

INQILAB

SOUTH ASIA SOLIDARITY GROUP

Autumn/Winter 1994 Vol 3 No 2

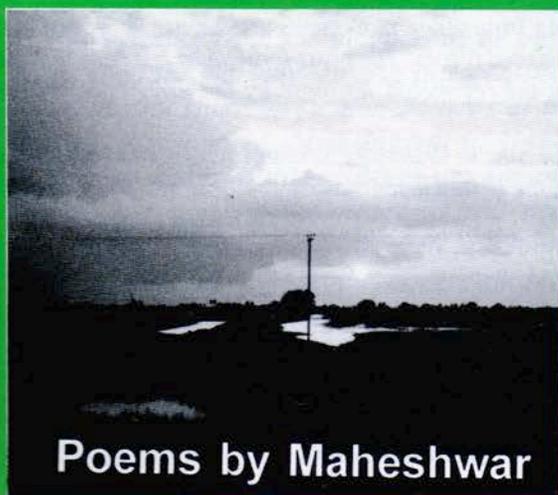
Resisting a second colonisation!



Cairo: the CIA and a woman's right to choose

Sheffield United, Structural Adjustment and the Bengal jute workers' struggle

Sri Lanka - an end to misrule?



Poems by Maheshwar

Taslina on the Vedas

Demonisation of Asian youth: Camden

Chandralekha - extracts from a play



Remember Rajani Thiranagama

'I want to prove that ordinary women like me also have enormous courage and power to fight alone and hold our inner selves together'

On 21st September we remember our beloved friend and comrade Rajani Thiranagama who was shot dead in Jaffna five years ago. She was a founder member of South Asia Solidarity Group and later of the University Teachers for Human Rights, Jaffna.

Rajani was driven by a revolutionary's burning honesty so at a time in Sri Lanka when most 'revolutionary' affiliations were based on fear or else in hope of personal gain, she remained independent. She will not be forgotten.

Dear Inqilab,

Manab Adhikar Sangram Samiti (MASS) have been constantly opposing state repression in Assam. during Operation Rhino and Operation Bajrang the Indian army conducted massive search-and-arrest operations in thousands of villages in Assam. Many victims of abuses committed during these operations were civilians, often relatives or neighbours of young men suspected of militant sympathies. Villagers were threatened, harassed, raped, assaulted and killed by soldiers attempting to frighten them into identifying militants. Arbitrary arrests and lengthy detentions of young men picked up in the periodic sweeps or at random from their homes and from public places was common and detainees of the armed forces were regularly subjected to severe beatings and torture. Deaths in custody had occurred as a result of torture, and in alleged encounters and escape attempts.

The members of the fourth estate are experiencing the full wrath of the state machinery. The State Government has let loose its forces upon the recalcitrant journalists. On March 2 1992, Ajit Kumar Bhuyan and Parag Das, Convenors of MASS, were arrested under NSA. Bhuyan is the editor of the local Assamese weekly, Sadin. Parag Das is editor of Boodhbar, a weekly. They were released on May 3 1992 and the cases against them were not pursued.

Parag Das was rearrested on February 8 1993. He was held under Section 4 of TADA and Special Operations Unit case no

1/93 was registered against him. Boodhbar's publisher, Krishna Kanta Barua, and printer, Nripendra Sarma were also arrested under TADA.

Again, in the early hours of July 5 1994, Ajit Kumar Bhuyan and Ramendra Narayan Dutta Baruah, editor-cum-proprietor of the local English daily, News Star, were arrested under TADA. Earlier, a Jorhat-based correspondent of News Star, Deben Bora, was also arrested under TADA.

Whatever is happening in Assam it is in pursuance of a conscious policy of the State Government, supported by the Central Government. The Chief Minister, Mr Hiteshwar Saikia, has given full freedom to the police to do whatever they feel necessary.

In this milieu, all those who are sensitive to the issues involved and are prepared to talk or write about the state terrorism have become intolerable to the rulers of the State. They are being subjected to attacks. The principal target is Manab Adhikar Sangram Samiti (MASS) and the press. MASS have been consistently opposing in principle the policy of suppressing insurgency movements by the use of brutal and unconstitutional forces. The press for its part has been writing reports on the repression let loose by the army and security forces.

We request you to undertake a campaign for the immediate release of the arrested journalists.

Tarun Bose, Delhi, India

South Asia Solidarity Group does not receive funds from any statutory or voluntary sector body. Inqilab is produced entirely through subscriptions and donations from its readers.

Cover photo: Anti-GATT demonstration in New Delhi, December 1993. Inset photo: Sunset near Hilsa, Nalanda district, Bihar.

Between the lines...

In Britain, the plague outbreak in India has opened the flood gates to a reservoir of racist mythology and irrational fears. All passengers arriving by air from India are being sprayed by aerosol insecticide - 'to kill fleas'. And the Daily Mail is predicting the arrival of huge numbers of Asians in Manchester, Leicester and Bradford for 'Diwali' celebrations.

What is the reality behind this racism? The plague epidemic started in Surat in western India - arguably the city which most clearly illustrates the effects of India's economic policies. Here multinational investment in the diamond industry provided a blueprint for the most grinding exploitation of workers from all over India. And what could be a more telling indictment of the brutality of India's new 'free market' capitalism than the diamond industrialists' frank admission that the plague is a 'blessing in disguise': they were overproducing and the plague provides a pretext to cut down on the workforce. When the fleeing workers return many will find themselves without jobs.

The disease spread to Delhi and other parts of northern India as migrant workers from Surat's modern industries fled back to their homes in states as far away as Rajasthan, Bihar and even Orissa. But why did it spread, considering the high standard of Indian medical expertise? Because private medical treatment, in which India excels, is not the same as public health.

Many analysts have pointed out that twenty years ago such an outbreak could not have turned into a crisis on this scale. The standard of preventative care for the people has declined with the increase of high quality private medicine for the privileged few, just as luxury goods have flooded the country while the percentage of India's people living below the poverty line grows.

Under the new economic policies there is worse to come. GATT agreements will mean massive rises in the prices of essential medicines; public health will be more or less abandoned with the exception of its repressive wing - population control. And as essential welfare services collapse, the police and paramilitaries will be strengthened to contain the people's anger. Already the judicial and administrative system blatantly serves the interests of those with power: in Punjab a witness about to testify in court about police atrocities is kidnapped from the courtroom; in UP a district magistrate commenting on allegations of mass police rape admits that one or two cases may have occurred and tells reporters 'if a constable comes across a young woman on a deserted stretch in the dark is this so extraordinary?'

In this issue of Inqilab, we look, among other things, at India's economy under Narasimha Rao, or perhaps under the World Bank and the IMF. Because although Narasimha Rao has rightly been accused of playing the Hindu card and preparing to have a temple built at Ayodhya, it is clear that his new and true God is Foreign Investment and now with this plague outbreak this new God may well be irrationally angry and blame India.

What seems likely now is that the nervous foreign investors fleeing from the plague will be placated by a widening of the gap between 'the Intercontinental Hotel and the Surat slum' as Dr Ron Behrens of the London Hospital for Tropical Medicine put it. However if the underlying causes of this epidemic are not addressed, it is inevitable that similar outbreaks will occur again. Perhaps the only hope that such questions will be considered at all lies in the concerted resistance to India's new economic policies from its people. While the British media focussed exclusively and with relish on the plague epidemic, on 29 September several million people took part in a general strike in defence of democratic and trade union rights and against the 'recolonisation of the country'.

Contents

- 2** In Brief
- 4** Surinder Bassi -
a fighter for justice
- 5** Taslima Nasreen's selected
columns
- 7** Camden - media myths and the
realities of racism
- 8** Sri Lankan elections -
a new beginning?
- 10** Inquilabi Muslim Conference
- 12** U.S. Foreign Policy and a
woman's right to choose
- 17** Comment: 'human rights' or
'democratic rights'?
- 18** Poems by Maheshwar
- 20** The Bengal jute
workers' struggle
- 25** An extract from 'Chandralekha'

Self-defence ...

One family's experience of British justice

The Deols are an Asian family who bought a small shop and sub-post office on the mainly white Abbey Hulton council estate in Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire in 1989. They suffered continual racist harrasment from gangs of youths who were encouraged by adults living on the estate. On July 3, 1993, the Deols found themselves surrounded by a racist mob of about 60. Attempting to escape in their van they ran over and killed a white youth - Kevin Copeland. What has happened since illustrates the integral racism of the police and judiciary:

*One of the Deol brothers has been charged with the murder of Kevin Copeland.

*Four other Asians who were with them face serious charges.

*None of the white racist mob have been charged.

*Racist attacks and harrasment have multiplied in the area since the incident.

*Racist mob rule on the estate goes unchecked. The Deols have been unable to collect their possessions from their wrecked shop and they and their co-defendents have to be taken to court in a police riot van.

*The stipendary magistrate who heard the committal proceedings, councillors, and the local MP all agree that the Deols cannot get a fair trial in Staffordshire because of the racist atmosphere. But the judge refused to transfer the trial to another area.

In November their store was repossessed by the bank and the Deols were declared bankrupt. The trial begins on Oct 4. For further information contact Sheera on 021 551 4679



still criminalised

Free Satpal Ram - Picket the High Court

On 4 November 1994, a judicial review of Satpal Ram's case is being heard at the High Court. Satpal Ram has been in prison since 1986 for defending himself against racists. In November 1986 he was in an Indian restaurant in Birmingham with friends when a group of six white men objected to the Indian music being played, saying, "We don't want any wog music!", "Turn this fucking black crap off!". When they began to racially abuse the staff, Satpal objected and was then attacked by the gang, his face was slashed with a glass. Satpal fought back and both he and his attackers were taken to hospital. Satpal needed stitches, but his attacker refused treatment and died two hours later. At the trial where no interpreters were provided for the Bengali witnesses, Satpal's plea of self defence was rejected, and he was convicted of murder by an all-white jury.



The Free Satpal campaign and CARF have organised a picket from 10 am onwards outside the High Court. It is vital that all progressive and anti-racist groups mobilise and come out in full force, not only to support Satpal Ram's case but to prevent similar cases in the future. Details: Free Satpal Campaign 021-551 4518 or CARF 071-837 1450

Support the Otis Workers!

Bombay workers employed by Otis Elevators (India) Ltd, a subsidiary of the U.S. multinational Otis - which is also responsible for some of the notorious escalators on London Underground - are waging a prolonged battle against management attacks on their pay, working conditions and rights. And they are up against a powerful - and increasingly typical - alliance of multinationals, Indian capitalists, the police, and Hindu fascist groups.

From 1988 the Otis management began to introduce changes including sub-contracting, recruiting casual workers for permanent jobs and use of cheap sub-standard equipment, which endangered both workers and customers. The Otis Elevators Employees Union (OEEU) which has represented the workers since 1961 opposed these measures. The management responded by making arbitrary deductions from wages, cutting the wages of 350 workers altogether for four and a half months in 1992, and bringing false cases against the workers.

In June 1992, outsiders from the Bharatiya Kamgar Sena (BKS), the trade union wing of the Hindu fascist Shiv Sena, came to Otis' Kandivali factory employing 1200 workers, and forcibly recruited members with the tacit support of the management. The BKS has traditionally been brought in by management to break effective trade unions.

Since then the BKS has terrorised workers into signing undertakings to support an agreement whereby wages would be linked to productivity, the management would have complete freedom of redeployment, sub-contracting and temporary labour would be allowed and workers would forego accident compensation in most cases. In December 1993, the BKS clashed with another Mafia-style union

which was trying to get a foothold in the factory. The management used this as an excuse to suspend production and locked out the workers on February 21, apparently in preparation for a 'voluntary' retrenchment scheme.

Meanwhile the 800-odd field staff (erecting and maintenance workers) remained united behind the OEEU and became the target of attacks. On March 4, one of them - Narayan Manchekar, brother of one of the OEEU leaders, was arrested, brutally assaulted, and tortured with electric shocks. 600 Otis workers marched to the Police Commissioner's office demanding action against the officers responsible and a full enquiry. The democratic rights organisation Lokshahi Hakk Sanghatana noted that "the police has been acting at the behest of the Otis management for a long time" and that "the police are refining their methods of torture to cause extreme pain without killing".

On May 6 the field workers too were locked out. Since then they have faced unprecedented repression - demonstrations have been lathi-charged with the intention of inflicting maximum injury, union activists have been targeted for arrest and tortured, and in all about 150 of the 800 field workers have been arrested and charged with various offences. The struggle continues and a wider campaign to support the Otis workers has emerged bringing together many trade unions and democratic rights groups. Send messages of support, and donations to the struggle fund, to Otis Elevators Employees' Union, Janashakti Building, Globe Mill Passage, Opp. Century Mill, Worli, Bombay, India.

Crack-down on Kashmir activists

In raids conducted by the security forces in Srinagar in September, several prominent citizens, including

engineers, doctors, professors and journalists have been arrested. They were said to be ideologues of the Jamat-e-Islami in Jammu and Kashmir which demands the right to self-determination for the people of Kashmir. As part of this crack-down on 7 September, troops confiscated computers and other equipment used by the Institute of Kashmir Studies to document atrocities committed by Indian security forces.



Amidst the violence that Kashmiri society has been subjected to such raids and arrests may not seem extraordinary. But in attempting to suppress voices which have been documenting and disseminating violations of democratic rights by Indian troops there is a danger of an escalation of the Indian military crack-down. *Economic and Political Weekly, 10 September*

Riaz and Qayyum in court on 8 December

Mohammed Riaz and Qayyum Raja who are fighting the imposition of 20- and 25-year prison sentences by the Home Secretary over the heads of the judiciary, (See *Inqilab Winter 1993/94*) have won a judicial review. This will take place on 8 December. Mohammed Riaz and Qayyum Raja were involved in the kidnap of an Indian diplomat in 1984. While the trial judge accepted that Riaz and Qayyum were only unwittingly and indirectly involved in his murder, the Home Secretary doubled the period to be served recommended by the judge and set a tariff of 20 years for Riaz and 25 years for Qayyum. For more

details of the campaign and the picket on 8 December contact Free Riaz and Qayyum Campaign PO BOX 102, Bradford BD3 8YT or Friends of Mohammed Riaz on 071 713 7907

Haiti - Invasion of the snatcher bodies

US invasion or no Washington controls Haiti...In business terms, Haiti represents a pool of some of the cheapest labour in the hemisphere, down around 14 cents an hour in assembly plants run by U.S. corporations.

