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Fox photos

Dialogue in India will discuss

Development by the people, in the people, for the people

'A DIALOGUE ON DEVELOPMENT' will take place at Asia Plateau, the Asian centre for Moral Re-Armament, at the end of this year. It will look at 'the role of individuals and communities in creating the new mentality for the hitherto elusive new economic order'. Among the issues to be considered, the invitation goes on, are 'the rich/poor gap within Third World nations; the rich world's readiness for a new life-style; and the relationship between heritage and development.'

Asia Plateau will provide a unique atmosphere in which to consider these issues. Ever since it opened in 1968, a continuous series of conferences—for farmers, students, labour and management, the medical profession, and many others—have helped participants to find a faith and apply it to the problems which perplex them.

These conferences have brought a new impetus for change to many areas of life in India and beyond. Now Asia Plateau is the focus of an attempt to bring new impetus to the initiatives for world development.

INDIA is a land of contrasts. This year she launched a satellite on her own. Six years ago she exploded a nuclear device. On the other hand, 70 per cent of our people live below the poverty line.

India has reserves of 20 million tons of food grain; yet perhaps 50 per cent of our people are malnourished. India is the world's tenth largest industrial power; and yet we have 40 million unemployed or under-employed. Technology has greatly helped our food production. Since the heavy imports during the 1966-67 famine we have imported almost no food—in fact, for the last two years we have exported rice to Russia. In spite of drought and floods we have got over the hump of food production. It is a tremendous achievement, and we owe a great deal to men like Norman Borlaug, who discovered the Mexican variety of wheat.

Bombay newsweekly *Himmat*, my conclusion was that though workers had a higher standard of living, their quality of life had deteriorated. They have lost much of their old culture, and the new has not yet taken shape. It has created considerable havoc.

I often ask myself, 'Can anybody lift 70 per cent of our people out of poverty, even in the next 20 years?' I see hope not so much in the administrators as in the will of the people to lift themselves.

'This is more than economic development,' said one of the organisers, Leena Khatri, in a recent interview. 'We have seen in Europe what happens when this aim overrides others. In the way our family members care for each other, for instance, I think we are the more developed.'

'We need to awaken people of left and right to what is most urgent in the world,' she went on. The conference will bring together not only development experts from India and overseas, but people from the war-torn areas of Indochina and the Middle East, and from different cultures, such as white and Aboriginal Australians.

An industrial delegation will come from Japan—and the General Secretary of one of India's largest trade unions expects to send delegates from several parts of the country.

In a speech in Switzerland earlier this year, Indian journalist **RUSSI LALA** outlined the aims of the conference:

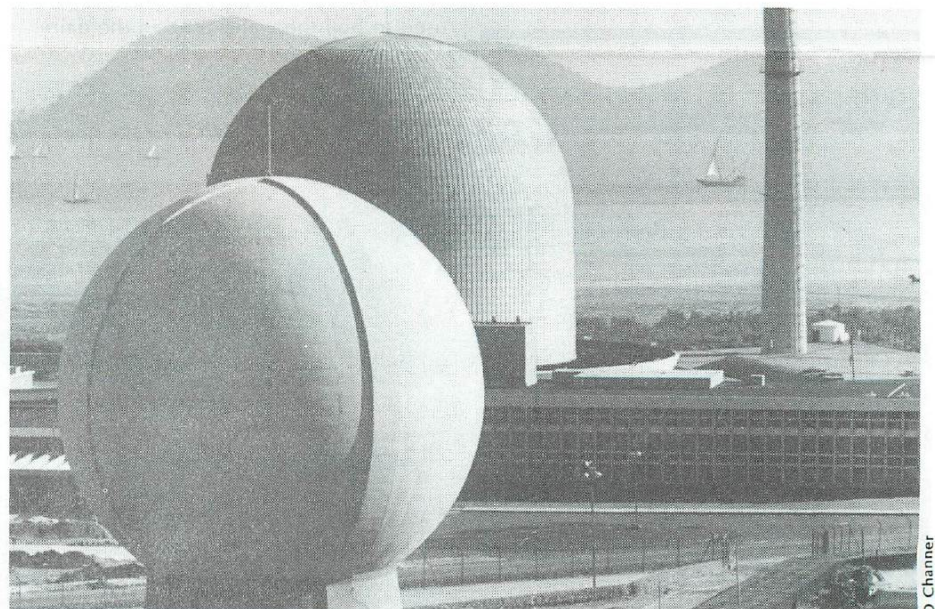
I think of a man who came to Asia Plateau, and decided to listen to the inner voice which speaks in all our hearts. His first thought was to give up smoking—he had been spending more than 10 per cent of his salary on this. Part of that money he gave to Asia Plateau, and part of it he used to start a school in his village. With the school started, his next thought was to dig out the village well. He enlisted his friends and did that.

