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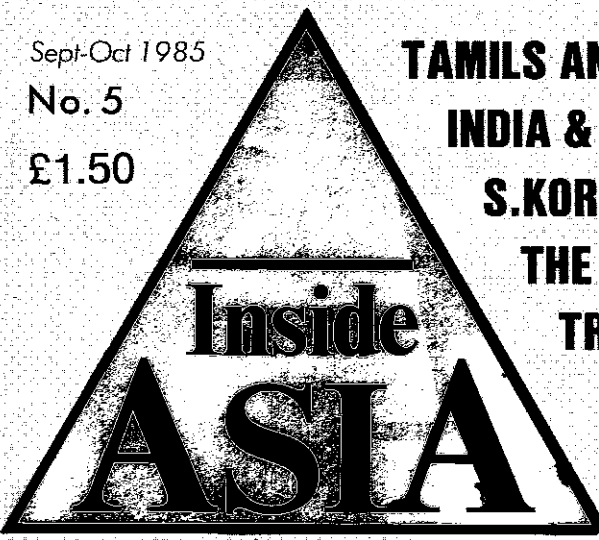
**TAMILS AND SRI LANKA**

**INDIA & THE SUPERPOWERS**

**S.KOREA REACHES FOR FREEDOM**

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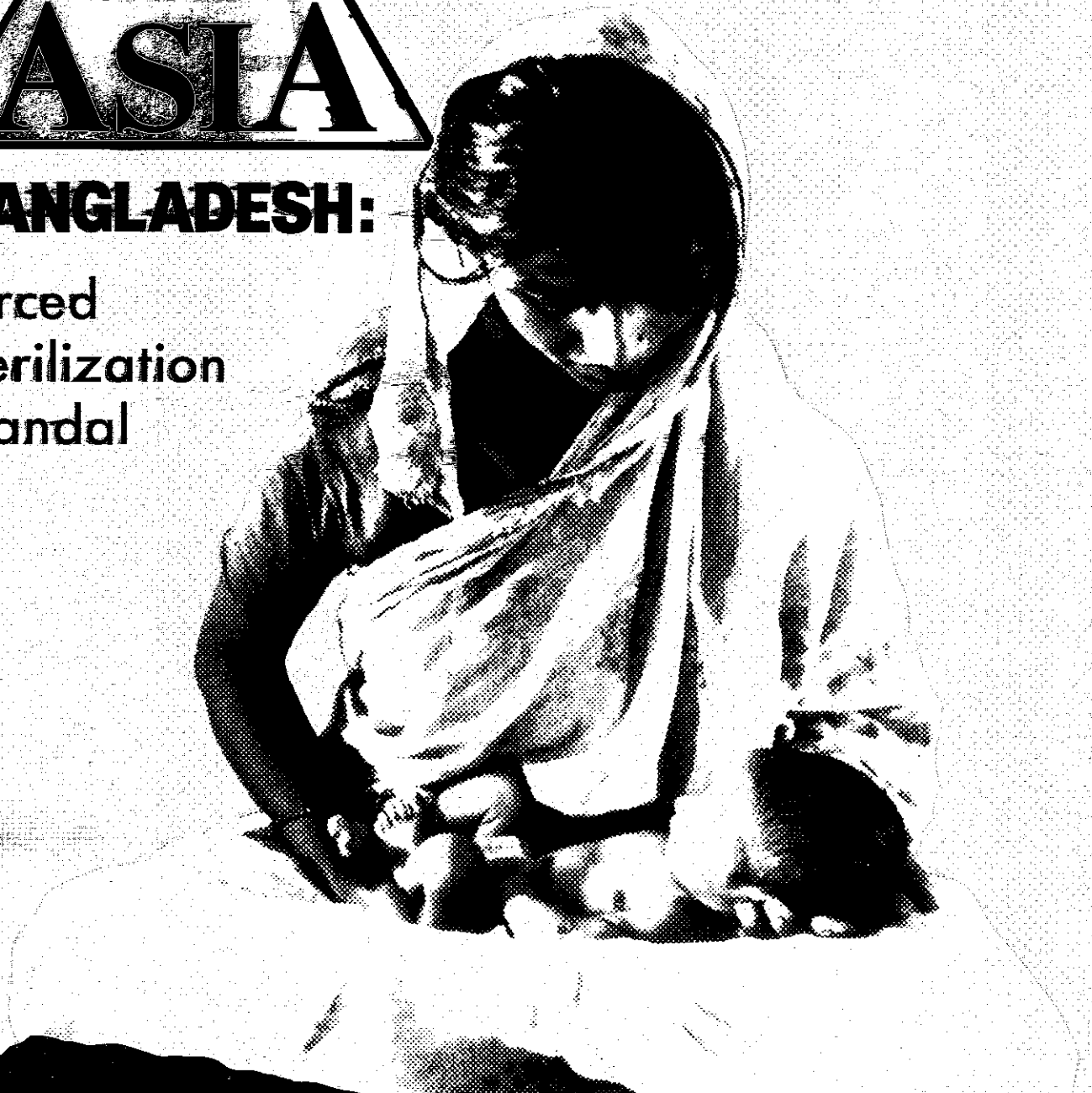


Inside

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# For a nuclear-free Asia-Pacific

**T**HE ATOMIC BOMBS on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in early August forty years ago brought an end to the war in South East and East Asia. They also ended the Japanese occupation of the region and an empire that had extended from Manchuria in the north to Papua New Guinea and the Pacific islands in the south.

From the Western, military point of view the bombs were the culmination of an existing fire bombing campaign which, since the spring of 1945 had unleashed immense horror on Japanese cities, similar to that inflicted on Dresden and other German towns. In a single night in March 1945, over 130,000 people in Tokyo were killed by the fire bombing, a similar number as were killed outright by the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima.

In retrospect it would appear that the Japanese were already on the brink of surrendering; one reason for the American use of the atomic bombs was to bring that surrender forward and physically to occupy Japan before the Soviet Union could do so. A second purpose clearly was to test the destructive capacity of this new, hitherto untried weapon; a third was to make a spectacle to the world of the Japanese surrender. A stark reminder to the world of what the bomb achieved is the existence of the *hibakusha*, survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki who still suffer from the effects of radiation and whose children as well are victims of the after-effects.

The slaughter in Hiroshima and Nagasaki was less the final act of the Pacific War than the beginning of the Cold War in Asia. Throughout the forty years of the ensuing arms race, the bomb has cast an ominous shadow. On several occasions, during the Korean War and again over Vietnam, use of the bomb was seriously considered. As relations between the superpowers oscillated between détente and fridity during the 1960s and 1970s, the arms race escalated. Nuclear weapons were increasingly stockpiled, their refinement in terms of range and accuracy was immensely improved, and their power boosted to the point where most of those who survived a nuclear exchange could well die in the subsequent postulated 'nuclear winter'.

While the Soviet Union and the United States are the major offenders, there are countries in Asia — India, China and quite possibly Pakistan—who have developed nuclear weapons, and others, such as South Korea and the Philippines, who have encouraged their proliferation in the region by harbouring them on their territories. All the while France, which

never signed either the Test Ban Treaty or the Non-Proliferation Treaty, has continued unashamedly to use the Pacific to test its nuclear bombs above ground.

Things are changing, however, in Asia. Growing voices are being raised against this nuclear folly. One such voice is from the Japanese peace movement that has, from first-hand experience, a commitment and international outlook that is to be commended. But there are other examples: the struggle, against American wishes, of Belau in Micronesia for a nuclear-free constitution; the efforts in New Zealand of the Prime Minister, David Lange, who claims the support of two-thirds of the country for his government's non-nuclear policy; and the increasing support for the new Nuclear Disarmament Party in Australia, where earlier this year it was revealed that the government had given secret permission to the US to test its MX missiles on Australian soil, a promise which in the ensuing protests had to be revoked.

It is above all the continuing French tests at the Mururoa Atoll which have aroused the fury of many countries of the Pacific and provided a rallying point for peace movements in the region. The apparent involvement, at a high level, of the French secret service in the sinking of the Greenpeace protest ship can only have raised their determination even more. Besides France, the US has used Kwajalein Atoll since 1960 for its tests, and is intent on testing the MX missile in the region, and the Soviet Union tests its own missiles using the Kamchatka peninsula as target area (though frequently overshooting and landing in the Pacific). China conducts tests from its centre in Gansu province, sending inter-continental ballistic missiles into the Pacific; in 1982 it delivered a submarine-launched missile into the East China Sea between Taiwan and Okinawa, while later tests have landed as far south as Kiribati. There is little wonder that resentment against such tests is rising in the region.

The moves for a nuclear-free zone in the Pacific, led by New Zealand and supported by other states, are by far the most important developments so far. Despite bullying by the United States, the New Zealand government has steadfastly stood its ground. This important lead should be vigorously supported and extended to the creation of nuclear-free zones in East Asia and South Asia. The countries of Asia should take up New Zealand's example and begin the fight back against the nuclear colonization of the region.



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The forces of repression are challenged by Korea's veteran democratic politician, Kim Dae Jung.

## SHOWDOWN IN S. KOREA?

# Towards a Sixth Republic

Developments in South Korea have adopted a new significance with the talk of possible reunification. **Gavan McCormack** examines the underlying political trends and concludes that US influence is paramount in determining the country's future political solutions.

**1985** IS A YEAR heavy with anniversaries in Korea: 75 years since the country's long unbroken history of national independence was broken and Japanese colonial control established; forty years since the bitter summer of 1945 when independence from the Japanese was accompanied by division into American and Soviet spheres; thirty-five years since the outbreak of the fratricidal war which was turned by UN intervention into a holocaust taking three million lives; twenty-five years since the uprising by students in the South led to overthrow of the dictator Syngman Rhee; twenty years since the 'normalization' of relations between South Korea and Japan; and five years since the present ruler, Chun Doo Hwan, drowned the nascent democratic movement in a bloodbath on his way to power. Loss of national autonomy, loss of

national unity, war, repeated setbacks in the struggle for democracy, continuing foreign interventions—the great economic gains of recent years make so much more bitter the failure on these other, crucial fronts.

The return of veteran politician Kim Dae Jung to Seoul in February 1985 and the rapid sequence of changes in the political landscape that it accompanied (and partly caused) is an indication *either* that a time of historical reckoning is approaching *or else* that another reversal is at hand.

### Outstanding politician

By any reckoning Kim Dae Jung is one of the outstanding democratic politicians of the late twentieth century. During a presidential election campaign in 1971 he survived several assassination attempts and against all odds was

defeated by a hair's breadth. The government then declared martial law and a new constitution—there has been no presidential election since—and, when Kim extended his campaign to the United States and Japan, government agents were despatched, in August 1983, to abduct him from his Tokyo hotel room. Were it not for an interruption they would have dropped him in the sea. Back in Seoul, along with the best and most courageous of his country's poets, priests, professors, workers and students, he spent most of the rest of the decade in prison or under house arrest. After the death of Park Chung Hee he was released in early 1980, but when he seemed on the point of winning a new (projected) presidential election the army stepped in to re-arrest him. He was tried for treason and, in a farcical court martial, sentenced to death. After a brief burst of outrage around the world the sentence was commuted to twenty years, of which he served three and was then allowed to leave 'for medical treatment' in the United States. The circumstances of his return show that after fifteen years of repression,

imprisonment, torture and attempts to kill him, he is still his country's most respected and charismatic son.

The reason that Kim is less than a household name in the Western world is simple enough. His struggle for democracy against his country's generals and bureaucrats—and their foreign sponsors—is identical in substance to that of 'Solidarity' and Lech Walesa in Poland, but while 'democracy' in Poland is considered something to be applauded, since it might help to weaken or embarrass the Soviet Union, it is regarded as intolerable in South Korea, where it might weaken or embarrass the United States. South Korea's assigned role within the 'free world', like Poland's within the counterpart system, is that of 'security state', base and buffer. It is its geographical location that accounts for the peculiarly intense and intractable character of Korea's problems.

Since the US-created Republic of Korea was established in 1948 there have been five 'republics' in South Korea, the transition between them regularly marked by mass struggle in the streets, military coups, or both. In 1960 Syngman Rhee was overthrown by a student-led mass movement; in 1961 Park Chung Hee spearheaded a military coup; in 1972 Park initiated a new constitution which, among other things, made him effectively life ruler; in 1979 Park's security chief assassinated him, inaugurating the brief 'democratic spring' of 1980; and in 1980 General Chun and his associates moved to forestall the 'threat' of democracy. The question now is whether the civilian democratic forces, reunited around Kim Dae Jung since his return and mobilizing for another bid for power, will be able to escape the fate of their historical antecedents of 1960-61 and 1979-80.

### US intervention

The obstacles are formidable. It is hard to see why South Korea should prove any exception to the general historical rule that those who hold power do not give it up unless compelled to do so by superior (and not merely moral) force. In Korea power is firmly in the hands of the military, and the Korean military, under the command of a US general, is in an important sense a branch of the US forces. The US position was made quite clear in 1980, when the US commander had no hesitation in releasing forces from his command in order to crush the popular rising at Kwangju. So long as South Korea continues to occupy the crucial frontier that it does in the Cold War, in close proximity to China, the Soviet Union and, of course, North Korea, and facing Japan across a narrow sea, and so long as it continues to sustain the sixth or seventh largest armed forces in the world (the seventh or sixth largest, depending on whose figures you believe, are those of North Korea) and to 'host' a substantial US nuclear arsenal, the US position is unlikely to change: South Korean democracy—a free press, free universities and



General Chun, dictator since 1980.

free political parties—might weaken the system, and so General Chun, or any other general, is to be preferred to Kim Dae Jung, or any other democrat.

There is no doubt that the military, created and nurtured by the US, remains the key institution in South Korea, with 600,000 regular troops, nearly three million reserves, about 35% of the budget, and six to seven million ex-officers and soldiers seeded throughout the society, controlling everything from the higher reaches of national government and industry to local village government. Military credibility, though, was damaged in 1980, perhaps irrevocably, when army units blooded in Vietnam turned their guns on their own people at Kwangju, massacring hundreds, possibly thousands, in a Vietnam-style dawn assault. Since then General (President) Chun's justification of South Korea in terms of its value to the defence of Japan and the United States has exposed the fundamentally craven, even mercenary character that belies the pretence of nationalism, while the US adoption of a strategy of horizontal escalation—'retaliation' in (North) Korea (or Cuba, or Libya) for a 'Soviet' advance in the Middle East or elsewhere—indicates that a concern for 'security' within the narrow confines of the Korean peninsula is meaningless when plans conceived in Washington reduce the whole peninsula to the status of a nuclear pawn, to be sacrificed if necessary in order to gain appropriate advantage elsewhere.

### Growing opposition

But, if the military bloc and its US backing seems unshakeable, the popular bloc too, since Kwangju, has gained unprecedented strength. Industrialization, for all its negative attributes of exploitation and dependency, has wrought profound changes, and the base of the democratic movement has been extended from intellectuals, religious people, and

students, deep into the new working class. The results of the February 1985 elections show this clearly.

The constitution of the 'Fifth Republic' is one designed to concentrate and preserve political power in executive (military) hands within a formally democratic parliamentary structure. The government party—the Democratic Justice Party (DJP)—employs all the perks of power and office, and all the circuits controlled by the military, police, and local administrations, to achieve the desired electoral results. Initially, an opposition was simply created by Chun Doo Hwan who, having dissolved the existing political parties, created new ones and chose their leaders (as well as creating his own government party). Just 26 days before the February 1985 election, however, a new party, the New Korea Democratic Party, was licensed and this immediately developed into a broad political opposition front. With both its acknowledged leaders (Kim Dae Jung and Kim Young Sam) under house arrest, and with few resources and against all odds, it swept South Korea's major cities and won just under 30% of the national vote, as against 35.2% for Chun's DJP. Because of the peculiar electoral system, which awards substantial extra seats to the majority party, the DJP's margin in seats was much greater: the DJP's 35% of the vote gave it 54% of the seats (or 148 seats), while the NKDP's 30% gave it only 24% or 67 seats, in a 276-seat assembly. However, defections from other minority parties immediately after the election were such that by April the NKDP's ranks had swollen to 106 seats.

### Showdown likely

This is not the tame opposition that Chun had planned for. Its demands—including an end to press censorship, removal of police spies from university campuses, direct election of the next president, and reinstatement of Kim Dae Jung—make it clear that the stage, now cleared of supporting actors, is once again set for a frontal clash between Chun and Kim. It seems beyond hope that Kim's moral strength, popular support, and growing tactical skill will be enough to gain him dominance over the US-backed military-bureaucratic bloc; yet the alternative is a renewed showdown, most likely greater in scale even than Kwangju. Another episode in Korea's long and tragic modern history looms. The United States is directly involved as the creator of the South Korean military and, in particular, as Chun's sponsor; and, via nuclear weapons and the alliances through which Korea is locked into the structures of the Cold War, so is the rest of the world.

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The Shan United Army, one of the many insurgent armies dependent on income from opium.

BRIAN EADS; CAMERA PRESS

## BURMA'S SHAN REBEL GROUPS

# Politics of opium

Burma's Shan state produces 80% of the opium grown in the Golden Triangle. It is also home to a greater variety of insurgent armies than anywhere else on earth. **Martin Smith** investigates the politics of opium and uncovers a morass of constantly shifting and, at times, unlikely alliances.

**A**CROSS THE FORESTED mountains of the Golden Triangle as the first rains begin, hill tribe farmers are busily trading the last of this year's opium harvest. Estimates of the crop vary, as they do every year, from between 300 and 800 tons, but as every year the simple truth is that nobody really knows. The opium poppy is notoriously susceptible to vagaries in the weather. But in Thailand where the crop is most strictly monitored, narcotics police are predicting a bumper harvest for the fourth successive year.

In Thailand itself the annual opium crop has been reduced with the aid of various UN-sponsored crop substitution programmes from a peak of over 140 tons twenty years ago to an estimated 35 tons today. Although it is on Thailand that most international attention focuses as the region's major transhipment point for narcotics, it is across the Burmese

border, and in the rugged Shan State in particular, that an estimated 80% of the opium crop is grown today.

### Wild and lawless

Shan State is a wild and lawless place. A vast highland plateau, the size of England and Wales and divided by deep mountains and precipitous rivers, it plays host to a greater variety of insurgent armies than perhaps any other place on earth. In British days it remained in a state of chronic underdevelopment, administered separately by over thirty 'sawbwa' or princely families, each with their own fiefdom. Only at independence in 1948 were these merged and incorporated as a federal state into the new Union of Burma, but with the unusual right of secession after a ten-year trial period granted in the constitution as a concession to nationalist sentiment.

However, from the outset, unity amongst the various indigenous races proved elusive. Shortly after independence a rebellion broke out amongst Pao hill tribe farmers in the west of the state. But more seriously tense relations between the majority Shans and the largely Burman government in Rangoon deteriorated considerably in the early 1950s when several thousand Guomindang (KMT) remnants from China blundered into the state bringing in their wake the first Burmese troops, whose record of behaviour often proved little better. It was the CIA-backed KMT with their vital overseas connections who first elevated the opium trade to its international proportions and who also showed the growing number of young Shan separatists the potential for armed rebellion.

It was to head off this movement that Burma's present military ruler, General Ne Win, already faced with serious Karen and Communist Party insurgencies, seized power in 1962. However this only served to fuel the rebellion further. Within a few years armed uprisings, often based on old feudal or territorial loyalties, had broken out across the state. The rebellion soon spread to the minority hill tribe groups who make up a third of the state's estimated six million population.

## Separatist forces

Today there are no less than three major Shan separatist forces: the Shan State Army (SSA), politically the most influential but much reduced after a series of assassinations and factional splits; the well armed and disciplined Shan United Army (SUA) of the 'opium warlord' Khun Sa, which draws much of its popular support from Khun Sa's home district of Loi Maw; and the Tai Revolutionary Army, formed last year by veteran Shan nationalist leader and one-time communist, Kwon Jerng, alias Mo Heing, from an alliance of SSA defectors and the now defunct Shan United Revolutionary Army. SURA itself had for many years been closely allied with SUA's bitter rivals in the opium trade, the KMT, who still play a pivotal rôle in the cross border traffic.

However the combined forces of these three probably do not equal either of the two strongest forces in the state—the 10,000 strong 'People's Army' of the Communist Party of Burma (CPB) which built up a large 'liberated zone' along the Chinese border in the north in the 1970s (which includes the prize poppy fields of the Kokang and Wa substates) and the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) whose main force is based in the Kachin State to the north but whose powerful 4th Brigade operates amongst the Kachin villages to the south.

To complicate matters even further there are several Lahu, Wa, Palaung, Kayan (Pa-daung) and Pao hill tribe forces, each several hundred strong and themselves split into left and right factions.

All the insurgent groups profess political objectives to varying degrees but for most survival depends on the ability to raise arms, either through seizures or purchases on the blackmarket. Although some do have their own sources of income (for the KIA it is jade, for the CPB, China) in this impoverished backwater opium is the only lucrative cash crop. As the late General Tuan Shi-wen of the KMT 5th Army once explained to the *Sunday Telegraph*, 'To fight you must have an army, and an army must have guns and to buy guns you must have money. In these mountains the only money is opium.'

## Revenue from opium

Perhaps only the SUA of Khun Sa, who on his own admittance has handled up to 250 tons of opium a year, is totally dependent on the opium trade, but most raise at least some revenue through it, either through taxes on the farmers or levies on the convoys which pass through their territory, or even on occasion running convoys themselves. In their defence they argue that on their own, and without the sort of aid given to neighbouring Thailand, they simply do not have the means to introduce substitute crops.

The Burmese government for its part claims last year to have seized over 4,000



*Alternatives to opium are not yet commercially viable.*

kilos of opium and 62.17 kilos of heroin. But many observers, denied access to the state by the Rangoon government, are sceptical. Certainly the government's own accounts of military operations against rebel groups involved in the opium trade, especially the SUA, suggest a lack of commitment. In this year's anti-narcotics offensive of February and March, the Burmese army claims to have killed twenty insurgents for the loss of two Government troops, figures which indicate a level of fighting far below current operations against Karen and Kachin insurgent forces elsewhere in Burma.

It appears that the Burmese government, faced with such diverse insurgencies, has little interest in moving against the opium trade, not least because trafficking in opium tends to obscure the political aspirations of the rebels from the outside world. Moreover, the anti-narcotics fight can be a useful source of aid and support. As a popular saying in the state goes, 'Everybody knows opium is good. It's good for the people and it's good for the government. When there's a good crop the farmer can buy a car and if it's really good the government can get a helicopter.' Of 18 Bell helicopters donated to the Burmese government by the USA under an anti-narcotics programme at least two have been shot down by Karen insurgents in the south of Burma who adamantly renounce any involvement in the opium trade.

## Offer rejected

In recent years only one serious attempt has been made in the west to investigate the narcotics situation inside Shan State. In 1973, in an offer repeated in 1975, an alliance of

Shan rebels, led by the Shan State Army but including key rebel leaders such as Khun Sa and Lo Hsing-han, proposed to sell the entire opium crop of some 400 tons passing through their hands to the US government for approximately \$20 million, a fraction of the amount the US was then spending annually on anti-narcotics programmes. It was an offer several congressmen took very seriously and led to several meetings with Shan leaders and a series of Congressional hearings filmed by British film-maker Adrian Cowell in his remarkable documentary trilogy on the opium trade.

Eventually President Carter turned the offer down. To have accepted would have meant virtual recognition of the minorities' political goals, though many analysts were rather more sceptical about the enforcement of such a deal. A similar pre-emptive purchase from the KMT on the Thai border in 1972 ended in farce when, after the US government had contributed \$1 million for the public destruction of the KMT's opium stockpile of 26 tons, a 27th ton suddenly became available in return for more funds.

## New developments

Although many observers have long seen the situation inside Shan State as one of unending chaos there are signs that a series of developments over the last three years, while symptomatic of the general confusion, could well break this deadlock. The initiatives for this come from across the Burmese border from China, where aid has been steadily reduced to the Communist Party of Burma and relations with the Burmese government increasingly normalized, and perhaps more impor-



tantly from Thailand where the government has traditionally tolerated the activities of the various insurgent groups on its borders.

The two groups most heavily involved in the narcotics trade, Khun Sa's SUA and the KMT, have long been regarded as anti-communist buffers in an area of rural communist insurgency. However, with the rapid decline of the Communist Party of Thailand in the last few years and the growing involvement of the Communist Party of Burma in the opium trade since the reduction in Chinese aid, this rôle has been increasingly called into question. With the CPB controlling the best poppy fields and the SUA convoys the major traffickers in the state, the conclusion that they have come to some kind of deal is inescapable. American pressure on the Thais to act was considerable.

It was against the SUA that the Thai government first moved, seizing their stronghold at Ban Hin Taek on the Thai side of the border in January 1982 after a fierce battle. Then last June the government turned against the KMT. The remaining border militia were ordered to disarm, take out new identity cards and send their children to Thai schools. To back this up raids were carried out on KMT villages in which several KMT troops were killed.

At first the new Thai policy appeared only to inflame the situation. Far from finishing the SUA as many analysts had predicted the loss of their Thai sanctuary prompted SUA commanders into urgent action. New recruits were enlisted as they began rapidly to expand their territory in the south of the state, largely at the expense of the Shan State Army and various hill tribe forces along the border. With the capture of a Pao base at Mae Aw in March 1984, most of the Shan-Thai border with the exception of a narrow enclave controlled by the Tai Revolutionary Army was in SUA hands. A battle between the two appeared only a matter of time. As the TRA's 'Foreign Secretary', Khern Sai, remarked ominously at the time, 'We are fighting a different kind of war now, a war of nerves.'

### Shan front

In one of the dramatic changes of alliance which make Shan politics so baffling to outsiders, a new Shan front, the United Shan State's Patriotic Council (USSPC) was suddenly announced on 7 April this year. Formed from a coalition of the SUA, TRA and southern SSA it marks the first time since the Shan rebellion began that all the Shan groups on the Thai border have been in alliance. As yet military details of the new formation have not been disclosed but it is open to all groups in Shan State who support a three-point platform; anti-the governing Burma Socialist Programme Party, anti-Communist Party of Burma and most significantly anti-narcotics.

Of Khun Sa no mention has been made but the TRA's President Kwon Jerng has been elected 'Prime Minister' of the new council,

renewing speculation about the health of the 52 year-old Khun Sa. In January the Bangkok press gave front page coverage to one report of his death, but although Khun Sa is known to be suffering from diabetes, such stories are almost certainly premature.

However the new alliance cannot be dismissed completely. A number of leading Shan political figures are behind it, such as the TRA's secretary-general, Chao Norfah, himself a minority Palaung and the son of one of the Shan hereditary *sawbwas*, and Khwan Mong, a one-time high-ranking left-wing officer in the Shan State Army who was a regular visitor to China in the 1970s. They have been holding meetings with many of the Shan leaders past and present over a two year period. Uppermost is the realization that without outside support, and in particular from Thailand, the Shan rebellion could soon be finished. As a TRA policy statement warned in January, 'The drugs problem isn't a drugs problem but a political question. It can be settled only politically, only by the Shan people and the political organization which speaks for them. In the past, however, the Shans have not been able to take up this responsibility. But if they do not today, they'll perish once and for all.'

As the first step in the new Council's anti-narcotics programme a survey is being undertaken of the total opium trade in Shan State before possible methods of crop substitution are considered. This process is strikingly reminiscent of the lead-up to the 1973 proposals to the US government. Whether they will be any more successful this time is unlikely but the intention no doubt is to gain more favourable recognition for the Shan cause. As the TRA statement asked, 'Why are the Afghans and the Pakistanis not annihilated but aided with every possible means?'

In the short term more crucial for the success of the USSPC is how far the other non-communist minority forces can be encouraged to join this alliance. In principle many of the minorities welcome this development. As Aung Kham Hti, President of the Pao National Army which has clashed with all the Shan groups in the past explained, 'Our attitude has been from the very beginning we need the kind of front that can represent the whole of Shan State, including all the minority peoples. Our problem in Shan politics has been that if you ally with one side the other two will attack you. But if they can unify into one alliance we can cooperate with them very easily.'

### Unity still elusive

However despite these sentiments the initial response of other minorities has not been good. In mid-April, Pao, Wa and KMT troops under the apparent direction of Karen officers from the pro-western National Democratic Front (NDF) fought a fierce five-day battle with the SUA near Mae Aw in which at least 150 troops from both sides were killed or wounded. The NDF alliance has long regarded

the activities of the SUA as a major impediment to getting outside help for their struggle and may well be using Khun Sa's present difficulties as an opportunity to regain lost territory.

Moreover the TRA's long-time allies in the KMT appear unlikely to join the new alliance despite several entreaties from the TRA. Indeed last year the SUA and KMT continued their long rivalry which appears to have reached a new pitch of hostility. On 11 March the SUA is believed to have been behind the bombing of KMT leader General Lee Wen-Huan's Chiang Mai residence and KMT elements are largely seen as responsible for the murders of three of Khun Sa's key men, including his nephew, in northern Thailand between last November and January this year.

There has been no official reaction from the Thai government to date. In private many Thai army officers are sympathetic to the struggle of their Shan ethnic cousins but currently the priority in Bangkok is undoubtedly to clear any group involved in opium trafficking or heroin refining from the Thai side of the border. Last November Thai troops clashed several times with SUA troops apparently trying to infiltrate into northern Mae Hong Son province and in March Thai Rangers launched a savage and largely unexplained attack on the KMT village at Pieng Luang which left over thirty villagers dead.

In the battle inside Shan State in April Thai officers appear to have been supporting the hill tribe NDF troops. After the battle NDF commanders handed over a large quantity of opium captured from the SUA to Thai officers at the border. But whether the Thai government will continue with this hard-line attitude is rather doubtful. It will not have been forgotten that it was the outright American rejection of the 1973 and 1975 proposals which pushed many insurgents into the communist camp.