Is an invading U.S. armada going to preside over the reform of these sweatshops?....

Reform in Haiti would mean the overthrow of the ruling families, and the abolition of the Army and the right-wing paramilitary hit squad, the Fraph. But this kind of radical action was exactly what doomed the legally elected President Aristide in the eyes of the U.S. Government. America does not like revolutions in the Caribbean (or anywhere else for that matter).

The aim of U.S. policy in Haiti has always been to shore up the old elites...according to Major Louis Kernisan, presently retraining Haiti's police. "What are we going back to save? You are going to end up dealing with the same folks as before, the five families that run the country, the military, and the bourgeoisie...they speak your language, they understand your system, they've been educated in your country."

Meanwhile, Aristide or a stand-in will be carrying forward the World Bank plan approved by a meeting of international bankers in Paris last month. Public services will be privatised, tariffs and import restrictions abolished and special corporate business courts created to ease the pains and trials of life for international investors.

Alexander Cockburn, New Statesman and Society, 23 September

Surinder Bassi - a fighter for justice



Surinder Bassi
February 19 1950 - July 11 1994

"To be honest with you, we are not tired. We are very happy. Yesterday at the demonstration we saw bosses going past with their heads down - they have never done that before...Our kids are really pleased with us...even if what we have done doesn't help us, the kids will get something out of it"

and the struggle of Asian women in Britain against exploitation and racism, a struggle which stretches from Imperial Typewriters and Grunwicks in the 1970s to Burnsalls in the 1990s

In the words of the song written for the Burnsall strikers,

***'I am tired of bowing down
the time has come to rise up and stand tall
from today I vow to have no fear'***

A poster has been produced commemorating Surinder - the funds raised from its sale will go to her family who are planning to set up a fund for black workers in her name. For details contact SASG on 071-713 7907.

Surinder Bassi was on the picket line for over a year outside the Burnsall's factory in Smethwick. She had gone on strike for the right to join a trade union - the GMB, for health and safety, and against forced overtime and low wages.

Surinder, together with Darshan Kaur, became a spokeswoman for this historic strike of Asian workers. They travelled the length and breadth of the country - speaking to the Timex strikers in Dundee; at the benefit concert held for the Burnsall strikers in London; to standing ovations in Chesterfield and Sheffield and at the Women Against Pit Closures rally in Hyde Park where Surinder spoke simply and directly to thousands of people about the reality of their experiences - the industrial injuries, the daily abuse and the employer's sheer contempt for workers' rights.

Surinder was always the first to challenge the racist management, the strikebreakers, and the police who continually harassed the strikers. Her determination and enthusiasm and her vibrant personality gave the Burnsall strikers the tenacity and strength which carried them through the long months on the picket line and enabled them to resist the continual efforts by paid trade union officials to make them abandon the strike.

Surinder was also one of the first to see the importance of support groups for the strike. She always had words of encouragement for anyone who brought new ideas to win the strike. It was Surinder who would often ask for refreshments to be organised for any newcomers and supporters as soon as they arrived.

In December 1993, Surinder and Darshan came to London for what was to be their last trip to the city together. They went to receive the Martin Ennals Award for Civil Liberties, in recognition of their courageous struggle for the fundamental trade union rights which are currently denied to workers.

Earlier this year Surinder used her Industrial Tribunal award on equal pay to take her daughter Narinder on a holiday to India. Soon after her return she was taken ill. She died on 11 July in Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Birmingham.

Surinder came to England from India in 1968. After her two children Narinder and Kamaljit were born, she worked for many years in the textile industry in Bradford. Later she was self-employed when the family ran a mini-market, before moving to Smethwick where Surinder took her place in the history of the trade union movement

'Selected Columns' by Taslima Nasreen

These are two of a series of columns first published in Bangladesh in 1991. Taslima Nasreen wrote them against a background where Bangladesh's Islamic fundamentalist party, the Jamat-e-Islam, was growing in power, openly supported by the West via Saudi Arabia. The Jamat opposed the independence of Bangladesh from Pakistan, and slaughtered thousands of progressive writers, artists and scientists on the eve of Independence in 1971. Since then it has increasingly appropriated and reinterpreted Islam for its own purposes. It is currently waging a violent campaign against women, particularly poor women in rural areas, who challenge its tyranny, in however small a way. In June 1993, Noorjehan from Chatakchar in East Sylhet was buried waist deep in a pit and stoned 101 times because the village maulana declared her second marriage "illegal". He had in fact been eyeing her and was infuriated when she married someone else. Noorjehan committed suicide. In September 1993, Feroza Begum from Satkhira who had come out of domestic confinement to earn a living by selling shrimps was given 101 strokes of a broom after the local imam issued a fatwa against her. She too committed suicide. These are only two of many such women. These columns have been translated from the original Bengali for Inqilab by Sumita Dutta.



I was about eighteen or nineteen then. The matinee had just ended in Mymensingh, where I lived. The rows of rickshaws were waiting for passengers. I got into one of them. The crowd was so dense that the rickshaws had to stop and start continually. During one of these stops I felt a sudden searing pain in my right arm. Turning round I saw a boy of twelve or thirteen pressing a half-smoked burning cigarette against my arm. He was dressed in a shirt and lungi. I had no idea who the boy was. I was bent double with the pain in my arm. The boy just walked away laughing. Thoughts kept buzzing in my head - I'll scream, I'll call for help, I'll run after him and catch him, I'll demand that the public put him on trial. Probably the sixth sense which all women have prevented me from making any attempt to punish the boy.

Already at that tender age I could see the unfolding scenario in my mind's eye - I would catch the boy myself or ask for help from passers by, people will crowd around to stare at me, at my ripening body, my shining youth, my pain, my distress, my anger and tears. Some will utter sympathetic noises, some will want to know what happened in an intrusive way, some will suggest catching and thrashing the boy, others will want to know where I lived, who my father was etc. etc. They will savour and relish my helplessness, my lack of security. Under the pretence of examining my burns they'll relish the sight of my bare shapely arm. And when I left there'll be catcalls and wolf whistles from these well wishers. All these thoughts prompted me to keep my pain to myself.

My right arm still bears the mark of that burn, I still carry the scar from that torture I endured. How can I blame that ignorant boy when the learned are just as guilty? I have seen with my own eyes a boy running off after pinching my friend's thigh, an unknown young man pulling my sister's veil and getting away.

In the crowds hundred and one unseen arms stalk women, touching them up. I know only too well that many of those arms belong to the learned and the educated.

I don't make a single protest against these incidents. Rather I consider myself fortunate that nobody has thrown acid in my face - thus burning and blinding me, or gang-raped me as yet. I'm lucky I'm still alive. And my crime which prompts this fearful anticipation of torture is that I'm born a woman.

Nothing, not my education, my good taste, my intelligence can ever define me as a human being. I still remain a 'woman'. In this country, no matter how capable a woman she can never be promoted to the rank of a human being.

There are many people in this society, privileged, cultured and intelligent people who accept, without question that the incident of the cigarette burn was my private affair. This allows them to abdicate responsibility. Not only me but any woman who steps outside the boundaries of home prepares herself to put up with obscene comments in silence. She knows that an unknown man can spit betel juice on her clothes. smile and walk off unconcerned. She anticipates such disasters as acid being thrown at her, being mugged, kidnapped, raped, and murdered. It is not an unusual incident to have a couple of stones thrown at you in the street. Only two months ago, a lot of people in this city relished the sight of a young woman who returned home half naked because her clothes had caught fire from a burning cigarette thrown into her rickshaw.

At one time, in different places in Mymensingh, particularly around girls' schools, colleges as well as cinemas, signs were to be found hanging from wooden posts, bearing the legend "Please ask for help from the police patrol if you are harassed by anti-socials". These signs didn't last long. Probably the anti-socials uprooted the posts and carried them away. As long as the signs were there, however, these boys would be seen leaning against the posts, whistling when schoolgirls passed by. The funniest thing is that the schoolgirls were so badly harassed by the policemen that they had to turn to these boys for help instead.



I was having a discussion about Bangladesh with a visitor from abroad. When he heard the Prime Minister was a woman he gushed excitedly "Women in your country are so emancipated that they can even become Prime Minister!" I was rather dumbfounded by this comment. Is it thanks to women's liberation that the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition are both women? Are we to conclude from this that there is no difference in the status of men and women and they have equal rights in this country?

Oh no, not at all. I explained to the visitor that these women have achieved such high powered political office not in their own right but because of the influence of their husband and

father.

Honourable Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition what is your view on this? Are you going to deny it? Although you have reached the top exploiting the name of your husband and father and now rule the country between you, I am still proud of you. Proud because you are women. On the other hand what is the point of being women if you merely tinker with the legal system and don't change it, if you go along with the existing mismanagement and do not change it, if rules and regulations remain as they are, unfair and unmanageable. I am not talking about problems such as Constitutional Amendment Bill, the Indemnity Bill, VAT, inflation etc. My concern is with women, the exhausted, drained, frail, ill, illiterate, blind and deaf women of the Third World.

As soon as you became politicians you started covering your heads. I haven't noticed male politicians doing the same. Because while Islam talks about women covering their heads it talks at the same time about men covering their heads and keeping beards. But we all know don't we, dear Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition that in this country men are not obliged to follow the dictates of religion as much as women. I know that neither of you is accustomed to covering your head. Women like you, one university-educated, the other, wife of a Lieutenant General certainly do not go around covering their hair with their saris. You are doing it now because your male fellow-travellers have taught you that that is the way to win the public over.

Aren't you deceiving yourselves? Being women there is no way you can forget - because this society has ways of reminding you if you do - that women are surrounded by taboos that they have grown up with. Have you never felt resentment at this? I have. Any woman would. If so shouldn't something be done about them now? You have the power. If you are really not puppets of a handful of male politicians, then why don't you challenge these repressive systems? Don't you feel outraged that the evidence of one man - any Kalimuddin or Raisuddin is good enough to be accepted in court but it requires two of you, two women for your words to be accepted as valid evidence? In other words one man equals two women.

Acid throwing, murder, rape, these are daily incidents here. The real perpetrators of these crimes are getting away scot-free. Are the loopholes through which they escape going to remain unplugged? Honourable Prime Minister, we admire you as a brave woman. I pay my deepest respects to you.

We see outriders clearing the way for your cavalcade when you travel. We have no such protection. Why don't you come out in the streets sometime, try a walk along the pavements in the darkening twilight? Feel how male lust claws at you, taking you for a prostitute. You too Opposition Leader try it, try it some time. Have you ever seen with your own eyes how countless women are sold for a handful of coins on the pavements of the city? Doesn't it touch you and make you feel that it is yourselves that are being bartered away? Don't you feel that women are worth about as much as vegetables? And you are not immune, no matter how high you climb.

If, being women, you don't close down brothels and rehabilitate the workers, then who will? One of you deputises

for her father, the other for her husband. If you sought power only to avenge their deaths, that's one thing. But if you have wider consciousness and awareness and feel that the widespread practice of child marriage, polygamy, bride murder, kidnapping, rape and trade in women must be wiped out in this country, then you'll be far more committed than any male politician and that's how it should be.

Material goods are essential for survival as well as for self respect and dignity. Disrespect for women is enshrined in Islamic inheritance law. For example if a woman dies her husband gets a quarter of her property and half if they are childless, yet a widow gets only one eighth of her husband's property and a quarter if they have no children. Why such inequality in property rights? Why such unequal treatment in the case of sons and daughters? A daughter inherits half of what a son does. An only child if he is male inherits the entire estate of his parents, only half if she's female. Just as the difference between rich and poor should be reduced, shouldn't we do the same for men and women? If, Honourable Prime Minister, this gap, this inequality cannot be abolished then why don't you take steps to nationalise all privately owned land, this will be of tremendous benefit! Or is that impossible? Because you love what keeps you in power, the support of male advisors, Middle Eastern theology, capitalism, foreign aid. Also because you are merely your husband's surrogate, you have no mind of your own, no power of judgement, no independent thinking, no religion or order of your own to give.

Taslina on the Vedas

"That Islam had nothing whatsoever to do with the fall in the status of women will be clear from the few examples quoted from the entire gamut of the Vedic literature. (Samhita, Brahmanas, Upanishad, the Sharauta Grihya, the Dharma Sutras etc.) between the 12th century B.C. and the 4th century A.D.

Grihya Sutra: During the marriage ritual, the bridegroom tells his bride, come let us unite so that a son might be born through whom my property will grow. The final prayer is for 'sons, grandsons, slaves, disciples, garments, blankets, precious metals, several wives, a good king, food and security'. The new bride is meant to provide physical pleasure and her number can be increased if she doesn't produce a son (Dharma Sutra 28.2-3).

She can be discarded like a piece of torn cloth if she produces only daughters, stillborns, or is barren, and can be immediately thrown out if she 'quarrels' (that is if she stands up for herself) (Shatapatha Brahmana 5/2/3/14 and Baudhayana Dharma Sutra 2/4/6)

She is in her father's charge as a child, in her husband's in her youth, in her son's in her old age - no woman is fit to be independent (Vasistha 5/1-2/2/1,3,44,45)"

(from 'Selected Columns' - translation A.R.)

Camden - media myths and the realities of racism

For years now the black community has been fighting racism in Camden. Activists have been trying to get the issue of racism acknowledged by the local authorities, the police or even by school governors but with little success. However when Richard Everitt (a white youth) was killed in August, the police immediately ascribed a racial motive to the murder. They subsequently had to retract this because of lack of evidence, but by this time the media was already loudly proclaiming it to be a racist murder. Ranue Bibi a volunteer and member of the Drummond Street Asian Youth Association and Sarver Lalljee an advice worker in Camden spoke to Sarbjit Johal about the impact of the incident on the black community in Camden and the battles that lie ahead.

