

### Little forgiveness likely for Rushdie

SIR — Your excellent leader (Dec. 27) rightly makes the point that Salman Rushdie's surprise Christmas Eve declaration will probably do him more harm than good among his supporters — and do him no good among his enemies.

For 22 months Rushdie slipped from safe house to safe house before coming to realise that unless he did something he would remain forever in hiding.

Declaring "I want to reclaim my life," he began testing the waters, going on television and popping up in book stores.

Rushdie clearly believes that his new book, a children's tale entitled *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*, rendered the Ayatollah Khomeini's edict obsolete. Calling *The Satanic Verses* "an old book . . . a finished story to an extent," he appealed for the "putting of a full stop" to the debate.

He maintained that some Muslim leaders were coming around to his point of view that "misunderstanding has arisen, a mistake was made" when he engaged in the dialogues which led to the signing of his declaration on December 24.

But this is all wishful thinking. Far from being forgotten, *The Satanic Verses* remains a vibrant cause among Rushdie's enemies.

The present leader of Iran has rejected his efforts, and the 15th Khordad Foundation has formally renewed its 1989 offer of \$1 million to any non-Iranian who murders Rushdie.

Rushdie's declaration that he did not intend to attack Islam and his promise to suppress any paperback edition may appease some Muslims. But those who were willing to meet him were not the fundamentalists who threaten his life. Nothing Rushdie says or does will change their minds. The threat against him remains permanent.

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