But whatever the political outcome, few observers seriously expect any dramatic change in opium production. The three cornerstones of the trade, hill tribe farmers who grow it, the rebel groups who transport and refine it, and the Chiu Chau syndicates who export it, will remain largely unaffected. Indeed by January prices on the border had dropped as low as 2,000 Baht (£60) for a *joï* (1.6 kilos) of opium and 12,000 baht (£360) for a kilo of heroin. There is already ample evidence to suggest that traffickers have any variety of well-oiled smuggling routes and have stockpiled supplies for any contingency. Indeed when prices last sky-rocketed—as they did in 1979 and 1980—the answer was much more straightforward—two successive years of drought.

*Martin Smith is a freelance journalist who has specialized in Burmese affairs and has spent considerable time in the region.*



Gandhi, Gorbachev: USSR will be India's No. 1 trade partner.

TASS—CAMERA PRESS

## INDIA & THE SUPERPOWERS

# A fine balance

Rajiv Gandhi has adopted an aggressively non-aligned stance. Breaking the pro-Soviet mould inherited from his mother, he has been quick to warm to the US. Dilip Hiro examines India's relations with the superpowers, suggesting that only minor realignments are likely in the near future.

**M**OSCOW IN MAY, Washington in June. If this is a dramatic way of demonstrating one's non-alignment with the superpowers, then the Indian prime minister, Rajiv Gandhi, opted for it.

In each of the superpower capitals, however, the agenda and the priorities were different. In the absence of any diplomatic conflict between India and the Soviet Union, Rajiv Gandhi and Mikhail Gorbachev concentrated on strengthening economic links while their defence ministers engaged in 'a very fruitful exchange' on cooperation in the weapons production field.

It was a different tale in Washington. Here Gandhi brought up the subjects of American relations with Pakistan, the blue-eyed boy of the Reagan administration; keeping the Indian Ocean free from superpower rivalry; the lowering of American tariffs for Indian imports; and the securing of concessional loans from the World Bank's soft loan affiliate. The

American response varied from non-committal to negative.

When Gandhi stated that the US was not doing enough to dissuade Pakistani president, Mohammed Zia-ul-Haq, from pursuing his military nuclear ambitions, the Indian prime minister was urged by American leaders to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

The Indians pointed out that the heavy tanks and 155mm howitzers supplied by Washington to Islamabad, as part of the \$3,200 million arms deal of 1981, are suitable for plains warfare along the Indo-Pakistan border and not in the mountainous terrain of the Afghan-Pakistani border. They are still upset about the Pentagon's sale of 40 F-16 fighter bombers to Pakistan, and fear that if the current negotiations about the E2 'Hawkeye' AWACS system, with a radar range of 640 km, are successful, the sale will make the Pakistani air force superior to their own.

Washington's response was that the Pentagon would be willing to sell sophisticated weapons to India. But for this to happen the US administration has to liberalize the strict clauses that govern such transactions. There is no sign as yet that it is about to do so.

### Wider dimension

There is another, wider dimension to this conflict between Delhi and Washington. For the past many years India has observed with rising disquiet and frustration an escalating militarization of the Indian Ocean by the superpowers, initiated by America. The US has dramatically built up its naval strength in the Indian Ocean, with the Diego Garcia atoll as its main base 1,600 km from India's southern-most point.

Remembering Washington's despatch of one of its aircraft carriers from the Pacific to the Bay of Bengal during the Indo-Pakistan war of 1971, the Indians fear that the next time around the US will intervene on Pakistan's side with its forces in Diego Garcia and the American battle carriers stationed in the Arabian Sea around the Hormuz Straits.

That such fears are not idle was impressed on Delhi by the statement made by Deane Hinton, US ambassador to Pakistan, on 10 October 1984: 'If the contingency you're talking about is from the east (ie, India), then we will not be neutral if there is an act, committed by anybody, of flagrant aggression. There are all kinds of things we can and would do'.

### Opposition to foreign bases

Finally, there is the issue of foreign bases in south Asia. As a leading non-aligned nation India is opposed to the idea of any of its neighbours leasing 'strategic bases' to either superpower. This suits the Soviet Union which has not shown any interest in acquiring bases in this region—but not the US.

Having signed a military pact with Pakistan in 1954, the US began using Pakistani airbases for the flights of its U-2 spy planes over the Soviet Union. Over the past few years the Pakistani port of Gwadar has been built up as a base for the US Rapid Deployment Force. In addition the Pentagon has naval facilities at Trincomalee in northeast Sri Lanka. Rajiv Gandhi has voiced disapproval of Sri Lanka's close relations with the US, and is opposed to Sri Lanka offering 'strategic bases' to America.

As the largest, most populous, and strongest country in south Asia, India feels that it is the natural leader of the region. While the Soviets have not challenged this view, the Americans have never taken it seriously. Having drawn Pakistan into a military pact in the mid-1950s, the US has steadily converted it into a client state, and integrated it into its strategic defence plans for the Middle East. Following the defeat of the left-of-centre government of Srimao Bandaranaike in 1977 the US has gradually brought Sri Lanka under its wings, and is actively working towards

same aim in Bangladesh.

### Military cooperation

In contrast there has been no clash of political interests between Delhi and Moscow. In fact on the issue of Kashmir—a bone of contention between India and Pakistan—the Soviets have backed Delhi by repeatedly vetoing pro-Pakistani UN Security Council resolutions.

Delhi and Moscow formalized their cordial relations in August 1971 by signing a 20-year Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation. 'Each of the High Contracting Parties' declared it will maintain 'regular contacts with each other on major international problems affecting their interests', and 'it shall not enter into or participate in any military alliance directed against the other party'. Furthermore, in the event of either party being subjected to 'an attack or a threat thereof, the High Contracting Parties shall immediately enter into mutual consultations to ensure peace and the security of their countries'.

When India attacked the then East Pakistan in December 1971 to help Bengali nationalists to found an independent state of Bangladesh, the Soviet Union supported India all the way through the two-week long war.

Military cooperation between Delhi and Moscow began in the mid-1950s when, following its failure to secure production licences for advanced weapons from Western arms manufacturers, India made a successful approach to the Kremlin. Since then defence production ties between the two countries have grown stronger as India has tried to outdo Pakistan's acquisition of sophisticated weapons from America. Today India manufactures MiG-19s and MiG-21s, and is about to commence producing MiG-23s.

Last year the Soviets tried to discourage India from diversifying its fighter aircraft procurement by offering it highly attractive terms. For instance, it sold a MiG-27 jet at about a quarter of the price of the comparable French Mirage 2000. What is more, the Kremlin contracted to let India manufacture not only the MiG-27 but also its successors: MiG-29 and MiG-31.

In recent talks between the defence officials of the two countries, the Kremlin was ready to supply the Indian army and navy with all-weather tanks, a land-to-sea missile system, a radar system covering the Indian coastline, and nuclear submarines (along with the technology).

During his visit to the Indian port of Visakhapatnam in March 1984, Marshal Ustinov, the Soviet defence minister, made a highly significant statement: 'In the conditions of the present complex situation, including the one in the area of the Indian Ocean, it is important that the armies and the servicemen of both (our) countries increase their combat readiness in order to be able, in the event of necessity, to give a resolute rebuff to any schemes of an aggressor', he said.

All this corroborates the belief of many

US officials and legislators that India has been according preferential treatment to the Soviet navy in its ports. India has neither confirmed nor denied such reports.

### Traumatic experience

Following Delhi's decision last year to diversify the procurement of advanced weapons, India opened talks with the US regarding the purchase of certain arms. Nothing came of it because, to quote Rajiv Gandhi, 'the Americans put conditions that were just not acceptable to us'.

The Indians underwent a traumatic experience, during the Carter administration, of the American conditions in the case of fuel for the US-supplied nuclear power plant in Tarapore. US Congress opposed the sale of nuclear fuel because India is not a signatory to the Non-Proliferation Treaty. In the end a compromise was worked out; but Delhi is not prepared to undergo something similar ever again.

Yet the prospect of Washington selling weapons to Delhi is not dead altogether. During his recent visit to the Indian capital, Fred Ikle, US under-secretary for defence, discussed the possible sale of C-130 transport planes, anti-tank missiles and artillery.

But the Indians are more anxious to purchase advanced computers from America than weapons. Their request for 19 computers worth \$11 million was held up due to the Pentagon's objections voiced through Richard Perle. The Pentagon wanted watertight assurances that the computer knowhow would not find its way to the Soviets. To smooth the way for Rajiv Gandhi's visit to the US, President Reagan intervened. The computers in question have either been cleared or alternatives proposed to the Indians.

The timing of Gandhi's visit to America also accelerated the negotiations between the Indians and American officials to reach an agreement for implementing the memorandum of understanding, signed last November, on 'Indo-US High Technology Transfer'. The implementation agreement was signed in mid-May, and includes computers, microprocessors, lasers, semi-conductors and sensors. The Gandhi government believes that injecting high technology into the Indian economy will boost its growth rate.

### Economic liberalization

Washington is well pleased with the economic liberalization that Rajiv Gandhi has carried out since assuming office in November. His first budget, presented to parliament in March, was so favourable to large companies and the rich that a *Wall Street Journal* editorial on the subject was entitled: 'Rajiv Reagan's Budget'. The headline was apt. The budget curtailed poverty alleviation schemes and limited the increase in public sector outlays to 6.5% (compared to the previous rise of 30%), well below the inflation rate.

In interviews with *Times*, *Los Angeles*

*Times* and *Financial Times* Rajiv Gandhi has repeatedly welcomed the idea of foreign—meaning Western—investment in India. Ministries in Delhi have been prodding businessmen to come up with proposals for joint ventures. Foreign collaboration is nothing new in India. During 1956-65 there were 2,500 joint ventures; and the figure for 1975-84 was 9,000. The difference is not only in scale but also in kind. The earlier ventures were mainly in heavy and capital goods industries; now the stress is on consumer durables.

Such developments have not been frowned upon by Moscow. Firstly, the Kremlin is unable to offer high technology. Secondly, and more importantly, the Soviets have always followed a policy of aiding Third World countries to build up their infrastructure of roads, irrigation facilities and power plants—and basic and capital goods industries. They have stayed away from setting up soft drink factories or distilleries or washing machine plants.

### Agreements signed

Significantly, of the two agreements that Rajiv Gandhi signed during his Moscow visit, one was for Soviet credits of \$1,200 million at 2.5% interest, repayable over thirty years, for major mining and power projects. The other document was a 15-year Trade and Technical Cooperation Pact. The trade between the two countries has been rising sharply; at \$46,200 million this year it is 20% higher than last year. It will make the Soviet Union India's number one trading partner, a position now occupied by the US.

Delhi's economic links with the superpowers fit into the Indian economy very well. For India has a mixed economy, basically developing along capitalist lines. As Indira Gandhi pointed out in an interview with the *US News & World Report* in February 1982: 'All agriculture is private, and all small industry and a considerable part of medium and large industry.' The goods and services produced in the public sector account for only 15% of the Gross Domestic Product.

All of the Soviet aid has gone into developing and expanding the public sector which extends into both civilian and military fields. Most of the American aid has been channelled into increasing production in agriculture, which is in the private sector.

India has been able to do the fine-tuning of the aid, financial and technical, from the superpowers without compromising its sovereignty. This is due to its physical size, strategic location, the magnitude of its population and thus of its local market, and the quality of its top political leaders and planners. All these factors give India a place in the non-aligned world which many Third World countries envy.

*Dilip Hiro is a freelance journalist and writer; he is author of Inside India Today.*



For the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, the only road left is armed struggle.

## TAMILS' STRUGGLE IN SRI LANKA

# The roads to Eelam

The recent resurgence of violence against the Tamils in Sri Lanka has shocked world opinion and highlighted the deep social divisions in the island. **Victor Karunan** describes the historical background to the present situation and assesses the chances of a Tamil Eelam state being established.

**T**HE HISTORY OF TAMIL ethnic consciousness in Sri Lanka has been marked by a significant shift—especially in the post-1976 period—from Tamil ethnicity to a social consciousness geared towards 'national liberation'. Ethnic (minority) consciousness has often asserted itself in response to a dominant ruling class that belongs to another ethnic (majority) community. The social consciousness of the dominant community incorporates itself in the powers of the state and its ideological institutions, resulting in the subjugated minority struggling for 'self-determination' and 'national liberation'.

During the British colonial period, 1815-1948, three main social formations

prevailed in Ceylon: the Kandyan highlands, the maritime provinces, and the northern peninsula. By 1840 the British had inserted a 'plantation economy' in the Kandyan highlands with migrant labour from South India. British rule brought all this under one administrative control and so recruited a class of 'mediators'—both Sinhalese and Tamil—to liaise between British colonialism and the ordinary people.

Historically, the Jaffna Peninsula had been known for its crops: rice, tobacco, chillies, and also salt, meat and milk products. During the Dutch and the British periods, these crops provided the necessary commodities for the island. However, re-investment in these

areas was lacking and, in fact, deliberately neglected by government, especially after independence. The meagre availability of infrastructural facilities and the few industries in the Jaffna peninsula are therefore a result of historical factors, and not merely explained in terms of the unproductiveness and barren nature of the land in this region.

The Tamil areas were, however, attractive to missionaries. Increasing educational opportunities and knowledge of English resulted in Tamils being recruited into the British administration. The social origins of the 'Colombo Tamils' can be traced back to this group of educated and élite Tamils of the high 'vallala' caste in the Jaffna peninsula. The 'Colombo Tamils' were to take the place beside their English-educated Sinhalese counterparts in their common quest for political office.

The religious riots of 1915 (Sinhalese-Muslim), coupled with a railway strike, were basically an abortive 'bourgeois national revolution'. Although this was an expression of resistance to foreign domination by bo-



For thousands of Tamil refugees, Tamil Nadu in S. India offers escape from Sinhalese violence.

the Sinhalese and the Tamils and showed signs of the two bourgeois interests merging in opposition to British rule, it failed to materialize primarily because of the contradictions of colonialism itself: 'the bourgeoisie that colonial capitalism created had vision of neither nation nor class.' Hence, bourgeois interests among the Sinhalese and Tamils resorted to building up their respective communal bases to assert their identity *vis-à-vis* British colonialism and each other. The formation of the Sinhala Maha Sabha by S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike in 1937 and the Tamil Congress by G.G. Poonambalam are clear indications of this. Besides, the possibility of a secular working class movement was also offset by the Sinhalese directing their attacks against the Indian estate Tamils during this period. In retrospect, both communities resorted to asserting their ethnic identities before independence in 1948.

### Tamil suspicions

At the time of independence Sri Lanka was a country with a dominant Sinhalese population that expressed itself in communal terms in the ruling United National Party (UNP); a minority Tamil population resenting its lack of representation in the UNP government and suddenly deprived of British patronage; a million or so (Indian) plantation Tamils who were about to be disenfranchised and declared 'citizenless'; and a minority of other communities all apprehensive of their own identity in the now independent Ceylon.

A series of pieces of legislation aroused Tamil suspicions and set the stage for the crystallization of Tamil ethnic consciousness. The chief laws included: the Ceylon Citizenship Act, 1948, which disenfranchised the one million plantation Tamils; the Ceylon Parliamentary Elections Amendment Act, 1949, which deprived them of the right to vote; and the Sinhala-Only Act of 1956 which made Sinhala the official language.

With a section of the Tamil leadership under G.G. Poonambalam capitulating to the UNP government, the Tamils turned to the newly-formed Federal Party (FP) led by Chelvanagayam to voice their sentiments. The resolution adopted by the FP at its National Convention in 1956 voiced the grievances of the Tamil minority: the need for a democratic constitution based on the federal principle and the establishment of one or more Tamil linguistic states; the restoration of the Tamil language as an official language of the country together with Sinhala; repeal of the citizenship laws; and immediate cessation of colonization of the traditional Tamil-speaking areas with Sinhalese people.

The FP resorted to 'non-violent satyagrahas' campaigns to press these demands. The first-ever military occupation of Tamil areas in the north and the north-east took place in June 1961 in response to these *satyagrahas*. Tamil regions were cut off from the rest of the country, and the Tamil resistance found its geopolitical base in the north and the north-east of the country. The

United Front government (a coalition of the SLFP, LSSP and CP) further aggravated this situation by introducing a new constitution which registered Sri Lanka as a Buddhist state with Sinhala as its official language. Moreover, it introduced the 'standardization scheme' in education which resulted in those sitting in the Sinhala medium needing fewer marks to get into university than those sitting in the Tamil medium. These developments destroyed all illusions the Tamil people had of equality with the Sinhalese and provided the basis for the separatist demand of 'Tamil Eelam'.

### Tamil Eelam

On 14 May 1972 the Federal Party, the Tamil Congress, the Ceylon Workers' Congress, the Eela Thammilar Otrumai Munnani and several Tamil youth and student organizations, formed the Tamil United Front (TUF). The TUF gained the Tamil people's mandate in the by-elections of January 1975 and voiced the call for separatism:

I wish to announce to my people and to the country that I consider the verdict at this election as a mandate that the Tamil Eelam nation should exercise the sovereignty already vested in the Tamil people and become free. On behalf of the Tamil United Front I give you my solemn assurance that we will carry out this mandate (Chelvanagayam).

The TUF was reconstituted as the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) in 1976 and

reaffirmed this demand.

While the TULF's call initially rallied together the youth and students, the post-1976 period saw the TULF preoccupied with constitutional politicking and unable to effectively resist the state repression of the Tamil population, especially the militant Tamil youth who took to 'direct action' to achieve a separate Tamil state. Increasing disillusionment with the TULF produced a radical shift in the Tamil liberation struggle: ideologically, from 'separatism' to 'liberation' and strategically, from the 'parliamentary path' to 'armed struggle'.

The period 1976-79 saw the emergence of numerous militant organizations of Tamil youth, all pledged to armed struggle to counter state repression, and in the process achieve a separate Tamil state. In June 1975 the Tamil Eelam Liberation Organization (TELO) was set up advocating direct action through armed struggle. In 1976 the Eelam Revolutionary Organization of Students (EROS) was set up in London with similar objectives. The next year, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) emerged, rallying together militant youth and students and issuing the call for armed struggle to achieve a 'socialist Tamil Eelam'. While the LTTE was gaining in popularity for its 'successful military actions', personality conflicts between its leader, Prabhakaran, and a close associate, Uma Maheshwaran, resulted in a major split, with the latter setting up the People's Liberation Organization of Tamileelam (PLOT) in 1977. Meanwhile, a major effort at unity was realized in 1980 when three groups came together to constitute a 'United Revolutionary Front' (URF): the Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF), TELO and EROS. With the LTTE proscribed by the government in 1979, the militant resistance of these political groups was effectively driven underground.

**Two definite strategies**

By 1978-79 two definite strategies to achieve 'Tamil Eelam' had emerged. The TULF was by now the main parliamentary opposition party seeking to establish 'Eelam' through parliamentary means and within the constitutional framework of the Sri Lankan state, while the LTTE and other militant groups gained increasing popularity for their aggressive programmes of action, seeking to establish 'Eelam' by weakening the Sri Lankan state from within, and ensuring social and political security for the Tamil people.

Variations in the political perspectives of Eelam and the strategies available to achieve this demand, have brought about conflicts and factionalism within the Tamil liberation movement. These political diversities are based on ideological perspectives and personal differences.

Yet it is clear that the broad masses of the Tamil people are determined to achieve 'Eelam'. What form of protracted struggle this



*Sri Lankan police.*

DON WOLLIN, CAMERA PRESS

would entail and what precisely the nature of the 'Tamil Eelam' should be, are questions that have not yet evoked a response from the Tamil people. The present stage of the struggle is inevitably oriented towards self-defence and counter-violence against the Sri Lankan military power in the Tamil areas.

The word 'Tigers' has now taken on a populist connotation in the Tamil regions of Sri Lanka. It has come to symbolize the armed resistance of the Tamil youth and political groups to establish 'Tamil Eelam'. For the majority Sinhalese people, however, 'Tigers' is the 'terrorism' of the Tamil people against the government and the Sinhalese, threatening to divide the country into two. The Sinhalese people see themselves as a 'minority', compared to the 'majority' Sri Lankan Tamils, and over fifty million Tamils in neighbouring Tamil Nadu in India. It is this suspicion on both sides that has now rendered the Sinhalese and Tamil communities into two irreconcilable groups in Sri Lanka.

There are two specific dimensions of the political perspectives of 'Tamil Eelam' that pose a problem for the Tamil liberation struggle. The first is the status and possible future within a separate Tamil Eelam of the (Indian) plantation Tamils and the minority community of Tamil Muslims, both antagonistic to the Sri Lankan state and the Sinhalese population. Secondly, how should the predominantly Sinhalese left parties, who have so far been preoccupied with parliamentary politics and who have failed to build up a militant working class movement in the

country, identify with or support the 'Tamil Eelam' cause? The political groups of the Tamil liberation struggle must be prepared to grapple with these issues.

**Shifts in direction**

The development of Tamil ethnic consciousness points to definite shifts in direction and strategy. The Tamil people, having asserted their identity as a minority community, assert a 'collective identity of Tamil nationalism'. This raises the urgent question of how far the ideology of Tamil nationalism indicates a revolutionary programme for a fundamental transformation of Sri Lankan society as a whole.

There are definite strengths and weaknesses of the Tamil liberation struggle that pose problems for the political groups in terms of a mobilization towards achieving a 'socialist Tamil Eelam'. Firstly, the historical economic boycott of the Tamil areas by the Sri Lankan government has left the Tamil people with a region of the country that remains too neglected in terms of infrastructure and industry to sustain any progressive economic development. The stunted process of capitalist development in these areas has left the Tamil people without the necessary preconditions for a revolutionary socialist transformation and a 'socialist Tamil Eelam'. Secondly, the leadership of the Tamil resistance is controlled by a group of militant Tamil youth and sections of the radical Tamil intelligentsia. While the TULF continues to cherish hopes of a negotiated settlement with the non-committed political backing of the Indian government, the potential leadership of the Tamil resistance continues to remain with the Tamil militants. However, any transformation of the present Tamil resistance into a more broad-based political movement would entail a radical change in the class nature of the leadership of the Tamil liberation struggle. This would itself imply a broadening of the social base of the movement and a transcending of the narrow 'ethnicity' and 'nationalism' that has so far been the motive force of the Tamil resistance in Sri Lanka.

*Victor Karunan is an activist and writer. This article is a shortened version of a report prepared for the Research Institute of Oppressed Peoples, Amsterdam.*

## EXECUTIONS IN INDONESIA

## Jakarta 'justice'

The recent execution of a leading trade unionist in Indonesia, after seventeen years' detention, has shocked the international community. **Elizabeth Marlow** examines the background to the case and suggests that a new dimension to military rule has been added.

ON 14 MAY the Indonesian military regime secretly and without warning executed Mohammad Munir, a leader of the SOBSI trade union federation linked to the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI). Though arrested in 1968, he was not brought to court until five years later. He was then tried under the 1963 Anti-Subversion Law (a draconian piece of legislation which makes virtually everything potentially 'subversive'), found guilty and sentenced to death. That was in April 1973. Since then he had been languishing in jail, failing at every level of appeal to have the death sentence commuted. Eventually he declined to reappeal, and a final appeal from his wife was also turned down. Then, suddenly, he was taken from his cell and shot.

On 19 July reports from reliable sources were received of the further executions, in East Java in early July, of Rustomo, Gatot Lestario and Djoko Untung, all prominent members of the Communist Party of East Java. There are some 45 other prisoners from the late 1960s still under sentence of death, and these recent executions have led to fears for their lives too, in particular for Ruslan Wijajasastra. Like many others their 'crimes' were to have been active in the PKI before 1965 (though it was then a legal organization, even including cabinet ministers), and attempting to revive the Party after it had been banned by the military.

It took the Indonesian government two weeks to confirm Munir's execution, and at the time of writing the execution of the others has still not been confirmed. However, news of them abroad, and fears that others were in imminent danger, spurred many outside Indonesia into lodging protests with the Indonesian government. Most significantly, two resolutions were passed in the European Parliament on 13 June condemning in the strongest terms Munir's execution. The timing of the resolutions could not have been more unfortunate for the Indonesian government, coming just before the arrival of an annual delegation to the European Parliament from the ASEAN parliaments, headed by Kharis Suhud, the deputy speaker of the Indonesian parliament.

## International outcry

The row in Europe led to an uncharacteristically angry and public response within Indonesia. Until recently the Indonesian govern-

ment had brazened out embarrassing issues—such as its continuing problems in pacifying East Timor—by saying that these are purely 'internal affairs'. This time, however, the daily newspapers were full of commentary on and attempted justifications for the execution.

Such unusual sensitivity to international criticism may be linked with President Suharto's widely-rumoured interest in the leadership of the non-aligned movement. Also, one of the European resolutions stated that the death sentences were imposed against Munir and others 'because of their political opposition to the military regime which came to power in Indonesia in 1965 by means of a violent coup', the accuracy of which turns the regime's version of the 1965 events on its head, and may be at the heart of Jakarta's discomfort. The executions of Munir, Gatot, Djoko and Rustomo, though, still remain to be explained, for it seems they were not the first to reach the end of the appeals procedures.

Of all the political prisoners of the late 1960s, several hundred are still being held. Many of them face severe problems in the 'judicial' process, being kept uninformed of the status of their appeals, not obtaining remission, or not even being released long after the due date.

## New scapegoats

It appears that a new generation of political detainees is being created, this time from among the Muslim opposition to the military regime. The scale of this crack-down is only just coming to light, with courts throughout Java and in Sumatra currently hearing cases against scores of such defendants.

As a result of these new show trials, reminiscent of those of the 1970s against the left, Imran and Salman Hafidz have already been executed. Azhar bin Mohammad Safar, Bambang Sispooyo, Abdullah bin Umar, and Timzar Zubil all await the firing squad. Others have received the full range of sentences; many more—probably several hundred—await their turn before the courts.

The crimes many of these Muslim prisoners are charged with are serious: hijacking a plane to Bangkok in March 1981, the murder of two men, and several bombing attacks including one on a bank owned by a leading Indonesian Chinese financier close to the President, and another on the Borobudur

temple, a major tourist attraction in Central Java. There are many, however, who see the hand of the military in these crimes, probably by infiltrating the Muslim opposition and acting as agents provocateurs.

Through these trials the regime appears anxious to prove that 'Muslim fanaticism' is about to terrorize the population. The public prosecutors, reported uncritically by the press, refer constantly to a 'Holy War Command' (*Komando Jihad*). There is no doubt that there are well-organized networks among the Muslim opposition. They have mobilized very large numbers among the disaffected population, with the most popular preachers speaking to crowds numbering tens of thousands at a time. However, not a shred of evidence has yet been produced by the government that a 'command'—a phrase with clear militaristic implications—actually exists.

## Political trials

These are political trials and not criminal ones. The Anti-Subversion Laws are again being used as the basis for prosecution. The judges are finding the accused guilty of trying to replace the state ideology of *Pancasila* being used as the basis for prosecution. The judges are finding the accused guilty of trying to replace the state ideology of *Pancasila* (Five Principles) with Islam, of arousing hatred against the government, and even of denouncing the official family planning programme. Others have been sent down merely for 'insulting the President', or for distributing leaflets and cassette recordings of speeches which challenge the army's account of events during the riot of 12 September 1984 at Tanjung Priok in north Jakarta, when the army fired on unarmed demonstrators, killing over sixty and seriously wounding over a hundred. Twenty-eight of the wounded were themselves charged with 'waging violent resistance', and sentenced to one to three years' imprisonment.

To the 'communist threat' of the past two decades has been added the 'Muslim threat'. The government's version is that it is trying to steer a course between 'left-wing extremism' and 'right-wing extremism'. But it is by these means that the Indonesian military attempts to justify continuing to impose its will.

October 1985 marks the twentieth anniversary of the military takeover in Indonesia, with General Suharto continuously in power since that time. Some, especially the Western governments, talk of this as twenty years of 'stability'. Others would argue that the political and humanitarian costs have been excessively high—and may yet soar even higher.

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# Links

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## DYING FOR PROFIT

### THE REAL CAUSES OF FAMINE IN AFRICA

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## ASEAN AND INDOCHINA

## Asian drama unfolds

Anti-colonial sentiment once linked the divergent nationalisms of South East Asia, but now the region is dominated by the hostility between Indochina and the ASEAN states. Above all, South East Asia has displayed a talent for confounding prophecy! Ben Kiernan examines the missed opportunities for regional cooperation, and dares to make a few prophecies of his own.

TEN YEARS ago few people would have predicted that such diverse countries as the Soviet Union, China and Papua New Guinea might have agreed on anything at all. Even fewer would have predicted that they would agree in supporting a New Zealand stand prohibiting visits by nuclear-armed ships, even allied ones, to New Zealand ports. This has provoked considerable US animosity, which in turn provoked Papua New Guinea's Foreign Minister to make the unprecedented remark that Washington was acting like 'a reckless bully'. Change can be dramatic indeed in a historically short period of time.

Likewise, however, few would have predicted in 1975 that the Indonesian Foreign Minister would ten years later be urging Washington to establish diplomatic relations with Hanoi as a means of countering Chinese pressure on Vietnam. Not many people would have thought in 1975 that American pique and bloody-mindedness would last a decade and that it would still in 1985 refuse to exchange embassies with its victim turned conqueror. Neither would many have expected Indonesian suspicions of China to so persist after the death of Mao and the subsequent revolutionary changes in Beijing, yet Jakarta declines even today to establish an embassy there. Continuity can also seem dramatic.

And who in 1975 would have believed that 1985 would see the apparently amazing thaw in Sino-Soviet relations, following the death of President Chernenko recently? The Chinese Vice-Premier even described the new Soviet leader as 'Comrade Gorbachev', the first time for many years that any contact has occurred between the two giant communist parties. Further, as another Chinese official pointed out: 'At first after the split we called them revisionist, then social-imperialists, and for the past few years we have called them a superpower.' 'A great socialist neighbour' was the term used by the leader of the Chinese delegation to Chernenko's funeral in Moscow, to describe the USSR a short time ago.

The past decade has also seen the demise of two major alliances in the region. In 1975 there was the collapse of the South East Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), and in 1985,

the ANZUS (Australia, New Zealand, and the United States) Treaty. The United States was the major power behind both alliances. And it now appears that the USA, as well as the countries of the region, will have to adapt to the medium-term entrenchment of Labour governments in both Canberra and Wellington, something not easily predictable in the wake of the anti-labour election debacles of 1975.