Sarbjit - *Could you describe the conditions for the black community in this area?*

Sarver - Since 1989 serious attacks on Asian families on Council estates in Camden have included harassment on a daily basis - from verbal abuse, stones thrown at families and their children as they come and go from school, spitting at families, to incidents of arson attacks in the middle of the night. We have reported these incidents to the police. But nothing much has been done to identify and punish the perpetrators. Instead it has resulted in a few families managing to get transfers to another estate. We asked the police to gather information on the perpetrators (its not a difficult task when there are about twenty youth outside someone's house on a daily basis). Families were obviously not always able to give information about the racists in court because of the likely repercussions. So we urged the police to get the evidence themselves, we also pressurised the council in their role as landlords to collate that information. Both came back and said that they didn't have the resources. The council initially

even refused to acknowledge that the black families were in fact facing racial harassment - they put it down to general harassment faced by everyone on the estate, despite the fact that it was the black families who were targeted for the arson attacks, they would be spat on, imprisoned in lifts....We did manage to get the council to take certain safety measures on the estates - like fitting fire proof letterboxes, securing windows etc, after a long time. But the problem was that families were still prisoners in their homes - so in the end all we could do was get them transfers.

Ranue - I'm a voluntary youth worker for the Drummond Street Asian Youth Association. This was formed in 1992 because of the high level of racism faced especially by the youth. It was felt by the youth particularly, that they needed a safe space, where they can be represented and they can help themselves to tackle some of these issues. It is not just the racism from fascists, but also the police harassment. Some of

the cases such as the Drummond Street 4, have shown the decline in police action in terms of racial incidents. In this case, the police took 45 minutes to arrive. A car full of racist thugs had entered Drummond Street, armed with metal bars and the police response was to arrest the Asian youth along with some of the white youth. The white youth were let off because of lack of evidence.



'There's been a demonising of Asian youth, as someone who is violent, needing to be controlled'

Sarver - The fact that the white youths were let off by the magistrates court at the first stage really does not leave much faith in British justice. I think that it was a clear signal to racists that there was a high probability that they would be let off even where they went to the extent of attacking the black community in their own homes. In 1987 an Asian restaurant worker, Abdus Sattar, who was returning home had been murdered and yet the issues of racism and racial attacks were not put on the agenda as a serious issue by all the relevant authorities.

Sarbjit - *After Richard Everitt was killed, what has been the general response?*

Ranue - In my opinion it has been a devastating blow to all of us. The young people here were also shocked to hear about it. On the other hand, three things have happened here, soon after the incident. Firstly the Asian community have been under siege by threats and revenge attacks by white youth, also all the Asian people of the area have put in a position as if they had something to do with the murder. The community are very frightened of the backlash. Everyone thinks which one of us is going to be next. The media has started focussing on the Asian youth, especially the Bangladeshis as being criminals, violent young people roaming Camden, taking the law into their own hands.

Richard Everitt was a victim and his family are victims but now we are the victims - now every Asian is seen as being guilty of this attack. They never paid attention when we have been suffering from racism for so long, but hopefully this time they'll do some preventative work rather than 'fire fighting'.

The residents in Somerstown especially think that Asian people have taken over.... Most white people don't see that - that we also as working class people are suffering. They are blaming us for all these things - but the power lies with the politicians. Since the event, it is giving leeway to fascists and BNP to come into the area and whip up racism. One woman actually said to me, "I'm racist, but only this much," but this much can become huge when BNP and fascists come in and start saying "Hey we can't tolerate this. These Pakis come in and takeover and now they've killed a white person - our brother etc etc..", this excites a lot of people. In 1992 we organised a march, there was recruitment to BNP going on Robert Street. Also in the Regent Park estate there were a few people who are well known for being BNP members, also around Drummond Street.

Sarver - The other danger is that there may be an appeasement of racist sentiments. First of all there have always been statements in, for example, Somerstown by some ex-local councillors about the need to have a sons and daughters housing policy for local residents in this area. Usually these sentiments are expressed as a direct attack on the black community. So we have to monitor the situation make sure the white community is not projected as discriminated against, or as victims of the Asian community. Even police statistics can combat this myth. Also there's been a demonising of Asian youth - as someone who is violent, needing to be controlled. This has been taken up by community leaders.

Sarbjit - *What do you think the role of the Drummond Street Youth Association should be now?*

Ranue - Basically, to represent the community in the area, supporting and assisting the youth arrested. Eleven have been arrested, a few more are being picked up, they are all on bail. They are members of the Drummond Street Asian Youth Association, and we feel they are innocent until they've been proven guilty. The police think that we know someone involved -they are basically going around picking people up and fishing for information. Its a really traumatic time for the families of those young people. Drummond Street Asian Youth Association will represent these youth if these cases go further.

Sarbjit - *In the current climate, what concerted strategy should we be adopting now?*

Ranue - We black people haven't even got our acts together. We are battling individually, always attacking and criticising each other. The only way we can succeed, we ourselves have to address our needs and issues, which at the moment is racism which is in every institution. We should forget about hierarchies and power craving, that's what is destroying our anti-racist struggle.

Sarver - Some immediate and practical measures could be providing transport for those coming home late, having a help line etc. In the long term, there are going to be forces who will play on the backlash on the community. The only way to stop that is to get together....there is a long battle ahead.

Sri Lankan Elections - A New Beginning?

Dayapala Thiranagama

On August 16, the electoral victory of the People's Alliance ended seventeen years of rule by the United National Party (UNP) in Sri Lanka. In these seventeen years the country had been opened up to foreign investment (particularly in agriculture), rural impoverishment had become extremely acute and the war against the Tamil people had taken on new dimensions, emerging as the main issue in Sri Lankan politics.

The People's Alliance (PA) emerged victorious, but with only a slim majority. The PA (see box) consists of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP), the Lanka Sama Samaja Party - (LSSP), the Communist Party (CP) and the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC). The Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) expects to give selective support to the new government. The PA has now formed a coalition government led by Prime Minister Chandrika Kumaratunga of the SLFP which is the strongest party within the coalition. The PA is ethnically diverse and politically pluralist clearly an advantage in the present political climate, although it could be a source of weakness in coming years. The PA pledged, during the election campaign, to begin negotiations with the Tamil Tigers who control the North of Sri Lanka. Ten years ago this would have been unthinkable and the PA's victory suggests a decline in anti-Tamil chauvinism among the mass of Sinhalese people.

The fact that the PA fought the elections against the most brutal, unpopular and corrupt regime in Sri Lanka's recent history made its task much easier. It also meant that it was less important to convince the electorate that it had alternative

policies to offer. However the voters clearly did come out in favour of the PAs proposal of a negotiated settlement to the ethnic conflict. Many smaller parties in the south who advocated continuing the war with the Tamil Tigers have lost their parliamentary seats.

The response of the Tigers who have formed a de facto government in the Tamil dominated north with repressive apparatus including brutal prison camps for political dissidents, remains to be seen. Although the latest news suggests that they are willing to negotiate with the new government. As for civilians in the North, there can be no doubt that the people want peace. On a day to day level, life is extremely hard. There has been no electricity in the Jaffna peninsula since 1990 and in recent years there has also been a food embargo imposed by the central government. Many civilian activities necessitate a trip to Colombo involving an extremely dangerous journey including a one mile walk through swamps riddled with land mines. At the same time it is clear that the Sri Lankan army has made inroads into the North - the Tigers have total control of only a comparatively small area. However even where the army is present, the soldiers are

often confined to barracks, afraid to venture out. It is civilians who suffer in this stalemate.

The new government has already lifted the food embargo as a preliminary move to negotiations. They have also made promises to lift the ban on trade unions in the Free Trade Zones. This is however not the first time the Sri Lankan government has tried to negotiate with the Tigers. The UNP government initiated negotiations in 1989 after its election victory. On that occasion both the ruling party and the President Ranasinghe Premadasa were totally identified with anti-Tamil chauvinism. Premadasa who initiated the negotiations was assassinated on May Day last year by a suicide bomber in Colombo. It is widely believed that the Tamil Tigers were responsible.

The crucial test for the present government is how to find a reasonable political solution for the ethnic problem, without which the country is ungovernable in political, social and economic terms. This war has brought terrible human rights abuses - unlawful summary executions, the curtailment of democratic rights, draconian laws, press censorship enforced by government-sponsored thuggery and violence. The social fabric of the country has been torn apart : every week hundreds are dying, people are fleeing to neighbouring India and to western countries as refugees, and millions have been displaced in all three communities - Sinhalese, Tamil and Muslim.

The war costs millions of rupees a week. It is hard to conceive of an impoverished third world country like Sri Lanka waging a war against a modern and highly efficient guerrilla army for more than a decade. The UNP government financed the war by placing unprecedented economic burdens on the masses and reducing their standard of living disastrously. At the same time it opened the doors wide to foreign investors and subjected the economy to conditions imposed by the IMF and World Bank. The Sri Lankan economy continues to be dominated by cash crops - tea, sugar etc grown on plantations.

The success of the coalition government depends on how far the government is prepared to go to extend democracy and give democratic rights to oppressed ethnic minorities as well

as women and working people. This task is impossible if the government is unable to find a negotiated political solution to ethnic conflict. It will also be necessary to regulate market forces to create opportunities for the underprivileged sectors of society. The left-wing partners in the government (the LSSP and the CP) will demand such measures. However Chandrika will find it difficult to persuade the right-wing members of her

The People's Alliance

Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP): The leadership of the SLFP is synonymous with the Bandaranaike family - S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike the first SLFP Prime Minister and Srimavo, his wife, and their children. The SLFP represents the interests of the traditional bourgeoisie and has been 'suspicious' of foreign capital. It has been a traditional supporter of Sinhala Buddhist chauvinism. Since 1960, it has never won an absolute majority without the support of the left parties.

Lanka Sama Samaja Party (LSSP) grew out of the anti-imperialist struggle of the 1930s organising the urban working class as well as the rural masses. In the 50s it was the largest left party and won a sizeable number of seats in the election. After the 1960s when it joined the SLFP in a coalition government its popular base started to shrink.

Communist Party (CP) was aligned with the Soviet Union. It was popular among students and the urban working class until it joined the coalition government with the SLFP in 1970-77.

Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC) is a recent political phenomena. In view of the massacres and mass expulsions of Muslims - in other words the "ethnic cleansing" - carried out by the Tigers in the North and East, the SLMC is a legitimate participant in any negotiated settlement of the ethnic conflict.

Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) claimed to be the sole representative of the Tamil people before the ethnic war began in the late 1970s. Committed to non-violence it raised the consciousness of the Tamil people for a separate Tamil state. The Tamil Tigers gunned down its leader in 1989.



Effects of the economic blockade in Jaffna: gathering firewood for fuel

own party to accept the demands of the left-wing partners. Since the smaller parties hold the balance of power within the coalition, it would be necessary to meet their demands if the government is to hold on to power. If these difficulties are not successfully resolved it could meet the same fate as the coalition government of 1970-77, which consisted of many of the same parties and fell apart before the end of its period of government, paving the way for the UNP's landslide victory in 1977.

The coalition government is yet to win total power in the country. The UNP government still holds the executive presidency. The creation of a separate post of executive presidency for which there are separate elections was an effort by the UNP government to hang on to power. It was achieved by changing the constitution in 1978. The elections for executive president are due in December this year, if the UNP is able to win this post they could continue to obstruct

the implementation of government programmes, effectively paralysing the coalition.

The left-wing credentials of the government will be thoroughly tested by the masses who voted for a change after seventeen years of UNP rule. Also on trial will be Chandrika Kumaratunga's claims to a left-wing politics which

distinguishes her from the rest of her family (she is the daughter of two previous Prime Ministers S.W.R.D Bandaranaike and Sirima Bandaranaike). What the coalition government should understand is that charismatic leadership will have no place in Sri Lankan politics today if promises are not fulfilled.

The Inquilabi Muslim Conference

*A recent and very significant development for the left movement in India has been the formation of the Inquilabi Muslim Conference. The IMC aims to represent the specific needs and demands of the Indian Muslim community, within the context of people's struggles for transformation of India. This is the first time the importance of Muslims organising as a community in India has been recognised from a left perspective. The IMC was initiated by members of, and people close to, the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist), with whom it continues to have a close relationship. Here **Shahida Hasan**, one of the founder-members of the IMC describes the reasons for its formation.*

The position of the Muslims in India today is in a sense peculiar. For historical and political reasons, they are a besieged and targeted community, living in a state of permanent terror. After the holocaust of Partition, the Muslims who remained behind in India were a decimated, defeated community, falsely attributed the guilt of having been responsible for the partition of the country. The Indian National Congress and the Indian government took pains to propagate this distorted history, teaching it in schools and colleges. The Muslim League and Mohammed Ali Jinnah were held solely responsible for the creation of Pakistan, although it was equally the clumsy and biased handling of the freedom movement by the Congress itself which had driven Muslims into the fold of the Muslim League and its ultimately extremist demands. And in some indefinable way, Indian Muslims were made to share the blame. They were viewed with hostility and suspicion, and discriminated against in jobs and positions of power. They have been, since then, also exposed to continuous bouts of killing, raping, maiming and looting, in what are called 'communal riots' but which are, in fact, state sponsored terrorism against Muslims, to keep the communal cauldron simmering.

All this has made the Muslim community withdraw into a shell, and turn to religion to protect their identity. Since they have no say in the running of the country, they have been overtaken by apathy, and have been pushed into a marginalised position. Government statistics themselves show that Muslims are the most deprived community educationally and economically. While Muslims are about 12% of the Indian population, they hold only 1-2% of jobs in the Government, bureaucracy, police, army etc, even less than those held by the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

The Indian government, in a desperate bid to prevent the upsurge of democratic forces within the country, has in the last few years adopted the strategy of promoting the Hindutva ideology, a violent and aggressive fascist ideology, which targets Muslims. This culminated in the demolition of the Babri Masjid, which flouted with impunity the Constitution of India, the orders of the Supreme Court, and the promises made by the BJP state government of Uttar Pradesh. We have

seen the horrors of the post-Ayodhya Bombay and Surat incidents, where Muslims were brutally killed in thousands, where women were stripped, gang-raped and set alight, and the whole thing video-taped and circulated, to be watched with relish in posh Bombay drawing rooms, by men and women alike. The long night of terror still continues in Bombay where the police and Shiv Sena activists can pick up any Muslim from their home, without charge or warrant. They then disappear and are either killed or tortured in jail. In Kashmir too, apart from the general savagery, rape is being used as a weapon of subjugation of the Kashmiri people by the Indian military and paramilitary forces.

