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# OPINION

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## THE FIVE GREAT FAILURES OF THE INDIAN POLITY

(With a sixth in easy sight)

(1) The failure of utter helplessness against Communist Chinese nuclear might. Negligence and lack of foresight in extraordinary degree.

(2) The failure of utter helplessness against the population explosion. The same remark as for (1), with the additions 'too little, too late' and right measures sometimes not even officially considered.

(3) The failure of not preventing, nay rather encouraging, the deterioration of ethical standards and norms of conduct and behaviour in all classes of people, all ranks, professions and businesses, a mask of continuous hypocrisy covering up the corruption, lying, intrigue, influence-peddling that have become the way of life of to-day. "As the rulers, so the people."

(4) Following from this, the failure of not preventing, nay rather encouraging, the ruin of the administration, which now seems to have reached its nadir.

(5) The failure of utter helplessness in preventing the accession to power, of a thoroughly unworthy person, whose aim is total personal power, "what I like is the whole law" and "The state? It is I"

(6) The very likely failure of not being able to prevent this aim from being successful.

All these subjects, before and after they reached the stage of failure, have been dealt with in detail in *Opinion*. This is just in the nature of an *aide-memoir*.

## "A WAY TO DIE, LIVING TO THE END"

(Rosemary and Victor Zorza, Andre' Deutsch 5.95 PP 250)

TAYA ZINKIN

"A way to die" is a very moving book and a book with a purpose. The authors had a daughter who died of a particularly painful cancer at the age of twenty five after five months of illness. The last week of Jane's life was spent in a hospice. The book was written at Jane's request so that people would know about hospices and be able to die, as she did, in peace and dignity, free from pain and degradation.

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The first half of "A way to die", a book written with the blood of love, takes Jane through the trials and frustrations to which hospital patients are subjected, treated more often than not as inconvenient objects or at first, like children to be jollied along but never taken into confidence and always being slotted into the institution's routine. Most distressing both to Jane and her parents, was the determination of the medical profession not to jeopardize her chances of life unwinding itself to the bitter end; thus determination means that the victim's of the hypocratic oath continue to be raked by pain and fear to no purpose other than that of protracting their agony.

By contrast, in the hospice which the second half of the book is about, nothing mattered except Jane and those who loved her. The entire staff, from the hall poster to the specialist in charge, made the patients feel welcome and important, not only as patients but as people. Everything that could be done was done to relieve pain and anxiety. Heroin and other painkillers kept being administered as often as Jane required. One of the nurses is quoted as saying "pain is what the patients say they feel", in sharp contrast to the hospital nurse who accused Jane of "fussing". The philosophy behind the hospice is to liberate the incurably ill from pain, frustration and fear. The staff are trained to lubricate the experience of dying, not only for the departing but for their family and friends. Indeed, the staff often acts as catalyst or agent to open out channels of communication which have become clogged by fear or lack of use. And, to the very last, they treat the body of the dying with the respect and concern, due to the living. At no time is anything "too much" if it gives pleasure or relief to those in their care. When Jane said she felt like touching velvet before she died, velvet was found. Her mother was encouraged to take bread for her in the staff kitchen; her entire family and her friends were welcome to stay or visit at all hours—one of her parents was with her all along. So caring was the staff that in the very few days left to her Jane managed to strike friendship sufficiently meaningful to ease her, and her parents, into acceptance.

"A way to die" is compulsive reading, gruesome though its subject, the characters emerge through the halo of impending death with a life of their own. Rosemary and Victor Zorza take their readers into such intimate confidence that they become part of Jane's family. Until she was brought to the hospice Jane was difficult; with a strong will of her own, she resented the extent to which fear and pain kept intruding upon her personality; there were times when she took this resentment out on her parents. But, from the moment she was told the truth, all the truth, she became another person and went out of her way to do for her parents what the hospice was doing for her: make death easy, almost joyful. Jane who had lived the life of a rebel agnostic did not die believing in God but, to note her doctor, in a state of grace. She died full of love for a beautiful world filled with people who care. The hospice where Jane died is part of the British National Health Service and its staff is remarkable as can be seen from the an-

swer of the nurses Jane to Jane's brother when he asked if her work was not depressing. "When you have helped someone die, peacefully and easily there is nothing better that you can do for another human being, nothing more important or rewarding."