## Continuity and change

For South East Asia the most important issue of the past decade has been the Kampuchea conflict, a conflict which has given life itself to the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN)—or at least transformed it from a regional mailbox to a political bloc of world significance, with six members: Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand, the Philippines and Brunei. The Association of South East Asian Nations has developed in this way largely by means of repelling and isolating three other Southeast Asian nations: Vietnam, Laos and Kampuchea.

The Kampuchea issue symbolizes both

change and continuity. In the past decade Kampuchea has had three regimes, with two dramatic upheavals in 1975 and 1979. After the first communist 'liberation', the *Far Eastern Economic Review* published an analysis predicting that 'as in Laos, the Russians will move slowly into Cambodia at the heels of the Vietnamese' (7 May 1976). This in fact occurred only three years later and not slowly at all. An invasion had proved necessary to establish Vietnamese and Russian influence. Events in Kampuchea have confounded many analyses over the years and in this instance the author could not have been more inaccurate about the affiliations of the Kampuchean leadership in 1976. 'The hardliners and the pro-Hanoi faction have won the struggle' was not a good description of the consolidation of what became known as 'Democratic Kampuchea'. It was indeed a hard-line regime, but it also massacred 'pro-Hanoi' Khmers and launched murderous attacks on Vietnam, eventually provoking a Vietnamese invasion; only after that did the predicted Soviet foothold take shape.

More important continuities include the presence of Vietnamese troops in Kampuchea in 1985, just as Vietnamese forces (from both the northern and southern regimes) occupied Kampuchean territory in the early 1970s.

The rest of South East Asia, which escaped pulverization by the American military machine and has also managed so far to avoid communist revolutions, has seen over the past decade remarkable economic develop-



Ho Chi Minh—one of Asia's postwar anticolonial leaders, still revered today.

ment for some and disillusioning material pauperization for others. Political movements have risen and fallen in consequence.

**Political pluralism**

One of the most dynamic economies in the region is that of Thailand, which despite military rule has witnessed the most significant democratic advances—in particular, a reasonably free trade union movement and press despite the murders of 47 investigative journalists. It is also a country of widespread child labour, where health authorities are concerned about serious malnutrition among half the country's children, and only 30% of the population has a safe water supply.

After the 1976 military coup in Bangkok, the exodus of educated activists to the jungle looked set to make the underground Communist Party of Thailand (CPT) a real contender for power. Few would have predicted the extraordinary dogmatism of the pro-Chinese CPT leaders that sent most of the new recruits back to Bangkok in disgust by 1981, virtually eclipsing the CPT as a real political opposition. The Party remains outlawed, but, with the foiling of last year's push for increased powers on the part of the military, there are some grounds for optimism concerning social and political pluralism in Thailand.

The Philippines, home of Magsaysay, was once the showpiece democracy of South East Asia, and ten years ago, despite having come under martial law in 1972, its economic prospects looked extremely bright. It was one of Asia's Newly Industrializing Countries (NICs), a developmentalist concept that seems to have relegated to a political museum the older radical notion, dear to the former Indonesian President Sukarno, of the New Emerging Forces (NEFOs). But the Philippine economic bubble has burst, and political reasons seem to have contributed to the outcome: the Marcos regime appears to be increasingly repressive as it loses its grip on the social forces of the nation, while the 'pro-Chinese' Communist Party of the Philippines has demonstrated greater flexibility than its Thai counterpart.

The military's assassination in 1983 of the opposition leader Benigno Aquino, like the brutal military coup in Bangkok ten years earlier, was a political disaster for the government and a windfall for the communist movement. Unlike the CPT, the Philippine New People's Army (NPA) has doubled its force levels since 1981, and now boasts an army of 15,000 active in at least half the country's 73 provinces. Recently the two stalwarts of ASEAN governments, Suharto of Indonesia and Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore, expressed 'very great concern' to the Philippines government at the rising tide of NPA fortunes in one of the major countries of the region. And a prominent Filipino Cabinet Minister has concurred, noting that the insurgency is growing because its root causes are 'right here where we are'. 'The most visible expression



*The Communist Party of Thailand—got lost in the woods.*

of state power is perceived as being used against a helpless population; this only increases popular support for the NPA rebellion. According to human rights organizations more than 380 Filipino civilians were gunned down by government forces in 1984. As the head of the country's biggest mining company put it; the 'glaring reality' is that 'brutal repression, rampant corruption and lack of principle... have been the principal reasons for the alarming growth of the New People's Army in recent years.'

It seems that ten years after the Vietnam War ended, another Vietnam is brewing just across the South China Sea from the last one. One of those who, along with Suharto and Kuan Yew, expressed concern about the Philippines was Henry Kissinger. Further, Lee Kuan Yew, according to *Asiaweek*, invited Kissinger to a discussion in Singapore because he 'reckoned the American's views on Cambodia... would be useful'. And now the US Congress wants to provide military aid to Kampuchea's anti-communists, on the tenth anniversary of their defeat.

**Silence echoes**

1985 is also the tenth anniversary of the Indonesian invasion of East Timor, in December 1975. Since then almost one-fifth of the Timorese population has perished. Although the territory is much smaller, the death toll is proportionally similar to that under Pol Pot's regime (still recognized by Jakarta). Recently the leader of the majority Timorese Catholic faithful called on the outside world to help his country achieve self-determination. But few ears were listening, for Indonesia is one of the Western world's most important allies. Silence echoes around the ASEAN countries also; Malaysians who claim that the principle of non-intervention must be resolutely applied in the case of Kampuchea, in order to gain it international respect, have long forgotten that Kuala Lumpur always voted in

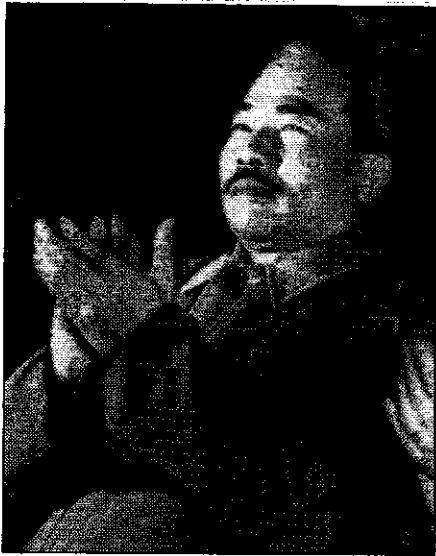
the United Nations in favour of Indonesia's forcible annexation of East Timor. There is still, in South East Asia, one law for friends and another for opponents. But this phenomenon is by no means limited to South East Asia.

**Regional co-operation**

On 7 January 1947, the American diplomatic representative in Thailand cabled his Secretary of State in Washington, informing him of a note that had recently come into his possession. It had been handed to his military attaché by a Lao prince, Souphanouvong (who became President in 1975). He had hoped the US government would pass the document on to the Secretary-General of the United Nations. The document was signed by the representatives of the Lao, Kampuchean (Khmer Issarak) and Vietnamese (Viet Minh) independence movements, then locked in a military struggle with French colonialism.

The summary provided by the US representative, Edwin Stanton, who thought that the document was a significant one, read:

Perhaps the two most significant features of the document are firstly, its advocacy of a United States or federation of the countries of South East Asia... and secondly that the memo is a joint document... Present hostilities between the Vietnamese and the French are likely to spread and... Free Laos and Free Cambodians may be expected at any time to join in attacks on the French, feeling that present developments furnish an opportunity of achieving their aspirations by force. The result therefore may well be that virtually all of Indochina will be engulfed in vengeful strife, which will further embitter relations between the native peoples of Indochina and the French and result in general chaos. It is also conceivable that neighbouring countries in South East Asia may become either directly or indirectly involved. It is certain that the sympathies of such neighbouring countries as Siam



*Souphanouvong of Laos.*

(Thailand), Burma, Malaya and Indonesia lie with the Vietnamese, Laotians and Cambodians. Serious and widespread conflagration in Indochina is therefore a matter which may very definitely affect the peace of South East Asia. In those circumstances it appears to me that the situation in Indochina is one which very definitely comes within the purview of the UN... It also raises the question of what if anything the US could do by way of offering its good offices to assist in preventing the spread of hostilities and in the working out of a just and equitable solution. It is therefore my earnest hope that the Department will give this whole problem its most careful consideration...

Washington declined to do so. The State Department's reply was: 'You should... return the document in question.' The US had taken its decision—a fateful one for South East Asia—to bankroll French colonialism in Indochina. Many of America's natural allies and many democratic politicians in South East Asia were thus left out in the cold, and others who had been amenable to good relations with the US, such as Ho Chi Minh and the Viet Minh, were forced to rely increasingly on Chinese aid. The tensions resulting from that process are still evident; in fact they fuel the region's major war.

Stanton also noted that Prince Souphanouvong hoped to be able to oust the French from Laos and place on the throne a nationalist, 'possibly Prince Phetsarath'. Now Prince Phetsarath—never a communist like Souphanouvong—has left his own record of these years, including some interesting remarks about the community of feeling that was abroad in South East Asia at the time. He says that, like Laos,

Vietnam, Cambodia, Burma and Indonesia were also thinking of national liberation... Since the national liberation movements of the five countries com-



*ASEAN foreign ministers: divided over how to face Vietnam.*

peted in the purchase of guns, [agreement was reached whereby] if any of the countries found weapons sources, they would be the sole buyers and others would not compete. When their needs were met, the other countries would buy. Countries without money would be helped [by the others].

All this was decided upon at 'a secret meeting of representatives of the five countries', according to Phetsarath.

And on the mainland at least, there was a 'South East Asian' flavour to the war against the French. Kampuchea (under Son Ngoc Thanh, later a US protégé) and Thailand (under Pridi Phanomyong, later a Chinese protégé) were among the first countries to establish diplomatic relations with the Vietnamese communist government after it was established in Hanoi by Ho Chi Minh on 2 September 1945. In 1946, Pridi secretly provided Ho with twenty tonnes of carbines which had been given to the Free Thai movement by the US government during World War Two. In the second half of 1947, French intelligence reported that combined Lao-Vietnamese units had established sanctuaries and bases in both of Kampuchea's north west provinces, where they were soon joined by 400 Thais, led by a suspected communist, who had fled their country after the November 1947 anti-Pridi military coup there.

### Political settlement

There is a good deal of irony in all this. Can the spirit of regional cooperation that developed in the first flush of anti-colonial awakening, ever be recovered now that the South East Asian countries are all free of Western dominance? Other post-colonial experiences suggest that it is unlikely. But one feature that distinguishes the currently deep regional divisions over Kampuchea from the conflict over Afghanistan, for instance, is that all sides are seriously talking. The obstacles to a settlement are not ones of principle, they

concern the terms. And there has been progress, at least among the South East Asian parties to the dispute.

Nearly all the factors mentioned that have marked the last decade of developments in South East Asia are capable of promoting a regional reconciliation that would guarantee settlement of the Kampuchea dispute. This does not mean a political settlement is inevitable or imminent. But each factor militates in favour of one. The Sino-Soviet thaw reduces China's interest in pursuing conflict with Vietnam, and at any rate the decline of the CPT reduces China's ability to influence Thailand by waving the CPT 'stick'. On the other hand the rise of the 'pro-Chinese' NPA in the Philippines is sufficient to strengthen the anti-Chinese concerns of Singapore and Indonesia, countries which do not recognize Beijing. The collapse of the American treaty relationships in the region reduces the US's ability to 'isolate Vietnam', while the rise of Labour governments in Australia and New Zealand, both with strong anti-Pol Pot records, strengthens the independence of mediating forces. And the strengthening of ASEAN as a bloc, even though it was occasioned by the conflict itself, will have the long term effect of enhancing a regional focus among its members, and so fostering reconciliation with Vietnam.

There are other, more immediate factors as well. These include Vietnam's propensity for making diplomatic concessions even while it is scoring military victories.

*Ben Kiernan is post-doctoral Fellow at the Centre for South East Asian Studies at Monash University, Melbourne. He has written extensively on Kampuchea and his latest book **How Pol Pot Came to Power (Verso)**, has just been published.*

### Note

1. See *Inside Asia* Nos. 2 and 3/4.



Even newly-annexed East Timor is to receive a quota of Javanese settlers.

## INDONESIA'S RESETTLEMENT SCHEME

# Settling for trouble

Indonesia's 'transmigration' programme has been described as the largest voluntary land settlement scheme in the world. But the people in the outer islands where the transmigrants will make their new lives are far from happy. **Robin Osborne** looks at what has become Indonesia's most controversial development policy.

**E**VEN IN THE DUTCH colonial period, Indonesia's most crowded island, Java, was seen as a population time bomb; so, early this century some 200,000 rural Javanese were moved westwards to Sumatra. This first wave of transmigration had an added advantage: the 'coolies' provided a cheap source of labour for the colonial plantations. It was felt that they were superior farmers to the local people and less likely to cause trouble. There are, no doubt, some parallels with Indonesia's rationale for contemporary transmigration.

The modern programme has larger targets and budgets than its colonial predecessor. Under Indonesia's current five year development plan, Repelita-IV (1984-89), transmigration of up to three and a half million people from Java (including Madura island) and Bali to the outer islands is planned. Sumatra is no longer the prime target area as it is felt migration there is likely to cause severe social fric-

tion. Already there have been protests from local farmers who resented the influx of Javanese in Lampung province, in south Sumatra. It is the less crowded provinces of Kalimantan (Indonesian Borneo) and Irian Jaya (West New Guinea) which have been earmarked to accept the major shares.

### Financial support

Up to 1989, some \$600 million of international funding has been made available to Indonesia for the programme. Among the major donors are the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the Islamic Development Bank, the BEC, the UN Development Programme, and several major western countries (including USA, France and West Germany). In addition, Indonesia will allocate significant proportions of its own budget towards the scheme. For example in 1978/79, transmigration expenditure in Sumatra represented 23%

of the central government's development allocation; in Kalimantan 34%; and in Sulawesi (formerly Celebes) 25%.

On the surface, the scheme looks appealing—it must be to have attracted such support from international bodies. Java and Bali together account for only 7% of Indonesia's total land area but have 65% of the country's 140 million people. Further, the population increase remains alarming, despite active promotion of the official birth control programme. Yet according to a projection released in April by the chairman of the National Family Planning Coordinating Board, Dr Haryono Suryono, Indonesia's population will be between 208 million and 250 million in the year 2000, depending on the programme's success.

### Unintended result

One of the transmigration's aims is to provide a 'breathing space' on Java until the longer term birth control measures can take effect. Another, obviously, is to better the settler's lot. In addition, the scheme is justified for it helps spread development to the outer provinces by providing an agricultural labour force more skilled than local people; this is especially important for plantation crops such as oil-palm, cocoa and rubber. It also has the

clear political goal of acting as a 'vehicle to promote national stability and integration'. In Irian Jaya the reverse has occurred, as transmigration has exacerbated local dissent: a number of the Melanesian refugees who fled across the border into neighbouring PNG last year complained about the threat that land acquisition for transmigration had caused to local culture.

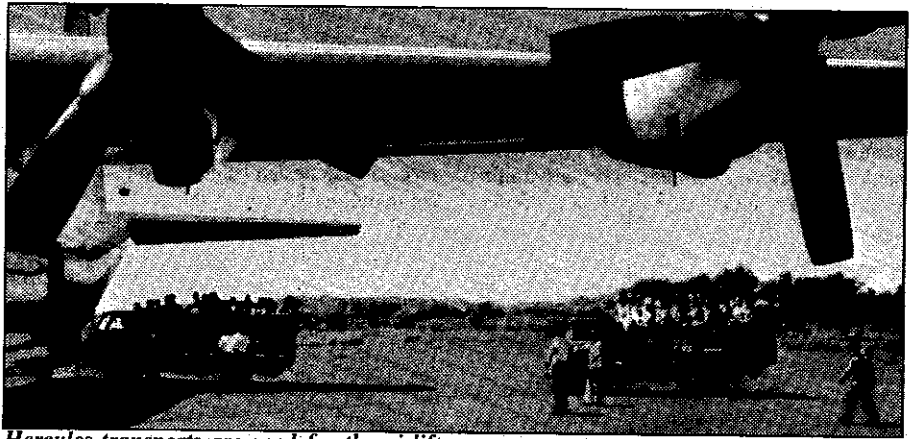
Target transmigration populations in rural Java/Bali are identified by the department in Jakarta in conjunction with local officials. The advantages of leaving home are explained at some length, with emphasis placed on how, often for the first time in their lives, transmigrants will own land on a freehold basis. As a result, settler communities volunteer for the scheme unlike in former days; in the late 1960s, *Time* magazine wrote that settlers were being sent into trackless zones with little more than an axe and a government exhortation to grow rice. Now transmigration sites are cleared prior to the newcomers' arrival, houses built and ancillary services such as schools and medical clinics laid on. The settlers are now airlifted by Lockheed Hercules, a company whose local agency is owned by a relative of Indonesia's president, General Suharto (during court hearings into the 'Lockheed scandal' in the US in the 1970s it was revealed that the president had intervened personally in the case).

### International interest

At the conclusion of their journey, transmigrants are given 3.5 ha of land (originally it was 2 ha, later 4-5 ha), most of it cleared and ready to plant food and cash crops. They also receive free food for a year, as well as tools, seed, fertilizer and a fuel ration if firewood is not readily available. Recently emphasis has been placed on grouping transmigration projects around areas deemed appropriate for large-scale plantation cropping, usually as part of the state-run nucleus estate and smallholder programme (NES). Under this scheme, transmigrants have the chance to sell their labour, thus augmenting their subsistence lifestyle. Overseas bodies have shown interest in this. For example, the British-financed Commonwealth Development Corporation has provided 'soft loans' for a transmigration-associated cocoa estate at Ransiki, on Irian Jaya's north west coast, which will supply the raw product to the CDC-initiated chocolate factory, P.T. Ransiki, nearby.

By promoting endeavours of this kind, albeit in the enclave mode, the government hopes to attract what are known as spontaneous migrants (*spontan*) who will travel to the outer provinces at their own expense. These larger projects can accommodate up to 2,000 settlers. The smaller sites average a few hundred people.

When analysed on the basis of comparative population density, the government-backed decentralization plan would seem to have great



*Hercules transports are used for the airlift.*

appeal, Java containing 690 people per square kilometre, Kalimantan only twelve and Irian Jaya three. But major problems have been presented by the logistics of trying to settle large numbers in places where local terrain is harsh and indigenous populations often hostile to receiving immigrant influxes. These impediments have seldom been explained thoroughly to the Javanese settlers, with the result that when they emerge from their Hercules they are not always pleased to see what confronts them: thick jungle, in the case of Kalimantan, and both jungle and inhospitable Melanesians in the case of Irian Jaya.

### Military presence

Equally disconcerting for the settlers is the military presence which accompanies them at most of the remote sites. Without the attendant army, many more attacks would occur than currently do; as it is, transmigrant centres in Irian, especially along the PNG border, are imbued with a siege mentality: at night, beyond the perimeters, lurk the guerrillas of the OPM (Free Papua Movement) whose main goal, short of an independent 'West Papua', is to end transmigration to the province. Since the transmigration to Sumatra was scaled down two years ago, the surplus has largely been allocated to Irian; in the previous Repelita plan, this was targeted to receive 7% of the national total. It is now earmarked to receive around 20% by 1989; a total of 137,000 families, or about 680,000 people.

While the target is unlikely to be met (shortfalls have become a hallmark of transmigration Indonesia-wide, due to inefficiency, the poor identification of sites and the high cost—up to \$15,000 per family), the Melanesians of Irian are deeply offended at the government's openly declared policy of matching, then surpassing, the indigenous population (of just over one million) by the time that two more five-year plans have expired: They suspect that the aim is not so much to help solve Java's problems—and even if it were, they would be unsympathetic—than to swamp the locals. Ever since the territory passed from Dutch hands to Indonesian in 1962-3, the people have harboured hostility towards the

Asian race from the west.

Across the border in PNG, similar sentiments have been expressed. One vocal critic of transmigration was PNG's former deputy prime minister, Iambakey Okuk, who described the settlement as 'inhumane' and akin to 'cultural genocide'. Indonesia was relieved when the government of Sir Julius Chan, and Okuk with it, lost office in 1982.

However, even the present Somare government recently has been less than diplomatic. During the height of the refugee crisis last year, acting foreign minister, Tony Siaguru, urged that PNG should intercede with Jakarta to ensure that no Melanesians were being dispossessed of their land. In so doing, he raised the key issue of how land was being permanently alienated there. In Melanesian custom, land is owned by the clans in perpetuity. In accordance with custom, it cannot be sold or transferred on a freehold basis. Land may only be leased in the short term. Indonesia's disregard for the Melanesian belief that land can be 'in use' even when it is uncleared has also caused friction. The problem is that Indonesian law does not recognize the rights of societies which traditionally hunt in the forests or practise swidden agriculture (which some of those in Irian do).

### Wooing the 'translocals'

In an attempt to overcome some of the conflict, the government, in accordance with a presidential decree, has ruled that up to 25% of places in transmigrant settlements should be reserved for local people—'translocals' they are called. But there has been little enthusiasm for the idea, particularly from those who have been forcibly removed from their clan land and then faced with the double insult of being told to move back again.

By the beginning of 1985, about 70,000 transmigrants had been settled in Irian Jaya, joining some 150,000 non-Melanesian spontaneous migrants. About 760,000 ha of land had been claimed for the scheme, much of it along the 760 km border zone with PNG. Local Papuans as well as foreign observers strongly believe that the prime aim has been to create a 'cordon sanitaire' along the border

which will inhibit the movement of OPM guerrillas, although the government deny this. It is also felt that the newcomers have included many former military men and their families.

Said the OPM's northern commander, James Nyaro, in 1984: 'Don't think of these settlers as ordinary civilians. They are trained military personnel disguised as civilian settlers'.

There is no doubt that the publicity arising from transmigration's impact on Irian has placed the whole scheme, Indonesia-wide, under an increasingly critical spotlight. Researchers in Jakarta, including some close to the government, have raised doubts about the cost effectiveness of the programme and the dangers inherent in alienating local populations. Even the former military commander of Irian, Brig-General Sembiring, has expressed concerns to his superiors in Jakarta, and urged a slowing down of the numbers. His view was recently echoed by the new commander, Lt-General Kahpi, who listed transmigration as one of the 'eight basic problems' affecting the province at present.

**Government unperturbed**

However, the government's determination to press ahead was repeated in April by transmigration minister Martono while laying the cornerstone of a new Transmigration Ministry in Jakarta's Kalibata district. Referring to recent criticism of the scheme by a team from Yogyakarta's Gajah Mada University, which had just returned from a fact-finding tour of

Irian, the minister said it was 'the right of everyone to agree or disagree with the government programme' but added that the scheme would proceed as planned. He said that one of the main impediments was the language barrier: most of the 'Irianese' were unable to speak the national Indonesian language and so could not communicate well with the settlers.

Signifying that settlement in Irian had been stepped up recently, Martono said that 10,000 people moved there in the financial year from early 1984-85, representing nearly 15% of the achievement in the past decade. He also mentioned that transmigration would be extended to Indonesia's 'youngest province', East Timor, which was annexed by force in 1975. Some hundred families from Java had already been resettled there and more are moving in on a regular basis.

Foreign concern about transmigration has been allayed to an extent by a recent tour of sites (in Sumatra, not troubled Irian nor Kalimantan, where tribal people and primary rain forest are also coming under threat) by nine ambassadors from Jakarta and staff members. The Swedish ambassador, Arne Lellki, said he was most impressed by the project at Batumarta, Sumatra, which had been aided by World Bank money. At this site, each family had received one hectare of land planted with rubber trees in 1978. The 4,500 ha estate is run by a government company. The transmigration tour, which was also accompanied by officials from international funding bodies, was held in response to questions raised about transmigra-

tion by Indonesia's overseas backers.

**Support and opposition**

Less qualified support was raised last year when, according to Indonesian officials, several African embassies in Jakarta asked for experts to be sent to their countries to advise on how the programme could be implemented there.

However, the scheme has been unsuccessful in the eyes of non-governmental organizations such as Survival International and the Minority Rights Group (New York). The latter has sent a long letter to World Bank president A.W. (Tom) Clausen, a friend of Ronald Reagan, asking him to explain the apparent inconsistency of the bank's publication, *Tribal Peoples and Economic Development*, and the bank's funding of Indonesia's transmigration policies, which seem to have had the opposite of the desired effect, namely to be protecting the rights of tribal populations. The group urged Clausen to withdraw the bank's funding as far as Irian Jaya was concerned.

Signs are that Indonesia will not be prepared to back down from its present stand, and if foreign observers continue to judge transmigration by the showpiece examples in Sumatra, Jakarta may be able to keep its important backers on its side.

*Robin Osborne is a freelance journalist and author of Indonesia's Secret War—The Guerrilla Struggle in Irian Jaya (George Allen & Unwin). He was formerly press secretary to PNG's former PM, Sir Julius Chan.*

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THE GUARDIAN

*Classical marxist question: under what circumstances do peasants attempt to resist exploitation?*

## MALAY PEASANT CONSCIOUSNESS

# People versus power

Although race permeates most aspects of Malaysian life, **Zawawi Ibrahim** argues that class consciousness can still develop among the peasantry. In a major theoretical contribution to the debate on ethnicity he suggests that peasant values and norms could be liberating.

**M**ALAYS STILL CONSTITUTE the bulk of the peasantry in multi-racial Peninsular Malaysia today. In a country once torn by bloody racial riots, it is almost impossible to discuss the nature of peasant ideology and consciousness in Malaysia without taking into account that its peasantry lives in a society where ethnicity permeates almost every facet of social life.

There are, of course, various reasons why Malay peasants normally view their problems and the world around them in ethnic terms. Some of the fundamental causes are historical. Under British colonial rule, though many of the non-Malay immigrants (Chinese and Indians) were exploited as cheap proletarian labour in the tin mines and rubber plantations, the economic position of the Chinese, especially the established merchant class, also flourished in strength. Their strong position in the new economy stood in marked contrast to the position of the Malays—most of whom were relegated by colonial rule to a neglected peasant base. Though still subordinate to colonial capital, Chinese capital, via the proliferation of merchants, businessmen, traders

and shopkeepers, became a dominant and visible economic force linking the wider market economy with the Malay rural producers, and *vice-versa*. At this level of social relations, the Chinese confronted the Malay peasantry on unequal terms as sellers, buyers, creditors and middlemen. The nature of such contact did not endear the Chinese to the peasantry; it only served to reinforce their ethnic differences, and the Malay sense of ambivalence, dependence and relative deprivation vis-à-vis the Chinese community. Among the Malays, a certain stereotype image of the Chinese also began to emerge and became reified: all Chinese were 'towkays' and rich. The traditional lack of contact between the Malay peasantry and the non-Malay working class (as a result of the segmentation of labour along racial lines generated by colonial policy) obviously helped to reinforce such views of the rural Malays.

### Alliance with Malay élite

The peasantry's relations with the state also went a long way towards fostering ethnic consciousness. Triggered by the fears of being

overwhelmed by the economic position of the Chinese, the Malay peasantry forged an ethnic alliance with their Malay political leaders who promised them 'protection' of their rights as 'sons of the soil' as the country was moving towards formal independence. They found their 'protectors' in the English-educated and westernized Malay élites, initially drawn from the traditional ruling class. These new political leaders had not only a legitimacy of tradition and hierarchy behind them but also the privilege of colonial education and the 'appropriate' political culture. It was through the ethnic-based nationalism of these leaders and their political party (the all-Malay UMNO, which is the dominant Malay faction of the multi-racial ruling coalition party) that the Malay peasantry's road to the modern world was opened up.

In post-colonial society, the UMNO-led government has embarked upon various development strategies to alleviate the economic conditions of the peasantry and to redress the imbalances between the Malays and the non-Malays. In order to legitimize their position, the Malay leaders in government consistently politicize and play upon their so-called 'protector' role of the Malays. In so doing, ethnicity is continuously reinforced in society and has become a conscious ideological structure which defines the continuing relations between state and Malay peasantry.

### New inequalities

But the Malaysian agrarian society, as in other Third World countries, is not totally unaffected by its internal class relations as a result of the logic of capitalist development. Under colonial rule, the Malay peasantry was left to 'develop on its own'. This did not mean, however, that the rural sector was insulated from the forces of capitalism. Apart from transforming Malay peasants into producers of exchange-values, dependent on the market economy for their subsistence and social reproduction, colonialism radically altered the traditional land tenure system by imposing on the peasantry its own system of private property (the Torrens System). As a result, the once egalitarian property relations within rural society gave way to new forms of inequality and social differentiation. But since the peasant sector, by virtue of colonial policy, had become a predominantly Malay enclave, the new basis of class and production relations which emerged remained relatively 'uncomplicated' by ethnicity.

This meant that at the level of production relations, Malay peasants entered class relations with fellow-Malays; Malay and not Chinese landlords were the class opposites of Malay tenants and landless or poor peasants. But even here, the production of class consciousness or ideology is not so straightforward. As is common to most peasant communities, even without the 'complication' introduced by ethnicity, both class and non-class bases of ideological production co-exist in Malay rural society. Such non-class elements are innumerable—personalism, kinship, patron-clientism, religion, village and so on. Some may indeed be coterminous with peasant relations of production; others which are not merely add to the number of bases available to the Malay peasantry in the production of ideology at this every-day level of their social relations in contemporary village society.

Theoretically, the function of these non-class components underlying peasant social relations is twofold; they may actually mitigate against the emergence of class consciousness, or else their relationship to class may not be mutually exclusive. Hence by incorporating elements of popular culture or certain universal norms (such as egalitarianism, or notions of justice and reciprocity), they may give strength and expression to class ideas which arise from the peasantry.

### Balanced approach needed

It would appear, therefore, that the Malay peasantry may not be totally doomed to ethnic primordialism. Students of the Malay peasantry should not focus only on the ideology generated at the level of peasant exchange (market) relations and peasant relations with the state, hence ignoring what happens at the level of every-day peasant class or production relations in village society. A balanced approach is essential since Malay peasants are simultaneously caught up in all these three types of social



relations. Each is capable of constituting the Malay peasant individual in its own particular way—be it in ethnic or class terms, or in terms of a combination between class and non-class ideas.