Muslims thus feel an acute sense of hurt, humiliation and terror, which is now turning into a state of desperation, leading to fundamentalist ideologies strengthening their hold over the community. Muslims are told that they do not belong in India, and must either get out, or be prepared to die in the most painful way. The other choice given to them by a section of the Hindutva brigade, is to convert en masse to Hinduism. Thus Muslims are faced with annihilation, physically as well as culturally and religiously. The proclaimers of this vicious pronouncement operate without let or hindrance, encouraged by the so-called 'secular' Government of India, which keeps mouthing meaningless 'Hindu-Muslim Bhai-Bhai' slogans. The reactions to this situation engendered in the Muslim community thus has nothing to do with religion: terror and hurt is felt as acutely by progressive, liberal, and 'communist' Muslims.

In such a situation it was conceived that Muslims need to organise as Muslims, to fight for their rights. Till now their fear and insecurity has been used by all political parties, who demand votes in return for promises of protection, but who take care never to address the real problem. They have thus, to stop relying on 'protectors', and fight for a share in the power and wealth of the country.

Thus an organisation was needed which cut across 'class' barriers for the present and addressed the problems relating to the community as a whole. We hope the Inquilabi Muslim Conference can fulfil this role. It aims to draw Muslims into the struggle for democracy and secularism, together with all

*Dwell in the ocean
and battle with the waves therein.
Eternal life lies in
ceaseless struggles*

Iqbal

the present regime, and who stand to gain from its overthrow.

The Inquilabi Muslim Conference's raison d'être has been much under discussion since its formation. It has still not been fully accepted by the traditional communist parties here in India, and there was a lively debate even within the CPI(ML), which lasted two years before the members were convinced of the need for such an organisation. It was finally decided, however, that religion, and the existence of religious communities as well as their specific problems, was a ground reality. It was neither possible nor desirable to do away with religio-cultural groups. They would have to be encouraged to enter the democratic struggle as such groups. There was no contradiction involved in their retaining their identities as well as fighting for a democratic secular India, since the old methods of purely 'class' struggles had failed to achieve results. Religious persecution has made Muslims insecure about their existence as a religious community. They cling to religion and traditions as a means of protecting their cultural identity. As such they are wary of the word 'communist' as a threat to their religious belief. A delicate balance has to be struck between retaining the identities and autonomy of these groups, as well as bringing them together on common economic goals. It is still an experiment - it may or may not succeed. However it seems to be a solution as far as Muslims are concerned for the present.

The most recent issue the Inquilabi Muslim Conference has taken up is to demand punishment for the killers in the 1989 Bhagalpur riots in Bihar, when over a thousand Muslims were killed and over 15-20 mosques were razed to the ground. The Janata Dal state government of Bihar, though it made an

the other
oppressed
communities in
India who face
discrimination
and exploitation
at the hands of

election promise to punish the killers has done nothing in the last four years of its rule. On the contrary, it has rewarded some of the killers with coveted positions and starved the Commission of Enquiry of funds.

In 1993, we formed an organisation of Muslim women called 'Tehrik-e-Niswan', which has been active in fighting for the rights of Muslim women, both within and outside the Muslim community.

Inquilabi Muslim Conference

Our movement

- * For the protection and modernisation of Muslim identity
- * For the formation of a modern secular India as against Hindu Rashtra
- * For unleashing independent initiatives of Muslims in the realm of democratic movements

We support

- * complete separation of religion from politics
- * All grassroot struggles that strengthen people's unity
- * struggles of ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities for the preservation of their identity
- * friendly relations with neighbouring countries and formation of a Indo-Pak-Bangladesh confederation

We oppose

- * The fascist ideology and designs of Hindu Rashtra
- * Vote-bank politics based on fear and insecurity
- * India's capitulation to US and other countries
- * American aggressive designs against Muslim countries by raising the bogey of 'Islamic threat'



The British Government on trial.....

Report of the first hearing of the People's Tribunal on Immigration and Asylum 25th November 1993.

Since the early 1960s, immigration legislation has been used by the British State to both limit the entry of black and refugee communities and to control these communities within the country.

This report presents first hand evidence of systematic abuses of human and civil rights under the guise of 'immigration control', and the demands which have arisen out of a wide range of campaigns being waged against Britain's racist laws. It also documents the ongoing resistance in prisons and detention centres by Immigration Act detainees. This report is a telling indictment of the British Government in the 1990s, and a vital record of a specific point in the history of the struggles of black, migrant and refugee communities in Britain for justice. More than anything, this document is a testimony to the courage of those who came forward to give evidence of their own experiences, many of them very painful, and whose resilience and determination to fight for justice is a lasting source of inspiration.

Copies from the Campaign Against Immigration Act Detentions, 6-20 John's Mews, London WC1 tel. 071 916 1646/ 071 254 9701

U.S. foreign policy and a woman's right to choose

by Amrit Wilson

In early September, after a preliminary bombardment of propaganda lasting several months, the International Conference on Population and Development was held in Cairo. Organised by two of the world's most powerful population control organisations - the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) and the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA) and attended by the well-heeled representatives of governments and large NGOs the conference discussed population control policies for the next few decades. Policies which must be imposed, they argued, to give women "the right to choose", policies in the interests of sustainable development and to save the earth from ecological disaster.

At the same time at an alternative conference, also at Cairo, women's groups from all over the world were protesting against these planned population policies and those already existing. And at a public hearing on the crimes against women, witnesses testified from their own experience about the untold suffering to women in third world countries in the name of family planning: about the inadequately tested injectable and implantable contraceptives being "trialled" on women with the permission of the WHO; about the forced sterilisations which in many countries are the order of the day because third world governments have to meet "targets" set by international agencies; about the way these policies actually encourage the killing of girl babies in countries like India where each woman is only permitted one daughter; and about the oppressive governments which are conducting slow genocide of certain ethnic groups using methods validated by population policies.

The Woman's Right to Choose

Women need contraception which they can choose and most crucially contraception which they themselves can control. But national population policies concerned with meeting targets not only do not meet this need, they take control out of the hands of women. Previously in their struggle for control of their fertility they had to take on the sexism and brutality of individual men within or outside the family and often feudal oppression from the family itself. Now they are also up against the forces of advanced capitalism which want to control and limit their fertility in an effort to continue their exploitation.

It is striking that the contraceptives used in Family Planning programmes are almost invariably controlled (inserted and removed) only by medical or para-medical intervention. This means that women who are injected or implanted no longer have control over their own fertility.

Meanwhile far away from Cairo the decisions on population policy had already been taken by another level of more primary decision-makers. The men from US State Department, the CIA and the US Ministry of Defence have determined international population policies from way back in the seventies. Now they voice their "concerns" in scholarly and influential journals. They do not pretend that population control is about anything other than maintaining the status quo under which

advanced capitalist countries control the world's resources and labour power. In the mid-70s the US State Department, Department of Defence, and CIA had produced a National Security Memorandum 200 but it was a classified document later adopted as National Security Policy. Now declassified it outlined the US government's major concerns around population: firstly the radicalisation of the developing world to a point where people "can more readily be persuaded to attack such targets as

multinational corporations"; secondly that certain third world countries e.g. Bangladesh whose position on international issues will be likely to become radicalized as its problems grow, might then "advocate a better distribution of the world's wealth"; thirdly that "in the absence of slow or zero population growth, concessions to foreign companies are likely to be expropriated or subject to arbitrary intervention. Whether through government action, labour conflicts, sabotage,

civil disturbance, the smooth flow of needed materials will be jeopardised". The memorandum recommended that development assistance is "integrated" into population planning and health into family planning. This

assistance as leverage was also recommended but *"it is important in style as well as substance to avoid the appearance of coercion"*. (Food aid was in fact used to enforce sterilisation policies particularly

have been targetted anyway because attempts to impose population control by performing vasectomies on men had failed miserably - (in one major experiment in India, it had contributed to the fall of Indira Gandhi's government). There were in addition other advantages in targetting women, firstly that violence against women had reached such proportions in most 'third world' countries that this new assault on women's bodies would be seen as 'acceptable' by the governments in these countries; and secondly it would ensure that progressive organisations, the left in general and in fact most men would simply ignore these developments as mere 'women's issues' - nothing to do with them. Sexism provided the smokescreen behind which these major strategies of economic and political control were put in place.

By the eighties the US government had set aside almost \$3 billion specifically for population control activities. At the same time USAID was supporting population activities in 95 countries, including 45 sub-Saharan countries (now targetted as of special interest) and the World Bank had emerged as one of the major money lenders for population control, third only to the UNFPA and USAID. And in addition to money lent directly for population control the World Bank was making many of its loans conditional on the implementation of population control. But it was all being done

How Targets are Implemented

On a practical level how do "Third World" states implement the population policies forced on them? In India the state agreed, in 1983, to a target of a Net Reproductive Rate of 1 by the year 2001. NRR of 1 means that each woman at the end of her lifetime would be replaced by just one daughter. In a country where there is enormous pressure to produce a son and where there are already a large number of girl babies killed, this amounts to encouraging female infanticide. However this was no deterrent - the problem was simply that the target was not practicable. The time span was increased by another 10 - 15 years to 2011 - 16. But even this according to a recent study (undertaken jointly by the Gujarat Institute of Development Research and the Population Council) is an unrealistic aim and can only be achieved "under regimes of very high mortality... as happened in the Indian sub-continent during 1911-21" when there was an influenza epidemic which killed a large proportion of the population. As the study points out, Gujarat's infant mortality rate is 67 per 1000 live births compared to 7 which is the average for the UK. But obviously this figure is too low for the NRR to be achieved. All this makes it abundantly clear that what population control is about is not a better life for people in India but simply less people in India so that the West faces no hindrance in keeping control of the world's resources.

How has the Indian government managed to meet these targets in the short term? Targets are translated to numbers for each state and district. After this it is a story of coercion and corruption.

For example a recent expose of the situation in Purnapur, UP, showed that when central and state governments are unable to meet impossibly high targets, the district administration sets targets for non-health departments - school teachers, officials of cooperative societies, forest officers and so on. In December 1993, 80% of these employees had their salaries stopped for non-achievement of targets. In 1994 they kidnapped large numbers of women from neighbouring Nepal, forced them on to buses and then drove them to dingy warehouses to be forcibly sterilised. In this situation (which is not unique to India) can anyone believe that what these women are getting what the population control lobby calls the "Human Right to Contraception"?

integrated health and family planning would *"help the US contend with the ideological charge that it is more interested in curbing numbers of LDC (Less Developed Country) people than it is in their future and well-being"*. The use of food

during the floods in Bangladesh in the seventies).

Since by this time feminism had placed women's rights on the agenda, the US establishment began to use it cynically to enforce population policy. On a practical level, women would

in the name of health. According to Fred Sai (former President of the IPPF and key organiser of the Cairo conference) and Lauren Chester, writing in *Population Policy: Contemporary Issues*, (New York, Praeger, 1990) for the World Bank, "**Health became an operational issue ..stress was placed primarily on the relationship between health and population**". In Indonesia, the Bank "**supported the government's innovative ideas for a population program and in part formed a basis for the program. [it also] helped the government implement its ideas.**" No mention here of

Indonesia's use of population control methods - sterilisation and untested hormonal contraception - for genocidal attacks on the East Timorese people. Sub-Saharan Africa despite an extremely low population density (Botswana has only 2.23 people per sq km compared to 230 per sq km in the UK or 320 in Belgium) was targeted for population control. In Senegal, for example, according to Sai and Chester, "**The Bank's sector work...probably influenced to some degree both government officials (including the President) and regional Bank**

staff on the importance of population. The population sector work prompted Bank regional staff to talk about population with high-level officials when discussing terms for a structural adjustment loan (SAL). As a result, preparation of a Population Policy Statement and Action Plan became an agreed condition of the release of the third tranche of the SAL...this Population Policy Statement has been drafted by the Bank and will eventually be discussed at a national workshop. It will then go to the President and council of ministers for approval. ..It will be translated into a priority investment program. Here...explicit targets will be identified."

If governments in Africa and Asia are being pressurised into implementing these policies, what is their own position? Just as they are in charge of the implementation of Structural Adjustment Policies dictated by the World Bank and the IMF, they also provide the infrastructure for the implementation of population policies and they also provide the coercion and repression which is increasingly necessary. (Currently in India the draft stage of new population policy has even recommended the use of the army and para-military forces for "population stabilisation"). But with increasing globalisation how exactly does population control meet the needs international capital? Not only has this been discussed openly by key actors in the field but their opinions have been collated and

Some long-acting contraceptives being "trialled" on third world women

Among the contraceptives widely used in population control is the injectable Depo-Provera. A public inquiry conducted on this drug in the US in 1984 held that data on its carcinogenic potential was insufficient to prove its safety. It is now to be manufactured in India in a collaboration between Max Pharma India and UpJohn USA.

The most widely used of the implants is Norplant. This is being trialled (or tested) in third world countries with the permission of the WHO. It consists of five capsules which are implanted in the upper arm and contain a steroid called levonorgestrel. Apart from possible side effects of hormonal disturbances, absorption of levonorgestrel by infants through mothers milk, circulatory and heart problems, there are established risks of ectopic pregnancies (which can be fatal) for women who have been on Norplant. Norplant therefore requires careful follow up services. It lasts five years and requires minor surgery to remove.

Also making its way on to Family Planning Programmes round the "third world" is an anti-pregnancy vaccine developed and tested under the management of the WHO which acts through the immune system. The first experiments to test the safety of the vaccine resulted in 25% of cases in a collapse of the immune system.