BY THE PEOPLE, contd on p2

'Even God will not dare to appear to a starving man except in the shape of bread.'

Mahatma Gandhi

Though shelter in our industrial cities is still insufficient, industry has given many of our people a higher standard of living. But in an investigation in the industrial city of Pune, in which I participated for the



Two faces of India—top of page, rice fields below the Himalayas; bottom, the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre north of Bombay.

D Channer

BY THE PEOPLE, contd from p1

Then he thought of a colleague whose wife had left him because of his drinking. He brought him into his own home, helped him to start again, and got him back his job. The man apologised to his wife, and she returned to live with him.

'He cannot be a believer who sleeps the night with a full stomach while his neighbour is hungry.'

Tradition of the Prophet Mohammed

For this man, development is not just ideas, it is care for people. He felt for the children—he built the school. He felt for his neighbours—he dug the well. He felt for one man—he tried to do something for him. Unless such a revolution of responsibility comes, we will not lift India.

You can never gauge what will happen when a man starts obeying that inner voice. At the 'dialogue on development' we want to discuss this inner motivation, looking especially at the development of character. As the Brandt Commission report says, 'The new international economic order will need men and women with a new mentality and a wider outlook to make it work.'

'They will ask him, "Lord, when did we ever see you hungry, or thirsty, or lonely, or naked, or sick, or in prison and fail to look after you?"

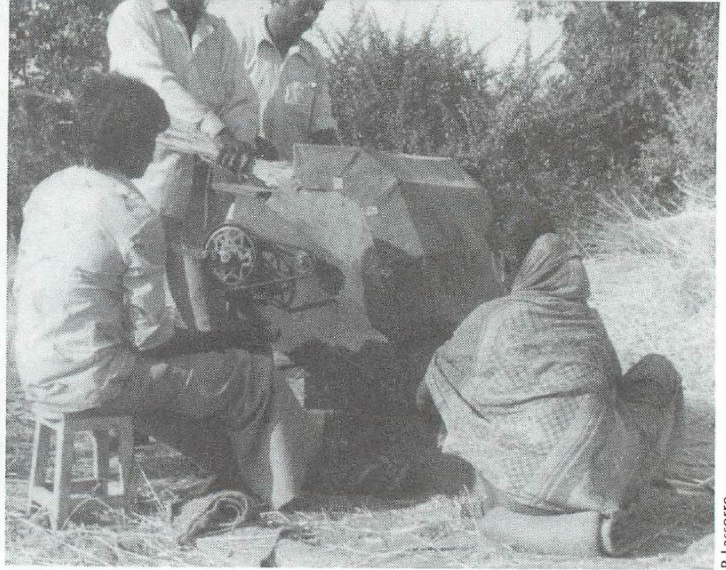
'Then the king will answer them with these words, "I assure you that whatever you failed to do to the humblest of my brothers you failed to do to me."'

Matthew 25

Asia Plateau



Intermediate technology threshing machine at work



P Lasserre

MILK FROM MULBERRIES

INDIA has 600,000 villages, whose inhabitants scrape together an existence from the land. Drought cracks the scorched fields and torrential flooding destroys crops. Yet for the most part life goes on with inbred, patient tenacity.

In many cases the sheer poverty of village farmers makes it impossible for them to experiment with more efficient methods. This is why the experimental farm at Asia Plateau is so vital. Those running the farm conduct tests to find grain suited to local conditions and make the results available to local farmers. In collaboration with government centres for agricultural research, a blight-resistant potato has been developed. If a farmer cannot afford to buy any of these seed potatoes they can be exchanged for a number of hours' work on the farm.

The farm is also experimenting with intermediate technology. Every harvest time they build a machine for threshing grain and a winnowing machine driven by a bicycle chain. The plans were supplied by E F Schumacher's Intermediate Technology Development Group. The hen house is lit and the incubators are heated by methane gas extracted from cow dung. This gas is also used to boil the water used in the dairy.