The search for the genesis of class consciousness, however this may be defined, must inevitably focus on the images and expressions which emerge at the level of production. The richness of Malay peasant experience in terms of 'class', conveyed through words, proverbs, idioms, metaphors and symbols, has been captured meticulously in a forthcoming book by James Scott, author of *The Moral Economy of the Peasant*. My own work amongst Malay peasants as proletarians in plantation society also indicates the possibilities of making sense of the various components (class, non-class, ethnicity, universalism) of Malay proletarian consciousness at a specific level of ideological discourse. Notions of Malay dignity (*maruah*), empathy (*timbang rasa*), or reciprocity (*jasa*), are capable of transcending the boundaries of ethnicity to be translated, by Malay proletarians themselves, into a more universal language of protest, giving added strength to their 'class struggle' against the moral assault of capitalism which constantly attempts to reduce their human status to a mere commodity of labour.

### 'People versus power'

In the context of multi-racial Peninsular Malaysia, the above observations are very pertinent. Considering the lack of social contact in the past between the Malay peasantry and non-Malay labour, it is essential that serious note is taken of the moment when labour shows a capacity to articulate its class experiences in universal terms, even if these experiences are initially handled in specific ethnic-cultural terms. Ultimately, for the possibility of some ideological 'sharing' between the different ethnic fractions of labour in this country, the search for the genesis of their class consciousness must come to grips with the task of unravelling this common universal thread, regardless of ethnic or

cultural specificities. This is not to deny the relevance and force of ethnicity, but the ethnic identity of labour is surely part and parcel of a broader, more universal ontological base. This also means that it is not enough to look for 'class-type' contradictions in society—'people versus power-bloc' contradictions are equally pertinent. In the end, both modes of analysis must be combined to understand the ideological synthesis underlying peasant or proletarian forms of 'class struggle', however everyday, symbolic or ephemeral these may be. In this context it is interesting to note that whilst the Malay peasantry and state relations are formally defined by ethnicity, peasant modes of protest against the state in the post-colonial period are not. Examples of the latter includes: the Hamid Tuah case over the Teluk Gong squatter issue towards the end of the 1960s; the 1974 Baling demonstration by peasants over the downturn of world rubber prices and increasing inflation; and the more recent Alor Setar demonstration by 'Green Revolution' farmers over the issue of conversion of government rice price subsidies from cash payments to forced bank deposits. It is obvious that both the 'people versus power-bloc' and class analyses are equally pertinent in understanding the above. It is also all the more reason why it is necessary to know in more detail the interconnection between the ideological synthesis reached at the level of production relations and the forms of synthesis underlying other areas of peasant relations during such moments of praxis. What happens at the specific level of ideological practice is more complex than what normally meets the eye of a 'pure' class, or ethnic or 'whatever' analyst. We need to know how the Malay peasantry combine their various capacities and identities as 'people', as Malays, and as a class at a specific level of ideological discourse and social practice.

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## POPULATION POLICY IN BANGLADESH

## Corruption &amp; coercion

Women always bear the brunt of family planning policies, particularly in the Third World. Bangladesh is no exception, and recent revelations about abuses of the sterilization campaign have found women the main victims. **Betsy Hartmann** and **Amanda Milligan** examine these abuses and argue that international support for the scheme should be withdrawn.

**A**T A MEETING to be held later this month the World Bank is hoping to smooth the ruffled feathers of the co-financiers of its proposed \$271 million population plan for Bangladesh. The project has run into trouble because of concern that the country's family planning system pushes sterilization too hard.

The five year project, which is the third in a series, was scheduled to start in July but it was not approved by all its co-financiers at a pledging meeting last February in Paris. Representatives from official aid agencies of the UK, Holland, Sweden, Norway and UNICEF raised worries about sterilization abuses in the programme and demanded further assurances from the government and the World Bank before making final commitments.

Some of the most serious incidents have been uncovered by field workers from British voluntary agencies. In the aftermath of last year's devastating floods, agency personnel interviewed a number of destitute women who had been denied relief wheat provided by the United Nations World Food Programme unless they agreed to be sterilized.

'The Union Council Chairman told me, "if you have the operation, you will get wheat."' said twenty-year-old Rohima, a divorced mother with only one baby son who lives in a village south west of the capital Dhaka. After the operation Rohima received a card confirming that she had been sterilized, and authorizing her to receive food aid. However, she only received a small proportion of the wheat she had been promised. Her sterilization effectively ends her chances of remarriage, and her only son may not survive, for her breast milk has dried up and he is feeding only on barley water.

### Directed at women

According to a health worker in the area, 80% of the women sterilized during the floods had done so to receive wheat. Similar cases were reported from Barisal, Jessore, Comilla and Pabna Districts. Of 85 women sterilized in one location in Pabna, two allegedly died of side effects from the operation.

Government figures reported in the

Bangladesh Observer indicate that an 'unprecedented' 257,000 sterilizations were performed in last year's flood months, from July to October—almost one quarter of the total performed in the entire decade from 1972 to 1982.

The government Agency for International Development (AID) undertook our investigation of the abuses and agreed that 'some incidents may in fact have occurred but were not widespread.' The World Bank maintained that any abuses were probably due to 'overzealous local officials' taking 'undue advantage of food shortages to improve their family planning records'. Pressures on officials to meet sterilization targets are institutionalized in the Bangladesh government's population programme. Over eighty-seven million people live in the country's 140,000 sq km and they are in theory offered a broad range of contraceptive choices. But in practice, female sterilization is the main method promoted—a survey in 1983 revealed that 80% of those who underwent the operation were women. Today, 34% of Bangladeshis using a family planning method are sterilized, and the government aims to increase this figure to 41% by the end of the decade through the use of financial incentives and disincentives.

### Financial incentives

While the linking of sterilization and food aid may not be official government policy, it is the logical outgrowth of the incentive system operating in Bangladesh. Doctors and clinical staff receive special payments for each sterilization they perform, and health and family planning workers, as well as members of the public, receive a fee for each sterilization patient they bring forward. Until very recently family planning workers who failed to meet monthly targets had their salaries withheld. People who are sterilized receive a new item of clothing and a cash payment of 175 taka (£6) which is almost one tenth of the annual per capita income.

Eighty-five percent of the incentive payments' costs are funded by the AID. Such assistance contravenes section 104(f) of the



US 1982/83 Foreign Assistance Act, which prohibits the use of US funds 'to pay for the performance of involuntary sterilizations as a method of family planning or to coerce or provide any financial incentive to any person to undergo sterilization'. In Bangladesh AID skirts the law by calling the incentives 'compensation payments'. Officials maintain that the money is intended to cover transportation, food costs and wages lost due to the operation. The free clothing is justified as 'surgical apparel'.

### International disquiet

But European donors are more critical of the system. Christopher Allison, population adviser to the British Overseas Development Administration, wrote to the World Bank on 28 March saying, 'the UK would like to see the entire system of incentives and disincentives abandoned'. British Labour MP, Jo Richardson, put down an Early Day Motion in the House of Commons on 4 July calling on the ODA to withhold its intended £6 million contribution to the forthcoming World Bank programme until abuses are rectified. The motion has so far attracted signatures from 38 MPs.

A January 1985 Position Paper of the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) has expressed concern that the system 'carried the danger of unacceptable pressure being exerted on potential accepters and may amount to indirect coercion'. The SIDA paper also warns that the threat of punitive action against family planning workers who fail to meet quotas may lead to 'a neglect in counselling, a vital element. This is most serious when it comes to sterilization, since it is irreversible.'

These fears are borne out by a 1983

sterilization review for the donors, which revealed that in more than 40% of the sterilization centres, patients were not adequately informed about the permanent nature of the operation'. A 1984 investigation by the Independent Programme for the Introduction and Adaptation of Contraception Technology (PIACT) found that family planning personnel generally did not tell women about possible side effects from sterilization or the IUD, and did not offer other contraceptive methods or provide follow-up services.

The PIACT study also reported the existence of male agents who scour the villages for potential sterilization patients, sometimes 'selling' them to family planning workers who need to meet targets. 'These agents have no information about advantages or disadvantages of family planning methods or their side effects,' says SIDA.

**Resources diverted**

Bangladesh's more liberal Western donors are worried that the sterilization programme is diverting resources from the country's pressing health problems and they challenge the premise that birth control alone is sufficient to bring down the country's population growth rate. Instead they stress the importance of ensuring decent health care, employment opportunities for men and women, education and old-age security, which would reduce people's dependence on large families and set the stage for a population decline.

Today over a third of the country's health budget is spent on population control and its share is growing. Although the World Bank's third project includes the provision of Mother and Child Health (MCH) services, according to SIDA: 'There are good reasons to suspect that an expansion of MCH services will be significantly hampered by the present system of incentives and disincentives,' since 'health workers are likely to favour the activities which bring money and are set by target.'

AID doesn't attach such significance to MCH services: 'a population control programme does not depend on a functioning primary health care system,' it says. And the United Nations Family Planning Association's Dhaka representative, Walter Holzhausen, claims no one seriously believes, 'that Bangladesh has the money or the time to establish better MCH services... as a precondition for making voluntary family planning more successful.'

**Government sidesteps**

The Bangladesh government frankly admits population control is its number one priority, a priority vigorously supported by hardliners like USAID. With 80% of the country's development budget coming from foreign aid, Bangladesh is unlikely to stand in the way of what key donors now see as the solution to its problems.

However the government has tried to calm concerned World Bank donors by circulating

assurances that the sterilization system is not abused. It has said that measures to punish family planning workers for not meeting sterilization targets were never put into practice and that the legislation has been abolished.

Only a few changes to the existing system are proposed and donor reactions so far are not enthusiastic. UNICEF has already decided not to become involved in the World Bank programme because of reservations about the strong emphasis on sterilization. According to Dr Richard Jolly, Assistant General Secretary of UNICEF, 'you will get a much more enthusiastic response from people if family planning methods are part of a Mother and Child Health programme.'

All the indicators are that this month's meeting is not going to be a smooth ride for the World Bank. As one informed source put it, 'everything is still wide open—liberal donors are using these negotiations as their only lever to get improvements in the programme.'

*Betsy Hartmann is co-author with James Boyce of A Quiet Violence: View from a Bangladesh Village, Zed Press, 1983, and author of The Right to Live: Poverty, Power and Population Control, forthcoming from the Institute for Food and Development Policy in San Francisco. Amanda Milligan is a freelance journalist.*

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## Geography of poverty

**BANGLADESH** almost entirely consists of an alluvial plain formed by the annual deposition of fertile silt from the great Padma (Ganges), Jamuna (Brahmaputra) and Meghna rivers. The great fertility of the alluvial soil has been able to support a nation of peasant farmers concentrated in one of the world's highest population densities, though in recent years despite growing crop yields there has been increasing rural poverty. High population growth is often cited as a cause of poverty, but the poor point to the extreme maldistribution of land ownership.

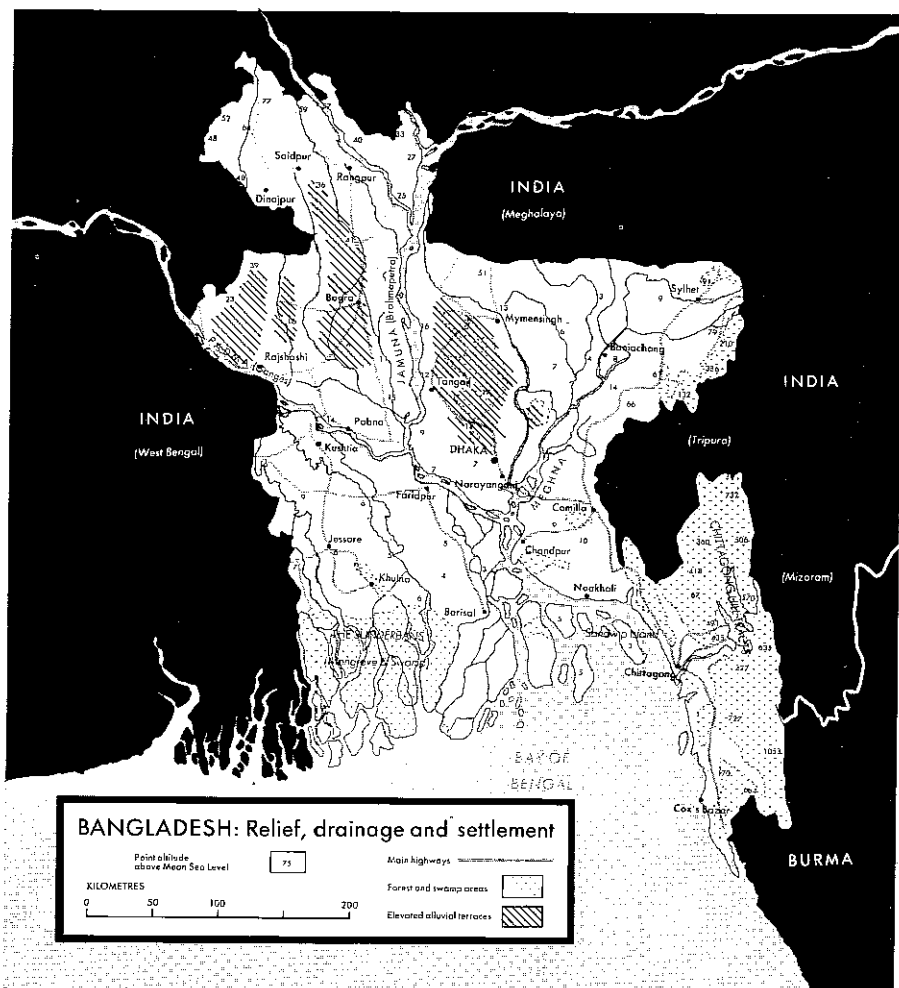
The physical features and geographic location of Bangladesh make it particularly vulnerable to natural disasters. The low-lying plain is susceptible to flooding during the annual rainy season (June-September); southern Bangladesh is regularly struck by tidal waves and cyclones sweeping up from the Bay of Bengal. The severity of both floods and cyclones varies from year to year, although the flood problem has been recently exacerbated by Himalayan deforestation, prompting the Bangladeshi government to call for a Ganges dam located in Nepal.

The past two years have been particularly bad for both floods and cyclones: 1984 brought the worst flooding for a decade and the 1985 cyclone left 30,000 dead and caused untold damage to houses, crops and livestock. In response to events of this sort, Bangladesh receives disaster relief aid from around the world. However, Bangladesh has also become a major recipient of long-term development aid, given by OECD governments and the World Bank.

### Dependence on aid

Western aid commitments between 1971 and 1984 totalled some US\$16 billion. This year, aid commitments will pay for four-fifths of Bangladesh's development programme and some 60% of its expected US\$2.7 billion import bill. The dependence of the regime on foreign aid has given Bangladesh's international creditors, co-ordinated within the Bangladesh Assistance Group, tremendous leverage over the country's economic policies. Ershad recently moved to return jute and textile factories to their pre-nationalization owners, and scrapped subsidies on rice, kerosene and fertilizers following pressure from the IMF.

The poverty-creating policies of the regime, drafted by the 'experts' seconded from the international agencies, are leaving the rural poor more vulnerable than ever to natural disaster.



## REPORT ON THE AID AGENCIES

# Bypassing the poor

Criticism of aid to Bangladesh has mounted as increasing evidence suggests that, far from alleviating poverty, it has increased the gap between the haves and the have-nots. **Larry Jagan** examines a recent confidential report on poverty in Bangladesh and concludes that radical land reform is an essential prerequisite.

**B**ANGLADESH is one of the world's poorest nations. Like most Third World countries some 85% of the population live and work in the rural sector. According to an FAO report, in 1977, 83% of the rural population lived below the poverty line. The proportion of poor has continued to increase despite massive injections of aid. Some aid agencies, concerned at the lack of impact the projects have had on the level of poverty, commissioned an independent report on 'rural poverty in Bangladesh'.

This confidential report has angered the Bangladesh government, for its findings were

critical of the government's development policies and the direction of aid projects. Its primary purpose was to explore the causes of poverty and to suggest ways in which these could be alleviated in the future.

The report's findings document an increasing pauperization of the rural population. According to the report, households with less than two acres (0.8 ha) of land cannot produce enough for their basic needs and in only 20-30% of households does 'the land they own alone provide their basic subsistence'.

For the 70-80% of rural households who

*continued on page 30*



Devastated: this man's house was entirely washed away and his family killed by the May cyclone.

## RELIEF IN THE CYCLONE ZONE

# Harvest and disaster

Bangladesh has recently been hit by the worst cyclones in fifteen years. The devastation in terms of human life and livelihood has been immense; but for some, **John Cunningham** found, there have been opportunities to exploit the misfortunes of others.

**L**AND IS THE KEY RESOURCE in rural Bangladesh, for it not only produces in come and employment but also represents the main source of security, provides the basis for access to other resources, and is the prerequisite for credit. Land is increasingly owned by a small minority as a growing proportion of the impoverished rural population is forced to sell its land in order to finance debts. The proportion of landless people has risen from 35% of rural households in 1960 to over 50%. Consequently the landless, with little opportunity for alternative employment, strive to gain some measure of security and employment on the *chors*—new lands created by silt deposits in the Bay of Bengal.

Earlier this year a cyclone drove a huge tidal wave over parts of southern Bangladesh. Hundreds of thousands of people suffered losses. Homes were washed away—many with their occupants still inside. Over 12,000 people have been reported dead, but the exact number of people killed may never be known. Hundreds of thousands of animals were killed, including draught cattle, so crucial to the area. Large areas of agricultural land were flooded when embankments and roads were washed away.

The affected *chor* areas—including both islands and parts of the mainland—while very fertile, are constantly being threatened by flooding, and therefore offer a precarious

existence. Only poor people live on the *chors*; as a result only poor people lost their lives and homes in the recent disaster. *Chor* land is considered as *khas*—government land—for any land submerged for more than twenty years, under existing laws, is to be distributed to cooperatives of landless peasants. With increasing landlessness migration is common in the coastal region—to settle on *khas* land is the goal.

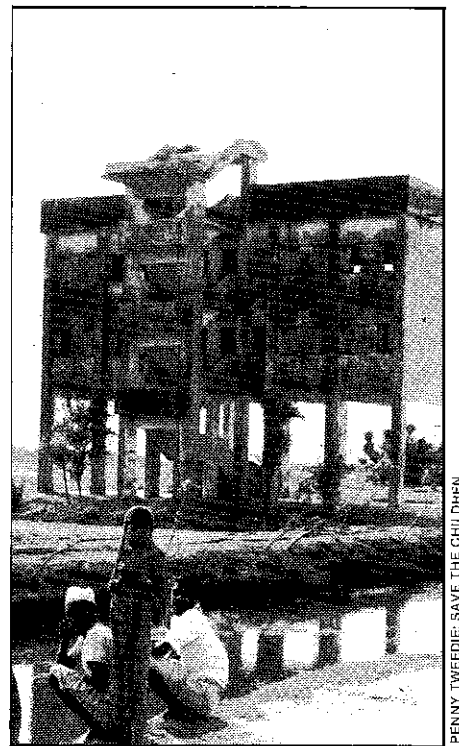
### Corruption and coercion

The landlords in the region—the *jodtars*—are anxious to control access to *chor* lands, and indeed to other resources. They are not, however, interested in inhabiting the *chors*, but instead attempt to subvert the government's efforts to distribute *khas* to genuinely landless groups. The intentions of the government are disrupted both by illegal occupation (land grabbing) as well as by control being gained over land through the exercise of patronage. Landowners have established ownership of land by cultivating it, particularly on newly accreted land. The opportunity now exists for unscrupulous *jodtars* to establish 'ownership' of land temporarily vacated by marginal and small farmers during the cyclone and tidal wave. This means that people are being forced to stay on their land instead of taking refuge, and as a result even more deaths have occurred. Land is also

acquired by the *jodtars*' falsifying documents to prove their 'ownership'. In some cases occupants of land are encouraged to move on the basis of promises by the *jodtars* offering them 'protection and shelter'. Whatever the motivation for the move, the landless are expected to pay cash to their patrons. For anyone trying to by-pass this patronage set-up the risks are high; pressure will be exerted on the intending offender and the person concerned may well be forced to flee the area following intimidation.

In much of the *chor* area *jodtars* have amply demonstrated their power, and settlers have increasingly been forced to buy protection. More and more, control of the area has come into the hands of *jodtars* and of the local and regional élite.

The disaster has had two major consequences. Firstly, there has been the physical damage caused by floods and cyclonic winds—the loss of life, loss of assets (cattle, houses and household possessions), and loss of communal resources such as drinking water. Secondly, it has given rise to the impoverishment of small and marginal farmers, through the loss of ownership of their land. Assuming, therefore, that the attempts of the agencies to relieve and rehabilitate are designed to alleviate suffering and reduce further impoverishment, then their efforts must be directed towards the needs of those occupying the lands. Relief supplies made available in response to disasters are not neutral. They have the potential to prop up a system of patronage as well as to provide relief to victims. In designing programmes—whether of relief, rehabilitation or longer term



Flooding regularly hits Bangladesh's low-lying deltaic plains. In some places special shelters have been built (right).

development—account must be taken of the characteristics of the area.

### Cooperatives need support

The cooperatives of landless and small farmers on the *chors* should be strengthened. Simply making extra resources available in the expectation that those in greatest need will somehow benefit is inherently dangerous.

Following the cyclone and tidal wave, needs have been identified and action taken. The agency *War on Want* has well-established contacts with projects and groups who have been working in the area for a number of years. This first began after the 1970 cyclone and has continued ever since. One such local group, Nijera Kori, has established training programmes for peasants and women. Working with some of the most disadvantaged sections of the rural poor they have helped to set up more than two hundred groups, which in turn has helped them gain access to key resources in the area, including land. A close working relationship with local people meant that groups such as Nijera Kori were on the spot at the time of the tidal wave to make an immediate assessment and to respond appropriately. Through this group *War on Want* was able to channel relief aid—particularly of food, water and clothing—to the affected people. A ration card system was immediately introduced, and there was quick response to a request to send medical teams.

The impact of a cyclone and tidal wave is devastatingly short and sharp compared with that of a lingering drought. After the initial shock, survivors are forced to continue with the daily struggle for life. Now, a

rehabilitation programme is under way. Food and cash for work programmes not only provide valuable employment opportunities, but they are also important for reconstruction. To protect against future cyclones is clearly an important task. In 1984 *War on Want* provided the necessary funds to construct an earthen mound (*killa*), which proved successful in saving people and animals during the flooding. Even on a strictly economic assessment the *killas* showed a considerable return on capital. More of these *killas* will be built in coastal areas, giving a long term asset as well as generating short term employment. Multi-use cyclone shelters are also being designed, to serve as community health centres and schools.

### Direction of aid

Economic programmes have also been undertaken. Provision to cultivate land for those who have lost draught animals has been made through contract cultivations—both with mechanized as well as animal power. Arrangements have also been made for the provision of seedlings essential to the next planting date. In addition to land damage the tidal wave caught many fishermen unprepared, and lives, boats and nets were all lost. It is common practice for fishermen to hire nets, and there are consequently plans to strengthen the women's cooperatives by enabling them to make fishing nets to hire out.

Because the affected area is new, it lacks even the barest infrastructure and services. It is important that ways are sought of complementing the setting up of cooperatives of landless people and women's groups, with

physical inputs such as water supplies, health and educational facilities and communications. Such development would strengthen land reclamation efforts in the area. The Land Reclamation Project (LRP), funded by the Dutch government, has constructed a pilot stretch of reclaimed land of some 4,000 acres (1,620 hectares), and people who were previously landless now occupy the area. Plans for a further 60,000 acres (24,300 hectares) are already well advanced, and a cross-dam from Sandwip to Noakhali should be ready within five years. The LRP is not only concerned with the technical feasibility of the project but also with settlement policy as regards the new lands. No amount of projects will prevent future cyclones or tidal waves, but with carefully designed schemes it ought to be possible to minimize their impact and to make the *chors* a safer place to live and work.

The effect of the tidal wave and cyclone has been devastating. Aid agencies, however, needed to be aware of the difficulties of operating in the area if further polarization between people living in the *chors* is to be avoided. Not everyone fares equally in such disasters, for, as the Bengali proverb states: *Kaaro poush maash, kaaro shorbonaash*—'for some it is harvest, for some it is disaster.'

*John Cunningham is Programme Officer for South Asia for War on Want.*

cannot subsist on their land, additional income needs to be earned. This is generally done by sharecropping or working for others. With unemployment in excess of 30%, with the insecurity of contract labour which is mostly for 2-3 days, and with the low wage levels, which the World Bank argues have fallen substantially during the last decade, this provides a solution for only a few. The net result is that families with insufficient incomes are forced to reduce expenditure; 'as little money as possible is spent on the purchase of clothes and medicine'. The consumption of basic foodstuffs is often reduced, 'rice is taken only once or twice a day, and sometimes the members of the household, particularly women, girls and old people, go without rice for several days.' Starvation has become a calculated strategy for existence.

The pauperization process is not only confined to the consumption of essential needs. It pervades all aspects of rural life. There are inadequate housing facilities, with 63% of households having less than 400 sq ft (37 sq metres); only 4.9% of villages have a primary health centre; 8% of landless children attend school and the overall literacy rate for Bangladesh is 27%.

The report found that while the rural population was being increasingly deprived of the basic necessities of life, women in rural households faced a double deprivation. Males on average consume some 20% more calories and protein per day than women; while male literacy is 30% higher than for women, and only 38% of school attenders are women.

### **Causes of poverty**

In explaining the root causes of poverty, the report found land ownership to be central. For not only was it the basis of production but it offered access to other resources, particularly credit. As a result of increasing poverty poorer peasants have had to sell off land to raise extra income, or have forfeited it to moneylenders when unable to repay loans. Inheritance rules, under Islamic law, mean that each son inherits an equal share of land, which in practice has also led to land being increasingly fragmented into smaller and smaller plots, inevitably hitting the poorer farmers hardest. Access to credit facilities is relatively easy for the large landowners. The small farmers are faced with a greater problem, for they get only 14% of their credit requirements from institutional sources and are forced to rely on moneylenders and others, paying in excess of 50% in interest. This also reinforces the polarization of landownership.

In 1960, 35% of rural households were functionally landless owning less than half an acre (0.2 hectare); in the 1977 Agricultural Census this had grown to 46%, and 50% in 1978 as measured by the Land Occupancy Survey. At the same time land ownership was concentrated into fewer hands, for 8.5% now own 48% of the land. This is despite the at-

## **Distribution of income among rural households** (who constitute 83% of the total population)

	1963/64	1976/77
<b>Top 5% of households</b>	<b>16.8%</b>	<b>17.3%</b>
<b>Upper middle 15%</b>	<b>24.1%</b>	<b>25.4%</b>
<b>Middle 40%</b>	<b>38.0%</b>	<b>39.0%</b>
<b>Poorest 40%</b>	<b>20.1%</b>	<b>18.3%</b>

Source: Osmani, S.R. and Rahman, A. — *A study on Income Distribution in Bangladesh* (Dhaka, 1981).

tempts at land reform, originally in 1972 and again in 1983, when a limit of 100 *bighas* (405 hectares) per family was enacted. However, there is neither the administrative machinery nor political will to ensure that radical land reform is implemented.

The first part of the report concludes that it 'is clear that the rural development strategies pursued in Bangladesh over the years have not effectively countered the processes which have contributed to the growth in the incidence of rural poverty'.

The report then examines the role of aid in Bangladesh and concludes that instead of helping the poor, it has contributed to their pauperization, for it has generally benefited the urban population as against rural people, and where it *has* been centred in rural projects it has been to the benefit of the wealthier farmers. This is particularly the case with irrigation schemes, where the report suggests that large landowners have been able to extend their holdings and power at the expense of marginal farmers.

### **Urban concentration**

Commodity aid has certainly benefited the urban centres where 'the government has also used subsidized food rations to help pay its employees, whose salaries have declined significantly in real terms over the last fifteen years. Consequently, urban ration cardholders, government employees, the military, police, teachers, employees of large establishments and a few "priority" groups received almost two-thirds of all publicly-distributed food in the late 1970s.' Health programmes have also largely benefited the urban population.

Project aid has also generally flowed more to the urban centres. During 1972-82 agriculture, rural institutions and flood control received 17% of project funds, health 2.7% and education 2.4%; while transport and communications received 25%, power and fuels 19.3% and industry 18.2%. With rural poverty the major problem in Bangladesh is that the direction of project aid is not likely to have a major impact on its alleviation.

Much of the report's criticism of aid is that it is either in the interests of the Bangladesh political leadership or of the donor country. It suggests that some aid is inappropriate; it

finds the value of EEC concessional butteroil and skimmed milk of 'dubious value' while suggesting that although North American wheat is useful, this is only because Bangladesh's needs match US interests, with their large grain surplus. The report also points out the dangerous effects political motives of donor countries can have, pointing to the example of the US, who during the 1974 famine withheld aid in order to persuade Bangladesh from trading with Cuba.

More appropriate aid, the report suggests, could be reflected in policies towards fertilizers. Currently, 90% of fertilizer imports have been financed from commodity aid, representing 69% of all commodity aid given to agriculture. Policy, the report suggests, should be directed towards increasing local production which is substantially cheaper. At present there is a heavy use of nitrogen, which is produced at three factories, one of which, the Ghorasal plant, is being expanded with the help of Chinese aid, while phosphate and potash is underused due to its lack of availability. 'There is no domestic capacity for producing potash fertilizer', and lack of foreign exchange prevents the importation of phosphate rock. The report concludes that aid could redress this situation by increasing the importation of phosphate rock 'so as to utilize domestic capacity more fully' and possibly establishing a potash manufacturing plant.

The report stops short of suggesting that there has been misappropriation of aid, preferring to blame the inappropriateness of aid and the domestic social structure for its ineffectiveness. Two things clearly emerge from the report. Aid should be directed more towards agriculture, and in particular the poor. The landless and agricultural cooperatives should form the basis of future aid projects. The paramount theme of the report is that only radical land reform can hope to counter poverty in Bangladesh.