If follow up services have been recognised as essential for all these contraceptives, what infrastructure is available for follow up? In India where health services are stronger than in many other "third world" countries, 300 women selected for the pilot study on the implantable contraceptive Norplant are now untraceable. This is alarming but not really surprising since India has one Primary Health Centre for 30,000 people and one sub-centre for 5,000 (and these sub-centres may well have neither medicine nor any sort of auxiliary nurse or midwife.)

analysed and published. "Population issues of concern to the Foreign Policy Community" (Oct 1993) - is a literature search and bibliography prepared by the Population Reference Bureau for the Pew Charitable Trust's "Global Stewardship Initiative" by Alex de Sherbinin. ("US Foreign Policy Community" being defined as comprising those working directly on the design and implementation of foreign policy and those advising/observing the process - including the State Department, AID, US Department of Defence, the US National Security Council, the CIA and think tanks such as the Centre of Strategic and International Studies). De Sherbinin sums up the main issues in a diagram (see below). He shows how control of "third world" populations interlocks with very many of the recent economic and political initiatives in Europe and the US, all of which aim at a situation where

capital is mobile and labour immobile. They foresee some of the developments which are to be part of the New World Order.

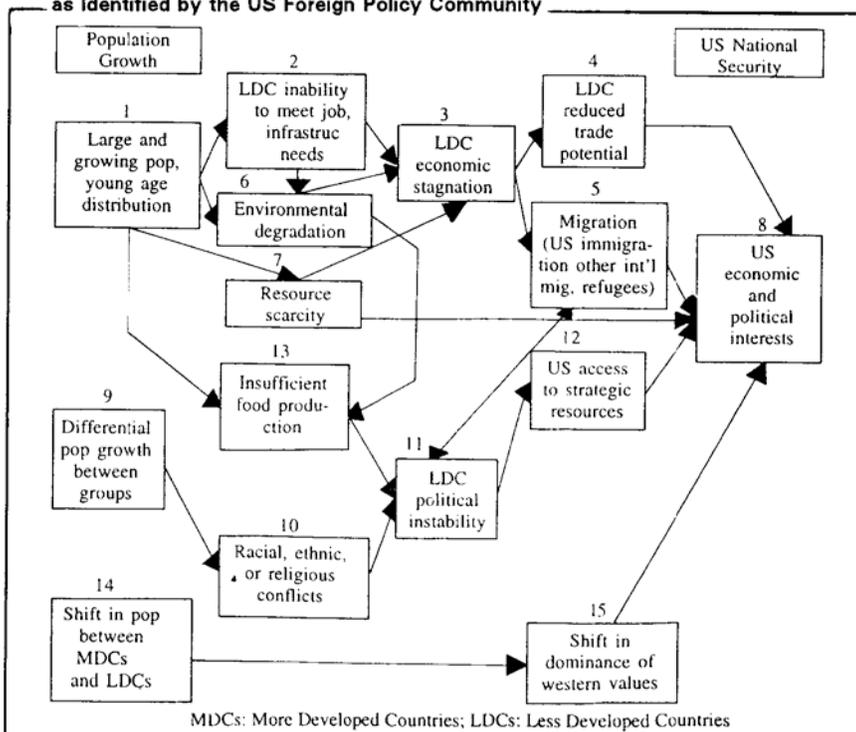
"Sustainable Development"

"Sustainable development" is a term frequently used by international agencies. On the face of it, it sounds extremely reasonable. For example according to Nafis Sadik, Executive Director of the UNFPA a "sustainable balance between population, natural resources, consumption and production...both developing and industrial countries have complementary responsibilities". What is left unanswered is : "sustainable by whom?"; and why "sustainable" rather than "self-sustaining"?

Underlying the concept of sustainable development are the assumptions that the status-quo will be maintained in "third world" countries; that agricultural countries will never become industrial countries serving their people; that cash crop economies will remain as they are, their people will remain dependent on food aid and loans from outside; that the advanced capitalist countries will continue their exploitation of the so-called "Less Developed Countries".

While these concepts were being consolidated, research by US scientists was showing that there was very little correlation between population growth and per capita income and the relationship between population growth and economic development was complex. For example Julian Simon's work in 1973 showed that moderate population growth is a stimulus to economic development, rapid population growth only a mild deterrent and zero population growth and population decline are strong deterrents.

Links Between Population Growth and National Security as Identified by the US Foreign Policy Community



For example Box 2 "LDC inability to meet job, infrastructure needs" foresees the effects of massive redundancies and cuts in welfare services which are a part of structural adjustment; Box 5 "Migration, US immigration and other international migrants and refugees" takes account of the unemployment which is being expected in the G7 countries and the creation of barriers around trade blocks like Fortress Europe which would require if necessary the sending back of refugees to torture and death in their countries of origin, in total contravention of all International Regulations on Human Rights; Box 13 "insufficient food production" implies the food scarcity in countries particularly of Asia and Africa because of

Source: From 'Population Issues of Concern to the Foreign Policy Community' by A de Sherbinin, Pew Foundation, October 1993.

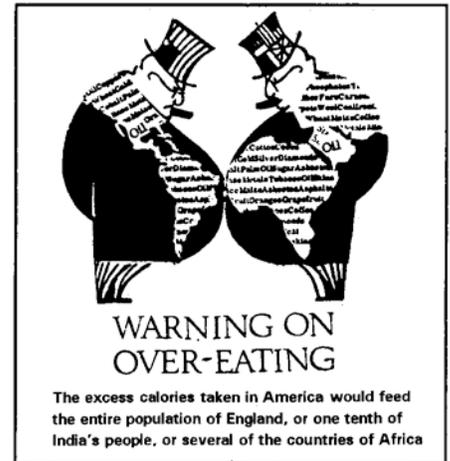
cash crop production on the one hand and the effects of the "free market" and GATT on the other; Box 10 "racial and ethnic or religious conflicts" suggest the fear of civil wars thanks to the proliferation of US manufactured arms and arms from the old Soviet Union, and also suggests that there will be intervention and sometimes genocidal policies in the interests of "maintaining a balance" (Rwanda's problems for example are already being linked with population pressure) ; Box 1 confirms the Memorandum 200 policy of targeting of countries with young populations as in Bangladesh and the countries of sub-Saharan Africa - countries essentially where life expectancy is low and disasters are frequent.

In addition to the diagram, de Sherbinin expands on specific issues, among them US access to strategic resources. "African nations" he points out "produce between 90 and 100 percent of four minerals vital to US industry: platinum, manganese, chromium, and cobalt" and, writes de Sherbinin, Secretary of Defense Richard Cheney reported to the President and Congress in 1993: "Failure by the Western nations to promote stability in Africa could result in disruption in the production and distribution of strategically important resources and could reduce access to facilities important to regional contingencies". No wonder then that Africa, particularly Sub-Saharan Africa, has been targeted for population control.

The media has portrayed the population debate as a conflict

between the population control agencies who want to give women the right to choose and the Pope and Islamic fundamentalists who are against women having control over their bodies. In fact "third world" women have organised consistently and widely against population control, the alternative hearings and testimonies at Cairo are only one example of the activities of a growing movement which has a number of publications - among them the monthly magazine "People's Perspectives" published by UBINIG in Bangladesh.

What the years of "Family Planning" have shown is that people - both women and men - in "third world" countries are unwilling to accept these policies till they themselves have control of their lives. When this happens - when they are sure of survival, when infant mortality falls and diseases are overcome, it will be in their interests to have fewer children. But not till then. World Bank policy makers are well aware of this, they acknowledge that they are "encountering resistance" to sterilisation and have suggested a shift to injectable and implantable long acting contraception despite the dangers of these methods - in other words it is to be a shift from coercion to deception since in most cases the women do not know what injections they are being given or what the implants are doing to their bodies. These programmes, far from giving the right to choose, breach the most basic requirement for choice - that women and not governments



Gertrude Elias

or foreign agencies or even doctors - must have control over their bodies.

But choice is not what population control is about. In the voice of the US Foreign Policy Community:

"The US national security agenda has broadened considerably since the collapse of communism in the Soviet Union and the East Bloc... In the post-Cold War era foreign policy is much more complex, encompassing such diverse issues as international migration, economic development, environmental degradation, and religious fundamentalism... global developments now suggest the need for a broadening definition of national security to include resource, environmental and demographic issues... the average American's interest in maintaining high standards of living has been a potential motivator for US population policy from its earliest formation and it is likely that this will continue for the foreseeable future" (From "Population Issues of Concern to the Foreign Policy Community" by A. de Sherbinin published by the Pew Foundation) ■

At a time when 'human rights' and 'democracy' are the buzz-words of America's expansionist foreign policy, Rajani Desai of the Federation of Organisations for Democratic Rights and the Maharashtra based Lok Shahi Hakk Sanghatana (Democratic Rights Organisation) exposes the appropriation of these terms and explains how the movement for democratic rights in India is inextricably linked to revolutionary and anti-imperialist people's struggles.

There are certain basic differences between human rights, civil liberties and democratic rights. Human rights is a term which is best left to refer to what the United Nations has incorporated in the Charter of Human Rights and to understand the motives within that Charter. It relates to the notion that certain atrocities should be objected to on grounds of humanity. But if you actually look at its history and practice, it has been associated with the determination of the imperialist countries, or the more advanced countries as they are called, to use the human rights issue in order to negotiate better terms, or to impose something on third world countries or on one of their own members with whom they may be having some problems.

Civil liberties we see as liberties which are mentioned in the Constitution of India which is actually an 80% replica of the British Act of 1935 for colonial India, which Nehru said at the time was a document imposing slavery on the Indian people. But the 'fundamental rights' in the Constitution of India are not available to 95% of the Indian people today - never were in fact - so we do believe that we should be asserting these civil liberties.

The area of democratic rights goes beyond that. It comprises much more. Actually the notion of democratic rights emerged during the '60s, after the Telengana armed struggle was suppressed by the Nehru government when the people set up Committees for the protection of rights of political prisoners. In the course of their struggle to get reasonable treatment for the political prisoners who were the leaders of that movement, local or national, it dawned on them that any action against people in struggle or against the leadership of people in struggle is in fact an attack on the people. When in the course of struggle against exploitation or oppression people face repression either from the local powers like employers and landlords or from the state machinery, that is the area where democratic rights operates. It asserts the rights of the people to struggle for a better living and for a more self-respectful existence. It was mainly after the people's struggles of the late sixties that it was explicitly formulated as a democratic rights movement. In the '70s democratic rights organisations began to come up in various parts of the country, taking up issues of repression on peasants' struggles, students' struggles, workers' struggles. So it is a larger area - although it comprises the assertion of civil liberties, it also involves exposing how the social and economic conditions in which people live, and the kind of rulers we have, make it next to impossible to implement civil liberties. So exposing that and educating people about why that is so is part of our task. The democratic rights movement cannot be a movement of intellectuals only. It has to have for its backbone the working class and the peasantry, employees, women and students - working people generally.

When we began work in Maharashtra the Janata government which had come to power after the Emergency had brought

COMMENT

in an Industrial Relations Bill intended to prevent workers organising. We brought out a pamphlet and took it from door to door in working class areas, we explained what the Bill contained - demystified it. Because as the workers told us the unions were not doing this at all. We also had street corner performances, speeches, public meetings and signature campaigns. The whole purpose was to educate people about the provisions of the Bill and how it was going to affect their lives and the importance of resisting that onslaught.

We don't believe in collaborating with the government. We believe cooperation is impossible with a government whose constitution is not accountable to the people in practice. In our paper "In Defence of Democratic Rights" we show the interconnection between the economic crisis and repression, whether it is an attack on the people of Kashmir or the workers of Chattisgarh.

After the IMF loans in the early '90s, people have begun to eat less, and the government is talking about reducing the ration (the public distribution system for foodgrains). It needed to be consolidated and extended, but they have cut it and are talking of targetting those who are 'really needy'. With less foodgrains at higher prices, it is hard to imagine how they would target this 40% who cannot eat two square meals per day.

Politics is being systematically communalised. In Maharashtra, we have the Shiv Sena of which we have to be very wary when we carry out any democratic activity. In 1992/93 the so-called 'riots', which were actually massacres of Muslims, bore testimony to what they were prepared to do. They have a social base among the unemployed youth. The youth are looking for fundamental changes and they don't know the answers. The democratic movement is not so strong or widespread - it hasn't reached them. In 1982/83 there was a massive mill strike - if that had succeeded (not in demands but in terms of the organising of the working class) then this youth could have gone towards a more democratic politics. The kind of reply which the working classes in Bombay were capable of giving to any communal force it is not capable of giving today; or the kind of reply which the organised peasantry in Bengal, Bihar, Andhra or even Maharashtra is capable of giving to communal politics, it cannot. That is not to say that the majority of people are themselves communal - they are not - their life's experience goes against it. But they are not organised to resist it or prevent it. And that task has therefore fallen to the democratic rights organisations. I think an important point is that through all these years of repression - 28 years or more during which things have got worse, with attacks not only from the government but from ruling class parties outside and organised gangs - the democratic rights organisations have increased, their network is better, they keep in touch with each other, they are producing their own literature. In these conditions they have withstood the fascist forces - this is a major achievement.



Poems by Maheshwar

Maheshwar, the revolutionary poet, writer and cultural activist, died on 25 June at the age of 45. For hundreds of people from all walks of life who knew him and worked alongside him in Bihar, Maheshwar was 'not merely a passionate poet or an erudite essayist, but above all an inspiring mentor, a reassuring friend, a cool reservoir of rare human warmth'. These three poems translated from Hindi were written when Maheshwar was waging a long battle against the kidney disease which finally claimed his life.

