

GBC REPORT PAPER ON COLUMBIA, S.A.

Dear GBC Godbrother,

Please accept our humble obeisances. All glories to Srila Prabhupada.

This letter is the report, based on the findings of a GBC committee, which went to Columbia, South America April 26, 1984.

As you will remember, the GBC, at the annual meeting in Mayapur this year, granted Alanatha Swami's request that he work with a different GBC member in Columbia. Srila Jayapataka Swami, was assigned to be the GBC there and at least on the managerial level, it appeared that Alanatha Swami was satisfied with this, and that he was prepared to go back to Columbia and work according to the ISKCON and GBC guidelines. But shortly after the Mayapur meeting, and especially after a visit to Columbia by Srila Pancadrapida Swami, reports circulated of a disturbing defection from ISKCON by Alanatha Swami. It was reported that Alanatha Swami was denouncing all connection with ISKCON and refusing to accept any GBC authority, and that he was convincing the devotees in the Columbia Temple to leave ISKCON along with him and to claim that the properties, the temple etc., were now their own outside of ISKCON jurisdiction. There was also a report that Alanatha Swami and the devotees in Columbia were now going to take direction from Sridhara Maharaja of Navadvipa, and that this was also the preaching work of Bhaktibharata Maharaja (Prabhupada's initiated disciple Vyenkata dasa) who had been preaching in Columbia for the month of March, during the time of the GBC meetings. It was in order to investigate these reports and to try to take remedial action, that a GBC committee was formed by GBC Chairman Srila Jayapataka Swami.

Through a series of phone calls between Alanatha Swami and other devotees in America, it was understood that Alanatha Swami was willing to talk to different selected GBC members whom he was inviting to come to the Columbia temple. He had mentioned Atreya Rsi, Tamal Krsna Goswami, Satsvarupa Goswami, and others. Attempts were made to organize a party but Atreya Rsi prabhu as well as Tamal Krsna Goswami and others were not available. Satsvarupa Goswami agreed to go, and it was decided that Jayapataka Swami would also go along with Radha Krsna Swami and Prahladananda Swami.

On the afternoon of April 26th, the party flew from Miami to Bogota. They were met at the airport by Alanatha Swami and some of his leading followers, including Mrgesa Swami. Alanatha Swami was in a very angry mood, especially on seeing Jayapataka Swami. Alanatha Swami said that none of the visitors was welcome to Columbia, and that they would not be allowed to come to the temple and neither did he want to speak with any of them.

The members of the GBC committee were shocked to hear this, since they had come down to Colombia with the understanding that Alanatha Swami had invited them to talk with them. Alanatha Swami said that he did not like the lineup of persons who had come down, and he considered it a GBC trick. He then began to speak in an angry way about his rejection of the GBC and ISKCON and brought many allegations and accusations about the GBCs, gurus and ISKCON leadership. He announced his allegiance with Sridhara Maharaja, and his firm decision, along with his followers, to leave ISKCON and take the temple and devotees with him. He said there was no question of discussing anything except one issue, namely, whether there would be peaceful co-existence between his group in Colombia, and the group which was remaining faithful to ISKCON in Colombia, under the direction of Pancadrapida Maharaja. Alanatha then left the GBC party at the airport to fend for themselves.

A great deal of background information about Alanatha Swami's phone discussions, previous papers, behaviour in Mayapur and many other matters can be delved into, but we shall confine ourselves in this paper to a brief report. As you all know, these feelings of Alanatha Swami had been building up for at least the last six months, and they were manifested in recent papers which he sent to GBC members. His criticism of GBC and ISKCON gurus, and his threats to leaving ISKCON were already spoken by him, although it had appeared that these threats

were pacified at Mayapur by his own decision to work with a new GBC man.

Through the findings of this GBC committee, we can understand that ISKCON in Colombia was particularly vulnerable to this unprecedented defection by the ISKCON members there, as engineered by Alanatha Swami. One factor in the vulnerability was the unfortunate but very serious illness of Hridayananda Goswami Acaryadeva, which prevented him from any frequent visits to Colombia in the last two years. Another factor in the vulnerability there was the letter sent by Pancadravida Swami Tridandipada, in which he said that he should not be worshipped on the vyasanana any more by his disciples. This caused confusion in his disciples, and was aggravated by Alanatha Swami. Pancadravida Swami's continued conflict with Alanatha Swami also made for vulnerable situation. Rumors about misbehaviour of Jagajivana Goswami also widely known in Colombia, did not help the matter. Also the lack of any managerial depth through absence of any secondary managers who were knowledgeable and loyal to Srila Prabhupada's movement, proved advantageous to Alanatha Swami's attempt to take over. Overall the credibility of the ISKCON GBC and ISKCON leadership was weak in the minds of the devotees there.

The influence by followers of Sridhara Maharaja has also been a major cause here. Reports are that Alanatha personally invited Vyenkata (Bhakti bharati Maharaj) to visit Colombia. Vyenkata preached to the ISKCON devotees in Colombia blaspheming ISKCON's leadership, system and philosophy, preaching about the advisability of their taking shelter of Sridhara Maharaja. Some loyal Srila Prabhupada's devotees sent Mrghesh Swami to ask Vyenkata Das to leave the temple, but instead Mrghesh Swami was converted to become a Sridhara Maharaja follower. Thereafter the majority followed his example.