When the Asia Plateau centre was built an Australian MP and cattle breeder gave a herd of pure-bred Jersey cows. Today its descendants give 50 to 90 litres of milk a day which also provide the centre with cheese, butter and yoghurt. During the last 11 years the farm has sold 22 bulls bred from this herd to artificial insemination centres in Maharashtra and Nagaland. One of the farm's two bulls is put at the disposal of the surrounding village farmer for cross-breeding with local species. A cross-bred cow should be able to produce 6 litres of milk a day, against an average of 1.5 litres for a local cow, but village farmers are often unable to provide sufficient fodder. So the Asia Plateau farm is planting mulberry bushes, which grow quickly and make good cattle fodder.

Training is another important purpose of the farm. In a country where rural life is hard, many young people see university as a way of escaping from the land. Through the farm, students from cities who attend the centre's training courses gain an understanding of what agriculture can do for India. Also from time to time apprentices are taken on—such as the young man from Nagaland who has recently started a poultry farm of his own.

P Lasserre

IT STARTED IN THE MELTING SHOP

The Indian government is encouraging firms to 'adopt' a local village and sponsor social and development projects there. An employer in Pune whose firm has done this says it was possible because some 50 of his personnel had taken part in industrial seminars at Asia Plateau over the years—the atmosphere in his firm had been 'transformed'.

Since human problems are 80 per cent of industry's problems, says the seminar's prospectus, 'the ability to change attitudes and motives, rather than just to manipulate them, is the key art we need to learn.' Discussions centre on this personal element, and move out to its impact on industry.

At the end of last month's seminar, for instance, different participants spoke of the personal conclusions they had drawn from the discussions. There was the personnel officer who had decided not to take a bribe, and to make up a quarrel with a union leader; the manager who had decided not to go ahead with a shady deal which could earn him money on the side; the tenement dweller who was going to stop harassing neighbours he did not like.

But what difference do such personal decisions make? A more constructive attitude towards their firms, as one Pune manager put it recently? Certainly—but more than that, as this interview with **Kiran Gandhi** of TELCO, Jamshedpur, shows:

THE TATA Engineering and Locomotive Company (TELCO) employs 24,000 men and manufactures more than half of India's trucks and excavators. But one man who works in its management training section has even bigger ideas for its role in India's development.

Kiran Gandhi has worked at TELCO for seven years. It was not what he originally intended. As a student in Bombay, at one of India's best engineering colleges, he was all set to start a small industrial company of his own. But a visit to Asia Plateau, the MRA centre near Bombay, changed that. There he found people living to serve, rather than advance themselves. It was a new concept, and he wanted it. He asked himself what the best way was to serve India. What would happen if the ideas he had found at Asia Plateau caught on in a big firm? It could become a model for the rest of industry.

At that time the violent Naxalite movement was at its height in Eastern India. Some Naxalites from Jamshedpur, the town in Bihar where TELCO is situated, had come to Asia Plateau and had found a better idea than violence, which they wanted to take to their comrades. Why not go there, he thought, and help them?

He applied to TELCO and was accepted. Soon, however, he realised what a task he had taken on—he was put straight into the melting shop, regarded by the management as their greatest headache. Two groups in this department were engaged in a bitter struggle to control the work-force, and in the year he came there were five strikes, some of them violent. 'I was scared,' he says. But soon after his arrival he met two workers who, it transpired, belonged to opposing groups.

Eye-catching

Both were intrigued to hear of Mr Gandhi's ideas, and some months later they came to Asia Plateau. There they decided to sink their differences. On their return, their changed attitude towards each other amazed everyone. Gradually they convinced the two groups to reconcile. In 1974 there was not a single strike, and the department met its yearly target in only 10 months.

This caught the eye of the management; and when the General Manager heard of the

part that Asia Plateau had played, he started sending managers and trade unionists to the industrial conferences there. So far they have sent eight such delegations and many TELCO employees have come to the MRA conferences that have been held in their city.

'What effect has this had?' I asked Mr Gandhi. 'Nothing so dramatic as that first experience,' he said. 'But there is a growing number of people who are applying MRA's concepts—living by absolute moral standards, and seeking God's guidance—in their work. We are always looking for ways to contribute beyond our factory.'