Flying

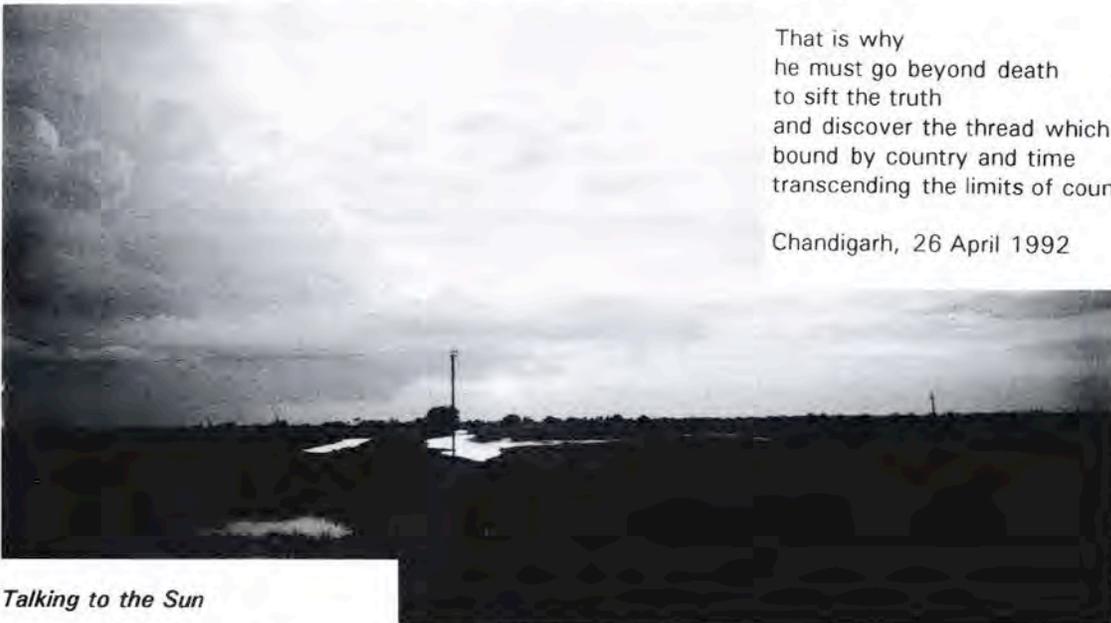
On the wings of my wishes
the bird of my mind
soars higher and yet higher
into the vast unknown blueness
of the sky

That bird is tireless
those wishes don't die...

On the wings of questions
my mind's bird flies -
to fathom the end of the endless
to seek out the source of the new
and transform everything inside and out

That is why
he must go beyond death
to sift the truth
and discover the thread which is hidden -
bound by country and time
transcending the limits of country and time.

Chandigarh, 26 April 1992



Talking to the Sun

*One day I shall tell the sun
Brother, if you have to shine
Shine in style
Not in this clumsy manner
From one fixed corner to another.
The sky is so vast
Open your eyes
Run
Go
Whichever way you like
Glow
Simmer*

*One day I shall tell the sun
Brother, stop this habit of
Sprinkling a little light at doorsteps
And fleeing away
Move
A little inside every home
Sit down
Relax
Have a little chat
And
Stitch a fresh patch of light
On every hidden stretch of residual darkness*

*Just see,
One day I shall tell the sun point-blank
Brother, if you are indeed a sun
Learn to shine in style
As the sun does
Else
People will only
See and forget you in poems
They will forget your existence
In real life.*

Madras, 25 June 1992

Undefeated

If you want to understand
the complexities of life and truth
then listen
in my veins each day a new sun rises and sets,
in my blood simmers the forests,
....
thousands of children play
in the courtyard of my heart
I am in the sweat of the peasant pulling the cart
of life
across the flaming fields
in the callouses of the worker who carries the
city on his back,
....

I am from the dynasty of nais, dhobis, kahars,
gwalas, chamars, mochis and mallahs,
of the anguished township
for us struggle and nothing else is what can be called life.

....
I have fallen in the battlefield
but I am undefeated
My flag is not bowed
I can still withstand the harshest attack
That is the reason
the only reason for you to believe me my
comrades
One day I will return
to your laughing, playing world
Even if I die before my time
I will fly as the victorious flag of life
Believe me my comrades
I will return

Madras, 1 March 1992

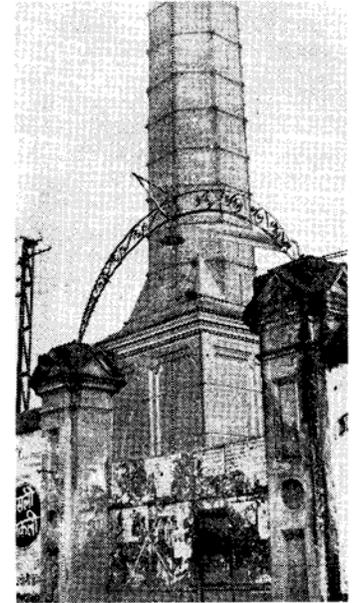


Red Flag in Nadhil Village Bhopur District, Bihar

The Bengal Jute Workers' Struggle: the new colonialism in action...

In 1989, British businessman Reginald Brealey, the chairman of Sheffield United Football Club, bought Titaghur plc, which owns four jute mills in Calcutta. Since then, Brealey has failed to pay pensions, statutory benefits and more than six months wages to the 20,000 workers in these mills, and currently owes them several million pounds. Workers' protests have been met with brutal police repression; but with all four mills closed for months at a stretch, the workers are determined to expose Brealey, re-open the mills and get the money owed to them.

"Calcutta, January 2 1994 To reach Telenipara where the Victoria Jute Mill is located, we take a train to Bhadreswar, an outlying suburb of Calcutta across the river in Hooghly district. The jute mill area itself is a twenty-minute rickshaw ride from the station, the cramped squalor of the tiny shacks and ration stores lining the route emphasised by the lush greenery of the surrounding fields. One of the shop stewards of the Bengal Chatkal Mazdoor Federation, who has been working the nightshift in one of Titaghur's other mills, walks us to the 'lines' where the majority of the Victoria workers live - rows of rooms whitewashed and bordered by drains, each one the home of a whole family. A sign for drinking water indicates the many regions and communities from which workers are drawn to the mills - it is written in Hindi, Bengali, Urdu, and Telegu. Today in the bright winter sunshine there is a desultory atmosphere with an undertone of desperation. The mill has been closed since October 24 and those workers who have not returned to their villages - where the majority rely on irregular, poorly-paid work as agricultural labourers - are trying to survive through pulling rickshaws, the women looking for work as labourers on construction sites. We go to one of the gates of the mill itself, whose single chimney towers over the surrounding area. As the union activist recounts the events of the last three months, more and more people gather. One man, obviously from Bihar, suddenly asks - "how can we speak when we are filling our stomachs with water? How can we carry on like this?" According to the workers, when British businessman Reginald Brealey bought the company in 1989, he promised to invest Rs 7 crore (£1.4m) for modernisation. But to date there has been no investment. Instead money meant for pensions and bonuses was used to somehow run the mill. Now after nearly three months of being locked out by the management they are literally on the verge of starvation. They say we should meet the family of an old man who recently died as a result of malnutrition. When we arrive in this lane, where most people are Telegu speakers, it turns out that the man has died only yesterday. A crowd of people surround us as the man's son, himself thin and frail even in middle age, says quietly in Telegu that his father had worked worked in the mill all his life, but he did not receive the pension which the mill owed him. He himself has had no source of income since the mill closed. He looks devastated and dazed, there is nothing more he can say. As we are leaving a middle-aged woman says to me "Sister, we are poor people, now we can't feed our children, we can't afford to take them to the doctor, how can we live?" Tears are streaming from her eyes. This woman from Andhra Pradesh is herself a worker in the mill, her desperation is made even more affecting by the strength and confidence of her expression and her whole bearing. Three days later, the workers are demonstrating outside Titaghur's head office in Clive Street in the heart of Calcutta's financial district, demanding the re-opening of the mills and the repayment of the money owed to them. Inside, Brealey's representative, a blond blue-eyed young Australian called Brian Adams, assures me that "Mr Brealey has ensured that 20,000 people now have a future". The money owed to the workers and to the Provident Fund and Employees State Insurance (the equivalent of National Insurance) is blamed on "corrupt and inefficient Indian management" and the cure is on its way in the shape of twelve British managers - all ex-Army officers. However, he hastens to add, the arrears will not be paid off until the mills become "more profitable". But the slogans being shouted by the workers and the smoke from the burning of Brealey's effigy drift through the windows into the spacious Head Office, built in the heyday of the Raj. And one of the speakers is talking about the new laws which are allowing Brealey to play with the lives of 20,000 workers, calling on people to resist the 'New Colonialism'...."



The Victoria Jute Mill

Sahibs, Speculators and Structural Adjustment

Jute was a typical colonial cash crop which people were forced to grow instead of food. Produced by poor peasants in Eastern India, it was made into sacking and hessian in the jute mills of Calcutta and elsewhere, and then exported. The profits accumulated in Dundee in Scotland, where most of the colonial 'jute barons' were based. Today the Indian jute industry employs 250,000 industrial workers (nearly a tenth of whom are currently employed by Brealey), and provides income to 400,000 jute growers.

From the 1950s onwards, polythene and polystyrene gradually replaced jute as

packing and sacking materials, and by the 1980s the jute industry was in decline and declared a 'sunset industry' in India. But with the recent interest in eco-friendly materials - the Food and Agriculture Organisation has already recommended the packing of food items in jute bags rather than polythene - the price of processed jute has risen on the world market.

As a result, the Indian Government itself has recently recommended that investment and modernisation could now make the jute industry profitable again, through diversifying into new products for the world market, such as jute fabrics, clothing, shoe-soles, luggage, etc. This is very much the type of strategy which the World Bank and other Western-controlled international institutions claim to encourage, and which Structural Adjustment Policies are supposed to facilitate. If it happened, it would clearly carry a number of dangers: the

intensification of the Indian economy's dependence on a fluctuating world market, a shift towards smaller 'handicraft'-type production units where workers would find it harder to organise, and greater 'flexibility' of output at the expense of workers security.

But will it happen? The example of jute suggests that Structural Adjustment Policies do not work even in their own terms. Because the

reality is that the economic policies actually introduced at the behest of the World Bank and the IMF are actively discouraging any kind of productive investment in the jute industry.

When Reg Brealey took over Titaghur plc in 1989, as a foreign investor he had to give certain assurances to the Reserve Bank of India, in particular that he would not repatriate funds to Britain for the first seven years. Like most of Brealey's promises, these were never kept. But during the last three years, the Indian government has introduced a set of new economic policies which mean that even such assurances are no longer required and which suggest that Brealey may be a pioneer for a new brand of speculative and economically devastating foreign 'investors' in India.

The Indian government has introduced a set of new economic policies which suggest that Brealey maybe a pioneer for a new brand of speculative and economically devastating foreign 'investors'



TO LET
Immediate Possession. Long
lease available subletting &
sharing discouraged only cor-
porate parties need apply.
Contact Congress & BJP.

On the one hand the policies mean that there are no longer any controls on foreign business transferring profits out of the country; on the other, the dismantling of labour protection laws and the introduction of anti-trade union legislation leaves workers vulnerable to intensified exploitation, and with little redress when employers like Brealey run up huge debts to their employees.

In this situation it is hardly surprising that the Indian jute industry has become a magnet for speculators and asset strippers, whether Indian or foreign. Mills have been left closed for weeks at a stretch by managers who have invested nothing: in West Bengal alone, jute mill owners owe Rs 91 crore (£18.2m) to the Provident Fund (which operates like National Insurance). And while Brealey, with characteristic racist hypocrisy, told Titaghur workers in 1989 that "*I am not an Indian ... I don't lie. I promise you all I shall clear all the retirement dues*" he has turned out to be one of the biggest defaulters, now owing over £5m to the Provident Fund. But although 'Provident Fund defaulting' is an offence, no action was taken by the authorities.

Brealey's 'golden opportunities'

While Reg Brealey is one example of a whole breed of jute mill owners whose corruption and speculation is encouraged by the current policies, his reign at Titaghur has been marked by a return to colonial style racism.

Blueprint for the New Colonialism

India's New Economic Policies which were first initiated in 1991 immediately after the acceptance of the IMF loan, involve:

- * removal of controls on foreign capital: foreign investors are allowed to repatriate more of their profits, receive higher technical fees and royalty payments; key infrastructure like the financial and telecommunications sectors are being opened up to foreign multinationals
- * removal of restrictions on imports
- * cuts in subsidies on basic consumer goods leading to sharp price rises
- * massive cuts in public sector spending including the public distribution system for foodgrains, further lowering the living standards of the poorest.
- * privatisation and closing of nationalised industries, leading to hundreds and thousands of redundancies
- * undermining of laws which protect workers' rights -the most recent example is the cutting of maternity benefits for the second child (which also fits in with the governments coercive population controls policies). Unions are resisting the introduction of an 'exit' policy which will allow companies to 'hire and fire' at will.

Since 1991, urban registered unemployment alone has gone up from 34 to 38 million; planned closures will lead to a further 12 million people losing their jobs.

Meanwhile in April this year, India signed the GATT Treaty. Its direct impact will include the patenting of seeds used by farmers by agribusiness multinationals, soaring food prices and massive increases in the prices of essential drugs.

Rather than the modernisation he promised, all Brealey's initiatives since taking over the mills have been aimed at simply increasing the workload and reducing the number of workers. For example in February this year workers at his Angus Jute Mill were offered redundancy for 500 workers (although redundancy payments would only be received once the mill became 'profitable'); in September the Shyamnagar mill re-opened - workers returned only to be told that their hours had been massively increased.

Brealey has shifted the headquarters of Titaghur plc from Calcutta back to Dundee, and clearly sees himself as a successor to the Scottish owners who controlled the Indian jute industry in the days of the British Raj. The linerrooms where the workers live as well as the conditions in the factories - remain virtually unchanged since Victorian times. And like the colonial 'managing agencies' the new British management has no interest in investing in order to increase productivity, but simply aims to drain resources from India - which Brealey referred to in his 1992 Chairman's Statement as an '*untapped land of golden opportunities*'.

Brealey's twelve British managers were all in post by March. On 16 March the workers came to the Clive Street Head Office to present their demands. When the delegation went in, two of these managers - Whitcombe and Vigors - responded with racist abuse. The members of the delegation refused to tolerate this final insult, and the managers were dragged out of their offices into the midst of the other workers outside, and had to be rescued by senior police officers. This was followed by a mass picket of the British Deputy High Commission in Calcutta demanding an apology for the managers' racist behaviour.