Although the report is not as revealing or hard hitting as it might have been, it is hoped that more notice will be taken of it than was of previous reports, which have either been ignored or suppressed. For its limited recommendations are realizable and would be effective.

*Larry Jagan is co-editor of Inside Asia.*



Newham Seven Defence Campaign demonstration outside the court: 'Self defence is no offence'.

## AFTER THE NEWHAM 7

# 'Self defence' is not enough

The past few years have witnessed a frightening new trend within British racism—the growth of a systematic violence against Asian families. In some areas Asians are living under a virtual state of seige. The police have largely ignored these developments, prompting Asians to form their own self-defence groups. Now 'self-defence' itself is under attack—in the court room. Ariana Yakas examines the recent case of the 'Newham Seven', and considers the options that are now open to the anti-racist struggle.

**I**N RECENT months the case of the Newham 7, seven Asian youths charged with affray, has increasingly featured in the press. It has been established by the media as a 'landmark in the history of both the relationship between blacks and whites and that between black people and the police'.

On 7 April, 1984, a gang of whites in a car went round the borough of Newham, in the East End of London, carrying out a series of assaults against the Asian community. Five Asians were kidnapped in turn and attacked with a hammer. Amongst them was a 16 year-old physically handicapped Asian boy who was also bungled into the car, attacked and then abandoned in a ditch.

These assaults quickly became known to the Asian community, and a group of youths, some of whom were the Newham 7, quickly retaliated against the attacks. They went to the Duke of Edinburgh pub which was thought to be where the series of attacks had been

planned, and a two minute street battle between the Asian youths and a group of whites followed. Missiles were thrown and windows were broken but no one was hurt. It was for this incident that the Newham 7 were charged with affray, four of them, Bahadur Khan, Mohammed Hanif, Zafar and Parvaiz Khan, being found guilty and the rest, Amjad Ali, Athar Chaudri and Jothi Rajappan, not guilty.

According to the three guilty defendants and their supporters the only thing they were guilty of was defending themselves and their community. The attack was clearly more than just a street brawl, it was a retaliation from a community being attacked by racist thugs. Unmesh Desai, who works for the Newham Monitoring Project, a GLC funded body which deals with racist attacks, and who was at the forefront of the campaign, had this to say: 'It's not just the Newham 7 on trial, it's the whole community. It's not the case as such but the issues behind it.' One of these issues

is that the Asian community can no longer rely on the police to protect them and they have had to find their own methods of protecting their community.

### No isolated incident

But the Newham 7 is not the first instance where Asian youths have found it necessary to take matters into their own hands following the failure of the police to protect Asians from violent attacks. The first and most famous of the defence cases was that of the Bradford 12.

On 17 July, 1981, the police in Bradford found two crates of petrol bombs which had been hidden behind a nurses' home. The twelve Asian youths were charged with 'conspiring to make explosive substances'. The defendants were in jail for three months before being allowed out on bail. When bail was eventually set, one of the conditions was that they did not attend any political meetings. All of the twelve had been members of the nascent United Black Youth Movement (UBYM), an organization that despite its lack of statements on policy showed signs, through its activities, of becoming a radical black youth movement. It was clearly evident from their bail conditions that the twelve were also being prosecuted for their political activities. One Asian youth had made the petrol bombs after they had heard that a coach load of racist thugs were on their way to attack the Bradford Asian community. The petrol bombs

were manufactured to create a wall of fire and to act as a deterrent against the impending attack.

English common law upholds the right of self defence and the jury found the twelve's reasons for self defence adequate and found them not guilty. Unfortunately in the Newham 7 case, it was not seen fit to extend the common law of self defence to the defence of the community.

Both cases point to a breakdown of communications between the Asian communities in Britain and the police. The number of such attacks increased in 1984 by at least 50% and a Home Office report in 1981 stated that the number of racist attacks numbered approximately 7,000 and that Asians were fifty-five times more likely to be attacked than any other section of the community.

**Some local reform**

After the Newham 8 trial, similar to that of the Newham 7, there was an overhaul of top police personnel within Newham. The local police chiefs are now much more articulate and public relations orientated. They are now well equipped, both mentally and physically, to disarm their critics. They have even changed their tactics by putting both black and white youths in the same dock (as in the case of the Newham 7) and calling the incident 'gang-warfare'. More often than not racist attacks are not taken seriously, the most recent example being the death of a pregnant Asian woman and her three children, when their house in Ilford was petrol-bombed in July this year.

Parvaiz Khan, one of the Newham 7, said, 'We do not trust the police anymore. They are out to get us. All they want is to see us get into trouble.' Detective Constable Bonczoszek who interviewed the suspects, had this to say to the *Guardian*: 'I am aware of them (the Newham 7). I believe that they are involved in causing trouble.'

Such attitudes are not going to lessen the mistrust and the anger the black community feels against the police. The situation is also aggravated by the continuous harassment of Asian youths by the police themselves. The Newham Monitoring Project dealt with seventy such cases last year. It is not surprising that Asian youths have decided they have had enough and have started looking seriously into defending their communities themselves.

But racism is present not only in the streets of Newham where, incidentally, there is a very high National Front presence. (In the 1983 general elections, the NF polled 2300, 4% of the vote in Newham South, the highest in the country). Racism is part of the very fabric of British society and is entrenched in every institution, from government to the health service, to education. These are not new phenomena, but have a historical base in Britain's colonial past, which created the myth of racial superiority.

The Asian youth organizations have risen

to challenge this racism through campaigns such as the Newham 7. However there are problems and contradictions which the movement must confront. Talking to two of the Newham 7, Parvaiz and Bahadur, it is clear that they think that the main stumbling blocks in their fight against racism were the elders of the Asian community and the segregation of the community into various religious groupings.

**Community split**

'The problem with Asian people is that they don't stick together. If they stuck together right from the start we would not have this trouble (racist attacks). West Indians don't. They stick together as one people and they fight together,' said Bahadur.

'These Asian people have their own differences, you know, like religion—Muslim, Hindu, Sikh. In Newham the community is split, you have different religions,' said Parvaiz—a rather simplistic and superficial analysis of the problems that beset the anti-racist struggle.

Talking to the two, there seems to be a lack of understanding, in some cases understandably so, of the older generation. They were disappointed with the support they received from their elders. 'We felt bitterness at the way the mosque leaders supported us... They weren't brought up here and they think when someone calls you Paki then the best thing is to ignore them,' said Parvaiz.

The elders of the community, with a few exceptions, according to Parvaiz and Bahadur, don't want to fight back. But history has shown otherwise. Much of the groundwork for the anti-racist struggle was laid down in the 1950s and 1960s. The Indian Workers' Association (IWA) played an instrumental role in the formative years of the struggle. It began life as a cultural and social organization, but faced with the increasing number of strikes by Asians in factories, it was quickly transformed into a political organization. But unfortunately its mass base was concentrated on Punjabi workers and so it failed to become a vehicle for the struggles of other Asian communities.

Campaigns such as that of the Newham 7 should make it clear to young activists that the Asian movement does have a history of its own and one which should not be ignored, despite Sunder Kangesen's comment at the Newham Monitoring Project. 'We're not here to indoctrinate them, we're here to defend their rights—their history, they will learn in the course of their life.' However this type of history is not found in school history books, so there is all the more reason for it to be addressed at the same time as fighting racist attacks.

**A new beginning**

Now that the Newham 7 case is over, apart from the impending appeals, where does the campaign go from here?

The three defendants found guilty, Zafar, Parvaiz and Bahadur, are planning to set up a business in Newham after they come back from a planned holiday in Pakistan. Unlike some of the Bradford 12, they will not be entering the booming industry of race relations.

The Asian youth organizations have arisen with the central task of self defence. 'Self defence is no offence' was the slogan used by all the defence cases. This generation, one under direct physical attack, is determined to defend itself and the community. 'The campaign will go on defending the rights of black people against racist attacks. And if it takes thousands and thousands of campaigns we'll still carry on' said Sunder Kangesen.

But defending the community is a daunting task. It means creating and mobilizing a community prepared to retaliate at every instance of racial attack. This has not happened yet. Could it be because the movement has neither the experience yet nor the historical understanding to take on such a task?

It should also be prepared to learn from other experiences to further its struggle and to realize that its case is not unique. One valuable lesson could be learnt from the West Indian youth movement in the 1960s and the 1970s. They too were besieged with court cases in the early 1970s and a constant need to form defence campaigns—from the Mangrove case to the trial of Cliff McDaniel of the Black Youth Movement. Such valuable experiences should not be ignored.

**The lessons**

But one thing is clear—the National Front and their supporters are also learning from the black struggle. The three whites on trial at the same time as the Newham 7 all pleaded cases of self defence. It is for this precise reason that campaigns such as the Newham 7 that have considerable political potential start to politicize Asian youth and take the cause further than being just defence campaigns.

The campaign, despite some of its drawbacks, does have a valuable contribution to make to the black struggle. First of all, it illustrated the importance of a good public campaign. Secondly, it showed to the police that it is not possible to depoliticize a case by making 'token arrests' of the racist thugs and then treating both parties as members of rival gangs in order to deny the presence of a racist motive in the attacks.

The Asian youth movement has managed to provide an important identity for British Asians by establishing cultural, social and sports organizations. But the challenge still remains as to whether these organizations will be able to channel the sporadic enthusiasms generated during defence campaigns into grassroots political work—which will not only change attitudes but will also give birth to a new generation of Asian activists.

*Ariana Yakas is a freelance journalist.*



## DEVELOPMENT THEORY REVIVED

## Friedrich List lives!

Theorizing about development is in a mess. Dependency theories, once thought to have discredited earlier modernization approaches, now find themselves in trouble too. Aidan Foster-Carter suggests a new approach—which turns out to be a very old one.

DEVELOPMENT, as a self-conscious and institutionalized field of scholarly enquiry, was a product of the post-war era. (The very word 'under-development' does not predate the 1940s). As it crystallized, development studies visibly carried the birthmarks of those origins: that time and place, that context. Two factors loomed largest: the anti-colonial revolution and the Cold War. Contemporary European experience also fed into the mix by what would later turn out to be questionable analogy, for example, Marshall Aid as prototype for all 'aid'.

Thus was born what became known as *modernization theory*. By and large it assumed West was best; hence the development task was to help 'new nations' along this well-trodden path, being careful to avoid 'diseases of the transition' such as communism. While there might be 'strains' along the way, this process was seen as conflict-free, whether between or within nation-states: thus dirty words like class and imperialism were banished from the vocabulary. In fact, development was conceived as a doubly internal process: internal to societies, and often (in the more psychologistic of these theories) internal to individuals too. 'Modern man' (sic) must acquire the 'need to achieve'.

## Enter dependency

Twenty years later, in the late 1960s, a new paradigm arose which radically challenged the modernization approach. Once again, theoretical change had real-world correlates: perceived failures of the 'development decade' over much of the Third World; doubts raised by US policy towards Cuba and intervention in Vietnam; and increasing awareness of China as a different development model, all contributed towards *dependency theory*, an original Latin American mix of previous reformist critiques associated with Raul Prebisch and neo-marxism.

The dependency world view was very different. Firstly there was a world view: you had to see the global system in its totality, and 'societies' as units within it. Secondly, that

structure was a hierarchy: metropolis-satellite, centre-periphery. Thirdly, that hierarchy was in no way 'natural', with an international division of labour according to comparative advantage, but was historically created. Consequently the system was racked by clashes of interest at every level, both within societies and between them (class struggle and imperialism: the dirty words were back). As a conclusion, dependency insisted that the Third World would not and could not 'evolve' along Western lines. Rather, it must make a revolutionary break with past models and the capitalist world economy to establish socialism and self-reliance.

For a while, the dependency approach seemed to sweep all before it, although this was always in part a delusion as modernization theory never died. But dependency took a firm hold among Third World intelligentsias everywhere, and many of the sixties generation in the West also. Yet now history has moved on again. Almost another twenty years later, dependency theory in its turn has taken some knocks. Once more, it is a changing world that has delivered the blows. For one thing, there are the NICs (newly industrialising countries) of East Asia and Latin America, to controvert the dependency claim that capitalism had shot its bolt in the Third World. For another, China has radically changed direction and talks these days about modernization rather than struggle. In Kampuchea, 'dissociation' led to genocide; while revolution in Iran produced no socialism but a reactionary theocracy.

As a result, dependency theory is increasingly under fire. Yet the critics offer no new paradigm. If anything, the dominant note is a neo-orthodox marxism (eg, Warren) with an unmistakable whiff of the inquisition; dependency failed because it strayed from the truth of *Das Kapital*. For those who find that direction unpromising, is there another way out of the morass? I believe there is; not so much a new approach, as it happens, but a very old one whose lessons had either been forgotten or never fully learned.

## Dependency stumbles

The stumbling block for dependency theory lay in its conceptualization of the constraints of the world system. Most versions of dependency pictured structures as strait-jackets, and allowed no scope for human intervention and agency—other than the drastic option of a total break. To allow that capitalism *could* in some circumstances develop the Third World was to break faith, and to concede that modernization theory had been right all along. As Clive Hamilton has put it, to abandon 'impossibilism' was thought to imply 'inevitabilism'.

But of course this is absurd, logically and empirically. There are not that many NICs, for one thing; hence there is no reason to suppose that a global process is under way here. Indeed, everything suggests there is not. As Manfred Bienefeld and others at the Institute of Development Studies at Sussex University have argued, examination of what NICs like South Korea have actually *done* is at one level surprisingly comforting to broad dependency concerns. Despite neo-classical myths to the contrary, these are highly *étatiste* regimes. Development has been planned, not left to market forces alone, although markets have been used. Foreign investment has not been uncritically welcomed, but carefully selected, monitored and controlled. Great care and skill have been exercised to ensure effective technological transfer. And so on.

Certainly, some dependency nostrums must be abandoned in the face of the NICs' success. For some countries, patently, external orientation can work. But it is not 'capitalism', as some abstract force, which has done this. Rather, it is the conscious and skilled intervention of human actors such as policy makers and planners, clearly well aware of the perils and pitfalls of an unequal world system, who spotted a potential niche in that system and moved swiftly and effectively to fill it. For South Korea, market forces—and indeed external orientation itself—were never an end, only a means by which a resource-poor half-country could strengthen its national economy, industrialize, and generally augment its productive powers.

That last phrase—unfamiliar, probably, to those schooled in the vocabulary of productive forces and relations—gives a clue to the paternity of the approach I am suggesting

here. It comes from the vocabulary of another German, born a generation before Marx in 1789. Vastly inferior as a thinker to Marx, he nonetheless had one crucial insight that Marx missed. In his own day a prophet without honour, especially in his native Germany, he took his own life. Yet within a generation his theories were being put into practice; and since then almost every country that has industrialized owes something to him.

Friedrich List is his name: founder of the German school of 'national economics', rightwing nationalist; mostly ignored in Anglo-American economics, or else confined to a footnote about tariff barriers to protect infant industry; and recently rebaptized by his compatriot Dieter Senghaas, Mormon fashion, as the implicit grandfather of dependency theory. It would be more exact to say that List was the first to pose the problem of 'late development': that is, how do countries 2, 3, 4...n industrialize, in a world which *already* contains at least one or more industrial nations?

### What Marx missed

What List grasped (and Marx missed, or at least never systematized) here was the crucial *relational* dimension of capitalist development, as distinct from—and in a sense concretizing—its more obvious character as a *process*. For Marx, capitalism is a process which unfolds. For dependency neo-marxists, capitalism is a set of structures which strangle. For List, the former view (which he called 'cosmopolitical economy') is seriously incomplete: to accept it would run the risk of the latter. Then as now, the dominant ideology preached free trade as beneficial to all. This List roundly rejected. Free trade benefits those already industrially strong; if other states are seduced into adopting it, their markets will be overrun and they will remain backward and agrarian. Rather, late developers should protect themselves, in the first instance industrializing behind tariff barriers, creating a well proportioned economic structure in order to emerge later as strong national economies.

Anachronistically, we could say that List in a sense combined elements of both modernization and dependency perspectives. On the one hand, countries already developed do provide a model and a point of reference. On the other hand, the model is simultaneously a rival and an obstacle. Its very existence forces attempts at emulation (on pain of domination); while equally making *successful* emulation not only very difficult, but also likely to entail somewhat different strategies than the original model itself pursued, and now preaches.

Such a conceptualization has several advantages. For one thing, it re-establishes two important connections which both of the postwar development paradigms had sundered: between left and right, and between past and present. For opposite but in both

cases essentially ideological reasons, most modernization and much dependency thinking shared a sharply polarized view of capitalist *versus* socialist development strategies: a notion which the actual economic history of the last hundred years reveals to be seriously misleading. Late developers of left and right, from Japan and Russia to North and South Korea, have all in their different ways and degrees perforce played the Listian game: *reculer pour mieux sauter*, or what Wallerstein in an ugly but insightful phrase calls 'temporary neo-mercantilist semi-withdrawal'.

For any late developer, it is a *sine qua non* to first insulate yourself against the powerful gales blowing from those already advanced; a task almost inevitably entailing pervasive state economic intervention, at least in the early stages.

The other broken link which a Listian approach can mend is that between past and present. Specifically, despite the denials of many dependency perspectives, Europe *is* relevant after all. Provided that modernization's pollyanna unilinear evolutionism is replaced by Listian conflict and *real politik*, then we see in how many ways the Third World situation is *not* new (other than in degree sometimes). Much of Europe, especially eastern and southern Europe, was there before. Thus it turns out that development studies did not really spring into being only after 1945. Daniel Chivot, for instance, has shown that just about every analytical and political move in the development spectrum had already been anticipated—in debates in Romania before 1920! Further comparative research would no doubt reveal similar cases elsewhere.

Four further merits of the Listian synthesis may be mentioned. First, it effectively transcends the dreary old 'external' vs 'internal' false polarization, which has plagued debates between dependence and both its modernization and marxist critics. As it turns out, constraints are indeed external, but solutions must be internal—in a sense by definition in both cases. Second, it is strategically pragmatic. Neither 'capitalism' nor 'socialism' (whatever these fine words mean) offers a royal road. Practice, not *a priori*, is the only test. In their different situations, North Korea did right to break out; South Korea did equally right to break in. Third, Listianism avoids both the characteristic economism of dependency (as well as some mainstream development economics) and the culturalism of modernization theory, by firmly 'putting policy in command'—to adapt a phrase from Mao Zedong. *What* policy or politics will, of course crucially vary: China is not South Korea, and one should not bend the stick too far.

### Active theory

But, vitally, development in this model is active, not passive; transitive, not intransitive;

not something that just happens, but something that people make happen. This is the major Listian merit, in a sense encapsulating all the others, and in the final analysis the point is a methodological one. As against either modernization's insistence that you need do nothing (except swim with the tide) or the dependency claim that you *can* do nothing because your hands are bound, Listianism posits a more dialectical view: a theory and model of the (re-)acting subject. Structurally constrained, to be sure, but never reconciled to the inevitability of such a fate, such actors (regimes, in this instance) can kick back. It's a tough struggle, requiring both strength and skill. Many fail; some give up; others scarcely even make a serious start. But some make it: a motley crew, often an ugly one (primitive accumulation being no tea party), but effective for all that. Later, some of the political roughness may be softened by economic success; perhaps this too is a 'stage' theory.

I make no great claims for the originality of this perspective. Many, from various starting points and via diverse routes, are reaching similar conclusions. Among recent writing I would particularly cite the case studies edited by Bienefeld and Godfrey, and by Ruggie; the work of the 'Sainsbury project' group at IDS Sussex; and the still little known *oeuvre* of Senghaas and his associates. Moreover, within the broad development spectrum there were all along those who resisted easy pigeonholing into either the modernization or dependency camps. Often steeped in continental European as much as Anglo-American intellectual traditions, such figures as Reinhard Bendix, Alexander Gerschenkron, Albin Hirschman, and Gunnar Myrdal all elaborate important aspects of what I have here called the Listian development dialectic. We can still learn much from them.

As for the dialectic of development theorizing itself, perhaps in retrospect we can see modernization as Hegelian thesis, a dependency as its antithesis. But if we are neither to remain stuck in antithesis, nor effect escape by retreat back into modernization theory (*marxisant* or otherwise), then we believe the only way forward is the Listian synthesis. It does, after all, synthesize much rather than polarize, or construct hierarchies. Internal and external; economic and political (cultural, too); left and right; past and present; structure and action—all are linked in a working model whose broad outlines seem confirmed by both logic and history. Thus armed, development studies can come of age, and (to borrow from Marx) prehistory can end and its real history commence.

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Nepal's capital, Kathmandu: the state is powerless to halt economic decline.

## NEPAL'S DEEPENING CRISIS

# Clouds over Kathmandu

Growing political discontent, economic dependence and resistance to social, political and economic change have characterized modern Nepal. Piers Blaikie considers recent developments and suggests that change in the future is uncertain.

**T**HE PROBLEMS faced by the people of Nepal are very serious indeed. Long-term economic prospects for the bulk of the people are quite gloomy—but this is nothing new. Foreign agencies have written reams of reports full of quantified decline and dire predictions. But criticism alone is insufficient. Critics should also take the responsibility of reviewing the possible means of remedy. While there are no simple solutions, this article looks at the problems of the Nepalese people, speculating on the techno-political process that may alleviate these problems, and what developments in the Nepalese political economy may make these processes happen.

The 1981 census identified 93% of the population as rural, the vast majority of whom are peasants. Although as many as 20% of the peasantry work for part of their living as agricultural labourers, households which produce for use and not for the market with household labour are in a large majority.

Yet this class faces a number of crucial inter-related problems. Population pressure, declining crop fields for the past two or three decades and serious soil erosion (see *Inside Asia* Feb/March 1985) have all tended to reduce the ability of the peasantry to feed itself from its own land. There is a constant search for land in the plains of Nepal (or the *terai*,

where land can still be cleared of jungle), and to a lesser extent on very steep slopes in the hills. Additional incomes to make ends meet can sometimes be earned, as labourers in Nepal or in India as coolies, workmen, houseboys and in the Indian army. These are vital to the support of many households. In west central Nepal, for example, as many as 60% of households have such incomes. Surpluses are small and annual household budgets are often balanced within a few tens of rupees every year.

Cooperation in agricultural production is limited to some reciprocal labour called *parma*. However, individual and mutually competing strategies for survival in the face of deteriorating availability of resources (land, water, pasture and fuel) have helped to limit communal political action. Political representation is confined only to the local level (the local village council *panchayat*). On occasion

they have been able to cooperate on certain limited issues—for example, the government's attempts to tax *ghee* or the evasion of eviction orders by large numbers of illegal settlers searching for land in the forests of the *terai*. Undoubtedly the importance of earnings outside Nepal enables peasants to adjust to the adverse conditions at home more satisfactorily without losing their land, but at the same time it reduces their ability to mount sustained political or confrontational campaigns, due to the absence of the most active members of the household. Protest can take the form of hunger-marches to Kathmandu on issues such as extreme hardship.

Sometimes on specific issues too, protest has taken a more overtly political form. For example in 1982, a number of village council boundaries were redrawn as a result of the efforts of an aspiring member of the District Council, in such a way that the village headmen (*pradhan panchas*) who voted against his election could have their *panchayats* amalgamated into others, and thus effectively be disenfranchised in the election. Thus a form of crude gerrymandering was successfully engineered. The voters were small hill farmers, with a high proportion of ex-soldiers. About 1,000 marched into Baglung, the Zonal headquarters in west central Nepal, overturned ballot boxes, burnt them outside the chief Zonal officer's house, and called for the culprit's blood. Interestingly, the Zonal officer lent the culprit his horse, to flee and stay away. The boundaries of the *panchayats* have still not been redrawn. Such disturbances are not very common (two or three a year reach the national newspapers), and as yet do not threaten the status quo.

The central problem for peasants is the failure to produce enough to eat, or to sell enough to purchase the range of household requirements. 'Modern' capitalist agriculture has, by and large, failed to take root, even in the *terai* where flat land and irrigation make commercial farming of paddy wheat, oilseed and sugar-cane attractive. In the hills, there are not enough savings to purchase chemical fertilizer; high-yielding seeds are often unsuited to the highly variable environmental conditions there; and markets are often many days' walk away. So the Nepalese peasantry remains economically and politically conservative, and under severe pressure to maintain its viability.

### Labour surplus

Workers and labourers are the next most numerous group in Nepal. Rural labourers constitute some 30% of all households, and represent peasant producers, who have lost their land, unemployed 'occupational castes' and hopeful immigrants from India, who, like their Nepalese counterparts, are looking for land to settle or even buy, provided they have access to a loan. A labour surplus exists and bargaining is limited to individual labourers and their employers. Their lack of political



*Capitalist agriculture has so far failed to take root.*

organization reflects their weak position with employers. They seldom manage to secure an elected post as ward members in the local village assembly, although a few such examples do exist.

Urban workers are very few, since urban development is so limited. The only large concentration of workers occurs in the jute mills of Biratnagar, pockets within the *terai* and in the Kathmandu valley. Other urban workers, including those in hotels, cafes and garages, are usually very low paid and badly organized, since each establishment is small, the turnover of the labour force high, and employer-employee relationships tend to be personal.

Although workers' associations exist at the local level they are unable to strike legally nor have they any national negotiating rights. At present they fulfil (as the trade union movement originally did in the UK) a mutual welfare function, and have little political power. The main problem is that with few exceptions, the landless and urban workers tend to be spatially and socially fragmented, and it is these exceptions which spearheaded organized protest in the past. While most protracted labour disputes have only reached the zonal level of official action (which is almost always taken in favour of employers, and after using force and imprisonment as weapons against workers), some strikes and lock-outs in the town of Biratnagar and other *terai* towns have necessitated national level enquiries. In

a number of cases improvements in working conditions and pay have been won. However, the restrictions upon an overtly political form of expression have not been seriously challenged. The problem of forming an industrial base in Nepal lies in Nepal's dependent relation with India. The 'open frontier' allows imports from large-scale and relatively efficient factories in India such as cloth, shoes, household utensils and machinery. It is difficult for Nepalese businessmen to compete and indeed Indian imports have put many Nepalese occupational castes out of work (shoemakers, tailors and blacksmiths) who now join the ranks of landless labourers.

### Absentee landlords

Landlords are concentrated in the *terai* with far fewer in the hills. These are confined to the irrigated, paddy-growing valley floors. In the *terai* many landlords have large holdings often exceeding ten hectares. In spite of land reform measures, and farms will produce two or three crops a year. However, even here capitalist agriculture has failed to penetrate far. The classic feudal pattern of absentee landlords, share-cropping tenants, and a marked disinclination to use surplus to increase production (eg, sinking tubewells, buying machinery and modern inputs) can be found here. However, this class is the traditional class in Nepal and many of the present landlords are descended from those who



Indian goods flood the market, and local industry hasn't a chance.

received huge land grants from the king and from the ruling family in return for political favours or military service in the past. Many of them are absentee landlords, live in Kathmandu and are involved in senior administrative positions, in real-estate and other business enterprises, particularly those involving tourism and housing for foreign residents. In addition many individual families have invested in state power through education and other Kathmandu-based non-productive sources of revenue.

### Mercantile power

Merchants and contractors are an economically important class in Nepal. Their political representation tends to be informal and behind-the-scenes, which belies their degree of representation in government. Since most of Nepal's trade is linked to India, there is a distributory network of Indian imports, handled by very large traders operating in the *terai* towns on either side of the border, who then despatch goods to smaller wholesalers in the hills. The major exports from Nepal are wheat and rice or paddy, and the surplus from the *terai* tends to move south to India both legally and illegally, rather than to the food-deficit hills. Enormous fortunes are to be made smuggling across the open frontier—usually gold (brought back to Nepal by returning mercenary soldiers), machinery and cloth from India; and wheat, rice/paddy, 'fancy'

goods (imported from Hongkong and Japan and sold to Indian customers); foreign currencies; and fertilizers, because of high subsidies paid to Nepalese farmers, it pays them not to use them on their own land in Nepal, but to sell them illegally in India. Because of the penetration into Nepal of Indian goods, capital and increasingly personal control of enterprises by Indians, the latter's industries and handicrafts have been destroyed along classical underdevelopment lines. The accumulated surpluses that certainly exist are used in merchanting, real-estate, labour contracts and smuggling, rather than committed to productive enterprises. The enormous difficulties of running industrial enterprises in Nepal can easily be imagined. In these ways, Nepal is locked into a mercantilist stage of development, which is the main reason why the *industrial bourgeoisie*, the 'business class', is virtually absent as a class there.

### Organized student protests

The most organized forms of protest, rather than class struggle, have come from students, the university and the very small, but spatially concentrated *petty bourgeoisie* in Kathmandu and in several other large towns. This was most clearly seen during one of the few opportunities the Nepalese people have had to participate legally in politics. On 2 May 1980 a referendum was held to determine the people's choice over whether to continue a par-

ticular form of representation and government, the *panchayat system*, or adopt a 'multi-party system' (more akin to western notions of universal franchise) in which voters decide between competing political parties. The referendum was brought about by (and fuelled) noisy, open politicking and criticism of the status quo. During the months leading up to the referendum, political rallies were once more permitted, and a large number of demonstrations took place. Student leaders were arrested, kept in prison and then released weeks or months later. Members of the intelligentsia and petty bourgeoisie took part in many of the demonstrations. However, these were an urban phenomenon; the countryside and small hill towns remained untouched. Since the referendum political protest has faltered, opposition parties (again banned after the *panchayat* system continued after receiving 51% of the vote) fragmented, and their leaders incorporated by various inducements.

Foremost, there is a crisis of production both in agriculture and industry. There is little sign of a business class emerging in society, who could perhaps take over the state and mould it along 'efficient', 'rational' and 'business-like' lines. Also there is little evidence of a rising working class. Instead, a peasantry exists without the political or economic means to transform itself.

### State to intervene?

The state so far has been unable to intervene effectively. There are many issues which are beyond the power of one state to influence in any way at all. Nepal's problems—both the failure to produce enough and the rather slow pressures for political change—are very pronounced, but the *technical* requirements of an effective state in an environment such as Nepal's are formidable.

