cannot carry people with them and that a non-official people's approach to Gandhi Centenary could draw the kind of souls to Gandhi who are his real followers. I have related this incident only to show the great interest that peace workers still take in Gandhi and how our own government keeps them away. Neither the peace bureau, nor any representative of the W.R.I. Norway has ever visited India — and they complained that they did not get any literature from the Sarva Seva Sangh either. They are thus not even in touch with the official Gandhian movement, although most of them have, of course, read about Gandhi. But their loyalty for the 'unseen' master, like that of 'Ekalabya', was something to be seen, in order to be believed.

When I reached London, I found the same type of concern all pervading. Czechoslovakia was the main issue here too and people like Fred Blum, Donald Groom and many others had been talking about it. Nor had they much faith in the 'official' Centenary Committee, and had set up a parallel Committee instead. I learnt of a funny incident in U.K. I was told that the Indian High Commissioner himself arrived half an hour late at a function where the British Prime Minister was to 'unveil' a statue of Gandhi. The British Prime Minister was of course there in time along with a large crowd, waiting for the Indian Embassy!

#### RECONSTRUCTION OF POLITY

Many intellectuals in Europe are seriously re-examining Gandhi and his thoughts. One of them is Geoffrey Ash who has just completed a book on Gandhi; the other is John Pappworth who edits the 'Resurgence'. Pappworth is now working on a new theory of State structure. It concerns breakdown of size of nation states. The group had also organised a series of seminars in this connection; the first of which was inaugurated, in March, by Jayaprakash Narayan. I attended the last seminar in September. The theory that Pappworth expounds however needs to be developed further and one way of doing it is to see its relevance to Jayaprakash's thesis of Communitarian Socialism and the basic Gandhian position on 'concentric circles'.

The new approach in U.K. is thus still beating about the bush.

It would realise its full significance only when it is expounded in the background of certain basic postulates of Gandhian import. For Pappworth wants small sized nations and pleads for dismemberment of the present structure of huge monolithic states. His insistence is on rationalisation of the structure by cutting down the size. While it is easy to see that big units are not conducive for democratic growth, the manner in which decisions are taken even in smaller communities such as the role of 'consensus democracy' and the inter-relationship of different units, small and big, subnational and global, with each other, will have to be carefully sorted out before the theory of breakdown of nations could achieve its purpose.

The fcrmation of the 'Sarvodaya Gruppen' in Sweden is also a proof of the interest of the western intellectuals in Gandhi. Herr Marker who was at Rajghat had helped to start it. He wrote an article on Sarvodaya soon after his return to Sweden and some interested people took note of it. Marker himself had by then left the country but some others who had read about it got interested. They accordingly set up a group whose main purpose was to help the Sarvodaya movement in India.

The 'Gruppen' now has three units, each bound to the other in a manner of loose informal association. The main unit is in Stockholm; there are two others at Upsala and Lund. Not many people, say about fifty in all three groups, are involved in the project. What is important however is not the size of the body but the fact that most of its members are students. Quite a few of them who have thus shown interest in Sarvodaya work are also peace workers and/or are those who are distillusioned today with the affluence of their own culture and feel distressed at the agony of underdevelopment.

Some of them are pro-Chinese Communists, while others are still pro-Castro. There is one single cementing factor however which holds all those who have joined the 'Gruppen' today despite their divergent background together. This is provided by an universal uncompromising search shared by all of them in common for an alternate approach to the problem of economic and political reconstruction of the global society. This

induction to Sarvodaya of the Swedish group is a sure proof that the new recruits, notwithstanding their past commitments, carry an open mind today. If 'Sarvodaya' as reinterpreted in theory and practice could give them a lead in a new direction they would certainly be prepared to work for it.

A great 'indecision' is thus evident in the West today. Minds of most of the young revolutionaries who had once swang to 'Stalin' or 'Mao' have been disabused and a search for a new ideology and programme for action has taken its place. Could 'Sarvodaya' offer this alternative is really the question now.

