

India sends Lizzie home in disgrace

As Britain's Lizard Queen prepares to preside over the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Edinburgh, Scotland on Oct. 24-27, she is still smarting from her disastrous 12-day tour of the Indian subcontinent. As *EIR* reported last week, the Queen was received coolly by the Indian government, as demonstrators carried signs that read, "Killer Queen Go Back!" She was forbidden to deliver a prepared speech in Tamil Nadu. British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook created a scandal, when he made remarks suggesting that Britain was interested in intervening in the Kashmir crisis. Indian authorities were quoted saying that they believed Britain's "hidden agenda was ultimately to obtain an independent state of Jammu and Kashmir." Cook, when he departed from the New Dehli airport, was seen off by one of the lowest-ranking officials of the Indian Foreign Ministry.

The London *Observer* on Oct. 19 reported that the Commonwealth summit was likely to be overshadowed by the fracas over the royal visit to India. According to the paper, "The Indian prime minister's office has made clear to the *Observer* that the Indian delegation will walk out of the summit if the issue of Kashmir—which lay behind much of the antagonism on her trip—is raised."

Other Commonwealth countries are also stepping out of line, to the Queen's dismay. Malaysia's Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir Bin Mohamad has emerged as a principal defender of the right of nations to sovereignty and economic development, against the assault of the financial speculators. Nigerian officials, incensed at the Commonwealth's sanctions against their country, are threatening to "gate-crash" the Commonwealth summit: flying to Edinburgh by helicopter, whether they are granted visas or not.

Insults to India

The Queen's visit to India ended on Oct. 18, with a brawl at the airport in Madras between British diplomats and Indian security police. As the royal party approached the aircraft for boarding, according to the *Observer's* biased report, police "screamed at and jostled" members of the group, "manhandled a disabled female British diplomat," "harangued" an air attaché, and "mobbed" the Queen's press secretary. "I am in charge here," shouted Indian Deputy Inspector General Nanjit Kumaran, whose uniform was "bristling with gold braid," the newspaper reported with righteous indignation.

Following the visit, commentators in India continued to complain of the royal insults. The worst, was on the occasion of the visit by the Queen to the closed garden of Jallianwala Bagh in Amritsar, the scene of a hideous massacre by British troops in 1919, under the command of Gen. Reginald Dyer. The massacre, one of the worst offenses of the British Raj, has been widely condoned in Britain, and the British have never offered an apology.

One Indian columnist wrote angrily in *The Times of India* on Oct. 22: "I would like to say that the government of India has allowed the English Queen to desecrate the memory of those that died at Jallianwala Bagh. She should not have been allowed there unless she was prepared to read an apology, and unless she was prepared to issue a condemnation of Reginald Dyer."

At a state banquet on Oct. 13, the Queen had described the massacre at Jallianwala Bagh as a "difficult episode," but remarked blandly that "history cannot be rewritten, however much we might sometimes wish otherwise. It has its moments of sadness as well as of gladness. We must learn from the sadness and build on the gladness." Royal Consort Prince Philip compounded the insult the following day, denying the Indian claim that 2,000 people were murdered by the British at the site (the official British version of history has the death toll as 379, with over 1,200 injured). "It wasn't 2,000, was it?" he said, adding, "I was in the Navy with Dyer's son."

Finger-pointing

Back in England, officials hastened to blame one another for the mess. The Tories tarred the Labour government. Foreign Secretary Cook, in turn, pointed out that the previous, Tory, government had arranged the tour in the first place. "It might have been helpful if they had arranged this trip at some moment other than the 50th anniversary" of Indian independence, he said, "so we could have focused on looking forward into the 21st century."

The Royal House, in an unusual move, released a statement absolving the Labour Party-led government of any mismanagement of the tour. The statement said, "We have seen media reports from London suggesting that the Queen is unhappy with the Government's handling of arrangements for the state visit to India. . . . That is not the case. The Queen has been entirely satisfied with the advice from the Foreign Secretary and his officials in the preparations leading up to the visit and during the visit itself. . . . The Queen has very much appreciated the warmth of the welcome she has received through the tour."

At the Commonwealth summit, Indian Prime Minister I.K. Gujral is scheduled to reply, on behalf of the 52 members of the Commonwealth, to British Prime Minister Tony Blair, who, as host, will make the opening speech. Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif will open the first working session of the summit. The royals are keeping their fingers crossed.