

## From New Delhi by Paul Zykofsky

### His Highness visits India

*Despite the British Commission's best efforts, the results were less than auspicious.*

India was treated to a rare spectacle Nov. 24 when the heir to the British throne arrived for a two-week visit. The moment Prince Charles—also known as the Prince of Wales, Duke of Cornwall and Rothesay, Earl of Carrick, Baron of Renfrew, Lord of the Isles, and Prince and Great Steward of Scotland—descended from his Royal Air Force jet, however, it seemed unlikely that Britain would gain much advantage from the tour.

Strict observers of protocol, the Indian government sent only the vice-president and a few cabinet ministers to greet Charles. Neither Prime Minister Indira Gandhi nor the president was there, as British news reports complained at length.

On the second day after the Prince's arrival in New Delhi, local newsmen covering his visit to the Nehru Memorial were, in the words of United News of India, "unceremoniously bundled out of the premises" by a British official accompanying the prince—Mr. Warrick Hutchings, assistant press secretary for the Queen of England, suddenly appeared before the press corps three-quarters of the way through the Prince's 40-minute tour of the Museum. Mr. Hutchings blocked their way forward and announced, "I'm afraid you have come too far and I must ask you to leave immediately." When journalists protested, Mr. Hutchings had them escorted out by British security personnel.

Speculation here was that Mr. Hutchings was ordered to perform

this act of unaccustomed brashness, when he realized that his Royal Highness's insipid comments in the vicinity of reporters belied the carefully cultivated image of the Prince as a very well-educated young man. Journalists here were, for example, taken aback to hear Charles inquire about the meaning of *satyagraha*, the term describing the nonviolent protest Mahatma Gandhi launched in the mid-1920s to expel the Prince's forebears from India. "That's nice" typified his other reactions, along with "Ummm."

I happened to encounter another incident that would have embarrassed the late Lord Mountbatten, last Viceroy of India and the Prince's preceptor, when I called the British High Commission about what had been billed in Charles's public itinerary as a "meeting with the press." My question about the time of the press conference elicited the response from the Commission that it was "not, heaven forbid, a *press conference*," but "an informal meeting with a select group of Indian and British journalists," and no Americans were invited.

One of the Indian journalists allowed to attend wrote afterward in the *Times of India* that the invitation to the gathering asked the select guests to "please use the rear entrance to the High Commission."

Two larger incidents occurred during Charles's visit. The first involved a report in the Indian weekly *Blitz* that four British sailors, during a goodwill visit to Bombay by

several Royal Navy vessels, made unauthorized entry into the naval dockyards and were caught by Indian officers taking photos of sensitive military subjects, including a submarine in dry dock.

Further surveillance, according to *Blitz*, turned up Royal Navy frogmen who had apparently been deployed to "bottom search" a Soviet-built Indian missile cruiser.

*Blitz* is not considered a very reliable source, but attention has been drawn to the fact that the Indian External Affairs Ministry has not denied the report, despite pressure from the High Commission.

The second incident occurred on Nov. 25, when the U.K. government announced its decision to continue the practice of X-raying children from the Indian subcontinent who arrive in Britain, in order to determine their age and consequently their right to settle in the U.K.—a decision viewed here as "racially derogatory and medically indefensible." The decision is being compared with the scandal two years ago in which Indian women emigrating to Britain were given virginity tests "to prove that they were fiancées" before entry permits were granted.

Trailing alongside during the various upheavals of the Prince's visit was a high-level delegation of British industrialists, led by the Earl of Limerick. Though it offered economic assistance, investments, joint projects in third countries, and credit packages, skeptics were quick to point out that nothing had come of similar missions in the past, because of what Charles himself has described as Britain's industrial collapse, and India's rise as a competitor with the U.K. and many Commonwealth countries.