Some of my predecessors who visited Sweden before me had in their bid to establish the superiority of the Sarvodaya approach created some false hopes about the Gramdan movement which it was my tragic duty to dispel. The report in Sweden was, for example, that wherever Gramdan has been achieved food production has increased manifold. Since the revolutionary aspects of the movement are of doubtful appeal to a 'development' oriented elite the false propaganda gives an easy acceptance to the preacher!

The tasks in the days ahead will thus be one of interpretation of the movement in scientific terms and of an unambiguous admission of our frustrations and failures. This should be so for two reasons. The first is the new role of the theory of Sarvodaya. If the latter is to replace any of the established cliches or 'isms' it should not follow the set pattern of building up a false image of its many advantages but clearly indicates the limitations and hardships which Sarvodaya entails. The other reason arises from Sarvodaya's basic concern for truth. For truth is stronger than fiction and the aspirations and failures of the Indian experiment are bound to be of far greater interest to a resurgent elite of a disillusioned society than anything else. If the Gandhian Institute of Studies could fulfil this task it would have served its purpose.

#### IN U.S.A.

My next halt was at Boston where I was located at the Brandeis University. As I arrived at Brandeis I found that the University was

preparing for a convocation in order to welcome a new President. The celebration that I attended was almost like that of a 'Coronation'. I also had the first glimpse of two new 'powers' of the American Society, namely those of the black power and the student power for the first time, during these ceremonics. The visit was thus on the whole very educative. I joined the university in the thick of a students' movement. Something like what is happening at the B.H.U. now, although more on a dialogue than action level, was evident at that time.

The highlights of the new convocation was represented by a series of symposiums, one of which had "Black Power" as its theme. The arrangement was that two representatives of the official black power group were to speak first and two others, a teacher - a white man - and a student - a black girl - were then to react to these speeches. The black girl, the leader of the Black \*\*udents' Group of the University, stole the thunder of the day. For after stating whatever she had to present in a formal manner the black girl announced towards the end, staring at the audience which was predominantly white; "You think that by organising meetings and seminars like this, you can get away from the problem? No, you can't". She went on, "You are racism personified and there would be no dialogue between you and us, for one party is to be destroyed".

Next day the leader of the Students' Union, a white boy, spoke after the swearing in of the President. He spoke in a somewhat similar vein. "I pledge my conditional support to the new President", he said, "that is, we will formulate our policy towards him as we watch his steps". The leader then gave an idea of the type of conditional cooperation he was prepared to offer.

The new President spoke at the last and it was with the theme of this speech that we are concerned here. His was a sincere speech. A pro-'black' and 'student' power leader, the new President outlined his main approach to the problem of university organisation. But what the President said while summing up his speech, which was indeed his main advice to the student community was interesting. Concluding his long discourse the President said that he would hold out three men as the

'models' of a university culture. "The test of the success of an university community life", he said, "is that they should - these three men - find comfort and solace in their home - at Brandeis". The first name that he mentioned in this connection was that of Mahatma Gandhi. The other two were those of Eimstein and of a biblical figure which I now forget. This incident at Brandeis shows the concern of the American leaders for Gandhi. The new President of the Brandeis University was no peace worker. He was just a statesman being a lawyer by vocation. The fact that he too thought of Gandhi as the main model of his 'campus' only shows that the concern for Gandhi is no peace abberation in the U.S.A. It represents, on the other hand, a positive search for a new way of life!

I stayed at Brandeis for two weeks and next to my room was seated a person, Mr. Speigel by name, who was heading what was known as a 'Centre for Study of Violence'. Mr. Speigel is a psychatrist by training and is also a member of President Johnson's Violence Commission. The Centre was originally established to study the 'Causes of Physical Violences'. Quite a few persons raised objection to this. They said that the Centre's scope of work should be expanded to include studies of 'societal and psychological violences' as well and the unit be renamed as a Centre for Non-violence. This view was expressed by certain members of the staff of the University and I was told that the President had ultimately agreed to rename the Centre.

