

Mexico's have converted. Fifty million souls in all. A case of gringo cultural imperialism? Apparently not. While missionaries from the United States have helped spread the faith, Martin says, Protestantism has gone native.

What is the attraction? The converts, mostly poor people, leave behind "a Catholicism reduced to one or two external markers, to godparenthood and the fiesta," Martin writes. They join churches which offer "participation, a healing of body and

soul, and a network of mutual support. What they demand is discipleship and discipline, at work, in the family, and in the church."

Just as the rise of Protestantism in Europe after the 16th century fostered the personal discipline and attitudes that launched the industrial revolution, as Max Weber wrote in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1904-5), so, in Martin's view, the evangelical revolution bids fair to transform Latin America.

## Gorbachev's Ethnic Surprise

"Ethnic Politics in the USSR" by Paul Goble, in *Problems of Communism* (July-August 1989) U.S. Information Agency, 301 4th St. S.W., Washington, D.C. 20547.

Mikhail Gorbachev must dread reading *Pravda*. Each day brings fresh news of ethnic unrest in his country, whether it be Baltic states demanding their independence or Armenians and Azerbaijanis clashing over the Nagorno-Karabakh region. Is the Soviet Union disintegrating? Have Gorbachev's policies of *perestroika* and *glasnost* opened a Pandora's box of turmoil that ultimately will topple him as party leader?

Gorbachev clearly was caught off guard by the level of unrest. As Goble, a State Department analyst, points out "Gorbachev had little experience or expertise on nationality questions before coming to power" in 1986. Now that the lid is off, Goble thinks Gorbachev can avoid disaster, and he may be able to use the troubles to advance his own agenda of loosening Party control over Soviet society.

More than 100 separate ethnic groups—ranging from the vast Ukrainian community of more than 50 million down to the Small Peoples of the North (26 micro-nationalities each numbering fewer than 2,000)—are clamoring for a say in what happens in their respective homelands. The party chiefs in the 15 republics for the first time are having to listen to the voices of their people or risk being rendered ineffective. A telling example: When outspoken Dinmukhammad Kunayev was replaced as Kazakhstan's party chief by

Russian-born Gennadiy Kolbin in 1986, the appointment sparked mass demonstrations. But Kolbin himself was soon forced to become "more Kazakh than his Kazakh predecessor," amplifying the crowds' demands for more regional autonomy. Gorbachev has found himself bound by his own democratic style to permit such adaptability to ethnic demands.

Three of Gorbachev's policies have contributed to the growing dissent in the republics. First, *glasnost* revealed past sins of Kremlin leaders. As Goble says, "collectivization looks very different in Ukraine and Kazakhstan—where millions died as a direct result of it—than in Moscow, where Russian workers were guaranteed some food." Second, Gorbachev's call for mass participation in national politics has raised expectations of a larger role for the republics. At the same time, his plan to reduce some republic ministries has prompted a scramble among party chiefs to protect their own turf.

Ironically, the mass demonstrations have created two misconceptions in the West. Goble asserts that they are often the sign of a group's last-ditch desperation, not its power. What occurs behind the scenes is still what matters most. And although Moscow has seemed to let unrest get out of hand—albeit repressing it brutally at times, as in Azerbaijan—Gorbachev may be using the demonstrations to force the

Party to respond to citizens' complaints.

What lies ahead? Goble foresees "a period where there will be a series of ratchet-

like adjustments of freedom and repression, as both Moscow and the other actors feel the situation out."

### *You Say Tomato . . .*

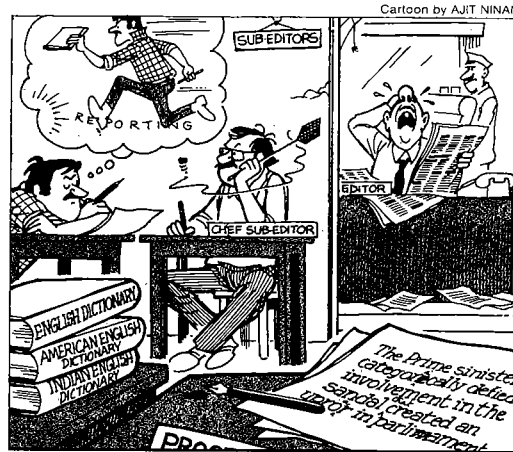
"Of Skylarks & Shirting" by Sarvepalli Gopal, in *Encounter* (July-Aug. 1989), 44 Great Windmill St., London W1V 7PA, Great Britain.

In 1937, the Malagasy poet Jean Joseph Rabearivelo killed himself in despair over his inability to reconcile his nationalism with his need to write in French. The reaction was extreme, but similar to that suffered by people in many colonial lands, writes Gopal, a historian at Nehru Collège. India has been an exception.

The use of English has caused Indians no great discomfort in part because the elite has always spoken a second tongue—first Sanskrit, later Persian, then English. After the British withdrawal from India in 1947, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru bore English no special malice but expected it to die a natural death. After all, Gopal observes, it was a language of "sceptered isles and country churchyards" which touched little in the Indian soul. So in 1950, Nehru supported a constitutional provision which called for phasing out English as the nation's official language by 1965 and replacing it with Hindi, the native tongue in much of northern India.

But it turned out that Hindi replaced English only as the nemesis of non-Hindi speakers in southern India, and actually stirred more political protest. Recognizing the threat posed to national unity, and the fact that Hindi "was neither graceful, artistic, nor generally understood," Nehru declared in 1959 that *no* single language would be imposed.

The result has been an expansion of English, writes Gopal. Some 35 million Indians (four percent of the population) speak and write it; India is also the world's third largest producer of books in English. English remains the language of the Indian Establishment, "the unavoidable avenue to status and wealth," and the only language spoken by members of the elite everywhere in the country.



Three kinds of English, *India Today* noted recently, often add up to bad English.

One reason, says Gopal, is that after independence, English "began to sink roots into the upper layers of the Indian soil." Increasingly, the subcontinent's English-speakers have made the language their own. Men carry "bucks" or "chips" (rupees) in their wallets; sneakers, called "plimsolls" in Britain, are called "fleetfoots" in India. "Plenty of Indian writers of talent and passion find English a language in which they can deal adequately with the special realities of their country," says Gopal.

He believes that Nehru was right to let events shape themselves. Now that language has been depoliticized, radio and television are spreading all of India's languages. He expects that English will remain the language of the growing middle class, but will gradually give way to regional tongues as the language of Indian politics. The media, Gopal says, "are achieving imperceptibly what governments and politicians have struggled in vain to do."