Nepalese history has not resulted in the development of the institutions of state which could meet these challenges. Nepal has never been colonized. It fought a militarily inconclusive war with the British East India Company to keep out direct British colonial occupation. Since the Treaty of Sugouli in 1816, Nepal has managed to preserve its independence. The ruling class of the day, a military and land-owning aristocracy, was able to sign a treaty with the British which preserved Nepal's political independence, and from then on it kept Britain at arm's length. In essence Nepal was a 'tributary' state in which surpluses were created by a peasantry who were coerced into clearing and working the land and providing *corvée* labour for local military administrators and land owners. Part of this surplus was passed onto the ruling clique in Kathmandu. Control of trade between India and China plus the sale of valuable timber in the *terai* also provided additional valuable sources of revenue. Naturally, the maintenance of law and order, security of the country and surveillance of rival factions in the capital were the main objectives of those



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in power. An effective administration with widespread legitimacy and support did not need to be built up.

The economic problems of the country began to appear more acutely in the twentieth century. There was and still is a conspicuous failure to raise revenue—at present it is estimated that government revenue amounts to less than 5% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The peasantry are simply too poor to pay much tax, and the rich merchants, contractors and the few landlords merely evade taxation altogether. Secondly, as the hill areas increasingly suffered from population pressure and produced less surpluses for the ruling class, the *terai* became increasingly vital to the maintenance of that ruling class and the viability of the state itself. However, the state has shown a continuing inability to control the remaining surpluses which were being produced in the *terai* because of increasing Indian control of trade and land, and powerful class forces, including elements of the landed aristocracy, which benefited privately from this national haemorrhage of smuggling and flows of resources into India. A lack of options now is all too plain. Taxes cannot be increased, saleable timber is running out, and the Tibet-Indian trade has been slowed to a trickle by the incorporation of Tibet into China.

### Foreign aid intervention

During the past fifteen years or so, those dilemmas were removed by the massive interventions of foreign aid. Indeed, foreign aid in some ways fills the gap created by the inability of the state to raise revenue, to undertake the staggering task of raising agricultural production, mobilize savings, invest in irrigation and power plants and so on—but only fills the gap for the more fortunate classes who can benefit.

Nepal, as a small country, has tended to attract much more multilateral aid per head than its larger neighbours, and indeed the

growth of bilateral aid during the late 1960s and 1970s has made Nepal one of the world's highest recipients of aid per head. Since 1970 budget deficits have been steadily growing (from around Rs. 450 million to Rs. 2,500 million in 1982), and these have been financed by foreign grants, some foreign borrowing and to a diminishing extent by domestic borrowing. Currently about two thirds of Nepal's total public sector outlay and 90% of Nepal's development budget is financed by foreign aid or soft loans. The *economic* impact of aid is overwhelming. *Politically*, foreign aid has both modified but has also extended the viability of the state. It has put off the process of social change, particularly at the heart of the political power in the Kathmandu valley.

### Constructive pessimism

As in most countries necessary and progressive change requires the implementation of a series of 'techno-political' decisions. Production needs to be raised, through re-forestation, field terrace levelling, new varieties of foodgrain, minor irrigation works and so on. But all of them have strong political implications and preconditions. In the case of hill agriculture, for example, many soil and water management and forestry decisions can only be taken communally. Such cooperation should and sometimes is encouraged by discretionary grants to successfully cooperating villages. However, most of the production improvements in agriculture will have to accept that the rural population is a peasantry, or aspires to be part of it. Micro-credit for very small farmers, as is being successfully supplied by the Asian Development Bank, and research and development into improved seeds and agricultural practice are ways forward. There is, as yet, simply no other political initiative which might lead in time to a 'mixed agricultural economy' such as in Vietnam or China. The problem is that very little can be done for those who do not have access to land, and such development strategy aims only to tread water at best. Still, there *are* technical opportunities for increased production.

Impetus for social change, however, does not come from the countryside, so much as from students, the new class of technocratic and often foreign-trained bureaucrats, and other politically-motivated people in the Kathmandu valley and *terai*. A string of cosmetic constitutional changes to the present unrepresentative form of government will probably not be enough to divert slowly growing dissent. The political form of protest for more effective and less corrupt government at present is fragmented. Opposition parties are officially banned and ideologically split, and incorporation of their leaders into lucrative economic opportunities constantly undermines organized political opposition. The main force for change therefore probably comes from the growing body of skilled and politically aware bureaucrats and state func-

tionaries, some of whom have succeeded in reaching positions of effective decision-making. Time and time again, it is the personality and skill of a Nepalese administrator which has proved to be the decisive factor in successful projects (and the same can be said of foreign consultants).

Nepal's relationship with India is another major cause of its underdevelopment. The problem lies in the 'leaky frontier' and the powerful class interests on either side which maintain it in that condition. There *are* resources and surpluses for investment in Nepal, but, like Nepal's soils, they too slide south. Renegotiation of trade and transit treaties is very difficult indeed, given the powerful interests ranged against an outcome which may benefit the poorer classes in Nepal. Clearly, better policing of the frontier would help, but smuggling is a normal mode of transaction (as elsewhere in the world), and a new political mobilization would only help dam the flow. Only a radical change in the nature of the state and the class that controls it would bring this about. Indian cooperation is also required. It may be rational for India to be very generous to Nepal and allow Nepalese goods into India, but to forgo that right for selected Indian goods to have access to Nepalese markets and hence encourage selected Nepalese industries to develop. It may be rational for India to finance massive soil and water management projects in Nepal and so reduce the extent of flooding and siltation of irrigation ditches in the Indian plains. But politics works rather on the balance of power of sectional interests, and not usually on the state intervening above the competing interests for 'the good of all'. So India continues to exact conditions from Nepal that help to keep Nepal in a state of dependence and underdevelopment—and pays the price for in terms of floods and siltation in its most populous areas.

It is not so much impoverishment of the Nepalese peasantry and landless which will bring about progressive social change. It will be the slow but growing dissent and, when the time comes, the fast-moving and unpredictable nature of political change which will bring this about. A demand for a more genuine representative form of government, a reaction against corruption, a more nationalist (and frequently anti-Indian) spirit, the politicization of a hunger march—all of these have an increasing chance of mobilization for more permanent political change. But the technical challenge of growing enough food and producing the daily needs of the people of Nepal remains.

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Workers at a cigarette factory in Java: the government aims to keep labour cheap and under control.

JENNY MATTHEWS: FORMAT

## INDONESIA'S TRADES UNIONS

# An instrument of control

On her recent visit to Indonesia, Mrs. Thatcher told President Suharto: 'Our cultures are diverse, but when it comes to defending independence and freedom, we are at one with you'. Here **Elizabeth Marlow** analyses the independence and freedom available to Indonesian workers to organize genuine trade unions.

**T**HE RECESSION has hit Indonesia's weak industrial sector hard, resulting in mass layoffs and a declining value of real wages. An inquiry into workers' basic needs and wage levels in 1983-4 carried out by the All-Indonesia Labour Federation (FBSI), sponsored by the Brussels-based International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), has revealed that official minimum wage levels are some 50-80% below minimum physical needs. Such minimum wages are advisory rather than statutory, and actual wages are usually even lower. In Greater Jakarta only some 10,000 industrial workers receive a wage equal to, or higher than, the local minimum, while 200,000 receive less. Not surprisingly, 'the demands of the belly', as Indonesian workers put it, lie at the base of many industrial actions. The response of the military regime has been to strengthen

further the hand of the state in cracking down on worker unrest.

For the past five years, a group in Holland has been monitoring trade union rights in Indonesia, publishing annual booklets on the theme 'Indonesian workers and their right to organize'. The 1985 'update' was issued recently. This documents the particular combination of brute force and mass ideological manipulation which characterize the Suharto regime's approach to labour relations, and reveals how the handling of labour relations is being centralized into the hands of an increasingly militarized Ministry of Manpower.

The Indonesian Ministry of Manpower is headed by Admiral Sudomo. Sudomo was previously head of the notorious KOPKAMTIB Operational Command for the Restoration of Security and Order, which, as its name suggests,

is a major instrument of repression of the Suharto regime; he was transferred to the Ministry of Manpower early in 1983, especially to head off industrial strife resulting from the recession and the 1983 devaluation of the rupiah.

### 'Father figure'

Sudomo tries to cultivate a populist image, and has promoted himself as the 'guiding father figure' for all labour problems. He appears in the press on almost a daily basis, appealing in a chatty way to workers to bring their problems to him. However, no one should be fooled by Sudomo's apparent championing of workers' rights. When he went to the ministry he took most of his close KOPKAMTIB aides with him, and has since been busy militarizing his civil servants. One Indonesian newspaper revealed in February that, in an attempt to 'increase discipline and productivity', all employees of the ministry are to be organized into brigades and battalions and given uniforms. Those at head office will be trained by soldiers from the Jakarta district military command.

When challenged, Sudomo is not above reminding his audience of his KOPKAMTIB background and his readiness to use its

methods. The direct intervention of military or police units in particular industrial incidents, often under KOPKAMTIB command, remains common.

Meanwhile the nationwide programme of mass ideological indoctrination is being intensified. The state ideology, recently made compulsory by law for all organizations, is based on 'five principles', or *Pancasila*. According to this, and in stark contrast to everyday reality, everything is supposed to be resolved on the basis of 'togetherness, family principles, and consensus decision-making'—a conscious attempt to root out any notions of class struggle. The head of the body overseeing the *Pancasila* Indoctrination Programme is General Sarwo Edhie Wibowo, a man notorious for his part in the rout in 1965-66 of communists and many others in Jakarta and Central Java, in which hundreds of thousands were massacred. His appointment underscores the violence which lies behind the indoctrination programme.

As with other areas of Indonesian life, *Pancasila* has been applied to industrial relations. Workers are enjoined to be the 'partners' of their employers and government. Although the right to strike is still guaranteed by law for all enterprises except 'vital' ones, it is held to be incompatible with *Pancasila* and thus deemed subversive. As Sudomo said in September 1984: 'In giving life to *Pancasila* and putting it into practice, it is certain that there will be a decrease in the cases of restlessness, slowdowns, voicing of feelings or dismissals'.

## Pancasila no panacea

To get the message across, compulsory *Pancasila* indoctrination courses, held for several years for civil servants, teachers, academics and others, have now been extended to the industrial workforce. In 1984, such courses were held, for example, at PT Unilever Indonesia and the Jakarta Hilton Hotel. On these occasions, it is also usual for a new-style 'common agreement' to be forced onto the workforce. These common agreements replace the collective labour agreements of before, and, being drawn up to a standard format, are further than ever removed from any semblance of collective bargaining.

Another such indoctrination course was held in 1984 at PT Sandratex, a textile factory in Tangerang, in West Java. In 1982, 4,000 Sandratex workers went on strike for a wage increase to the official minimum level and the implementation of a collective agreement to which the company had agreed in 1977. Following the joint intervention of local officials of the military, police, manpower office and the FBSI, and a meeting between workers and management at which most workers refused to speak for fear of dismissal, the 35 who did speak up lost their jobs. Since then the Indonesian textile sector has suffered from both the recession and western protectionism, and it is likely that this factory will have carried out mass layoffs. For the remainder, *Pancasila* courses set the tone. No one yet knows the extent to which workers

who have suffered such treatment can both see through, and mobilize against these indoctrination courses.

On occasion Sudomo has argued in favour of trade unions. Like many other repressive regimes, the Indonesian military feels that the presence of 'yellow' trade unions in certain sectors is useful for channelling and containing workers' grievances. All Indonesian unions must be affiliated to the FBSI, the sole labour federation, which was set up by the military in 1973. Not surprisingly, this federation has a long record of collaboration with the military and the employers, for example in several types of tripartite organization set up to 'detect and defuse' discontent. However, it appears that Sudomo has not been impressed with the ability of the FBSI to keep workers' grievances in check, and, whereas he used to refer to his relationship with the FBSI as a 'partnership', he is now increasingly treating the FBSI as little more than an extension of his ministry.

The presence of the FBSI and its member unions, however collaborationist and corrupt at the top, has served to remind Indonesia's workers that they do have a right to organize in defence of their interests. At the turn of the 1980s, before the current recession began to bite hard, there was a sudden upsurge in worker demands for organization, as well as protests against their appalling working conditions and wage levels. In many cases, the workers chose to organize themselves within the FBSI, this being the only way they could do so legitimately. They soon found their initiatives taken over by FBSI officials and channelled into inactivity. But organize they did, and this is likely to be one source of Sudomo's discontent with the FBSI.

## More restrictions on unions

There are signs that Sudomo wishes to limit further the narrow area in which FBSI unions can operate. At present, only private sector workers are allowed to form unions. By Presidential Decree No. 82 (1971) all public sector workers must belong to KORPRI, the Public Servants' Corps, whose job it is, also according to decree, to maintain political stability and to increase the allegiance of state employees to both state and government. KORPRI's organization runs parallel to that of the government's hierarchy, with its central board chaired by the Minister of Internal Affairs.

Enterprises in which the government owns part or all of the shares are amongst the largest in Indonesia, and include companies operating in the steel industry, oil and natural gas, construction, chemicals, transport, import and export, as well as banks and agricultural estates. The plantation sector alone, for example, accounts for two million families. All these workers have no right to unionize.

Plantation workers in particular suffer gross abuse. An Indonesian journalist recently concluded that it was better to be a contract-labourer on the colonial estates than a day-labourer under today's conditions. Contrast this to the 1946-1965 period, when SARBUPRI, the plan-

tation workers' union associated with the Indonesian Communist Party, was a mass organization, successful in obtaining many changes to the benefit of its members.

It seems that KORPRI's sphere of influence is being extended to exclude ever more workers from the right to organize. A Presidential Decree passed last year (No. 4 1984) states that all employees of private enterprises in which the government owns a share (sic) must belong to KORPRI.

## US links

On the international front, the FBSI was intended to appear independent and so deflect any criticism that Indonesian workers might not have the right to organize. For many years, and in contrast to its inability to carry out the domestic task set for it by the Suharto regime, the FBSI seems to have been successful enough in its international role. Its head, Agus Sudono, with the backing particularly of the American AFL-CIO (according to the America-Asia Free Labour Institute, US trade unions contributed US \$2,740,000 to the FBSI during the period 1974 to 1984), has achieved considerable prominence in both the ILO and the ICFTU.

All the same, a top-level ICFTU mission to Indonesia in January 1984, which included Moss Evans of the British TUC, Wim Kok of the Dutch FNV, as well as Irving Browne of the AFL-CIO, has led, in spite of filibustering by the Americans and Asians, to ICFTU criticisms of both the Indonesian government and the FBSI leadership. Wim Kok in particular saw the situation very clearly. Following his visit, and to the consternation of the Americans, Kok stated in the Dutch press that 'on very essential points there is no right for the Indonesian trade union movement to defend the interests of its members'. He added that 'in Indonesia it appeared to the delegation that the official trade union movement, just like the whole of life in that country, is entirely dominated by the military. They occupy the administration at all levels.'

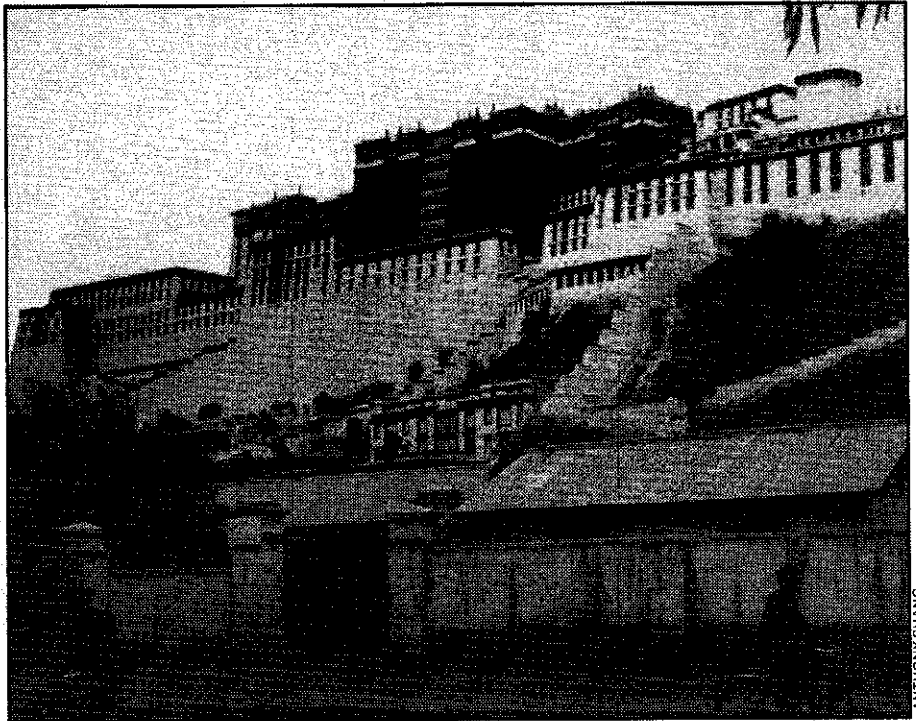
For the past two years, as a result of the extreme difficulties brought to Indonesian workers by the recession, the previous level of industrial unrest has substantially died away. But the desperate need for a living wage continues to push workers to air their discontent, and to demand the freedom and independence to form genuine trade unions denied them by a brutal military regime and its international supporters.

*Indonesian Workers and Their Right to Organize*, published by INDOC (Indonesian Documentation and Information Centre), Postbus 11250, 2301 EG Leiden, Netherlands. Book, 1981 £3; Updates 1982, 1983, 1984, 1985, 50p each. All available from TAPOL, British Campaign for Defence of Political Prisoners and Human Rights in Indonesia, 8a Treport Street, London SW18 2BP.





ANTHONY SHANG



ANTHONY SHANG

Tibet is now open for tourists: the Dalai Lama's former palace is one of the attractions.

## TIBET PREPARES FOR THE TOURISTS

# Lama's lament

As Tibet prepares for its twentieth anniversary, it is also ready for an enormous influx of tourists, the basis of its new prosperity. On his recent visit there **Anthony Shang** found the Tibetan culture under greater threat from consumerism than from Han chauvinism.

**N**EW HOTELS, shopping arcades, and a modern workers' sanatorium in Lhasa are the most visible signs of a massive construction boom on the eve of Tibet's twentieth anniversary as an Autonomous Region this September.

Life is indeed changing fast for the Autonomous Region's 1.8 million Tibetans. Beijing is now convinced it has introduced the right policies to enable Tibet to catch up, the region having lagged in economic terms behind the rest of China for the last three decades. The official nod has been given to the rapid development of the service sector, notably tourism, in an attempt to boost incomes.

Today, nearly 35,000 people, half of Lhasa's workforce, are working in restaurants, shops, hotels and transportation. This represents a threefold increase since 1983 and in recent months the Chinese press has

highlighted dozens of Tibetan success stories, including a thriving privately owned taxi company in Lhasa.

### Tourist flood

As Tibet's doors open to foreign tourists—40,000 expected this summer alone—there is money to be made; at least for Tibetans in Lhasa, Shigatse and Gyantse.

Most of the tourists so far have been low budget travellers coming from or en route to Nepal. Movement between the two countries has increased significantly since the opening of the common border in March this year.

Preparations for the tourist boom are visible almost everywhere. A new road is being built between Lhasa and the airport 90 km away, cutting the present 4-7 hour bus journey across the Tibetan desert by more than half. New hotels, such as the luxury 2000-bed Lhasa Hotel, are near completion and will accom-

modate rich tourists who are being charged anything from \$5,000 for the Tibetan tour.

On the surface, it seems that Tibet's harsh climate, poor soil and backward infrastructure would preclude any option other than developing commerce and service trades. Successive climatic disasters—heavy spring snow followed by summer droughts—have to some extent blunted the impact of the economic reforms introduced in 1980. Livestock sales have certainly suffered, although the 1984 grain harvest showed an impressive 30% increase over the previous year.

### Political obstacle removed

It was only after the sacking of Ren Rong, Tibet's hardline Party Secretary, and his replacement by Yin Fatang, a Tibetan-speaking veteran to the region, in 1980 that the economic reforms really got under way. Compulsory grain procurement by the state was abolished, allowing farmers to dispose of their produce as they please. Tibetan farmers were also allowed to return to traditional crops such as chingko (hill barley) and changes in the comparative price of barley and wheat were ordered so as to increase barley supply. Households could also breed livestock belong-

ing to brigades, with a free rein to dispose of the produce.

Further reforms last year were announced in an attempt to boost rural incomes. Tax holidays on agriculture and animal husbandry were extended to 1990 and contracted leases on land extended to thirty years, enabling farmers to make forward plans on land use. With the abolition of compulsory labour, Tibetans recruited on state construction projects can now actually earn lucrative incomes.

It is true that per capita income has increased 50% to farmers earning Rmb 317 between 1983 and 1984. Tibet can also boast its share of farmers earning Rmb 10,000 per year. However, these figures obscure the stark poverty in which most Tibetans, particularly those outside the cash economy, still live.

Even in Lhasa, living conditions—in particular hygiene and basic sanitation—are appalling. Health care delivery is poor and the literacy rate embarrassing low. Beggars, young and old, roam freely in the market place and some are permanent 'fixtures' in popular eating houses.

### Enter consumerism

This state of backwardness is not due to a shortage of funds as since 1952, Tibet's dependence on state subsidies has been almost total. The central government has so far pumped over Rmb 8 billion (US\$3 billion) into the region. But rather than vitalizing Tibet's productive capacity, most of the funds have been swallowed up by Tibet's burgeoning administration and by purchases of fuel and consumer goods from neighbouring provinces. Sunglasses, cassettes and TV sets are today easily available in Lhasa, an irony perhaps, since it is almost impossible to find a shop selling pens or pencils.

In an attempt to supply southern Tibet with essential consumer items such as matches, tea bricks, biscuits and glassware, Beijing has encouraged cross-border trade with Nepal. Poor transport links mean that consumer supplies can be more easily transported across the Himalayas than from the neighbouring provinces of Yunnan, Sichuan or Qinghai.

With the development of commerce and service trades, the demand for fuel is also likely to increase. At present most of Tibet's fuel supplies have to be transported by tankers from Xinjiang Autonomous Region in the far north west of China. Developing the region's own energy resources is therefore a priority, and a UNDP-assisted geothermal project located 90 km north of Lhasa is currently in its exploratory phase.

### Initiatives needed

Low educational standards are a burning issue for Tibetan leaders who are worried that without better educational opportunities, very few Tibetans will reap the fruits of modernization. Enrolment rates, even at primary level, are shockingly low. Last year, only 600 Tibetans graduated from college and technical



Beggars are often seen on the streets of Lhasa.

schools.

To increase the number of graduates, a 10% increase in state expenditure in 1985 has been announced. Mandatory grants are now available for Tibetan and other ethnic minority students, even for primary education. This year, 1,300 Tibetans will be sent to special middle schools in Shanghai, Lanzhou, Chengdu and other cities, and plans have been approved to build a university in Lhasa.

The shortage of skills is being made up by a further inflow of Chinese. Over the next few years, 2,500 teachers from other provinces are to be drafted in. Construction workers have been sent from as far away as Zhejiang province on the eastern seaboard to build a new hospital and gymnasium, just two of the 43 prestige projects planned to mark the twentieth anniversary of the Autonomous Region.

Whilst generally pleased with the economic reforms, Tibetan leaders like Baingen Erdini Qoigy Gyaincai, vice-chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, have expressed anxieties over the status of Tibetan culture and language. Although 60% of local government posts are filled by Tibetans, many jobs still require examination passes in Chinese.

It will require more than economic measures to mollify the suspicions and even hatred that many Tibetans have of the Han Chinese. Memories of the destruction of monasteries by Red Guards are difficult to erase. In a complete reversal of policy, Beijing now encourages Lama Buddhism and monasteries, and shrines are being restored at the state's expense.

### Chauvinism ever present

The extension to Tibet of the nationwide crackdown on crime in 1983 has, however, affected the goodwill earned by Chinese

leaders for their economic reforms. Tibetan exiles claim that prominent Buddhists and political dissidents, such as Lama Geshe Lobsang Wangchu and Tamden Tsering, were among the 2,000 Tibetans arrested in the summer of 1983 for alleged anti-social and economic crimes.

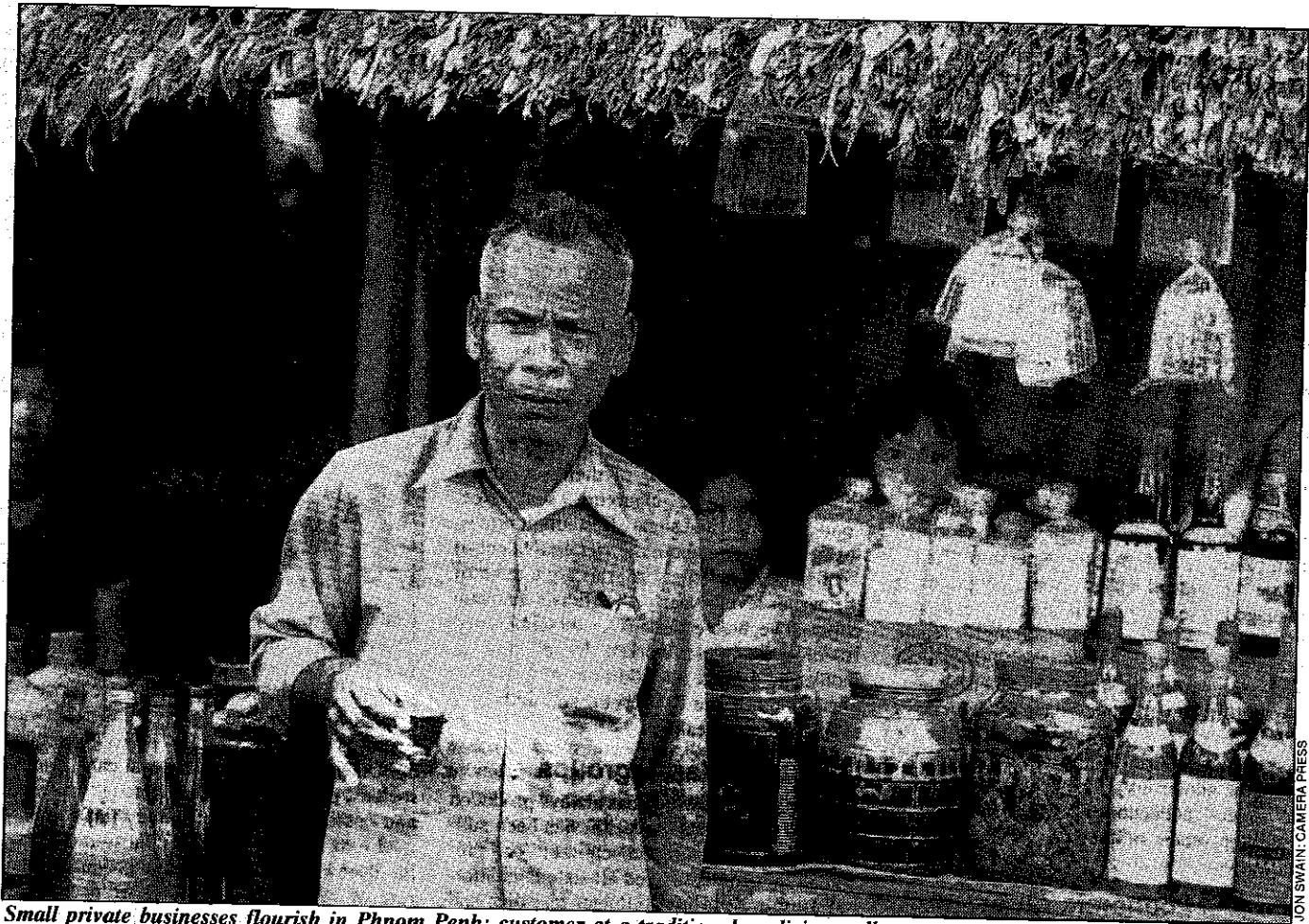
Han chauvinism, however, is primarily manifested in personal attitudes rather than institutionalized forms of discrimination. The disrespect for local customs shown by Chinese day-trippers, when visiting the sacred Potala palace with their straw hats, sunglasses and blazing stereo cassette recorder is hardly conducive to better race relations. The fact that most of the Chinese in Tibet did not settle there by choice does not improve matters either.

Scuffles are now almost daily occurrences at the sacred burial site outside Lhasa. Crowds of pleasure-seeking Chinese, keen to catch a glimpse of Tibetan corpses being chopped and fed to the vultures, are regularly stoned off by funeral workers.

Yet it is not the influx of Han Chinese that poses the only threat to Tibetan culture in the future. Already the growth of tourism is creating new expectations and habits. Young Tibetans are exposed to the latest pop songs from the West and kung fu movies are shown to packed houses every night. Tourists are frequently being surrounded by cash-thirsty Tibetans eager to sell their jewellery, antiques and religious ornaments.

This surge towards modernity has happened so fast that nobody has really bothered to ask the average Tibetan whether they would be willing to abandon their traditional lifestyle.

Anthony Shang is a freelance journalist.



Small private businesses flourish in Phnom Penh: customer at a traditional medicine stall.

## PHNOM PENH REVISITED

# Gone is the gloom

After six and a half years of existence, during which it has been ostracized by a large part of the world community, the People's Republic of Kampuchea has begun to develop an identity and a quiet self-confidence. **Michael Vickery** reports on his impressions from his recent visit there, and on the changes since his previous visit four years earlier.

**I**N JANUARY THIS YEAR the People's Republic of Kampuchea (PRK) celebrated its sixth anniversary, a longer life than either Pol Pot's Democratic Kampuchea (DK) which lasted from April 1975 to January 1979 or Lon Nol's Khmer Republic (March 1970 to April 1975). It is also as long as Sihanouk's Sangkum lasted after the Prince cut loose from US aid in 1964 and attempted to conduct his Royal Buddhist Socialism on the country's

own resources. Not only has the PRK enjoyed a relatively long life for a Cambodian regime, it has made steady, if slow progress, whereas its predecessors were in decline long before their terms came to an end.