I got in touch with a person at Brandeis one Mr. Harrison
Hobbliet Zellee who was the head of the Foreign Students Exchange Programme and a lecturer at the English Department. As a part of the curriculum on Language teaching Harrison had devised a new course. The latter incorporated the writings of peace leaders like those of Thoreau, Ruskin, Tolstoy and Gandhi. He had a picture of Gandhi in his room and it became obvious from our conversation that he was a devotee of Gandhi; a true Gandhian indeed in many respects. Harrison was also one of those who had pleaded that the Speigel's Centre be renamed. He put me in touch with Mr. Gene Sharp at Cambridge.

Gene Sharp is now located at the Centre for International Studies

- He also teaches parttime at the University of Massachusetts. While Gene's burning passion is Gandhi he has been working on the theme for the last eighteen years.

As I have mentioned earlier the last halt in the U.S.A. was at San Francisco. This journey through the west coast was very interesting as I heard of a number of memorable incidents there. The first was about the appointment of what was known as an 'Ambassador on non-violence'. My host at Los Angeles told me that the Pope had appointed a clergyman as his personal ambassador for this job whose duty it was to stir up non-violent revolts in Latin America wherever there were military dictatorships in vogue.

The leaders in Latin America were also planning to hold a seminar in the Mexico City where representatives from Latin American countries were to meet to devise new strategies for a nonviolent fight. I was invited to attend the seminar. But since the event was to take place only in the first week of November when I was to have returned home I had, reluctantly, to give up the idea. Addresses of the sponsors of the seminar are with me and I hope to secure a copy of its proceedings as I am sure that the publication of the report of this seminar will be a matter of great interest to us.

#### CESAR CHAVEZ

The other person whom I met was Cesar Chavez. He is the leader of the famous Mexican American revolt of grape workers. Chavez was then heading a nationwide nonviolent strike of Mexican workers who were employed on grape farms. The demand was for higher wages which was of course not headed to. And as soon as the workers downed their tools and left the farms, the grape growers imported new workers from Mexico itself and continued their operations. They could do so as wages in Mexico were very low. It is something like an Indian community in America striking work and the American employers importing new workers from India where the rate of wage is naturally low. The tactics employed by the grape growers namely that of using a people against their own kith and kin had infuriated all and the next step was to call for a boycott of

scientific social work, ethics, social philosophy, education and psychiatry and attempted to graft in it the methodology of mass movements. The syllabus included both theory instructions and practical work. Gandhian concept of nonviolence was taught as the part of a course. Other areas covered in it included the Pacifist approach to peace the North European passive resistance movements against the German occupations and Martin Luther King's life and work. The technique of teaching used were (1) talks (2) discussions (3) role play (4) public speaking and (5) field work. Role play was used specifically as aid to role building rather than for role clarification.

I also found that the Churches in U.S.A. were showing keen interest in the new theme of nonviolence and Gandhi. The face of violence had disturbed the chapel leaders and they are therefore making efforts to modernise and secularise their outfits. Teaching on Gandhi, they find, well fits into these new scheme of things.

In the turmoil that is the West today, one can find a real aversion to traditional revolutionary thoughts — and this includes aversion to communism. Any logistics for social reconstruction which follows a new path as the nonviolent way seems to do, is thus of special appeal to them. The insistence is on discovering a new rationale for a new polity. The latter is not only to be fundamentally different from the one in which we live but different as well from any model or stereotype now available at hand anywhere. Notwithstanding the many violences which are stalking the country today this width and expanse of rethinking in the U.S.A. encourages one to feel that the concepts and ideologies which are now being discussed may not all be mere intellectual abberations but could, if properly nurtured, lead the way for establishment of a post modern and post industrial society the first ever to be achieved in the world.

