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10th May, 1972

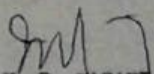
My dear J.P.,

I received your letter of April 29 and have added the passage you wish to the text of the interview which I fear has already got too long. I have left the question of shortening it a little to Khushwant Singh.

I enclose a copy of the text of the interview as it has gone to the Illustrated Weekly. Except for the length I think it reads extremely well.

In case it has not been brought to your notice, the Time magazine of May 1 carries a sympathetic story about the dacoits on page 22.

Yours as ever,


(M. R. MASANI)

Mr. Jayaprakash Narayan,
Kadam Kuan,
PATNA 3.

encl.

arm;rka

JAYAPRAKASH NARAYAN

Permanent Address :

KADAM KUAN, PATNA-3

BIHAR, INDIA

Telephone : 51238

CAMP.

Circuit House
Gwalior

April 29, 1972

Dear Minoo,

Even though I have already added sizeable chunks to my replies to your questions, I should like to add just a few more lines. The exact spot where this has to be done is in the paragraph that begins with the words: "A great deal of fuss has been made by Government, etc...." and should come after the sentence "Shri Sethi himself was present at the two major surrenders at Jaura and I am sure he will bear me out". The lines to be added after this are: "Before the dacoits came up to the platform to surrender themselves and their weapons, one of them came up to the mike and read out a statement on their behalf in which they had expressed their sincere repentance for their past acts, asked for forgiveness from those whom they had harmed and pledged themselves to atone for their bad deeds and to turn a new leaf in the book of their lives. Was this lionising or glamourising the bad men?"

Khushwant might want to shorten the interview, but please tell him that either he himself should do it or ask someone competent enough to do it, so that nothing important or interesting is left out.

Yours sincerely,

Jayaprakash

(Jayaprakash Narayan)

Shri M.R. Masani,
148, Mahatma Gandhi Road,
Bombay-1.

FOR FAVOUR OF PUBLICATION

PRESS RELEASE

It is since October last that I have been engaged in Chambal Valley dacoit work. Even during my illness I have kept in touch with it, the actual job of contacting the dacoits, or baghis, as they call themselves, being carried on by my Sarvodaya colleagues, mainly by Shri Mahabir Singh and Shri Hemdeo Sharma, assisted by a number of other workers. During these six months I have not made any public statement about this work, except for the appeals I have issued to the dacoits from time to time. On the eve of my departure for the area, however, I feel I should say a few words.

First of all, I wish to express my feeling of utter unworthiness for a work of this kind. I have no claim to any moral or spiritual quality, and my approach to the problem has been entirely from the angle of social work. Whatever success has so far been achieved is, to my mind, due to three following factors:

The most important of these is the continuing effect of Vinobaji's work in 1960. He had sown then a small seed, which ever since has been at work, in the minds of the dacoits, the public, and, if I am not mistaken, also in the minds of those in authority. Vinoba demonstrated in action, no matter how briefly, that there was a humane and a more civilised way of dealing with crime. Indeed, modern criminology and penology, both in the West and in Soviet Russia, fully accept this approach.

Secondly, just as it was the initiative of Tahsildar Singh, son of the legendary Man Singh, that had prompted Vinobaji in 1960 to undertake his mission of redemption, so in my case it was the insistence of Madho Singh, one of the most celebrated leaders of the present generation of dacoits, that launched me upon this course. One fine morning early in October he dropped from the blue, as it were, at my residence in Patna and pressed me with convincing sincerity to pick up the thread from where Vinobaji had left it. To my plea that they should seek Vinobaji's help and guidance, he replied that his emissaries had already seen Vinobaji who had advised them to go to me, which I checked up later and found to be true. Madho Singh would not listen to my pleas about being overworked and wanting to unload some of my burden rather than take on another heavy one. He further assured me again and again that this time it was not a question of a few 'baghis' surrendering but of the whole problem being solved if I took the initiative and was able to secure the cooperation of the Central and the three State Governments concerned. The upshot of that rather dramatic encounter was that I finally gave in to Madho Singh's pleading and took on a fresh

burden for which I knew I was not qualified.

The change in the attitude of the dacoits themselves, as revealed to me by Madho Singh, is the second important factor for such success as my colleagues have so far achieved in persuading them to surrender voluntarily. Several factors are no doubt responsible for this change in the dacoits' attitude, but one of them is doubtless that tiny seed planted by Vinobaji in 1960.