Back to Basics

But perhaps the most telling - and bizarre - indicator of Brealey's colonial mentality is his '**Back to Basics**' project. While claiming to be unable to pay pensions owed to its workers, Titaghur has spent £2.5 million on purchasing a 16,500 acre estate, Knoydart Peninsula, in the Scottish Highlands. The land will be the headquarters of a training



Reginald Brealey (on the left)

scheme for 16-18 year olds who have been in care or are from 'deprived' 'inner-city' backgrounds. But the high point of the 'Back to Basics' course will be sixteen weeks of 'work experience' in the Calcutta jute mills. The course brochure speaks for itself: "*For the first time in the course (and perhaps in their lives?) trainees are appointed to specially-created positions of authority as 'Assistant Supervisors' and they don the white uniform which is standard dress for supervisors in the jute industry. Their living accomodation also reflects this new status. Though attached to the mills, the trainees apartments are located in a separate compound which also contains a swimming pool, snooker hall, and tennis court. The apartments themselves are serviced by cooks, cleaners and laundrymen, thus the trainees learn to treat servants as they themselves would wish to be treated.*" According to Colonel Mike Reynolds, the Project Director, the aim is to boost the self-confidence of the British youth by putting them in a situation where they are not "at the bottom of the pile": the Indian workers under them, he claims, could never aspire to these posts and, he is quick to add, the trainees will be reporting to British managers, or failing this, to "educated Indians".

Brealey is currently seeking Home Office and Social Services funding for the project.

The West Bengal government - 'Communist' only in name

The West Bengal state government is controlled by the Communist Party of India (Marxist). But while the CPI(M) has expressed opposition to the New Economic Policies at a national level, in West Bengal it has long made it clear to the working class that its only guiding principle is to hold on to power, and the state government has consistently supported employers against workers. Lacking any alternative economic strategy, Chief Minister Jyoti Basu currently seems to be trying to outdo even the central government in welcoming in all potential foreign investors, however dubious, with open arms. Recently, he has begun negotiations to turn an entire town into a sort of colonial theme park : Chandernagore in the former French enclave of Chandernagore may be taken over by the French multinational ACCOR Asia-Pacific to be developed as a resort for French tourists.

Basu - Brealey bhai-bhai?

So it is only to be expected that Brealey, who was invited in personally by Jyoti Basu, should received such considerate treatment. A case brought against him under the Foreign Exchange Regulation Act (FERA) in 1990 has sunk without trace. When Brealey last visited Calcutta in February 1994, instead of being arrested as a defaulter he was provided with a police escort to protect him from the workers' anger. It is only the workers themselves who have challenged the power of the mill owners whether in Kanoria, another Calcutta jute mill where the workers have formed an independent single workplace trade union and are attempting to set up a workers

co-operative, or in the Titaghur mills where the workers are linked to a wider struggle with revolutionary goals.

Police Repression

Meanwhile, the Titaghur plc workers, already faced with unemployment and starvation, have been the target of police repression and brutality. When the Victoria Jute Mill workers' anger at the cycle of lockouts, redundancies, increased workloads and broken pay agreements exploded onto the streets on 20 October 1993, police fired on them without provocation, injuring three workers. A policeman also died after being hit by flying bricks. This was followed by a reign of terror in the area: police burned and raided workers' homes, beat up workers and their families and carried out indiscriminate arrests. Several women were molested. On 21 October Bhikhari Paswan, a worker in the finishing department, was taken from his home by the police. His brother described how *"they took him away, beating him all the time. My father went to the police station. He could hear my brother screaming. He said, 'why have you taken my son?' They said come back in the morning....In the morning they said the senior officer had taken him away"*. The family filed two Habeas Corpus cases but it is generally believed that Bhikhari Paswan has been murdered by the police.



General Strike!

On 29 September 1994 the Titaghur plc workers are participating along with several million others in a one-day General Strike against the New Economic Policies

and GATT. The strike is the culmination of a nationwide campaign of protests throughout August and September. It has been called by the All-India Sponsoring Committee of Trade Unions, which includes all the left and left-of centre opposition trade unions.

Workers Fight Back

Despite these tactics of intimidation, the workers of Titaghur plc have shown their determination to fight back. This has meant challenging not only the management but the leadership of the established trade unions in the mills.

the workers of Titaghur plc have shown their determination to fight back. This has meant challenging not only the management but the leadership of the established trade unions in the mills.

These unions are aligned with the major ruling and opposition parties, including both the CPI(M) and the Congress, and in the Titaghur mills their leaders had become completely integrated into the management structure. They consistently betrayed the workers in negotiations, making deals without



Victoria Jute Mill workers at a mass meeting on 10 November which was disrupted by the police

their consent. As a result they became one of the targets of the workers' protests last October. The only organisation which has stood by the workers in the face of intense police repression is the **Bengal Chatkal Mazdoor Federation (BCMF)**. This is part of a national level trade union federation - the AICCTU, and is led by the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist). The CPI(ML) is a revolutionary left party rooted in mass struggles in the Indian countryside and cities. It is particularly strong in the villages of Bihar from where many of the Calcutta jute workers migrate, and links the Titaghur struggle with their battles against exploitation as agricultural workers.

Currently the Titaghur workers are demanding:

***Brealey's extradition to India to face charges. According to their union the AICCTU: "The Indian Government is saying there are terrorists from Kashmir sitting in Britain who should be extradited back to face charges. We think the number one terrorist is Brealey who is playing with the lives of 20,000 workers. We are demanding that Brealey should be extradited to India and brought to book".**

***Re-opening of all the mills under conditions which provide a living wage for the workers**

***Payment of back wages owed to the workers**

***Repayment of the pension fund and other statutory benefits which legally belong to the workers.**

During most of the last year all four mills have been closed and the workers have had no source of income, but they have refused to be driven away. Earlier this year a camp was set up at the gate of the Angus Jute Mill which was kept going through donations. When electricity and water supplies to the line rooms were cut off at the height of summer, (while supplies to the managers' quarters continued), the workers

demonstrated until the supplies were reconnected. The movement initiated by the AICCTU has also led to the CITU (the union federation linked to the ruling CPI(M)) being forced to raise the demands of the Titaghur plc workers and as a result Jyoti Basu is facing growing pressure to take action against defaulting mill owners.

The Brealey Jute Workers Support Campaign

Meanwhile an active campaign has emerged in this country to support and publicise the demands of the Titaghur plc workers and to expose Reginald Brealey. During the last football season, the grounds of Sheffield United (the team Brealey owns) were plastered with bright yellow 'WANTED' posters accusing Brealey of 'crimes against Indian workers', and a group of fans distributed thousands of leaflets at matches giving the details of the activities of the club's chairman in Calcutta. In London, the campaign leafletted Indian Prime Minister Narasimha Rao's meeting with British businessmen at the Guildhall in March. In July when West Bengal Chief Minister Jyoti Basu came to open an exhibition of paintings of colonial buildings at the Nehru Centre in elite Mayfair, he was greeted by demonstrators shouting 'Jyoti Basu, Reginald Brealey, blood on their hands' and 'British rule, never again - make Brealey pay!'. The demonstration got wide press



The creme de la creme of Indian business - Basu's guests in Mayfair....

Messages of support/donations can be sent to the workers' union the Bengal Chatkal Mazdoor Federation c/o A.Chakrabarthy, CPI(ML), 21/1/1 Creek Row, Calcutta 700014, India. Contact the campaign here c/o Londec, Instrument House, 205-217, Kings Cross Road, London WC1X 9DB tel. 071 713 7907

coverage in Calcutta, intensifying the pressure on Basu as well as giving a boost to the workers. Their union wrote recently "we know it is a prolonged battle and in prolonged battles much depends on our ability to keep up the workers' fighting morale and save them from being starved into submission. But the solidarity action that you are organising in Britain means much more to us in this case, pitted as we are against a British capitalist who combines economic loot with racist hypocrisy".

If the trade union movement in Britain is to survive and effectively defend workers' rights in the future, solidarity and co-ordination with struggles like those of the Calcutta jute workers must become a central part of its practice

The Brealey Jute Workers' Campaign has made links between the jute workers' struggle and those of workers in Britain, sharing platforms with the Burnsall strikers, Turkish and Kurdish textile workers, and outworkers. In this era of attempted 're-colonisation', the existence of a black working class in the metropolitan countries, who themselves constitute the most exploited, and most militant sections of the working class in these countries, creates new potential for anti-imperialist solidarity. And with capital now increasingly free to move in and out of countries at will, the British establishment too is desperately trying to attract multinational corporations on the basis of the 'cheap' labour of black workers, women workers and other low-paid workers. Increasingly the conditions in the small sweatshops and factories subcontracted to supply these companies are approaching those in so-called 'Third World' countries. So if the trade union movement in Britain is to survive and effectively defend workers' rights in the future, solidarity and co-ordination with struggles like those of the Calcutta jute workers must become a central part of its practice.

Kalpana Wilson

Guard the green trees of your dreams
the flowering hopes in the corridors of your eyes

Cherabandaraju, Andhra Pradesh

An Extract from *Chandralekha*



Chandralekha by Amrit Wilson is a play about memories of the past and dreams of the future and about what happens when they collide and people have no choice but to try and transform the present.

Its arena ranges from India's anti-colonial movement in the 1920s to the struggles against British racism in the 1990s - from the courtroom to the heart of the family. *Chandralekha*, creative, humourous and strong, lives out her many lives confronting Christian missionaries and white social workers; colonial soldiers and racist policemen; feudal families and macho comrades - with a rare clarity of vision.

"I have always fought, whether by taking a gun or simply by surviving, refusing to let my spirit be crushed. And in this struggle I have sometimes had to fight against those closest to me, sometimes they have betrayed me - those are the most painful battles but they have to be fought."(Act 1 Sc.7)

"You don't know me. If you saw me on the street you wouldn't recognise me you would see an Asian woman on the streets of Stepney. You would never wonder about my past or my future...How? Why? did I end up here. I was an artist, a revolutionary, I was in love. Here under the pale gaze of British skies all that was blotted out. I was no longer me..Then one day quite unexpectedly, I found I had to fight back for myself and for those I love. That's when I began to think again about the future."

In this scene, set in East London in the 1970s, Chandra has been forced to leave India as a political refugee. She and her husband, Tejinder Bassi, had been activists in the Naxalite movement (the revolutionary uprisings of poor and landless peasants in India). Tejinder was brought up in this country, but had later gone to India and got politically involved.

After coming to Britain, they initially live

with his family but Chandra faces intense hostility from her in-laws and insists that she and Tejinder leave. They find themselves in the flat in the middle of a racist estate where this scene is set. At the climax of the previous scene, Tejinder is murdered on his own doorstep by racist thugs.

In some ways this scene, set a few months later, presents *Chandralekha* at her most vulnerable - bereaved, pregnant and alienated from her surroundings. But it is also punctuated with flashes of the challenging and resisting spirit which sustains her throughout. The scene opens with a dream in which she is visited by her yet-to-be-born daughter, who gives her intimations of the battles they will fight together in the 1990s. But before she can fully understand, she is woken up....

THERE IS LOUD RAUCOUS MUSIC, FOLLOWED BY VERY LOUD KNOCKING AT THE DOOR, THE STAGE GOES DARK. CHANDRA'S DAUGHTER DISAPPEARS, WHEN THE LIGHTS COME ON CHANDRA IS LYING ON THE SOFA JUST WAKING UP TO A KNOCKING WHICH IS ONLY NORMALLY LOUD.

VOICE OF MISS RIVETT FROM SCENE 1: (CHEERFUL AND BRITTLE)

Hello, are you Mrs Bassi, I am Pat Rivett, I am your social worker. You do remember our appointment don't you...We spoke on the telephone and I arranged to come today.

CHANDRA: Yes

PAT RIVETT COMES IN BRUSHING SLIGHTLY PAST CHANDRALEKHA AND SURVEYS THE ROOM, CHANDRA STILL RATHER SLEEPY TIDIES THE CUSHIONS ON THE SOFA AND GESTURES FOR HER TO SIT DOWN, PAT RIVETT IGNORES HER, CONTINUES TO SURVEY THE ROOM AND EVENTUALLY SITS DOWN ON WOODEN CHAIR AND TAKES OUT CLIPBOARD PAD,

PAT R: (NOW LOOKING CHANDRA UP AND DOWN) Now, Mrs Bassi could we just get a few details down first. You are a widow, yes? You moved here from Southall? Yes? Husband Mr Bassi had been unemployed for two years and died last March - that's three months ago.. Well now, coping on your own?

CHANDRA: Yes

PAT R: You can talk to me my dear, We are here to help you sort things out! Now lets see, any immigration problems, when did you come to this country my dear?

CHANDRA: I have no immigration problems.

PAT R: Yes, but you entered Britain in..?

CHANDRA: Really I don't see how that is relevant

PAT R: No need to be touchy my dear, it is just that we need to check these things.

CHANDRA: You'll be asking for my passport next

PAT R: Well, we normally do that as a matter of course. But I won't insist since you are obviously not in the mood to cooperate.

A LONG PAUSE DURING WHICH PAT RIVETT SEEMS TO BE DISTINCTLY UNCOMFORTABLE.

PAT R: (WITH FORCED CHEERFULNESS) Now I wanted to have a little chat with you about how you are feeling. You are eight months pregnant now? This is your first baby isn't it?...Looking forward to it?...Now, I know Asian ladies prefer boys...but you wouldn't mind a little girl would you?(PAUSE, CHANDRA DOES NOT REPLY) Hm.. you are what... 32? Unusually late for an Asian lady. Are you feeling alright in yourself?

CHANDRA: Yes.

PAT R: Yes?... (IN A CONSPIRATORIAL TONE) Now I was told that before your husband died there had been problems and that you are not coping.

CHANDRA: Oh who told you?

PAT R: Well! A look round this room tells me that.