T Buhler

Kiran Gandhi

He gave me one instance of how they have worked at this. In the area there have been serious riots between Hindus and Moslems. 'Many of us took part in the relief work, helping families who had suffered to get back on their feet.' They have worked steadily to build personal friendships between people of the different communities.

More recently, in their meetings, they have been thinking about the power shortage in eastern India. The output of the power stations has declined over recent years, and thousands have been put out of work—TELCO itself made 6,000 less trucks last year than they would have, had full power been available. This then has an added effect: in India it has been estimated that a truck generates employment for 13 people for the whole of its life—and there is an unlimited market for trucks.

'These are the issues on which employment and national development rest,' Mr Gandhi pointed out. 'But when you try to find

why there has been this decline, you find everyone blaming someone else—the power stations blame the coal mines, the mines blame the railways which transport the coal. We are working out a new idea for industry—that everyone can take responsibility. We feel we have experience which can help in this situation which is hurting so many people.'

Human rights

After several years in the melting shop, he was transferred to management training. There he designed a course on 'motivating oneself'. It is the only course in which workers speak to management—and they make an impact. One caused a considerable stirring of conscience among a group of managers when he told them of his decision to get to work on time!

'The thing that satisfies me,' said Mr Gandhi, 'is helping people grow to their full potential. That, of course, is my work in management training.' But it is something that goes far beyond the management training syllabus. 'My experience is that if we are aiming to do something beyond what we are humanly capable of, because we feel God means it done, He does step in and help. This is what I have found in organising the conferences we have held.

'When people find a purpose, it affects everything they do,' he said. 'One of the first men I met in the melting shop has not only changed things in TELCO. He has since set to work in his village nearby, building a school where none existed, a bridge to join the two parts of the village, and other improvements.

'I believe everyone in India is meant to have a decent standard of living,' he said, 'not the subhuman standard that something like 280 million of our people have. Our determination to deal with this is all part of helping India to become a moral and spiritual force in the world. This is what we are meant to be. I am not satisfied with the role India is playing in certain situations where human rights are being greatly abused—such as Cambodia and Afghanistan. India is meant to speak out forcefully, without worrying whether it is in our economic interest, or will upset some "balance of power".'

John Bond

What two trucks of manure did for Meghalaya

Several times over the last decades discontent in India's unsettled North East has flared up into major unrest. Violence has broken out again this year over the mass immigration of refugees from Bangladesh.

A previous occasion when violence seemed likely was in 1967, when the tribal hills' people were struggling to secede from the state of Assam, where they were a minority. In his book, 'More than coincidence', Malcolm Mackay interviewed Niketu Iralu,

who comes from the area, about the train of events which led the Chief Minister of Assam, B P Chaliha, to say 'MRA has transformed the climate of the state'. It began when Stanley Nichols-Roy, one of the hill people's leaders, visited Asia Plateau and found a transformation in his own attitudes. Here Niketu Iralu recalls how one of Nichols-Roy's political opponents found a similar change—an incident that played its part in the peaceful birth of the state of Meghalaya.

HOOVER HYNIEWTA had represented the hills people in the Indian Parliament. He was the one who first raised the cry for a hill state in 1952. He had become very bitter towards Nichols-Roy and others because they were now running the hills' party. He took every opportunity to make it difficult for any approach to be made towards the Assamese people on the question of the hill state.

At that time a Welshman, Sydney Cook, came to stay with Nichols-Roy. He had been at Asia Plateau, and when he met Hoover, he suggested that he make a visit there too.

Hoover just laughed and said, 'That is impossible. I'm unwell, I don't have enough money, and I do not see how I can go.'

Sydney Cook persisted, and helped Hoover over one obstacle after another. The final hurdle was that he needed two truck loads of cow dung for his potato fields. 'Get me them and I shall consider going!' he said to Cook. God would provide them, Cook assured him.

Later Cook met a friend who was a doctor and told him of the need. Unknown to him, the doctor was in charge of the TB chest hospital and kept cows for milk for the patients. He immediately said, 'No problem, tomorrow morning they will be delivered.' Cook rang up Hoover and said, 'Two truck loads of cow dung arriving tomorrow morning.'

