

Leader of Ananda Marga released after 6 1/2 years

By JACK DESMOND
Of the Emerald

While the world laments the recent trials and convictions of two Russian dissidents, Anatoly Shcharansky and Alexander Ginzburg, the release in India of Anandamurti has been hailed by his followers as a major victory for human rights.

Anandamurti, spiritual leader of the Ananda Marga society, was acquitted by the state supreme court in Bihar, India last July 4 on charges he inspired a yoga monk to commit five murders.

His release from jail this week will end six and a half years of imprisonment the last five of which were spent subsisting on a liquid fast.

Anandamurti founded AM in the late 1960s in answer to the corruption that he saw in Indian government and society. He said he hoped that in establishing AM, he would establish a spiritual society practicing yoga and meditation, and would involve itself with alleviating the suffering and moral corruption in India.

As the movement gained popularity, AM spread throughout the world and soon numbered several million followers in 85 countries.

AM is perhaps best known in Eugene for the film series it offers at the University throughout the year. Last year, says Wayland Secrest, a Eugene follower, the group launched an attempt to gather leftover fruits and vegetables from harvested fields. The project eventually floundered for a lack of volunteers and time.

While the movement snowballed during the '70s, Anandamurti languished in jail. Anandamurti had been jailed, says Secrest, because a yoga monk had claimed that Anandamurti had inspired him to murder five people.

In India, inspiring a murder carries a more serious penalty than in the U.S. In return for his testimony against Anandamurti, the yoga monk was given immunity from the murder charges.

Six months passed before any charges were brought against Anandamurti. The government offered to release him if he would disclaim the AM organization, but he refused.

After one and one-half years in jail, Anandamurti survived alleged phenobarbital poisoning by the prison doctor. In protest, he began a liquid fast that consisted only of curd water (leftover water from cooking rice) and a malt mixture.

David Quale, another Eugene follower of Anandamurti, was in India in 1974 and was one of the few foreigners able to visit Anandamurti.

Quale recalls that the jail was similar to conditions found in Mexican jails, noting that he saw a cell half the size of the EMU ballroom containing an estimated 500 prisoners. Anandamurti, however, was jailed in a small, solitary cell.

"He was bedridden," Quale remembers, "but he didn't look that bad. He was sort of happy and joking."

AM devotees renewed their hope that their spiritual leader might be released when a new government gained control following Indira Gandhi's loss of office in 1977. In Bihar, on last July 4, after five years of trials and delays, Anandamurti was acquitted to the joy of his followers.

"We feel he is a really great human being because he inspired a lot of people to do a lot of work," Secrest said on hearing of Anandamurti's release.

Both Quale and Secrest believe their leader will visit the U.S., perhaps as soon as December, on a worldwide tour to visit his devotees.



Anandamurti

Courtesy photo

Atiyeh (Continued from Page 4)

have to deal with it. And, our past positions on tax issues will be very important.

Although voters would consider his position on the tax issue political doubletalk, Atiyeh said that he won't make up his mind until all the information on the issue has been presented and evaluated. Atiyeh and his staff are studying the measure and his position will be announced later in the campaign.

How much later will be determined by the answers he gets to a list of questions he has presented to the measure's supporters and opponents, he said.

"I'm really very favorable about coming down on the side in favor of the measure, but there are still questions about it that I need answered," he said. "My heart is there but I'm not going to be swayed by anything but the facts on this matter."

On other campaign issues, Atiyeh said he still believes the death penalty is a "deterrent to the crime of murder" and he will support the measure to reinstate it.

The measure to end funding for state administered abortions has good intentions, but doesn't go far enough, Atiyeh said. "I do not support the measure because what it should have gotten at was the law allowing unrestricted abortions."

Tax Revolt (Continued from Page 8)

"What they have done is they have taken away my children's and their children's chance to own a home in this state," Govett says.

But, for all the trouble Proposition 13 is causing, it may have some redeeming qualities. The idea of wanting taxes cut is good, but not the best, he says.

"This thing is good in a sense, but we think that they've just got the cart before the horse," Govett

says. "First they should get a limitation on federal and state income taxes. Then if they want a property tax limitation, fine."

The inability to reverse the law after it has been passed by such a small majority and the problems with multi-national corporation control over valuable land have put California in "a tail spin that it can't get out of," Govett says.

Oregon, Michigan and several other states that face a battle over tax limitation clones of Proposition

13 will probably go the way of California, he says. Which will be the first step back to the European Middle Ages.

"It's (the tax revolt) not coming from the people who are tired of taxes," Govett says. "My god, we're all tired of taxes, but it's when we begin to sell out to that European philosophy (that the peasantry is ruled by a divinely-appointed monarch) that we begin to hurt ourselves and destroy what our nation stands for."

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