Some of these concepts which challenge the American mind today and are of interest to the new movement are not alien to 'Sarvodaya'. The theories of "non-organisation" of which S.D.S. talks, the urges to evolve a moral society, in place of the material and the felt need for a

participatory process in the new political system are some of the postulates which are dear to the Sarvodaya movement. It should be a matter of no surprise therefore if these ideas of Gandhi and Vinoba are implemented in the West earlier than in India.

Four different revolts are evident in America today. of 'youth power' of 'black power', the 'Anti-War Movements' and 'the revolt of the underdog' represent these four strategies and the writings are Students' unrest account for the youth power and the all on the wall. revolt of the Black for the other one. Those who are against wars, not only of the war at Viet Nam but of all wars signify the third category, while the 'Mexican American' movement and the rising aspirations of the Red Indians account for the fourth. A number of people thus had, I was told, paraded the streets of San Francisco raising anti-war slogans and . were later identified as members of the armed forces who had just taken off their uniforms. The march represented a continuum of the 'draft burning' movement and shows the depth of anti-war feeling. This particular gesture on the part of the members of the armed forces was however not considered an act of mutiny as they were parading in plain clothes. But can there be any doubt that the volcano is well in the brink of eruption?

#### THE FUTURE

There are many other events, straws in the wind, which need to be noted. The representatives of the Blacks evenly divided today in 'violent' and non-violent groups are planning, for example, 'direct actions' of various forms. The leaders of the S.D.S. are determined to take over the universities. The black guardians who control the boards of management of schools in New York area have 'fired' the white teachers from their positions.

The crises in America, whose reflex one can find in India too, is thus loud and bold. The tumult and uproar is furious and the line of demarcation between violence and nonviolence is becoming thinner every day.

This is so, despite the attractions of a Gandhi, mainly for two reasons. The first is the want of literature on the methodology of non-violence and the absence of enough informations about the Indian struggle. The other reason is that a strong willed leader is yet to emerge among the blacks! There can be no doubt that the American in search of a new destiny will soon find his leader and methodology; if a Gandhi Centre for Study, such as ours, could, however, help this task not only in America but here, there and everywhere it would go a long way to give Gandhism a trial in new cultures and contexts where the urge for the way of life is fast becoming a reality.

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GANDHIAN INSTITUTE OF STUDIES

POST BOX NO. 116

RRIGHAT, VARANASI-1 (INDIA)

Hony, Director;

JAYPRAKASH NARAYAN

Joint Director:

SUGATA DASGUPTA.

No. 6 (34) E. 1 16c. 2006

January 23, 1969

Dear Mr. Chavez,

This is further to my letter dated 3rd December 1968. No.6(34)F-1/GC-2487. I am sending you on behalf of Mr. Jayaprakash Narayan a set of books by Gandhi. may be aware, the books are mainly compilations of his speeches and occasional writing in newspapers (mostly in 'Harijan'). Gandhi never wrote many books himself. Ven Durant says he wrote three books, but my own feeling is that Gandhi never wrote any book excepting his autobiography and probably 'Hind Swaraj'. Gandhi's was a dynamic personality, he was changing with time, as he experimented with national politics. He had substantially modified his position on issues like Cow Slaughter and Hindu-Muslim relations during the last years of his life. A great and definitive biography of Gandhi, which begins where his autobiography ends, is a three-volume book "The Last Phase" by one of Gandhi's Secretaries, Mr. Pyare Lal. Should you feel interested in this work we can send it to you later. The book by Suresh Ram Bhai "Vinoba And His Mission" depicts the history of Gandhian movement after Gandhi. The book by Mr. Jayaprakash Narayan entitled "A Plea for Reconstruction of Indian Polity" is the most authentic interpretation of the political processes envisaged by Gandhi by one of his foremost disciples in India today.

I am also sending a photograph of Gandhi, which you had wanted.

Kindly acknowledge receipt of the books.

Yours sincerely.

Encl: Under separate post. (Sugata Dasgupta)

Mr. Cesar Chavez, P.B.No.130, Deland, California 9325, USA.