## MRS. GANDHI & MORADABAD

A. G. NOORANI

(Continued)

IT is cynical, not courageous, to divert public attention from police outrages as Mrs. Gandhi has done. To think that the course has been adopted by a politician who professes great concern for the minorities only shows up the professions, once again, for what they are. Mrs. Gandhi has been helped generously in acquiring the image particularly by the Jan Sangh. Its policies drove Muslims to support her. For one brief period, from 1972-75, the Jan Sangh saw sense and some of its members attacked the PAC's role in the UP riots during the period. Mr. L. K. Advani as we have noted (*Opinion* September 2) had other ideas this time and tried to build up the Jan Sangh constituency. Along-with Mr. A. B. Vajpayee he met Mrs. Gandhi on August 16 and took the line of the presence of foreign elements and the Muslims being instigated to attack the police instead of being the victims of its excesses.

On August 29 he turned tail and called upon Mrs. Gandhi to name her "foreign elements" while pleading that it was open to the Opposition or the press to "express suspicion" about their presence. The press can do without Mr. Advani's advice. His notion that one can "express suspicion" without any rational basis, as he did, is palpably wrong and poor defence of his own irresponsible action. What had chastened Mr. Advani was the realisation that Mrs. Gandhi was not prepared to accept his support except on her own terms. He cried "If even the Prime Minister indulges in vague charges it can only strengthen the doubts that have been expressed in a section of the press that the foreign hand theory is only a red herring to distract public attention from the Government's own failures to maintain law and order, a fact about which there can be no two opinions." Mr. Advani must, indeed, look very foolish now when it is recalled that he had himself rushed to grab that smelly herring on August 16.

It is a tale too tragic for words—the custodians of law and order perpetrate an outrage reminiscent of Jallianwalla Bagh and divert it along communal lines to cover up their excesses and the Prime Minister turns a blind eye on the excesses of outrageous proportions.

Mr. S. Shahabuddin, a responsible Janata MP, reported (*Sunday*, September 28) recently after a visit to Moradabad just over a month after the happening, "You hear of PAC looting shops and homes; you hear of PAC participating in an orgy of destruction; you hear of persons

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taken away and traceless; you hear of men and women who have turned mad with grief, of babies crying out for their missing fathers. You hear, till your senses refuse to take any more. And yet, since the authorities are against 'them', they do not matter."

He adds, "The fact is that out of 144 officially killed, 121 are Muslims; at least 75 per cent of the injured, of the 1,600 arrested, of the beaten up, are Muslims; nearly all shops looted, all houses searched or looted are Muslims. And the arm? In four weeks, the police have seized only 200 firearms, mostly unlicensed, and only four of them are of foreign marks!"

And, Mr. Shahabuddin asks "What is Mrs. Gandhi up to? Has she lost her grip, her will, or is she playing deliberately to the gallery of Hindu chauvinism? She is an astute politician and she knows which gallery to play to at which time. She is ruthless and amoral in her choice. She knows that when all else fails, when her Government bogs down under the weight of its incompetence, when she defaults on delivery of the goods she has promised, she can divert attention and harsh criticism only by touching hidden subliminal chords in the dark recesses of the Indian soul. What better than a combination of the enemy knocking at the door and the fifth column operating within: so you have the deliberate policy of fomenting tension with the neighbours—this was foreseen—and now you have 'rebellious' Muslim, a God-send indeed! Together they provide a beautiful and effective scenario for staying in power."

The civil liberties organizations who have maintained a culpable silence have helped her in her game of power. So have men like Mr. L. K. Advani, who endorsed for their own reasons her line only to find her rejecting them, and some others, who, whether out of sheer servility or innate communal bias, rushed to denounce Muslims and defend the police.

This is how freedom is lost. When the citizen disregards Solon's sage advice: "Those who are uninjured by a wrong must be taught to feel as much indignation at it as those who are injured."

(To be continued)

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