The third factor, and certainly no less important than the other two, for the progress made in this work is the consistently cooperative and enlightened attitude of the Union Home Minister and his officers and of the Chief Ministers of Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan and their officers. I have reason to believe that they in turn had the full backing of the Prime Minister. I should like on this occasion to express my gratefulness to them for all the help and encouragement I have received in this work.

Lest false hopes should be created, I must emphasise that the dacoit problem, which has its own distinct history and features in this area, is not going to be solved by the mere surrender of a couple hundred dacoits. Their surrender will be the beginning of a process and not the end. Everyone who has studied and written about this problem has stressed that it is not a mere law-and-order problem but a psycho-socio-economic one. Of course, all crime is a social problem (using the term social in its inclusive sense) and not merely one of law-and-order. But the Chambalghati problem is much more so. Therefore, unless after the surrender an earnest effort is made by the Central and State Governments as well as by Sarvodaya and other social workers and voluntary agencies to tackle the psychological social and economic aspects of this complex problem, new gangs of dacoits would spring up from the soil, and history would repeat itself.

JAYAPRAKASH NARAYAN

New Delhi
April 10, 1972

M. R. MASANI

148 MAHATMA GANDHI ROAD
BOMBAY 1

24th April, 1972

My dear Khushwant,

Here are the draft questions which I propose to shoot at J.P.
I do not know how many of these he will answer.

Would you like to add to these or alter any of them? Please
let me know by lunch time tomorrow, Tuesday. You can telephone
me at 254005 during office hours if you so desire.

encl

Look forward to see you for dinner tomorrow
(Tuesday) at 8 pm.

Yours sincerely,

M. R. Masani
(M. R. MASANI)

Mr. Khushwant Singh,
Editor,
Illustrated Weekly of India,
Bombay.

① A few dacoits are known to have gone on foreign jaunts. Who helped them to get visas?

② Who supplied them with the latest automatic rifles?

③ What wealth have the gang leaders amassed?

pc

Questions to be put to Mr. Jayaprakash Narayan

1. How and when did the idea of a change of heart on the part of dacoits start?
2. What is the philosophical basis of the experiment? You are quoted as saying that you are doing this from "the angle of social service, not morality" (Statesman, April 11) What exactly does this mean?
3. Is this not a mere law and order problem? Are these men dacoits or rebels - Bagheers? Are they part Robin Hood? Is it true that Madho Singh was a member of the C.S.F. or the S.P. and an admirer of Dr. Lohia? "He has laughed off the suggestion that he should stand for Parliament." - What should this be ruled out? Couldn't you agree that there are already an adequate number of dacoits in Parliament?
4. What are the problems of the negotiator? What are the demands of the dacoits?
5. What is the attitude of the authorities, particularly of the P.M.?
6. What assurances have you received that, if these men plead guilty, advantage will not be taken of their plea? Are you attending to their legal defence?
7. What is the experience in regard to those who surrendered in 1960/62?
You will recall your sad experience with Bafi Ahmed Kidwai over the withdrawal of the Posts & Telegraphs strike, when you were the P & T leader, and how you had to go on a 21-day fast in Poona to atone for your lack of care in sacrificing these men. Are you taking steps to guard against your having to undertake another fast in your present state of health? Would you take the view that the 1953 fast was not a tragedy because it led you to renounce Marxism and to write an article entitled "Incentives to Goodness" for Freedom First?
8. You have been quoted as saying that the surrenders are "only the beginning, not the end." (Statesman, April 11) When then is the end?
9. What are the immediate effects on the people of the region?
10. How do you look at the unconditional release of 60 to 80 kidnapped persons held by the dacoits as hostages? Does it not compare favourably with the attitude of hijackers?
11. What are these sophisticated weapons which are referred to in the press?

12. Tell us something about the dak or daku bungalow where all this took place?
13. What was this controversy about keeping the press and public away from the scene of the surrender? What is wrong with the B.B.C. taking a film? Is it not good public relations for India abroad where our image is rather dim?
14. What is the significance of the dacoits bowing to Gandhiji's portrait?
15. What is / K.F.Rustonji's (I.C.P.) objection to all this?
16. How about new gangs coming into existence to replace those who have been converted?

