

Prof. Prodyut Das writes on

Riddle of the RFI



Symptoms of an ancient malaise?

They play 'Abide with me' at the end of *Beating of the Retreat Ceremony* on 28th January, every year at Vijay Chowk in New Delhi. It was Gandhiji's favourite hymn but truth to tell, I do not care much for Victorian Hymns. The words and the music are all right I suppose and in this case there was a tinge of tragedy : Lyte was dying of tuberculosis when he wrote it, but generally, being on the native and therefore, receiving side of *Pax Victoriana*, the humbug, hypocrisy and self righteous sanctimony of that era spoils the flavours for me. My remembrance of 'Abide with me' comes from my recollection, perhaps faulty, of the phrase "the encircling gloom" which is a pretty accurate summing up of the present situation vis-a-vis the MMRCA and the LCA and the morass that passes for a process of building up of our air strength.

The RFI

My gloom was not lightened when a friend sent me a copy of the recent RFI issued by



Vayu Bhawan for some 110 new fighters for the IAF. Seventy three pages long it seems to be an amalgam of pilot's notes, vague questions and a lack of connectedness. Coming from one of the innovative and

experienced Air Forces in the world, this does not impress.

First is the style. Clearly some of the questions are mere "padding" The location of a parking brake or the resistance of some