Tangible, if superficial, signs of progress in comparison with my last visit in 1981 were visible from the moment of arrival at Pochentong airport, with the Soviet aircraft and crew supplied to the new Cambodian airline. The

airport was neater and official personnel wore new well-cut uniforms. Amongst the arrivals was Dr Nuth Savoeun, an official in the Ministry of Health, returning from a trip to France, dressed in a spiffy grey suit and with a cargo of medicines. He is one of the PRK officials without any revolutionary past and yet is able to undertake missions to western countries.

The next day, a Sunday, we travelled with a foreign ministry guide to a rural area 30 km north of Phnom Penh, to Phnom Prasith, to visit a *kathen*, the annual festival for presenting new robes to monks and other donations to temples.

The lively crowd in holiday finery proved that old traditions are still alive, and the copious dishes prepared for monks and cele-

brants and to which odd guests like ourselves were eagerly invited, proved that hunger had long been banished, even though we were not in one of the country's most fertile areas. The following Sunday we went to Oudong Hill, north west of Phnom Penh and previously inaccessible for 'security reasons'. I found it to be, as it was twenty years ago, a favourite weekend picnic spot where people stroll among the old royal tombs. There was a lively *kathen* at a neighbouring temple; and the lack of private automobiles was the only clear difference from pre-war times.

On the streets of Phnom Penh people are slightly better dressed than in 1981, appear somewhat better fed, and there are visibly more private shops for repair of radios, tape recorders, and assorted appliances, for photography and film processing, even automobile repair and upholstery. Although importation of private vehicles is virtually non-existent, and private ownership of cars is not guaranteed by law, some people have managed to recover cars not totally destroyed during 1975-79, and painstakingly repair them. One proud relic was a 1960s Lancia with traces of dents still in its panelling, being outfitted with plates on a Phnom Penh street.

Another indication of increasing prosperity were the numerous colourful stalls set up for *kathen* cash collections from passers-by, to be used for repair of temples and support of monks.

### Economic élite

Individual incomes originate in state salaries, market trading, or private artisanal work, all of which are legal. The economic élite in this nominally socialist society in which the state lays claim to all land, all dwellings, and even all cars, are not state functionaries existing on salaries, but private traders and artisans, and probably farmers in the better agricultural areas.

On an excursion just a few kilometres outside of Phnom Penh on Highway 1, the road to Ho Chi Minh City, we saw a woman seated beneath her traditional stilt-supported house at a hand loom. She was making a chequered type of cloth used for head covering, bathing sarongs or for wrapping possessions on trips.

The weaving, she said, was her full-time occupation. After calculating the prices of her raw materials, the number of pieces she wove in a day, and their sale price, her gross monthly profit averaged 1800 *riels*. This was \$120 at the official rate of exchange or \$36 in the free market, and constitutes more than three times the highest state salary. This amount will buy 360 kilograms of rice, enough to feed 24 people for a month, or 40 kilograms of beef, or 90 of sugar.

State salaries, in contrast, even after two rises since 1980, are only between 140 and 500 *riels*. There was probably a dual purpose in setting them so low when money was reintroduced in April 1980—to check infla-

tion, given the penury of goods, and to demonstrate that PRK officials, unlike those of Lon Nol or Sihanouk, were not meant to accumulate wealth by virtue of their positions. This is emphasized in the frequent political education sessions which all state employees must attend. They are considered as cadres who are to serve the people and the country, not use their places in the system to become a privileged class. The difference in pay between experienced workers and their bosses is small, and the director of a pharmaceutical factory told me that his skilled employees with bonuses and family allowances may take home more than he does.

Everyone agrees it is impossible to live on a salary, and all must engage in extra income producing activities, even it is only resale on the free market of part of their subsidized rations of kerosene, cigarettes, soap, rice, condensed milk and sugar. Restaurant prices, for example, are about the *riel* equivalent of 1960s prices, whereas salaries are a tenth of the earlier level. Nearly all officials maintain personal vegetable gardens, as do schools and Buddhist temples, worked by pupils and monks, and these, in addition to supplying cheap food, serve to keep urban inhabitants aware of rural realities.

### Solidarity groups

The rural sector, which has always produced most of the country's wealth, has been subjected to a minimum of discipline. With pre-war usury eliminated and all state land allotted for use, peasants no longer fear debt and the resulting loss of land, and the pledging of land for debt is forbidden by the constitution which guarantees land allotments for production and the inheritance of such rights.

Until 1983 there were no taxes or forced state deliveries, and all surplus beyond the farmers' own needs could legally be sold on the free market. If the country has not yet achieved self-sufficiency in rice, it is primarily because of several years of flooding or drought, compounded in some areas by improperly devised irrigation works of the Pol Pot period. Another problem, which may be the crucial limiting factor, is lack of draught animals, water buffalo and cattle, a legacy of the 1970-1975 war and careless slaughtering in the inter-regime anarchy of 1979.

Farmers are organized in 'solidarity groups' ranging from family cultivation on plots allotted at the beginning of the season, through an intermediate stage, including over half the rural population, in which preparatory field labour is communal, but subsequent work, harvesting and disposal are family affairs, to the most advanced type in which all labour is communal and the participants are rewarded at the end of the season in kind and in cash according to a point system. Tools and animals, except for those purchased by the group, remain personal property.

Each family also has a private house and cultivation plot of 1500-2000 square metres



At an officers' training school in Kampuchea

which they may use as they see fit as well as dispose freely of all its produce.

The solidarity groups are encouraged to sell surplus to the state and in fact are expected to plan for such sale. In 1984 the state was prepared to buy rice, maize, beans and tobacco. Other products, such as sugar cane, watermelons, poultry and ducks, were not included and could be sold on the free market.

From 1983, a 'patriotic contributions' tax has been levied on agricultural produce at the rate of 80 to 120 kilograms of paddy per hectare according to productivity of the land. Other crops may be taxed in cash.

A major problem, recognized by the authorities, in obtaining surplus from agriculture for feeding the town, investment and export, is the production of tools and consumer goods to exchange with the rural sector; and this determines the direction of industrial redevelopment. In the present and near future the tasks of the country's small industrial base are to satisfy the demand for agricultural implements and articles of daily use, and to transform agricultural products into commodities.

### Slow economic growth

Industrial reconstruction since 1979 has been disappointingly slow. The only industries satisfying both demand and plan are the cigarettes and soft drinks factories. Otherwise both plan and need remain unfulfilled, and the two main reasons, as given both by the Ministry of Industry and personnel in three factories visited, are insufficient raw material and lack of electrical power. A prime example is the rubber industry, one area in which Cambodia has the potential for raw material self-sufficiency. According to the workers, raw rubber supplies are now adequate, but the factory operates under capacity because of insufficient chemicals which must be imported. Textile factory staff complained, on the other



trainees practice with their Soviet-made weapons. Some may even train in the USSR.

hand, that lack of local raw cotton prevents them from operating at capacity or satisfying public demand. The same problem impedes production at the jute bag plant in Battambang.

Although such basic raw material deficiencies may be overcome by local efforts, and the energy problem is being alleviated (a new USSR-built electricity plant was opened in November), some imports, such as chemicals, are required in nearly all industries, and Cambodia will have difficulty acquiring them as long as its trade and financial positions are exacerbated by western opposition to the PRK.

In the face of insufficient production and with the impossibility of normal foreign trade, commodity demand is satisfied by the free market, supplied by smuggling across the Thai border or by ship from Singapore, and tolerated to an unexpected extent in a 'socialist' country. Until 1983 there was no state control of the market, nor even any taxation. Now, however, second-hand book stalls pay 90 *riels* tax per month, rice dealers 180 *riels*, and the wealthy silver and gold shops 320 and 1000 *riels* respectively. These rates are very moderate for traders in a country starved of even basic commodities and in which market wealth contrasts strikingly with low salaries. Unfortunately, frivolous and even noxious items occupy important places in the markets. A doctor at one of the largest hospitals said that they often have to send patients to the market for prescribed drugs instead of supplying them free, even though the quality is uncontrollable and counterfeit drugs have occasionally caused deaths.

### Cultural revival

If the economy gives cause for concern, cultural revival after the bleak Pol Pot years offers a brighter picture. When the PRK came to power in 1979 they promised a restoration of Buddhism, and that promise has been kept.

Temples have been reopened and repaired, monks ordained, and traditional festivals, such as the *kathen*, revived. There are limits though, due to the country's precarious economic situation. Men under fifty are not supposed to be ordained, as they are needed in productive work; but exceptions may be seen. Temples are normally opened at local request, but where several once clustered in wealthy neighbourhoods, only one is now permitted to function, and temples which once might have housed 20-30 monks are now limited to four or five.

Islam, Cambodia's second recognized national religion, and the faith of the Cham minority, is also flourishing. No previous regime made such efforts to integrate the Chams into the country's mainstream: At Chrui Changvar, a Cham community across the river from Phnom Penh, an imam told me that over half the pre-revolutionary population have returned and the three mosques are functioning again. The Chams there, as before, cultivate fruit orchards and raise fish, which they sell on the free market, earning 40-60 *riels* per day per family; and paying taxes of 100 *riels* per year for each 100 square metres of orchard land, an amount which the imam considered very reasonable.

Education is another area of enthusiastic revival, with as many students as in pre-war times enrolled in the ten-year primary and secondary schools, where much time is devoted to Khmer language and literature. No foreign languages have yet been introduced in the schools, and the claims by PRK enemies about Vietnamization of education are without foundation.

There is also little sign of the alleged Vietnamese colonization. Pre-war Vietnamese residents have returned and settled in their old neighbourhoods; and there is also a small floating population of illegal Vietnamese who move back and forth along the rivers to trade,

dodge the draft, or simply to enjoy an easier life in Cambodia. Western aid workers who have travelled extensively in the border provinces report no massive influx of Vietnamese settlers there; and in a trip to a border area in a part of Takeo province where Vietnamese might have been expected, I found new Khmer settlers in a government scheme to develop agriculture where insecurity had prevented cultivation all through the 1960s and 1970s.

The Vietnamese presence is in general restricted to the troops concentrated in the north and north west to combat infiltration by Pol Pot. Son Sann and Sihanouk forces from the Thai border. The danger is real, and tension prevails in those regions. In 1981 I was able to travel by car from Phnom Penh northward to Battambang and Sisophon, then east to Siemreap and Angkor, but now the northern roads are closed to foreign visitors.

Because of the military situation, national defence consumes scarce resources, contributing to the slow economic growth, imposing strict security measures, and requiring mobilization of the population for onerous tasks such as military service and civilian construction groups near the Thai border.

Given the situation facing the PRK in 1979 their record in most areas is good, but further progress is problematic so long as their enemies enjoy increasing support from such powerful backers as China, ASEAN and the USA. The Cambodian people need peace; and peace in favour of the PRK or a coalition in which the PRK nucleus is prominent.

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## CHINA'S LITERARY FREEDOM

## Permanent waves

The end of the Cultural Revolution seemed to herald a new era of literary freedom in China. However, writers and artists have still had their share of problems, as Gregory Lee argues in his review of a recent analysis of the current literary scene.

LIANG HENG and Judith Shapiro will long be remembered for their poignant account of life during the Cultural Revolution in Liang Heng's biography, *Son of the Revolution*. Liang Heng is typical of those sons and daughters of the revolution; described as the 'lost generation', taking part in what they believed was a great egalitarian crusade. Liang Heng was a zealous Red Guard at the age of twelve and he and his father even turned against his own mother, labelled as a 'rightist' during the Hundred Flowers Movement in the 1950s. Liang Heng and his generation want those appalling times never to return and it is doubtless out of a wish to protect and nurture the freedoms that will prevent another Cultural Revolution that this more recent work stems.

Although the title of their latest book suggests an emphasis on 1983—the year of the 'spiritual pollution campaign'—it does in fact cover the whole of the post-1949 period, and in particular provides a detailed survey of intellectual and artistic life in China since 1976.

Arthur Miller, who produced his play *Death of a Salesman* in Beijing and Tianjin during 1983, has written a remarkably perceptive introduction and seems to have grasped the workings of Chinese society during his brief stay. Miller has, of course, a long association with 'intellectual freedom', manifested notably in his play *The Crucible*, which was written as a reaction to the McCarthy witch-hunts. Of the current situation in China he writes: 'Life is immeasurably more hopeful... If regressions like the recent campaign against "spiritual pollution" have again broken out, it is also true to say that they have had to be quickly turned off again.'

The latter part of the book is very much concerned with the potentially destructive 'spiritual pollution campaign' which now seems to have died a timely death. As a resumé of the campaign alone, this is a useful book; but it also provides a general discussion of post-Cultural Revolution intellectual activity, covering such events as the experiments with democracy, the local elections

of 1980 and the consequent challenges presented to party authority.

## Political activity

Those 1980 elections, and their concomitant hustings and meetings, seemed at the time to create more fuss and publicity than their scale and nature warranted, such was the sensitivity and effervescence of Chinese intellectual and political life at the time. Much of the fuss was due to the fact that the students involved, many of whom had suffered the rigours of the Cultural Revolution; were for the first time in their lives given the opportunity to show their dissatisfaction with the way things had gone; the resultant naive exuberance was perhaps to be expected.

Subsequently, much of the testing of the limits of democracy and party patience has taken place in the world of literature. In this field the ambivalence of the Communist Party to the artistic treatment and interpretation of the history of the Cultural Revolution manifested itself in the reception accorded to the film script of the writer Bai Hua. His film *Unrequited Love* was criticized by the Party, while having earlier received its acclaim. The subject of the film is a patriotic artist returning from overseas who meets his death during the Cultural Revolution. Films, plays and books about the Cultural Revolution and its mistakes and tragedies had been popular for several years, but suddenly, in 1981, the Party decided to call a halt. The campaign against the film lasted almost a year, Bai Hua personally escaping severe criticism but his film being denounced for its 'bourgeois liberalism'.

Unreported by Liang and his wife is the fact that Ba Jin, the famous pre-Liberation novelist and author of *The Family*, had supported Bai Hua, and rumour had it that he too was to be reprimanded. Sanity prevailed, however, and both are now exerting a liberalizing influence within China's literary circles.

All this serves to illustrate the complex

situation facing the Party when the Cultural Revolution was under discussion. Formally it was the Party that was responsible for the Cultural Revolution and its excesses, and although roundly condemned by the current leadership many of those cadres who had taken part in the Cultural Revolution were still in positions of power. At that time Deng Xiaoping still found it necessary to accommodate some of the old guard, especially the conservative-minded military. The process of removing these 'left-wing' members of the Party still continues and only recently has it been deemed timely to institute wholesale reselection of grassroots members. But however much the Party purges itself, it is inevitable that criticism of the Cultural Revolution by outsiders may be seen as criticism of the Party itself. Consequently, for the time being at least the line is fine for Chinese writers who turn their attention to that period of Chinese history.

One writer who has successfully attempted to address the problems of guilt and responsibility experienced by those who participated in the Cultural Revolution is the outstanding young playwright Li Longyun, whose play *Little Well Lane* discusses the life and attitudes of a small backstreet community in Beijing from 1949 to the end of the Cultural Revolution. Written several years ago the play was shelved during the 'spiritual pollution campaign', and it was only in the spring of this year that this stimulating and controversial production was finally staged.

## Effects of tourism

The 'spiritual pollution campaign' itself was in many ways a Cultural Revolution writ small and it led to more than just the banning of literary manuscripts: it encompassed every facet of life from cultural influence from abroad to ear-rings and the permanent waves of Chinese women's hairstyles.

Liang Heng and Shapiro wrote this book when the 'spiritual pollution campaign' had not yet received its final death-knell, and many of the points made by them about the 'campaign' have an air of perceptive immediacy. Yet their treatment of the problems of the Chinese when faced with the confusing mélange of both positive and negative Western influences has a more long term significance. For instance, they ask what the Chinese people are supposed to make of the presence of those brash foreign tourists who throw their money around. Naturally their behaviour will create envy and the desire to emulate them. The Chinese people are, after all, being encouraged to take a more materialistic attitude to life and to respond to work incentives in order to buy desirable goods with the fruits of their labour. As the authors put it: 'They see foreign tourists, in their colourful Western clothing, pull out what seems like a lifetime's savings in shops. They envy them the luxury hotels and their travel in imported air-conditioned buses.'

The one-sided way in which the 'spiritual pollution campaign' was handled was the main reason why some of its saner points seemed so incomprehensible to the Chinese populace. Condemning permanent waves was ludicrous and superficial, when a more effective approach might have been to underline the pitfalls of Western consumerism.

### New freedoms

The question of freedom of belief is given a good airing in this book and those interested in religion will find it illuminating. The discussion of freedom of speech is also treated fully and fairly, again mainly in relation to the quashed 'spiritual pollution campaign', and some incisive observations are made. It is observed that the problem is not that all Chinese want to broadcast their complaints from on high, but rather, that they want the 'freedom *not* to speak'. During the Cultural Revolution people were not allowed to keep their own counsel, as we were reminded when the spectre of 'self-criticism' once again reared its head in the recent campaign.

On the whole Liang Heng and Judith Shapiro give a positive gloss to their concern about the future of intellectual freedom in China. Where it appears negative it is so because events at the time of writing led them to fear that the mistakes of the past might be repeated. The 'spiritual pollution campaign' is now truly buried and its chief architect,

Deng Liqun, has recently been demoted. But even though its end was still uncertain when the book went to press, the authors nevertheless felt a certain optimism: 'The door is firmly open, however, and if Deng Xiaoping can retain power for another few years, there will be no going back to the Maoist xenophobia which kept China cut off from the rest of the world for so long.'

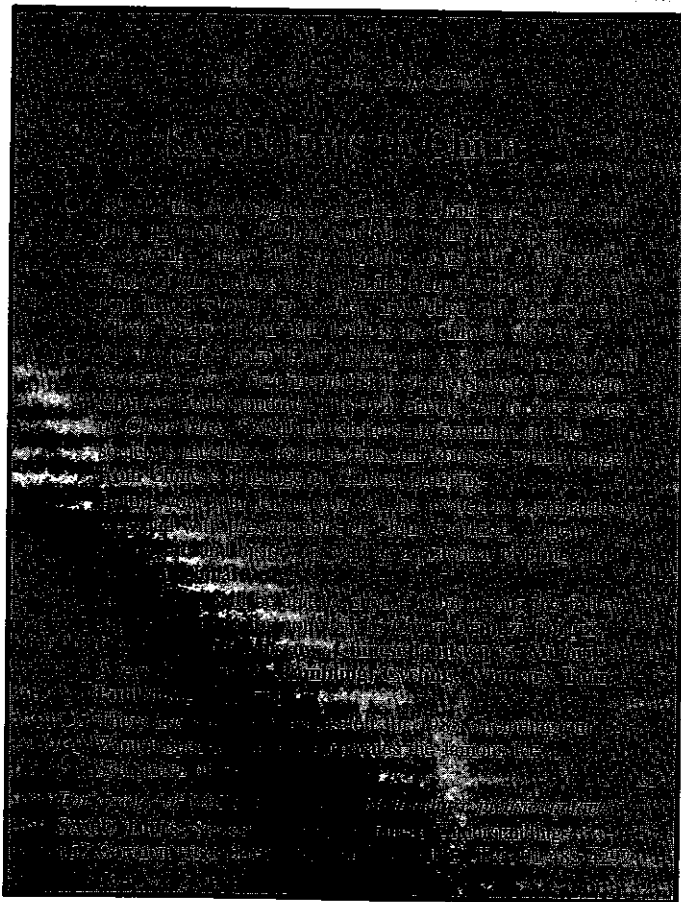
The book also admits that the problem of intellectual freedom is confined to a tiny fraction of China's vast population and points out that far more people are concerned with 'corruption and abuse of privilege'. Indeed it is only with the exposure of such practices by the fine investigative reporters now springing up in China, that the leadership will be alerted to the extent of this problem. In order for this to come about these journalists need a certain latitude of expression. There is now every sign that they will get it.

The problem is more tricky when it concerns poets: what do they have to offer? The answer is, a lot, and if they are permitted to flourish they will put China back on the world's literary stage. To a large extent China's young poets interpret the lack of confidence of the young, especially the 'lost generation' of the Cultural Revolution. But here again the authors are optimistic, believing China able to 'strike at some of the roots of the disillusionment and the "crisis of belief".'

And there we have it. It is not the poets who give vent to genuine frustration who should be chastised for their pessimism but rather the causes of the frustration itself which should be tackled. One must agree with the concluding sentences of this book: 'greater intellectual freedom . . . cannot help but accompany modernization and the new emphasis on education and skills. Political and economic stability, ironically, are the surest ways of bringing about change in China. In this regard, China's intellectuals wish Deng Xiaoping's reformers success.'

The final acknowledgment of the importance of intellectuals to Chinese society and recognition of the shabby and sometimes barbaric way in which they have been treated came from the Communist Party leadership in July of this year, when a two year deadline was set for the rehabilitation of all intellectuals persecuted since 1949. The intellectuals and artists have been given back their voice: one can only hope that China is ready to listen.

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Dai Houying

Translated by Frances Wood

# STONES OF THE WALL

'STONES OF THE WALL builds up pebble by pebble an extraordinary mosaic of life in China among the excoriated – and indispensable – intellectuals. A moving story of humanity under intense pressure.'

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MICHAEL JOSEPH

# Will communalism kill India?

**India: The Siege Within** by M. J. Akbar.  
Penguin Books, London, 1985. £2.95 (paper).

The centrepiece of Akbar's publication is India's unity and the power house of forces that threatens it. He raises the same old question: Can India survive, particularly now in the 1980s? Having marshalled all the bits of fact and evidence, both historical and contemporary, on which he could lay his hands as a competent journalist, Akbar makes a positive case for India in three well defined sections.

First he unravels the ways in which unsuspecting Muslims were manipulated and forced to accept Pakistan. This country is essentially a creation of an ideological Muslim élite led by theocratic forces, who successfully 'managed, in the midst of deliberately provoked violence, to sell the thesis that a Hindu majority would either subjugate them or swallow them. The Muslims were told that the Hindu's secularism was a pretence, his democracy a trick to disguise a sinister ambition—to turn the Muslims into slaves'. Hardly had Pakistan come into being, when it became clear that contradictions were built into the very concept and structure of Pakistan. The geographical separation between its two units by over a thousand miles raised immediate doubts about its future. The unbridgeable cultural distance between them proved even more damaging. That Islam was not adequate to glue all Muslims together into one nation—a repudiation of the logic of the birth of Pakistan—was proved by the secession of East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) in 1971. By rejecting secularism and democracy, Pakistan was left without 'a controlling cohesive idea which could generate a genuine nationalism among the masses or the leaders'. This explains persistent political and constitutional crises in Pakistan. There are other issues as well. Why were forty million Muslims left behind in India? Why was it created in Muslim-majority areas where the Muslims least needed protection from the Hindus? Why was Urdu selected as the official language of Pakistan when Bengali was spoken by 56% of the population, Punjabi by 37%, and Pushtu, Sindhi, Baluchi and Urdu by the remainder? Before long 'Pakistan discovered that it was not a country at all'.

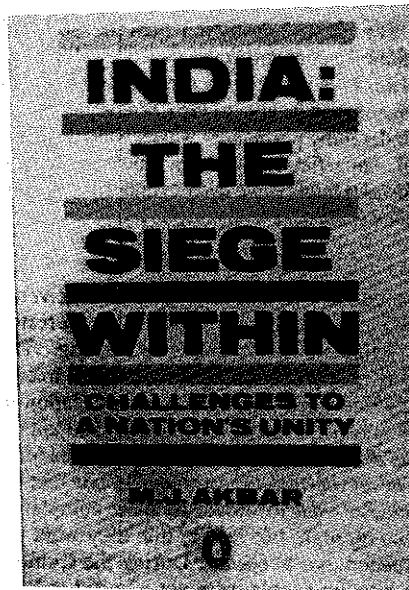
## Can Pakistan survive?

Can Pakistan, or what is left of it, survive and retain its territorial integrity? Yes, provided it practises secularism and democracy—the very principles the acceptance of which contradicts the rationale of Pakistan's birth. The future, therefore, 'looks as tenuous as the past'. Despite the

National Assembly elections of February 1985, in which political parties were not allowed to participate, Akbar's assessment apparently continues to hold out. All power is still concentrated in the hands of an unelected President, Zia-ul-Haq, who is yet to lift his martial law in what is becoming an undiluted theocracy.

In sharp contrast, the commitment to and the practice of secularism and democracy enabled India both to survive and to thrive. Even Mrs Gandhi, who flirted a while with fascism by declaring the Emergency in June 1975, wisely chose to return to democracy which, however, voted her out of power in March 1977. 'Nor did Mrs Gandhi try to rig the polls, or attempt to remain in office after her defeat'. For the same reason, Hindi was not forced as the only national language upon recalcitrant citizens. Secularism pervades because, among other things, 'nine out of ten Hindus do not believe in violence against the minorities'. All this does not mean, however, that there are no mortal threats to India's democracy, secularism and unity. One such danger, Akbar's second theme, surely comes from Punjab where the Sikhs have raised the secessionist demand for a sovereign homeland—Khalistan—apparently to safeguard Sikhism from its absorption by Hinduism. Punjab is India's 'success story', for it is where India is now harvesting the fruits of an expanding agrarian capitalism.

The Sikh religion was founded by 'Guru' Nanak in 1499. But it was Gobind Singh, who redefined Sikhism in 1699 by giving the 'Sikh' (disciple) a strictly military identity, called the *Khalsa* or the 'pure'. As a defender of the faith, his cry at every time of prayer is *Raj Karega Khalsa*, 'The Khalsa Shall Rule'. This is the historical and religious origin of the political demand by the 'Akali' (immortal) for his Khalistan which has the same meaning as that of Pakistan—'the land of the pure'. The first independent Sikh kingdom was set up in 1799, but disappeared in 1848. The Akalis, who constitute the political wing of the Sikh religious movement, did not give up the dream of Khalistan: 'At the back of the Akali mind, whether put into words or not, would be the belief, first expressed by Guru Gobind, that it was not possible to protect the faith without the control of political power. Since such power would never be possible without an area in which the Sikhs were a majority, it was imperative to get a Sikh homeland'. The Sikh bargaining strategy was accordingly devised. Each concession they might extract is to be considered a staging-post for a fresh demand, and this is to continue until the dream of homeland



comes true.

## New Sikh state

A new Sikh-majority state of Punjab was created in November 1986 basically to reward the Sikhs' contribution to India's defence during the two wars of 1962 and 1965. Even then, the Akalis persistently failed to draw such mass support as to enable them single-handedly to wield political power in the state. There Congress remains a veritable contender for power since it keeps on attracting enough voters, much to the chagrin of the Akalis who, after each defeat, tried to buy more Sikh votes by increasing their own militancy as well as by provoking religious sentiments of the Sikhs. For the outright Sikh extremists led by Bhindranwale, the Ayatollah Khomeini-cum-Jinnah of Punjab secessionism, the conversion of Punjab into Khalistan was inconceivable without violence, which was in fact directed at the Hindus and Sikh traitors from the last quarter of 1981. Initially it was Mrs Gandhi and the Congress (I) that promoted Bhindranwale. Nevertheless, in June 1984 she moved decisively against the extremists who converted the Golden Temple and other Sikh shrines into their armed bastions. Along with others, Bhindranwale was killed in what was almost a full scale modern war between the extremists and the Indian Army, otherwise code-named Operation Blue Star. A few months later, on 31 October, Mrs Gandhi was killed in revenge by two of her own security guards. Ironically, Mrs Gandhi was the person most responsible for the creation of the Sikh-majority state of Punjab. The extremist campaign of violence has not ceased altogether, as is attested by the bombings in May 1985 in Delhi and three other neighbouring states of India. Akbar correctly reminds us that it is the same theocratic elements that forced the creation of Pakistan in 1947 who are now the





June 6th commemoration by Sikhs of last year's seizure of the Golden Temple by Indian troops.

vanguard of the struggle for Khalistan, which can hardly be defended on economic grounds. The per capita income in Punjab is the highest in India—being Rs 2,768, as compared with the Indian average of Rs 1,571. Though just under 2% of the total Indian population, Sikhs account for 8% of all central government employees, more than 6% of the directly recruited officers in the Indian administrative service, more than 5% of the parallel Indian police service, and about 8% of the Indian army. The Sikhs' gains are obviously such that any other ethnic or other minority group in India 'would give an arm and a leg for such statistics'.

### 'Laboratory' of democracy?

Finally Akbar's book deals with the states of Jammu and Kashmir, particularly the latter. Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah and Jawaharlal Nehru regarded Kashmir as 'the laboratory of secular and democratic India. The idea of India will succeed or fail in this Muslim-majority state'. There is no better repudiation of the two-nation theory that divided India and created Pakistan, if Muslim Kashmir could live in India. In reality, however, Kashmir has been a continual political mess for which Akbar blames both Hindu communalism and the Congress (I). In 1956, after six years of his rule since independence, Sheikh was sent to jail, mainly at the instigation of the Hindu and Sikh communal forces that suspected his sincerity to keep Kashmir within India. It was in February 1975 that he came back to power as chief minister of the state, but by this time 'he knew that the chance of any kind of independent status for Kashmir

over'. Despite Congress (I) hostility, Sheikh's party, the National Conference, won an overwhelming victory in the July 1977 Assembly elections. He remained in office until 8 September 1982, the day he 'died an Indian'. The office, as it were, passed to his son, Farooq Abdullah, who called Mrs Gandhi mummy and regarded Rajiv as his good friend. But this didn't help, and history repeated itself in Kashmir.

Even though the National Conference won by a landslide in the next elections in June 1983, Farooq was out of power by early July 1984. The Congress (I) engineered a coup d'état by defection, replacing B.K. Nehru by Jagmohan, the latter being 'a governor with very lax attitudes towards the truth'. The new chief minister was Farooq's own brother-in-law, G.M. Shah. If this pattern of toppling the legitimate government by questionable and unconstitutional means continues to find favour among power brokers in Delhi, the Kashmiris may be tempted to leave India altogether. 'If those who win elections are not allowed to rule, then Pakistan could yet win the war it lost in 1947. But if Kashmir has self-rule, then *Islamabad dur ast* (Islamabad is too far)'.