24th April, 1972

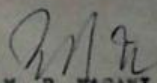
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mrs;rka

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15. What is ~~Mr~~ K.F.Rustomji's (I.G.P.) objection to all this?

16. How about new gangs coming into existence to replace those who have been converted?

~~Unclassified text~~

Mr. Jayaprakash Narayan interviewed by Mr Minoo Masani
for the Illustrated Weekly of India on 26th April, 1972, in Ranchi

Minoo Masani: In these days when there is very little good that happens in India, your achievement in facilitating the surrender of so many dacoits in Madhya Pradesh is a welcome exception. Some good news has appeared for once along that of the depressing developments that are happening daily. Could you tell us when and how this idea of a change of heart on the part of dacoits, as they are called, started?

Jayaprakash Narayan: ~~First of all~~, I would like to start by saying that, ^{as} ~~like~~ all of us ordinary human beings, the dacoits also have ^{introspection} their moments of ~~reflection~~ and repentance. Nobody is a hundred per cent criminal or a hundred per cent ^{evil} ~~good~~.

Minoo Masani: Would you agree with Father Flannagan that "there is no such thing as a bad boy"? Would this apply to grown-ups also?

Jayaprakash: I entirely agree with Father Flannagan.

It all started with Tahsildar Singh, ^{in 1960} ~~the~~ son of the legendary Man Singh, ^{serving a term of 132 years in a L.P. jail} who was ~~in prison in 1960~~. When he heard that Acharya Vinoba Bhave was walking through the districts of Morena and Bhind in the Chambal region, he wrote to Vinoba asking him to come and see him in jail and, if he could not, to send somebody, because he had something important to say.

^{An emissary of Vinoba saw} Vinoba sent somebody ^{and try to wear them away from this path of crime} to see him and what Tahsildar Singh suggested was that Vinoba should try and meet some of the dacoits. I think he ^{six} ^{was} ^{Lukka} gave the name of one of them, Pandit Lokman, who ~~he~~ called Lukku, who was his old boyhood friend. There were many dacoits, he said, who would respond if an appeal were made to them to surrender because circumstances had forced them to go into the ravines and jungles and they wanted to

find a way out. That was when the first surrenders took place.

^{The present}
In this particular case, early in October 1971, a man called at my Patna residence and my office sent him upstairs to see me. He came on behalf of the Chambalghati dacoits and he gave his name as Ram Singh. He had come to plead with me to take up their case. I said that there was so much on my plate that I could not take on any more. I asked him why he did not go to Vinobaji to which he replied that he had sent a messenger to Vinoba - in fact a Congress MLA - and Vinoba had asked him to come and see me. I was hesitant to take on this task. Then suddenly the man revealed his real identity and said he was Madho Singh. I had heard of that celebrated dacoit and told him that he was taking too much of a risk in coming to see me because there was a price of a lakh and a half on his head. He said: "We trust you and I have therefore come." He was very insistent about one thing -- that this time if I took up this work, it would not be a question of a few dacoits surrendering but the end of the entire dacoit problem in that area. So I finally agreed. You see, Minoo, the initiative for a change came from them.

Minoo Masani: What is the philosophical basis of this experiment? You are quoted in the press as saying that you are doing all this from "the angle of social service, not morality." What exactly does this mean?

Jayaprakash : That is not exactly what I said. I had said in my press statement of April 10: "I have no claim to any moral or spiritual quality and my approach to the problem has been entirely from the angle of social work."

Minoo Masani: That certainly makes it a little clearer. What would you say is the philosophic basis of the experiment?

Jayaprakash: I would say the philosophic basis is the same as that of Bhodan, Gramdhan and Gandhiji's idea of Trusteeship - the idea that the human heart can be changed if a proper approach is made and that nobody is irredeemable, and that the dacoits of Chambalghati are no exception. The philosophy behind it is similar to the philosophy behind modern penology - that the criminal has to be reformed and not punished.

Minoo Masani: Who do you find, J.P., are the more intractable - dacoits or businessmen?

Jayaprakash: I think it is the businessmen who are the more intractable. That is why we have this creeping disease of Statism in India today.

Minoo Masani: Supposing a cynic were to say that this is a law and order problem, and you are needlessly giving it a more noble dimension?

Are these men really baghis (rebels)? Are they part Robin Hood?