Alanatha Swami had dispatched a telegram from India to Colombia informing of the GBC decision and requested them to cooperate with ISKCON, but when Alanatha returned from the Mayapur festival and found that the disciples of Acaryadeva and Tridandipada as well as the new devotees were already determined towards aligning themselves with Sridhara Maharaja, Alanatha Maharaj followed this up with his own actions. He advised the disciples to leave ISKCON with him, and to continue operations independently, while taking shelter of Srila Sridhara Maharaja, and installing Sridhara Maharaj's picture alongside the picture of Prabhupada on Srila Prabhupada's Vyasaana and on the altar. This was despite a letter from Aksayananda Swami (in response to letters sent to Sridhar Swami by Jayapataka Swami and Hridayananda Swami) quoting Sridhar Swami who said that he considered placing his picture in the ISKCON temple an aggressive action which should not be taken by his followers against ISKCON in Colombia. Different GBCs, sannyasis and leaders sent appeals for Alanatha to reconsider, but Alanatha Swami rejected appeals from all sides and wanted unconditional surrender by ISKCON to all his demands.

Alanatha Swami's letters were filled with offensive and blasphemous references to ISKCON and GBC members, and we don't think it is necessary to quote their contents here. Anyway, he has intentions to send out one of his recent papers to all ISKCON temples, in hopes of getting more sympathy for his action. He feels that he has been mistreated by his GBC authorities and that in general, on a very wide scale, the ISKCON and GBC leadership is corrupt and should be abandoned. Alanatha Swami may have some honest complaints, but he has now snapped into an irrational, completely negative attitude towards Prabhupada's movement, and seems unable to see the reality of the bright side, and the many wonderful devotees and projects which were flourishing in ISKCON. As Jayapataka Swami expressed in a letter to Alanatha Swami, Alanatha Swami now sees only bad and more bad. He sees bad things that are not actually facts, and he sees bad things to be much worse than they actually are; but he does not see anything good or spiritual. You all can read these things for yourself in his recent letter.

PRESENT OPTIONS AND ACTIONS

Regarding the ISKCON property now in the possession of Alanatha Swami, we requested that even if he were to leave ISKCON the property should

be handed over as it is in the society's name. However, Alanatha had his followers elected as the legal controllers of the property, and they say they have no intention of giving it up. Nor have they expressed willingness to even give up the name of ISKCON. They also have a book debt to the BBT, Spanish division, of almost \$40,000 and there's no hope of their repaying this unless there is a miraculous change of heart.

Alanatha Swami is very desirous that ISKCON not take any aggressive action against him, and yet he has not conceded on any of the important points, which would even constitute a clean break-away from ISKCON on his part. He has convinced the disciples of Srila Tridandipada and Srila Acaryadeva, that they should not follow their guru's instructions, but should follow his own instructions, as he is their 'siksha guru'. When the GBC committee asked that they be allowed to speak to these disciples to insure that they were being given free choice to stay with Alanatha Swami or to go with ISKCON, Alanatha Swami replied that he himself would give them that choice by informing them that if they like they could go with Tridandipada. But obviously, Alanatha Swami's presentation to them is that they should reject Tridandipada and Acaryadeva, and so far that is what they are doing.

There are however about 25 or 30 devotees in Colombia who are faithful to ISKCON. They are maintaining the temple in the city of Cali and a preaching center in Medellin. According to Srila Acaryadeva, these men are actually the best devotees in Colombia. Some 60 devotees are staying at present with Alanatha Swami. ISKCON's present strategy in Colombia is that Pancadrapada Swami Tridandipada will visit there regularly and encourage the loyal ISKCON devotees to continue the maintenance and preaching of the ISKCON program there. Jayapataka Swami will also visit there briefly during his South American tours to lend spiritual support. It is hoped that on a long range basis our movement will sustain itself, being empowered by the parampara from Srila Prabhupada, and that gradually we will recover our losses.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. We recommend that the GBC members take seriously this anti-ISKCON preaching of renegade followers of Sridhar Maharaja, and alert their zones and leaders about it. Although Sridhara Maharaja of Navadvipa publicly advised his followers not to take aggressive action, they have spear-headed the aggression against ISKCON in Colombia, encouraging Alanatha Swami along with disciples of ISKCON gurus to break from ISKCON and the GBC. In other parts of the world reports of aggression are also being heard. It seems that since they have not been successful in getting many new recruits that they have adopted the tactic in some places of destroying the faith of ISKCON members who are isolated or in a weakened condition. Once these devotees are alienated from Srila Prabhupada's movement Sridhara Maharaj is promoted. Even in India which has so many religious groups this type of purposeful aggression is practically unheard of. All precautions and steps should be taken to protect the spiritual lives of ISKCON devotees from this type of aggression, which is coming from bitter devotees who have left ISKCON.
2. It was discovered that anti-ISKCON preaching was being done by Alanatha for some period of time. The mass exodus of 50-60 devotees would not have been possible had immediate action been taken in the beginning of his blasphemy campaign to undermine the faith of the devotees in ISKCON leadership. If he had been stopped at that time he would have not been able to leave with so many persons. Therefore, wherever this kind of anti-ISKCON preaching spirit exists in the world, even if it is on a small scale, it should not be allowed to spread, as it had proven to be of an insidious intent, aimed at the takeover of temples and devotees.
3. The GBC should also give special response to the South and Latin America, which are more vulnerable to anti-ISKCON propaganda. If possible, regional secretaries and leading devotees from other parts of the world should try to visit South America to protect our interests there. Visits by GBC and sannyasis to integrate the Latin American