However, there are a few drawbacks in Akbar's analysis. Religious communalism that created Pakistan and is now threatening India's unity in Punjab and Kashmir is only one of the major problems facing India in the 1980s. Far more fundamental are the problems of removing poverty and hunger, creating employment, and securing a just distribution of India's resources and wealth. Akbar's guiding assumptions and conceptual vocabulary are firmly anchored

in the age-old liberal political tradition. He does not provide a marxist analysis, even though he occasionally borrows some of its concepts. For him the difference between British India and pre-British India is equivalent to 'the difference between a new technology and an old one', but not that between a capitalist India and a feudal India. Thus, he is led to underemphasize the enormous significance of the unity and nationhood which India as a capitalistic nation state experienced directly as a result of the intervention by British capitalism during the period of colonialism (1757-1947). That unity and nationhood is certainly different from, but not unconnected with, the 'geographical and cultural sense of a single entity' experienced by 'an assortment of feudal kingdoms'.

Similarly, the responsibility for the partition of India should not fall on 'Indian shoulders' only, for it was the British who set the ball of religious communalism rolling in the first place, for their own imperialistic interests. For the same reason it is a facile generalization to say that Pakistan was created within just seven years. Neither did the mullahs win Pakistan simply by the strength of Islam. The Muslim landlords were alienated by the anti-landlord/feudal pronouncements and actions of the Indian National Congress. The Muslim peasant masses resented the intermediary Hindus intercepting a portion of their produced surplus. The tiny minority of educated Muslims, apprehensive of their failure in what was already an over-crowded job market of an exploited colonial economy, found Pakistan promising and, accordingly, ideologically propagated an historical mission

of Islam. Using Islam, the mullahs only linked the landed and educated élite to the peasant masses. The Hindu communal forces duly strengthened that linkage as much as they could.

### Critical of Akalis

Akbar is critical of the political role of the Akalis and the extremists in the current Punjab crisis. However, when it comes to Kashmir, his emphasis undergoes a characteristic change. He blames almost entirely Hindu communalism and the Congress (I), not the Abdullahs and the National Conference, for all Kashmir's ills. He forgets that when the Congress (I) meddles in the political affairs of a state, it does so in order to wield political power at the state level. Akbar does not tell us that the cry of communalism among a 'religious' minority, instead of being real, may just be a comfortable cloak to achieve goals otherwise unattainable. This certainly applies to Sheikh who, among other things, harboured 'the old ambition to remain independent' or, failing that, preferred 'autonomy within the Indian union', an autonomy denied to other Indian states. Akbar fails also to convince why Muslim Kashmir alone, but not any other Indian state, is especially the laboratory of India's secularism and democracy, and why it should enjoy a special political and constitutional status. It is neither enough to say that Sheikh and Nehru agreed to such status nor particularly satisfying to point to past feudal exploitations of Kashmir. Therefore, if this Muslim-majority Kashmir has to be appeased by according it self-rule and special status in order to prevent its joining Pakistan, then surely this is not exactly a repudiation of the two-nation theory that created Pakistan. On the contrary, it is rather a veiled affirmation precisely of that theory which Akbar rejects. The reason is that keeping Kashmir in that case amounts to maintaining and paying for a sort of Pakistan within India by all Indians outside of Kashmir.

Despite all his shortcomings, Akbar has to be credited for having conveyed a very powerful message in his *tour de force*, containing plenty of juicy anecdotes, toothsome sarcasms, racy interpretations, and brilliant touches of calculated objectivity that make reading more than three hundred pages both worthwhile and pleasurable. Since there are ample misguided interests who would welcome the collapse of Indian democracy and secularism, the challenge for the Indian politician in the 1980s is quite extraordinary, and it is this: 'the balance has to be found between serving a minority's economic needs and its emotional and religious fears, and maintaining the democratic environment where the majority may, in fact, resent any particular attention being paid to the minority'.

Bipul Kumar Bhadra

## And what do peasants think?

**History and Peasant Consciousness in South East Asia** edited by Andrew Turton and Shigeharu Tanabe. National Museum of Ethnography, Suita, Osaka 1984. £10 (paper).

People act in terms of the world as they understand it. They take political action in terms of what they remember previous responses to such action have been, in terms of what they believe their role is in the state in which they live. People evaluate their strength and weakness according to their folk theory of economics and politics. They count on allies, whether natural or supernatural, according to their image of the natural and supernatural world. Because of this simple, but often forgotten, fact, no history of resistance or compliance on the part of any group or class can avoid studying their consciousness, since it is only in terms of that consciousness that their action is understandable.

This is the starting point of this book edited by Tanabe and Turton and written by a number of anthropologists and historians from Asia and Europe. The editors are asking the classical marxist question: under what circumstances do peasants attempt to resist the exploitation to which they are subjected? They explore this through a number of specific instances drawn from Japan, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand. They need these examples because they know that abstract theories about world capitalist penetration, colonialism, the articulation of modes of production and so on will always be insufficient, since these do not explain things in the way those who actually resist, take up arms or take risks see things.

### Theoretical limitations

Theoretically, the approach to consciousness raises the many issues which have surrounded the concept of ideology. Perhaps the central question in this respect is linked to the idea of hegemony. How far does the ideology of ruling classes mould the consciousness of the dominated? Clearly if the ideology of the ruling classes totally dominated the consciousness of the peasants, there would be no resistance and no peasant rebellions. Strangely, much marxist writing seems to imply precisely this. This is for two reasons. First, many recent theoreticians, amongst whom Althusser figures prominently, have been fascinated by the ability of ideology to hide the real conditions of existence from the ex-

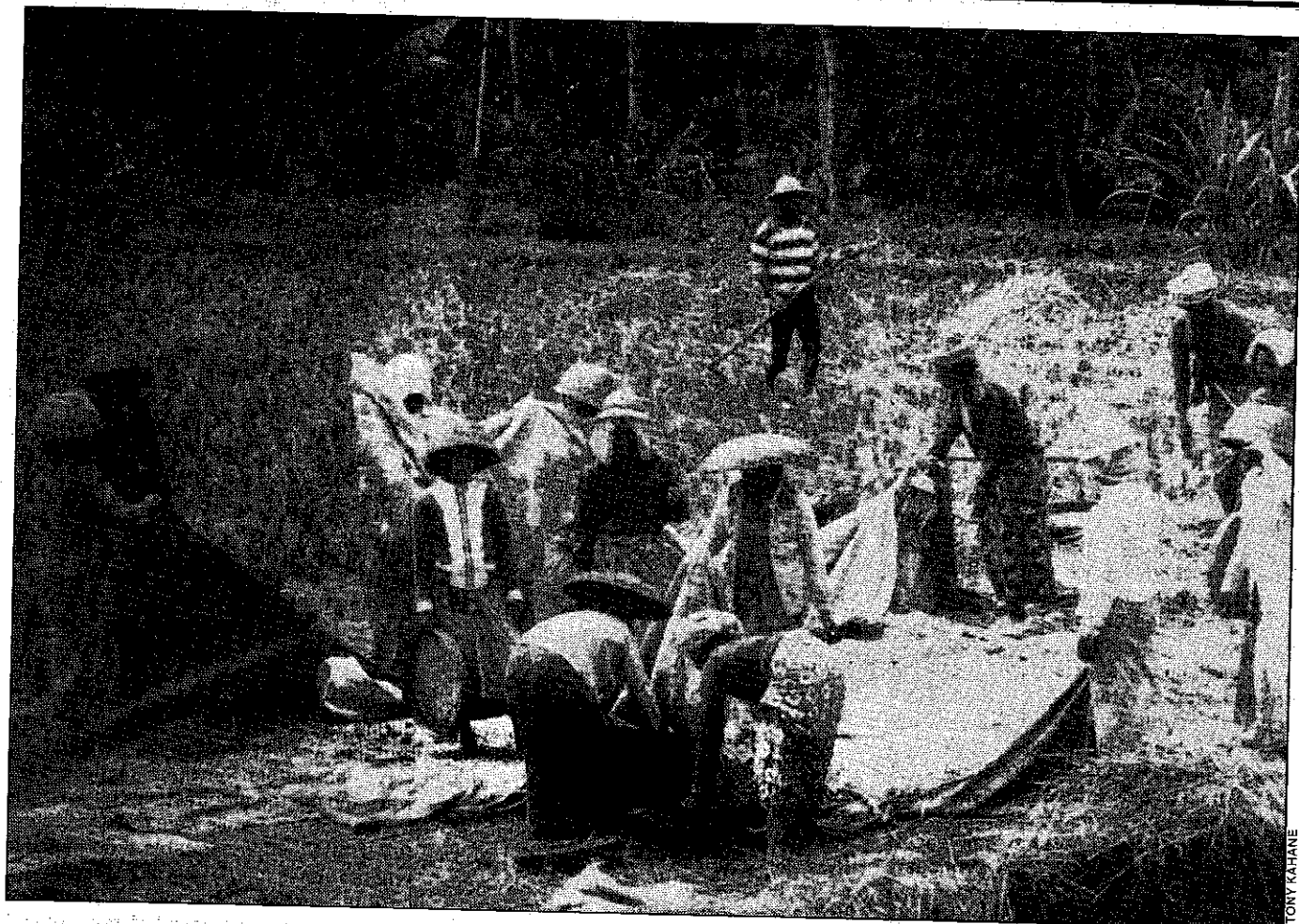
ploited, so that, instead of resisting, they actually participate in the reproduction of their own alienation. Secondly, for a very long time, marxists, starting with Marx, have grossly under-estimated both the historical and the political significance of peasants.

For many marxists peasants were a transitional form with little historical permanence, who could therefore be forgotten. Modern history has shown this view to be quite wrong. There is still a very large section of mankind which is adequately described as peasant. In proportional terms, they may still be as numerous as they were in Marx's time. Politically, too, peasants have proved a much more dynamic force than those, who believed that only a pure proletariat could be revolutionary, supposed. As a result, classical marxists have been of little help in the understanding of peasant consciousness. Because of this situation, the writers of this book have had to turn to those theoreticians who have discussed critical consciousness. Naturally, they have first turned to those who have analyzed working class consciousness—writers such as Lukacs and Thompson—but they have had to adapt their theories to the peasantry.

### Obscured reality

This presents a historical difficulty, as peasant consciousness has proved very difficult to grasp. First of all, the world-view of peasants is not as dominated by class relations as is that of the proletariat. Peasants attempt to interpret the world, at one level almost as though they were alone in it, and in this they try to harmonize nature, society and history in a static and all encompassing model, which seems almost deliberately to ignore intrusions from encroaching political and economic forces. Many anthropologists have made the mistake of thinking that this was all there was to the peasants' world view and, as a result, have represented it as though there was no difference between them and hypothetical isolated tribal peoples living in a universe which they have constructed.

In fact, careful studies, such as here, indicate that peasants, like everybody else, are much more complex, much more self-contradictory or, perhaps, much more subtle. They also have a view of the world which recognizes and even emphasizes their subordinate economic and political situation. This view is illustrated in an alternative vision of history, as is well illustrated



TONY KAHANE

by several studies in this volume, or even by an alternative conceptualization of time. It becomes clear in the way peasants, who a moment before might be perceiving their exploiters as the standard-bearers of civilization, suddenly show that they also see them as usurious landlords; it may appear in the way they see such things as combine-harvesters. The complexity of the peasant consciousness is made all the more difficult to study by the fact that peasants are not academic theoreticians—they live their lives, they don't theorize about them. As a result, their views are not to be found in well-rounded theses but in passing asides, hearty jokes or horseplay, or in mystical religious practices. In any case, peasants know better than anyone the dangers they run in making their oppositional views too open and, as a result, they will often disguise these views, even to themselves, only letting them appear in rare and precious moments of perhaps exceptional anger or exceptional elation.

### Essential task

Because of this, the task of social scientists who wants to study this type of consciousness is very difficult. They must train their sensitivity and their receptiveness to

such a degree that they quickly notice passing remarks and note significant, but apparently ephemeral, types of action. This study is only possible for people who have a long and intimate association with those about whom they write; something which is possible for anthropologists who carry out long-term fieldwork in a limited area or for historians who find occasional informal documents. Only in this way will peasants' words reveal the complexity of their consciousness.

However, some of the studies in this volume are disappointing. They lack direct information from peasants, which *must* be the basis of any study of consciousness. Indeed, one of the contributors repeats the now over familiar criticisms of the traditional community studies of old-fashioned anthropology, without seeing that the great merit of such studies was that, at their best, they gave the opportunity for the views of ordinary people in all their subtlety to be researched and made worthy of study.

However, this type of data is not entirely absent; in particular, it is to be found in James Scott's chapter on attitudes to the 'green revolution' in Kedah. Despite some shortcomings there are some studies on various peasant revolts which bear witness to the importance of critical peasant con-

sciousness. These make fascinating reading and show just how important the topic actually is. This book irrevocably challenges the old view that the peasants of Asia are an apathetic and pitiful mass, unable to analyze historical events and do something about them. For example, the Japanese historian Yasumaru tells us that during the period from 1590 to 1877 there were over 3,700 recorded peasant revolts, which probably underestimates the real number.

Actually Yasumaru's contribution raises another question: how far has the state in some cases almost institutionalized peasant rebellions so that various forms of social tension could be dealt with within bounds which did not really shake the foundations of the social order? If this were the case, yet another way in which the dominators succeeded in blunting the political implications of the consciousness of peasants would have been illustrated. However this is the topic for another book. The quality and interest of the present volume will surely make the reader hope that there will be many others from the same group of writers.

Maurice Bloch

# A splintered island

**Sri Lanka: The National Question and the Tamil Liberation Struggle** by Satchi Ponnambalam. Zed Books, London, 1983. £19.95 (cloth); £6.50 (paper). **Sri Lanka: The Holocaust and After**, by L. Piyadasa. Marram Books, London, 1984. £4.25 (paper). **Sri Lanka: Island of Terror: An Indictment**, by E.M. Thornton and R. Niththyananthan. Eelam Research Organization, London, 1984. £2.95 (paper)

The political kingdom, shakily sustained by military and paramilitary forces, of the Sinhalese Buddhist majority in 'Sri Lanka'—was there ever, really, such a state except on post-colonial paper?—is slowly being consumed by fire. The precepts of Buddha notwithstanding, a vicious but suicidal theocratic state structure has been erected step by step in this 'democratic socialist republic'; in a multi-ethnic island of some fifteen million people, governed now under the illegal 1978 constitution, a state which was once (falsely) regarded as a model of Westminster rectitude and welfare provision, an Asian emblem of every democratic virtue. Today, Amnesty International's dispassionate term for the continuous pogroms against the Tamils is 'extra-judicial killing'.

For Satchi Ponnambalam—and for the reader also—the crux of the matter is to diagnose rightly the juridical, political and moral entitlements on the island of the indigenous population of 'Ceylon Tamils'. He argues: in a well-informed political history, that they 'are not a minority sub-cultural group... such as the Asian immigrants in Britain.' Instead, they are a 'separate and distinct nation with an exclusive homeland of their own to which they owe patriotism as the land of their birth and of their forefathers. They are a nation possessing the capacity to alter the existing state structure'—as the Sinhalese army of occupation in the Tamil 'homelands' now knows to its increasing cost—and to constitute themselves a political state by their collective self-determination.

To Ponnambalam, this sense of nation is, at one level, inscribed in a history which—despite the claims of 'Sinhalese Buddhist ethnocentrism' that the Tamils are Dravidian invaders—shows the Tamils to be the 'lineal descendants of the original inhabitants of the island.' Though he elsewhere confusingly describes the Sinhalese and the Tamils as 'co-settlers with a shared descent', his basic standpoint is that it is the Tamils, not the Sinhalese, who are the 'aboriginal people of Sri Lanka'.

Even the name 'Sri Lanka', he acidly points out, is Sanskrit, while Buddhism itself—a 'relative latecomer' to the island in the third century BC—is Hindu in origin, as was Buddha. If Irish atavism has a long memory, this is positively prehistoric.

And at another level, Ponnambalam argues, it is a sense of nation which has been provoked by intolerable 'national oppression' at the hands of the Sinhalese majority since independence. Moreover, the Tamils, he implies, both in exile and in their embattled ghettos on the island, are now plainly ready to promote this sense of nation by prolonged armed struggle.

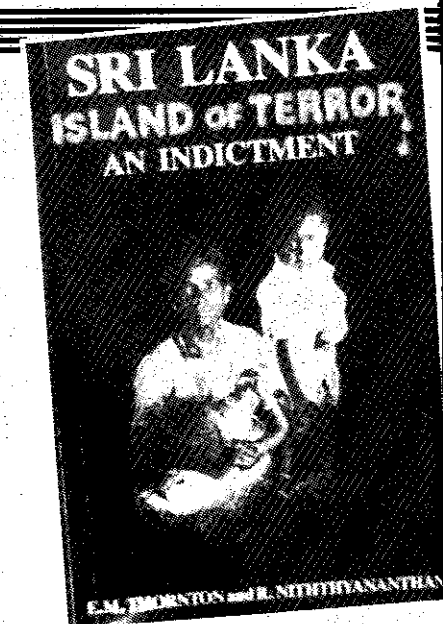
## Democratic failures

It is a tale, for him, which has been marked since independence by the failure, in a multi-ethnic state, of the Sinhalese to 'evolve a culturally neutral, secular nation-state... on the foundations of freedom, equal rights and social justice, embracing the various ethnic, linguistic and religious communities'. Instead, 'through the arithmetic of the ballot box ... freedom ... became the prerogative of the Sinhalese'; the spoils of democracy, as well as custody of the political rights of the Tamils, were delivered—as the rules of liberal democracy themselves dictate—to the majority.

In consequence, Tamil citizenship, suffrage and language rights came not only to be inadequately protected, but systematically eroded. Nevertheless (or therefore) 'national integration' failed to 'take root'; instead Sinhalese 'chauvinism' (vainly attempted 'conquest and assimilation' of the Tamils, rather than 'nation-building'.

Certainly, the record of the relentless and cruelly discriminatory Sinhalese ('we are the masters now') of the polity can hardly be gainsaid. It involved, *inter alia*, the immediate disenfranchisement, upon independence, of the Tamil plantation workers, one million becoming stateless and tens of thousands 'repatriated' to India, a country most of them had never seen; the 'Sinhala Only' official language act of 1956 which struck a drastic blow at Tamil aspiration; the programme, which has created violence, of Sinhalese 'colonization' of 'Tamil areas'; and the continuous Sinhalese mob and army butchery of the Tamils—as punishment for their refusal to accept Sinhalese domination of a state system run increasingly for the latter's benefit—without redress, official apology, or even inquiry.

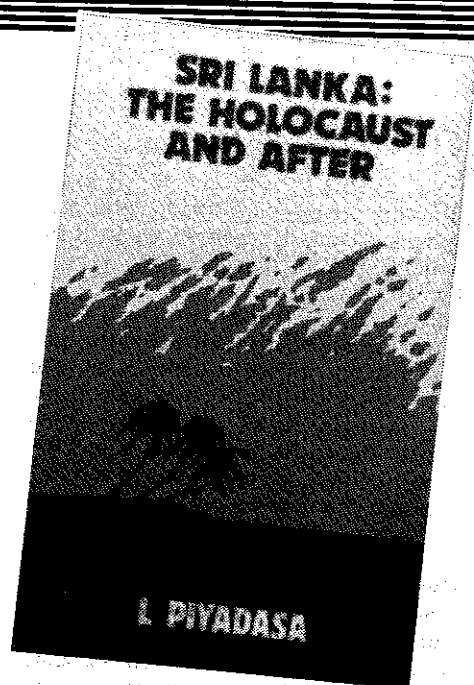
At the same time, Ponnambalam complains, intensely communalist Sinhalese 'negotiators' have consistently betrayed



naive Tamil expectations of a political accommodation of their grievances—whether in the form of a federal distribution of powers, or by some other arrangement for regional autonomy. For no such accommodation, he correctly suggests, was being seriously entertained by the Sinhalese during these long decades of mounting brutality against the Tamils. Instead, the very 'negotiators' on the Sinhalese side were and are the architects of the violence from which the Tamils were seeking protection at the conference table. And to make matters worse, the Tamils' own leadership, until the growth of the militant liberation movement, was composed of 'reactionary' and 'deraciné' 'bourgeois nationalist politicians', 'middle-class lawyers to whom politics was an out-of-court pastime'.

## Dialectic of oppression

The consequence has been a 'dialectic of oppression and radicalization', in a complex context—ably unravelled—of ideological, class, constitutional and economic questions, in which at issue has been 'subjugation' of the 'Tamil nation'. Now 'life in a unitary state' has become 'impossible' for incorrigibly separate 'nations', unified in 1833 only for the convenience of British colonial administration. Indeed, 'parity of status' for the Tamils itself appears to threaten Sinhalese paranoia with the spectre of racial and religious extinction. Hence, Ponnambalam concludes, 'national unity' as a 'sensible political goal' can 'no longer be advocated', even if 'at the level of the ordinary Sinhalese and Tamils there is no conflict'. It is a retrospect, in fact, this judgement, in which the increasing ferocity of the armed struggle is not taken for granted, while at the end of a dark tunnel the promise beckons of freedom—or rather, secession—from 'rule by the Sinhalese' and from the sinister influence of the Buddhist clergy, in an independent state of Tamil Eelam.



'L. Piyadasa', the (Sinhalese) pseudonym for a 'multi-communal group', acknowledges the brutalities suffered at the hands of the Sinhalese by the Tamils; bravely admits the systematic racist falsification of Sinhalese history; and argues that a post-independence 'patrician' Sinhalese ruling class (of right, left and centre) has 'subverted the democratic process' and plunged the island into violence. Yet, it is a measure of the scale of the problem before us that Tamil and Sinhalese 'Sri Lankans' of the left, with their basic common political sympathies, and in pursuit of a clarification of



the same issues, can nevertheless entertain such different perceptions about them.

### Courageous position

For Piyadasa's Sri Lanka, seen through the eyes of the secular and democratic anti-communal Sinhalese left—such as it is—bears only a superficial resemblance to the truth as it now appears to most of the Ceylon Tamils. True, in Piyadasa's account, 'goon squads . . . publicly burn men and women to death on the streets without hindrance', with 'the armed forces joining in' and 'the nation's President . . . public-

ly justifying the pogrom', as happened in July 1983. And it takes courage, even if it is a revealingly anonymous courage, for any Sinhalese now to speak of his 'agony and shame'—as this book does—at the atrocities being carried out against the Tamils.

Yet such sentiments, Piyadasa claims, 'express the views of a large proportion of Sri Lankans, a majority'. This is wishful thinking. There is no longer such a 'majority', nor is it possible, except in illusion, to reconstruct the integrity of a unitary polity in Ceylon on the old—or any other—basis. Similarly, Piyadasa argues, in a way that Ponnambalam's case does not permit, that Sinhalese and Tamils can share again a common patriotism towards 'our country . . . the country of the Sri Lankan people and nation'; a 'patriotism' albeit disrupted by cynical 'right wing' Sinhalese and Tamil communalists (indiscriminately lumped together in this reading), by autocratic Sinhalese rule, by the 'horrible barbarism which falsely claims to be Buddhist', by 'chronically retarded economic development', by the 'lawless violence of the state', and by the 'terrorism' of the 'noisy' and 'spurious' Tamil separatist movement.

Moreover, in the 'real Sri Lanka', says Piyadasa—wherever that Sri Lanka is, or was—'there are no Sinhalese areas and no Tamil areas'. Worse, the separatist Tamils themselves are blamed for the 'strengthening of fascist tendencies in Sri Lanka'; blamed for 'preventing movements which would have won Sinhalese support in opposing Sinhalese racism'; blamed, ultimately, for their own 'increasing isolation'. With



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**David Selbourne** lectures in politics at Ruskin College, Oxford. He has written extensively, including on India and China. His latest book is *Against Socialist Illusions: a radical argument* (Macmillan).

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political friends such as these—whose predecessors once blamed the Jews for the excesses of the Nazis—the Tamils have little need of enemies. Indeed, their growing predicament as scapegoats and martyrs of Sinhalese political and economic failure is merely made more bewildering by this type of Sinhalese 'sympathy' for their 'fellow Sri Lankans'.

### Atrocities continue

The trouble is that the Tamils are no longer, if they ever were, 'Sri Lankans'. Without any effective protection of their political rights under the law and constitution of Sri Lanka, driven from pillar to post (and from Colombo to Jaffna) in a continuing round of massacre and fake negotiation, they are now fighting their own way out of the trap which the Sinhalese have so meticulously sprung upon them. Piyadasa's book was out of date when it was written—the passage of events inexorably carrying the 'noisy' Tamils, with or without approval, towards a last stand for their freedom, dignity and survival as a people. To Piyadasa, the demand for Tamil-Eelam is itself 'racist'; but to the Tamils, the 'restoration of democracy in Sri Lanka', for which Piyadasa, calls, now itself depends in large part upon the gaining of Tamil rights to self-determination.

How far they have to go, and the dangers they face, is made all too clear in Thornton and Niththyanathan's account of the crimes committed against the Tamils up to and during the 1983 carnage. It is a chronicle of unremitting horror, the more telling for being unembellished. It ends with an appendix of simple personal testimony, in diary form, of the burning alive of innocent Tamils in the streets of Colombo. In its very simplicity, it has few equals in the literature of political terror.

'I had a feeling', says the author, trembling at every sound in his house after witnessing, from his window, a Sinhalese gang-rape and the beheading with an axe, on the pavement outside, of the young Tamil victim, 'that death was knocking at my door'. But the knocking was of a Sinhalese Catholic neighbour, warning him, as the Tamil bodies burned in the streets, to 'go to a refugee camp for safety' in what turned out to be a staging-post to yet another exile. Indeed, at the last, it is plain enough that it is to stop a slowly and intermittently advancing genocide—punctuated by periods of calm repose from bestial killing, camouflaged by state censorship and state lying, and aided by the world's apathy and connivance—that the Tamil separatists are fighting. Between them, these three books provide an adequate introduction to the complexity of the issues.

David Selbourne

## Vietnam's underground war

**The Tunnels of Cu Chi** by Tom Mangold and John Penycate. Hodder & Stoughton, London, £12.95 (cloth).

Only fifty kilometres from Saigon lies Cu Chi district—one of the Vietcong nerve centres which became the most bombed, gassed, defoliated and generally devastated area in the history of warfare. Most of the villages were wiped out and chemical warfare, including a horrendous tonnage of agent orange, turned the lush jungle foliage into an overnight desert pockmarked by huge bomb craters.

Although the area was devastated the guerillas survived the sustained onslaught to win the protracted battle of Cu Chi by vanishing underground into the extraordinary sanctuary of their 300 kilometres tunnel complex.

It was from the legendary tunnels of Cu Chi that the Tet Offensive was both planned and launched, leading to an onslaught on Saigon from which US forces in Vietnam never recovered.

This book, by two BBC Panorama reporters, is the first attempt to piece together the incredible exploits of Vietcong guerrillas, who ingeniously defended their ancestral lands by popping out from their holes in the ground to strike back at the mighty armoured columns ravaging their land from above.

Ten years after the fall of Saigon the US is still agonizing over how the greatest war-machine ever unleashed failed to subdue a poorly-equipped peasant guerilla army. Many of the American survivors from the battlefields of Cu Chi, according to this account, are in a unique position to supply the answers.

### Unprepared

US forces were unprepared for tunnel-warfare, and for the fact that the real enemy controlling the hinterland of Saigon was not the invading hordes of North Vietnamese (the US propaganda line) but the embittered farmers of the South, whose relationship with the land bordered on the sacred.

The tunnels of Cu Chi were first constructed in 1948 to protect the land from the French. They played an important role in Ho Chi Minh's successful struggle for independence from colonial rule. From Viet Minh tunnels against the French they became Vietcong tunnels in response to the sudden escalation of American forces in the early sixties.

Many passageways had to be redug, repaired, and extended. Concealed trapdoors in the jungle were points of entry to an extraordinary underground sanctuary.

Crawling on all fours through the dark, damp and dimly-lit passages, the Vietcong could stay in the tunnels for months at a time, if necessary, to avoid the US search and destroy operations.

At various points the ingeniously constructed passageways opened out into chambers with sufficient space for sleeping quarters, supply dumps, meeting rooms, and even a primitive makeshift hospital stocked mainly with medicines captured from the US base nearby.

### 'Tunnel rats'

Over the course of the five-year battle to flush out the tunnel fighters, which included pumping CS gas and planting high explosives around tunnel entrances, some sections of this underground defence system were seriously damaged. However, it was like chopping off the leg of an octopus; even the specially trained 'tunnel rat' commandos (US forces who volunteered to chase Vietcong) also failed to destroy the bulk of the incredible 300 km tunnel network. It was still operational right up until the arrival of North Vietnamese regular forces in 1975 in preparation for the final assault on Saigon.

This book beautifully blends narrative, anecdote, history and perception from both sides, based on testimonies of both Vietnamese and American war veterans. It also sheds light on the basic differences of the two sides, and their diametrically opposed approach to warfare.

The US and ARVN troops depended on awesome firepower, on the brute force of war technology and on the best equipment that money could buy. But for Vietcong peasants their country was not for sale. The guerrillas relied on courage, commitment and political will against overwhelming odds. The tunnels symbolized an intimate relationship with nature in contrast to the ecological destruction wreaked by agent orange deluges above.

The authors show that this was a struggle of a poor peasant society mobilized by nationalistic passion to defend its ancestral lands from the global might and wealth of a twentieth century superpower.

It is curious that Cu Chi has been mentioned only in passing in so many American books on the Vietnam War. Perhaps it will finally receive the kind of legendary recognition it so richly deserves as the most decisive area of conflict and battle in the whole of the Vietnam War, and ranking with the humiliation of the French at Dien Bien Phu.

Tom Fawthrop

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**Also open Monday to Friday 12.00—3.00pm**

**26-28 Whitfield Street, London W1P 5RD**

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