Jayaprakash: The tradition behind the Chambalghati dacoits is that ^{these centuries} ~~back~~. The defeat of the Rajput clans of the area, such as the Tomars & Bhokarias, ^{made or brought} they are rebels. Many of them were ~~rajas and smaller rulers and~~ ^{gone centuries} at the hands of the Sultans of Delhi & that the Rajputs & Bhokarias converted them when they were defeated by the Pathans or Afghans, they fled to the ^{into} ~~into~~ rebels against the established ^{order} & kept the tradition alive. ^{greatly} ~~into~~ ravines and jungles, economic conditions helped the process. The Robinhood tradition has also been alive amongst them. The latest ^{quite a lot of} ~~instance~~ was that ^{one of the} ~~of the~~ instance, take the legendary Man Singh. He was a Robin Hood. He would distribute a ^{considerable part} ~~great deal~~ of what he ^{took from the rich} ~~got~~ to the poor.

He ran schools in various places and the poor looked upon him as a good man and a benefactor & called him 'Raja'.

That tradition may no longer exist in the same form, but ^{the} ~~the~~ ^{memory & habit of mind persist} ~~it~~ ^{I shall say} tradition is there. Most of them, 75 per cent of those in the ~~prisons~~, ^{persons} ~~are~~ ^{families were} ~~were~~ victims of some who are surrendering, are ~~people~~ ^{people} who were victims of some

^{economic} social injustice on the part of the district or village ^{some petty, revenue or police} officials or police who did something against them or their families. They are ^{being a hot} quick tempered people ^{The provocation led them to some violent action, after which} and they fled to the jungles to take revenge. ^{took} shelter in the ^{in the bottom of the ravines.} This initial crime having been committed ^{Everyone, including Government Inquiry Committees and sociologists} who have studied this problem, have accepted this.

^{to avenge an injustice, they naturally look upon themselves as heroes.} ^{Therefore more} This is not ^{merely} a law and order problem but a socio-economic and psychological problem. ^{Everyone, including official committees of inquiry, accept this} But ^{But interestingly enough, for some reason, the law & order aspect of the problem} has been given much more attention than the other aspects. In fact, ^{practically} it could not be ^{wrong to say that practically} nothing has been done ^{to} remove the socio-economic causes which led to this problem.

Minoo Masani : Is it true that Madho Singh was a member of the Congress Socialist Party to which both you and I belonged.

Jayaprakash : I think he was a member of the ^{original} Socialist Party ^{later.}

Minoo Masani : So I don't have to plead guilty to having produced Madho Singh! How old is he?

Jayaprakash : He is about forty.

Minoo Masani : It was suggested by a pressman that he should stand for Parliament but Madho Singh laughed it away. Don't you think, J.P., it is not such a bad idea after all? He would be in good company!

Jayaprakash : He would probably not be in good company, Minoo, because he would be a reformed dacoit! In any case, the question does not arise ^{yet} because he has ^{first} to be tried, serve his sentence and become a free man. I must say, however, that I found him politically quite mature.

Minoo Masani : What are your problems as a negotiator? What are the demands of the dacoits? And what is the attitude of the authorities?

Jayaprakash : ^{In the past seven months} I have corresponded or talked ^{Shri} with Mr. K.C.Pant, the

Home Minister, ^{Shri} Mr. Kamalapathi Tripathi, ^{Shri} Mr. S.C. Shukla, and Mr. ^{and later Shri P. C. Sathi} Barkatullah Khan ^{the} as Chief Ministers, ^{convinced} and they have been uniformly cooperative and responsive. ^{In Mr. Patil} Madho Singh had put forward seven ^{conditions, the} ^{most important} ~~one~~ of which was about ~~the~~ death sentences being commuted. This took a great deal of negotiating but I was finally ^{satisfied} ~~able to secure agreement~~.

Minoo Masani: I am glad to hear that, because I recall your sad experience in 1953 when you had to go on a 21-day fast in Poona for calling off a strike by Posts & Telegraphs workers without obtaining in writing from Mr. Rafi Ahmed Kidwai, the Minister, the necessary assurance. Are you taking steps to guard against your having to undertake another fast which would be a matter for concern at your age and in your present state of health?

Jayaprakash: I have taken reasonable precautions. I do remember that incident about the P. & T. strike.

Minoo Masani: On the other hand, it may be argued that a fast like that also does some good. For instance, am I right in saying that it was during the 1953 fast that you finally jettisoned Marxism and gave me an article which was published in Freedom First entitled 'Incentives to Goodness'?