Happy to be shouted at

On arrival at Bombay Airport, Hoover was surprised to hear the name of Nichols-Roy being called over the loudspeaker system in the passengers' lounge. He had understood that Nichols-Roy was in Delhi with other colleagues and that there would be no danger of his meeting his rival while in Asia Plateau. But there had been a postponement of the meetings Nichols-Roy was to have with the Prime Minister, so he was planning to spend the intervening days at Asia Plateau. Hoover, to his consternation, found himself travelling with Nichols-Roy. He was angry. On arrival at Asia Plateau he kept quiet, but listened to everything.

One day a young lady from Malaysia, a medical student studying at Calcutta University who had come to attend the conference, made a very brief speech. She said that she had great fear in making that speech but that God had made it clear to her that

she was to put certain things right with her father and that she wanted to commit herself to do so.

The next day Hoover spoke. Referring to the Malaysian's speech, he said, 'She has shamed me. I have said to myself, why be a slave to your own pride?'

He then spoke for one hour and it was a very moving speech. Quite a number of people had tears in their eyes. He talked about his life, how he had struggled as a youth leader, and how he went to Delhi as an MP. Once he made a statement in Parliament, he told them, that made Pandit Nehru, the Prime Minister, so angry that in reply, Nehru shouted at him. 'At that I felt happy,' he said.

Meghalaya Proposal

Hoover turned to Nichols-Roy. 'I am sorry,' he said. 'I have done my best to hurt you and your family. I enjoyed hurting your father who was such a great leader of our people, and I want to ask your forgiveness today.'

Before he left, Hoover had decided to see several others. Sooner than he expected he met the first of them. On his arrival at the airport an acquaintance offered him a lift. Hoover thanked him and got into the car. The man said, 'Please give me a few minutes because I want to drive by my uncle's home.'

They drove to the home of the uncle. To his dismay Hoover found himself introduced to a man he and all the tribal leaders disliked intensely, a man who had previously been the Chief Minister of Assam, and had always said the wrong things as far as the tribal hill people were concerned.

Hoover said to himself, 'God, you have brought me to this place, this is the moment to act.' So he said to him, 'I am meeting you today, but not according to my own plan. I'm sorry for having preached communal hatred against the Assamese people, agitating my people for my own political power and success. I need your forgiveness.'

The former Chief Minister was very stirred. Hoover returned to his home town, feeling that God had already used him.

Soon after his return there was a reception in the home of B P Chaliha, Chief Minister of Assam at that time. Hoover repeated to Mr Chaliha what he had said to the former Chief Minister.

This was a real surprise, because every-

body knew the hurtful things he was always saying about the other communities. His change created a new spirit in the hill areas.

Because he had begun to give a positive leadership to the hill people at that very critical time, it helped talks which soon followed. Negotiations were soon conducted by the Government of India between the hill people and the Assamese.

The major newspapers, unaware of all this, were already writing editorials and articles saying that only bloodshed was to be expected, and they did not see any hope of a settlement. In fact, the Chief Minister himself, quoted in a newspaper editorial, said that unless a settlement was found, Assam would become a second Vietnam.

At this time Nichols-Roy and his colleagues had begun to make a fresh approach. A meeting was held in Delhi between the Assamese leaders led by Chaliha, and the hill leaders led by Nichols-Roy and his friends. They spent the whole day just chatting and exploring the issue as between friends.

Soon after that, to the surprise of the whole country, what is now called 'The Meghalaya Proposal' was made by the Government of India and the leaders on both sides made public statements appealing to their people not to start agitations but to give the scheme a fair trial. It was given a fair trial and it worked. Eventually a full State for the hill people was created.

The Governor of the North East Region, B K Nehru (later India's High Commissioner in London) said, 'Seldom have such far-reaching constitutional changes been brought about with so much good will and understanding. I have seen the hate in the hearts of the hill people reduced before my eyes.'

'More than coincidence' by Malcolm Mackay, St Andrews Press, available from Grosvenor Books, 54 Lyford Road, London SW18 3JJ. Paperback £2.95, postage paid, £3.45.

'Awakening the conscience to a future without fear'

The issue featuring the speech of Cardinal Koenig, Archbishop of Vienna, at the MRA assembly in Caux, Switzerland this summer, has just been reprinted. Copies are available from New World News, 12 Palace Street, London SW1E 5JF, price 10p, 10 copies 9p each, 20 copies 8p each.