CHANDRA: Oh?

PAT R: Well, I'd say you haven't tidied it for a while..There is this big pile of papers in the middle of the room.

CHANDRA: Those are my painting things please don't touch them.

PAT R: You haven't made it look ...cheerful.

CHANDRA: Why should I be constantly tidying and making things look cheerful

PAT R: Not doing your housework, is always a sign of not coping..of... something amiss

CHANDRA: Couldn't it be just a sign of not wanting to do housework.

PAT R: Yes, but why? That's the question. I mean, I know you are in mourning, aren't you, you have these customs in your religion. But that's not all, is it?.. Why do Asian ladies get like that. With many of the ones I see, it is problems with husbands or in-laws. Mental disturbance or illness and the vast majority benefit from treatment.

CHANDRA: You mean that women are given medical treatment just for not doing housework?

PAT R: Mrs Bassi, you are being difficult...Trust me. My job is to help you. May be you don't have social workers where you come from. My job is to look after you, ..it is a vocation...caring.

CHANDRA: You are a professional carer?

PAT R: (EMOTIONALLY) Yes, yes!

CHANDRA: If I want to look after someone, first I try and get to know them!

PAT R: That's it Mrs Bassi! Exactly! And I do know a fair bit about Asian culture, food, customs. Arranged marriage forexample.

CHANDRA: Yes but you don't know me or any of the other 'Asian ladies'.

PAT R: You are wrong about that my dear, I get on very well with them, actually, though I say it myself, they really warm to me. And they confide in me. Down the road, the lady I saw this morning, she used to cry her eyes out, poor dear she was so depressed, missing home you know. I got the psychiatrist to see her and now she has had some treatment, she's really quietened down, she's ever so much better.

CHANDRA: What treatment did she have?

PAT R: ECT, you know, Electro Convulsive Therapy. It is very effective. A lot of Asian ladies get given it and some of your men too. They seem to recover after a couple of sessions.

CHANDRA: My God. That's the cure for homesickness! After that do they come to love this country!

PAT R: Look my dear I have come here to discuss specific things. I haven't all day to waste. In fact (LOOKING AT HER WATCH) I like to finish my calls by 4.30

CHANDRA: Why? Because it gets dark by the early afternoon and you don't feel safe walking around on the estate, is that it? Well, I have to live here - morning, noon and night, day after day.

PAT R: I know, that's what I have come about.

CHANDRA: Really! Am I going to be moved off the estate? Rehoused?

PAT R: (IRRITATED) No Mrs Bassi. You are being difficult. I want to help you because I can see you are under pressure.... Have you ever thought what will happen to you when you have had your baby. You can't cope with the housework now, how will you look after your baby?

CHANDRA: I'll have no trouble looking after my baby.

PAT R: I am afraid I have been asked to investigate you

CHANDRA: Investigate? What for?

PAT R: Children who are not properly cared for by their parents are often taken into care.

CHANDRA: Care?

PAT R: What that means is that they are taken away from those irresponsible parents.

CHANDRA: (ANGRILY GETTING UP AND MOVING TOWARDS HER)
What are you saying to me !

PAT R: Let me tell you it happens very, very frequently with mothers on their own - I mean. I know it is difficult but you haven't made it any easier for yourself by choosing to have a baby in this situation - you are living off benefits.

CHANDRA: (SHOUTING AND FURIOUS) Are you telling me that my baby will be taken away from me! - By you!

PAT R: Mrs Bassi! You are obviously unwell. Your attention is wandering, because I did not say anything of the sort. My duty is to make you aware of the possibilities.(THERE IS SOUND OF KNOCKING ON THE DOOR) I really must go now, I'll come and see you again soon.

CHANDRA: No you are not going before you explain yourself! I need to understand what is going on.

KNOCKING AT THE DOOR. CHANDRA GOES TO OPEN THE DOOR AT BACK OF STAGE. ENTER RAMESH

RAMESH: Chandra I have some news for you (SEEING PAT RIVETT) Oh!

CHANDRA: Ramesh, come in. This lady is a social worker, she's just been threatening me. She says she'll take the baby away because I will not be able to look after it.

PAT R: Now Mrs Bassi

RAMESH: (TO PAT RIVETT AT THE SAME TIME AS ABOVE) What the hell do you mean by that. You can't do that. We are organised on this estate - the community won't stand for it.

PAT R: (STANDING UP) I am afraid I have a number of other cases to attend

to.(TO RAMESH) And there is no reason for me to speak to you - whoever you are - (SMILING PATRONISINGLY) Mrs Bassi I know you are distraught and anxious about your baby, I'll speak to the health visitor about giving you something to calm you down.

RAMESH: You are not leaving without explaining yourself - it is bad enough people having to live under these conditions with racist attacks day in day out and then you have to threaten to take away their children.

PAT R: Racialism is nothing to do with me. The police sort it out and sort it out jolly well, I'd say.

RAMESH: So what about these threats to take the baby into care.

CHANDRA: (QUIETLY, PARTLY TO HERSELF) Can they take everything away from us, even our children?

PAT R: I have told you there were no threats (PUSHES PAST RAMESH AND RUSHES TO DOOR AND EXIT)

RAMESH: She's in a hurry! Stupid racist bitch!

CHANDRA: (SITTING DOWN AT TABLE WITH HER HEAD IN HER HANDS) She said she would take my baby away because I am on my own, I am not a responsible parent because I hadn't tidied the room. As though it isn't bad enough without all this.

RAMESH: Don't worry about that, that kind of thing don't happen round here, we don't let it!



"...that's what the British call being civilised" - Ali (Nirjay Mahindru) and Chandralekha (Mina Anwar) in Act 1 Scene 2 of The Sphinx's 1994 production

CHANDRA: Ramesh, let's be honest. You don't even know if it happens.

RAMESH: Chandra! Listen to me, we are finally in business. Next Monday the advice centre will open. We've got money for a youth worker so I thought it would be best for me to take the job. It will be a chance to do political work.

CHANDRA: Yes?

RAMESH: Yes, the first priority now is to mobilise for self defence. I tell you, it will be a chance to train the youth from the community - train them properly.

CHANDRA: Oh that will be so good! You'll be able to politicise them, would you have political education?

RAMESH: (STARTLED) What for! No, we won't have time for anything fancy. Just get the boys together, make sure they are tough and make sure they understand what self defence is and that self defence is not a crime..... Anyway these are working class kids, they don't need their consciousness raised.

CHANDRA: Really! Working class people don't need to be politicised?

RAMESH: What I mean is these kids don't have middle-class hang ups. They don't need political education in the same way.

CHANDRA: Oh GodLook at the way women are treated in the community, if their consciousness is so high why do they treat women that way. And what about women defending themselves?

RAMESH: We are talking about war. It's not only Tejinder there have been six attacks since then. It is an emergency. We need muscle - physical muscle!

CHANDRA: So I can't be involved and I know lots of women who would want to be involved, who need to be able to defend themselves, but they won't be able to come to your centre - Tejinder's own sisters are like that. And if they do manage to get away from their families, you know what will happen, your lads, without "hang ups" will accuse them of being whores of coming to meetings just to meet men.

RAMESH: Look, I agree with you something needs to be done, but we can't do it now!...

CHANDRA: Tell me what is the long term aim, what is the strategy for reaching it?

RAMESH: Chandra, that's not fair. You know I can't answer those questions

CHANDRA: In India, we had short-term goals and long-term aims our dreams.....Here everything is short term. Survival, day to day. There is not a word about the future.

RAMESH: Yes, we don't dream Chandra - no time. That's capitalism for you. We have a job to do - protecting the community - and we get on with it.

CHANDRA: But if you don't dream, can't make others dream, can you be a revolutionary?

RAMESH: I can't answer that one - I don't know if we are revolutionaries, or even if we want to be revolutionaries.

CHANDRA: Why, Ramesh, is it because you are afraid to dream?

RAMESH: I really don't understand how politics can be about dreaming.

CHANDRA: Last night I couldn't sleep I began to think about India and Bihar and about how some of our experiences may be useful for people here...there may be lessons for the struggle here. But it... I don't know...may be that is not so.

RAMESH: Yes, there must be lessons ..We could have learnt a lot from Tejinder!

CHANDRA: (IN A LOW TONE) Yes

RAMESH: Chandra, we must fight to find his killers, have them brought to justice! You can't give up!

HIS WORDS ARE DROWNED BY THE SOUND OF A POLICE SIREN, THERE IS LOUD KNOCKING AT THE DOOR AND SHOUTS OF "OPEN UP! OPEN UP!"

CHANDRA AND RAMESH STAND TRANSFIXED, THEN RAMESH GOES TO THE DOOR AND SHOUTS "WHO IS IT"

VOICE OUTSIDE: Open up! police!

RAMESH: What do you want?

POLICEMAN: We want Mrs Bassi! Open the door immediately! Just open the fucking door!

RAMESH GOES AND OPENS THE DOOR, ONE POLICEMAN ENTERS, PUSHES HIM AWAY HARD, OTHERS CAN BE HEARD OUTSIDE STAMPING AND BANGING

POLICEMAN: (TO CHANDRALEKHA, TALKING VERY LOUDLY AS

IF SHE DOES NOT SPEAK ENGLISH) We want you down at the police station right away, (PAUSE) we are holding someone in connection with the killing of your husband!

CHANDRA: Oh Ramesh!

RAMESH: Oh these two white guys from upstairs, you've caught them!

POLICEMAN: White guys! You must be kidding! No it's one of your lot! A Paki from down the road

CHANDRA: But I saw the men who did it!

POLICEMAN: Well nobody else did, we can't just take your word for it you know!

CHANDRA: But I saw them, they stabbed him. They killed him in front of our house!

POLICEMAN: What are you saying! Are you accusing us of something? Are you accusing us of racialism? I'll tell you something lady, we don't have that on our patch! Now come on!... I don't know...you come to this country, think you can do what you like!



Photo by Gun Kessle.

Members of a revolutionary armed squad in Andhra Pradesh

Subscription rates:

Individuals Unwaged: £6.50 Waged: £10 Organisations: £20

South Asia £5.00 Europe £20 Elsewhere £25

I/We enclose _____ for a year's subscription to INQILAB, and/or _____ For the following SASG publications (please specify) _____: Total _____

Name _____

Address _____

Please make cheques payable to South Asia Solidarity Group, c/o Londec, 205-217, Instrument House, Kings Cross Rd, WC1X 9DB.

AUTOMATIC RAP

Don't get me started. Gida Pa.

So much to say, to say, this is the hardest thing in the World. Fire, Fire, Agg, Agg, Agg,
One struggle after another, one fight after another,
FREEDOM what's that? Woz, IZ, DEAD hard, stereotypes reinforces MYSTERY.
NO art books on our shelves at home. NO paper to draw on. Just making ice cream 99's.
Tiger nuts and toffee apples and millions of toffee walking sticks - ART sister art
NO one listens, suppose they must all think it's Dead easy, they haven't a clue.
Making rotis night after night, no time for homework, but loadsa sweets to eat from the
icecream van,
cornettos, choc-ices and raspberry splits. flakes and screwballs, shells and boats.....
Who says all working class Asian girls are quiet, WHA' in our house? Wild girls, punjabi,
Bhangra,
Gidha Pa, sticky sweets, sweat, who's wearing the best salwar keemich, glittery, satin, and
velvet rage,
Gida Pa, Gidha Pa gorla, Dance english sister Dance. Move that body....
Rot, Dal & beanz and biscuits, Palma violets, hopscotch under the dim cobbled street lamp in
bare feet in frilly nylon frocks, tatty hair, Red corduroy dresses, sparkly juridar pyjama, white,
purple & pink Indian films every sunday afternoon, all dressed up, tears, nappies, playing is in
the aisles,
Chocolate, Coke, Jalebi, Ludu, barfi, and syrupy sweet white masala tea, Bar 6, toffee crisp,
grar
Pakeeza, Mother India, Phoolan Devi, Jhansi Ki Rani, Meena Kumari, Sita Durga Ma, Kali, where
are you
Standing up tall and reaching heights, show 'em whatcha got...rebel without a pause....
Proud brand new grammar school uniform, wrong hat, 11 plus, cyclin proficiency, Swim for the
school, act for the school, run for the school, sing for the school, long jump for the school shot
put for the school, first class honours, who says we're all Meek and Mild sharp as a knife.....
FRAGILE EXPLOSIVE AND SENSITIVE SOULS HANDLE WITH EXTRA CARE AND LOVE.
Wish I could go to discos, parties, dances and have girl friends and boyfriends like all the english
girls and posh asian girls, Anyway they're all last those fellas, wimps, couldn't handle us
anyway
WE'RE too Wild, Sharp, Smart, Fast, Loud, Dynamic, Soft Sexy and Sensitive.
Stay in, study hard, study art, buy a stereo from the catalogue, It hurts so good,
Hibernate To Liberate - Don't get me started.....lets Laugh and Dance
Work hard in habitat on saturdays, rob all the best stuff, for Freedoms sake, Why work?
Study hard, TWICE as hard, hard, hard, hard, madness, slam, slam, slam, work, work, carrying
a heavy load,
STRUGGLE, FIGHT, SHOUT, IZZAT? RESPECT US NOW!
Gotta mek it through the night, warm love, sweetpillow, You know what am sayin Don't cheat
us
The world is so cold, ain't do nothing for your soul.
Cockroaches in the fire place, love mashing them up, stir it up little darlin', stir it up.....
Ther'e must be hundreds of us dying to do art and sing and shout out there
Why did they have to make it so hard, Go for the BURN, Stretch and Turn
Bad young sister, Reach out and Touch, Let's make this world a better place, We shall
OVERCOME
Aint no stoppin us now, you now, her now, we're on the move and groovin, chulor, lets go.....
STRENGTHEN and UPLIFT the mind....let's go CRAZY...
Roti, Kapar, aur Makaan - Food, clothing and shelter. PEACE

Chila Kumari Burman

*Inqilab is produced by South Asia Solidarity Group, c/o londec, 205-217 Instrument House, Kings Cross Road,
London WC1X 9DB Tel:071 713 7907*