Jayaprakash: That fast meant a great deal to me because I did not make it a political issue or a trade union issue. I undertook the fast as ^{measure of} a self-correction, as a public worker who had made a mistake. I had three weeks to think it over and, as you correctly say, I came to reject the philosophical basis of Marxism, ^{- discarded materialism -} because it did not offer ~~me~~ an answer to the question: 'Why should a man be good' or 'Why should anyone be good?'

Minoo Masani: You have been quoted in the press as saying that these surrenders are "only the beginning, not the end." What then is the end?

Jayaprakash: That is correct. What I had said was: "Lest false hopes should be created, I must emphasise that the dacoit problem, which has its own distinct history and features in this area, is not going to be solved by the mere surrender of a couple of hundred dacoits. Their surrender will be the beginning of a process and not the end. Everyone who has studied and written about this problem has stressed that it is not a mere law-and-order problem but a psycho-socio-economic one. Of course, all crime is a social problem (using the term social in its inclusive sense) and not merely one of law-and-order. But the Chambalghati problem is much more so. Therefore, unless after the surrender an earnest effort is made by the Central and State Governments as well as by Sarvodaya and other social workers and voluntary agencies to tackle the psychological, social and economic aspects of the complex problem, new gangs of dacoits would spring up from the soil, and history would repeat itself."

I would like to add that though this is the long-term solution, there are immediate tasks that have to be attended to in order to keep the process going. The rest of the dacoits in the area have to be persuaded to surrender. Then there are nearly 1000 people against whom there are charges and who have absconded. These are not dacoits. They are persons who are said to have sheltered or otherwise helped the dacoits. They are accessories. If they continue to abscond and remain in the jungle, new gangs of dacoits would arise from them. We have to get them also to surrender. The bulk of them may be set free without trial so that they will return to their normal life. Then, we have to look after the families of those dacoits who have surrendered already and may surrender hereafter. Happily, the Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh has announced grant of scholarships for the education of their children. But there is the question of maintenance of the rest of the members of the families. There is another set of families whom too we have to look after. These are families that have suffered at the hands of the dacoits. I hope the Chambalghati Shanti Mission will receive generous assistance

in this task from the people of Madhya Pradesh particularly and of the rest of the country generally.

Pare Then there is the work of legal defence. These are heavy tasks and the way they are going to be performed will affect profoundly the future of the dacoit problem in that area.

In this connection there is a very important question that has been worrying me. At their trial the dacoits will most probably be pleading guilty. How will the Government act then? Will the prosecution bring false charges against the accused? After conviction will they have to serve out their sentences in the usual jails and in the usual manner?

Minoo Masani: If I were a dacoit, and the only promise I get is that sentence of death on me would be commuted to life imprisonment if I were to plead guilty, I would hardly think it is a good bargain!

Jayaprakash: I agree with you, but pleading guilty was not one of the terms of agreement. We have asked them to plead guilty because it is in keeping with the spirit of their surrender and carries forward the process of change of heart. But I am hesitating to advise them to do this until I know how Government would react to it. I have suggested to Government that, after conviction, instead of keeping the reformed dacoits in the ordinary prisons, there should be a number of ashram type open jails established in the area, where they would be given land to cultivate and also training and facilities to set up rural industries. They could also be utilised in the execution of development plans in the area. If their undoubted energies and qualities of leadership are utilised in this constructive manner and if ~~a new life~~ it is all related to the building up of a new life for the people of that area, there will be wrought a profound psychological change that will strike at the very root of the problem there.

Minoo Masani: Like Father Flannagan's "Boy's Town"?

Jayaprakash: Yes. But I have not heard from Government yet.

Minoo Masani: What has been the immediate effects on the people of the region?

Jayaprakash: The immediate effect is one of great relief, the lifting of the pall of fear. Trade and industry, communications, education, administration - all these activities and many others are going to benefit immediately. Life has been far from normal for many years in that area. ~~It~~ It is fast returning to normal now and there^{is} universal relief and happiness.

I will give you an ^{interesting} ~~amusing~~ ^{quick} example. I was told on good authority that there was a house in a small town between Gwalior and Jaura, which ^{had been} ~~was~~ some months back/sold for Rs.15,000. Somebody recently wanted to buy it for Rs.20,000, but he was told that the price ~~had~~ ^{had} now gone up to Rs.2 lakhs! This may, of course, be an exaggeration, ^{but it indicates the change that is happening.}

Minoo Masani: I hope you will get a donation from the landlord of the premises whose value has appreciated! How do you look at the unconditional release of 60 to 80 kidnapped persons held by the dacoits as hostages?

Jayaprakash : It was part of the ^{conditions for surrender} ~~deal~~ that, ~~without taking any~~ ^{the kidnappers} ~~the kidnappers~~ will have to release their victims ~~without extorting the ransom price~~ ^{ransom, they would be released.} A very few gang leaders tried to cheat us, but ^{by a large} ~~they~~ kept their word.

Minoo Masani : What are these "sophisticated weapons" that are referred to in the press?

Jayaprakash: I really do not know much about weapons, but I was told that they included light machine guns, bren and sten guns and automatic rifles. I was told by someone, while the surrender ceremony was on, that the value of the arms surrendered would be Rs.10 to Rs.15 lakhs.

Minoo Masani: Any idea as to where they came from?

Jayaprakash: From the police, from the military. ^{there is a flourishing trade} ~~By means of smuggling~~ ^{in pilfered arms in this country, you know.} I was told that a good deal of ~~we stolen goods.~~ ^{There is an arms repair factory near Gwalior and some} ~~arms find their way out into the black market from the arms repair factory~~ ^{arms may have leaked out from there in Gwalior.}

Minoo Masani : What was this controversy about keeping the press and public away from the scene of the surrender? What is wrong with the B.B.C. taking a film? Is it not good public relations for India abroad where our image is rather dim?

Jayaprakash : I have much to say in criticism of Government's policy on this & ~~other~~ ^{some other} matters. But at the moment I must restrain myself, but, for the moment, ~~I do not want to say very much.~~ ^{I must say that I}

to go on p. 9

after the first two hand-written lines on the top.

If the Government really believes that the voluntary surrender of notorious dacoits and their gangs is a good thing and presents a more civilised method of dealing with crime, it should have gone all out to publicise and televise the event not only in this country but also abroad. Whenever the police succeeded in shooting down a few dacoits, the event ^{was as} ~~is as~~ well published as possible. The dead bodies are exhibited to the public, their photographs as well as the photographs of the police who 'bagged' them are published in the press and the announced prizes are ostentiously given away. All that is supposed to produce a salutary effect and strengthen the power and prestige of the law-and-order authority. But, has that authority no other philosophy than that of a tooth for a tooth and an eye for an eye? Are we so primitive still in our ideas of crime and punishment? I do not know what others think, but I have no doubt that the surrender programme could never have succeeded without the full and willing cooperation of the Madhya Pradesh police, as well as the police of Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan. I have publicly acknowledged their help and said that a good measure of the credit for the surrender goes, without doubt, especially to the Madhya Pradesh Police. ^{Therefore, it} ~~is~~ wrong to think the surrenders have lowered the prestige of the police in that area and eroded the authority of the law-and-order establishment. I strongly repudiate all these assumptions. They will be valid only if the authorities believe that shooting and killing are the

only methods that the police can follow in dealing with the dacoits.

A great deal of fuss has been made by Government, including Delhi, about "lionising" or "glamourising" such confirmed criminals, some of whom ^{may be} ~~are~~ guilty of multiple murder and other heinous crimes. For the life of me again, I do not understand what is meant by these words. But if we take their ordinary dictionary ^{meaning}, I deny that either at Vinoba's time or at the time of the recent surrenders there was anything done by us to lionise or glamourise the dacoits. Shri Sethi himself was present at the two major surrenders at Jaurā and I am sure he will bear me out. As the dacoits came up on the platform, they first bowed to the thousands of the people sitting below, then they took their weapons from ^{off} ~~from~~ their person, touched them with their forehead and reverently placed them before the pictures of Gandhiji and Vinobaji and touched the ground with their forehead. Was that lionisation? Then they touched our feet, including Sethi's, who patted their backs affectionately and spoke a few words to each of them. On my part, I stood up to embrace the gang leaders, but patted the rest while sitting. I would have liked to embrace every one of them, but it was not advisable in view of my health to keep standing too long. Did I lionise them by my action? As I explained in the course of my speech ^{at the function,} all I did was to treat them as human beings and accept them as brothers. They having surrendered on my appeal, this is the least I could ^{do} respond to their gesture of trust and ^{this desire to} change of ~~life~~ ^{the way of} life.

Objections have been raised ^{against} ~~about~~ photographs being taken and published. It has been said that the prosecution will be weakened by that because identification procedures will lose their validity. I am sorry that the Government has not yet grasped the depth and scale of change that has taken place. If the accused are prepared to plead guilty before the court, identification formalities have no relevance or significance. *The surrender ceremony itself before vast crowds makes identification meaningless.*

This much, however, I may say that for the life of me I have not
fail to understand this attitude. If this was a good thing and
been able to understand Government's inhibitions on this respect,
was welcomed by the Government - it certainly was welcomed by the people -

I should have thought that the surrender ceremony should have been
well publicised not only in India but abroad. One argument that has
been advanced is ~~that~~ that the Government is very much worried about the
criminals being lionised or glamorised. I do not understand this.
We have treated them as human beings. Chief Minister P.C. Sethi
himself patted them on the back. There was some response from them
as human beings, and that should be appreciated.

Minoo Masani : What about the B.B.C. taking a film? Was it not a good
thing?

Jayaprakash : That may have been unauthorised. I met the BBC man.

Since the camp was declared a 'peace area' or a sanctuary, nobody could
be prevented from ^{going there.} ~~seeing it.~~ But that also there was no one to stop. ^{But that also there was no one to stop.}
result hundreds of photographs were taken. ^{The As a}
~~argument was that, when their cases were taken up in court and when~~

witnesses had to identify the dacoits, anybody could easily do so
because the witnesses would have already seen their photographs in
the papers. But my answer to that is that, when they have agreed to

plead guilty, this question does not arise. I really felt bad about this.

In the end, ^{the press was allowed on the day of the surrender at Jeera, but} there was publicity but no pictures were allowed at the
jubilee photography was banned. Some pressmen, however, managed to shoot the ban.
function.

Minoo Masani : What is the significance of the dacoits bowing to

Gandhiji's portrait?

Jayaprakash: The significance is that from violence they have ^{gone to} accepted
nonviolence and a peaceful way of life.

Minoo Masani : A few dacoits are understood to have gone on foreign
jaunts. Who helped them to get visas?

if this has
already gone
to the previous
pages.

Jayaprakash: It is well known that throughout the world this business of faked passports is going on and India is no exception.

Minoo Masani: I was glad to see that the Prime Minister raised in Parliament yesterday the question of the abolition of capital punishment in general. Would you say that your efforts and any discussion you may have had with her have influenced her about the validity of capital punishment?

Jayaprakash: I think, Minoo, she has been thinking about the problem for herself for some time. The last time I met her she asked me about this and I very strongly pleaded for the abolition of capital punishment as I think it is a barbaric custom and I do not think studies made of crime throughout the world have established that capital punishment is a deterrent. I certainly encouraged the Prime Minister.

Minoo Masani: Hasn't our friend, Arthur Koestler written a book on the subject?

Jayaprakash: Arthur Koestler has written a book entitled "On hanging" ~~xxx~~ as a part of ~~in~~ his hectic campaign for the abolition of capital punishment.

Minoo Masani: I would suggest, J.P., your reading a book by Duff which describes in a lighter vein the horrible process of strangulation entitled "A Handbook for Hangmen".

Jayaprakash: Albert Camus has also written about the ^{guiltless} ~~subject~~.

Minoo Masani: Well, J.P., thanks for telling the story. I am sure a large number of people will want to know all about it. I see you are going back to Gwalior to continue your good work. Good luck, and more power to your elbow.

Jayaprakash: Minoo, hope you have finished with your questions, may I add something on my own?

Minoo Masani: Most certainly.

Jayaprakash: There seems to be a tendency on the part of Government ^{at} ~~on~~ to treat the surrender just as ~~isolated~~ ^{an isolated} episode, after the end of

which the law and order machinery would revert to its accustomed ways: Surrender until a certain fixed date and then confrontation and shooting and killing or capturing. It would be a pity if that were allowed to happen. I personally think that the mass surrenders that have taken place and their aftermath have opened a new method ~~for~~ dealing with this sort of crime, at least in this area. The Sarvodaya movement, particularly the Chambalghati Shanti Mission, would be glad to cooperate with the authorities in this task on a long-term basis.

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