Racial Violence in Europe

Racial violence has rocked the otherwise peaceful city of Brussels. Known as the "tidy symbol of European integration" Brussels had an impressive record of peaceful relations with its North African immigrant groups. However, what we saw in Brussels the other day appears to fall into the pattern of racial intolerance and maltreatment of immigrants that is becoming a widespread problem in many European cities.

With crisis in many parts of Asia, Africa and Latin America, the number of immigrants to Europe have risen dramatically in the last few years. Traditionally North Africans went to France and Belgium, Turks to Germany — as so-called "guest workers"-, Libyans to Italy, the Indonesians to Holland, the Asians to England, etc.much of the migration following the old colonial lines. Added to this, the new influx of refugees from East Europe have greatly increased the pressure on host countries and their resources. This has led in many cases to competition between citizens and immigrants for jobs, welfare, bank loans, housing, etc. causing conflicts to arise.

There is a fear that with the recent flood of refugees from East Europe, the non-European immigrants may become unwanted. Connected with this fear is the rising incidence of racial violence and the emergence of anti-immigration as election platforms in several European countries. This gives rise to concern about the future of Asian, African and Latin American immigrants who, after having worked for years and having contributed their talents and resources for the progress of their adopted countries, are suddenly finding themselves out in the cold.

The root of the problems in many cases is the resurgence of racism in Europe. In some countries it is taking the form of neo-nazism and antisemitism; in some others, white supremacist theories are finding new followers and in still others it is manifesting itself in feelings of animosity against the immigrant communities. When the 'Iron Curtain' was crumbling there was a fear in some circles that Europe, in the euphoria of its reunion, may become inward-looking.

Europe would be letting itself down if it allows these reactionary trends to have sway. As in the past so also now, in many ways we expect Europe to show our civilization the way. It must be said to the credit of the Europeans that in spite of having fought two World Wars — or maybe because it did so - that whatever real internationalism that is practiced in the world, it is done so in Europe. In their treatment of the immigrants also Europe must live up to the great doctrines of liberalism and tolerance, that it had been the birthplace of.

It is more than a question of showing understanding and tolerance. It is a question of being fair and just. Many of these immigrants are citizens of these countries in everything except in the eyes of the law. And that is so because the local laws unjustly deny them the rights which they have earned through years of devoted service to their adopted countries. The example of Turkish so-called "guest workers" is a case in point.

The immediate cause of violence in many cases - as was in Brussels - was police brutality. The young among the immigrants, being more vigorous in their spirit and emotion, find the police especially hostile towards them. Special measures need to be taken to equip the police force to deal with immigrants. Otherwise it may go out of hand, as it has in some cities of Europe.

We call upon the European countries to take immediate action to solve these problems in a spirit of understanding and sympathy. At the same time we also urge the immigrant community in these countries to show a little more sensitivity and understanding of the culture and customs of their host countries and try to overcome the dangerous gaps that seem to be overtaking years of understanding and friendship that existed between them.

There is already too much violence, misunderstanding and hatred in the world. Please, we do not need more of it.

Wonderful Departure

It was only an advertisement on a newspaper page-that too coming not from Satchi & Satchi but from one of the worst unimaginative duds in circulation, namely the government. Nevertheless it provided one of the pleasantest surprises.

The well laid out capacious thing announced in big and shaded type that the global sphere was warming. No scare-mongering was intended. The point was indeed to say that as a result of that 'frequent floods, droughts, tornadoes, storms, cyclones, tidal surges and other numerous natural disasters were taking place with increasing intensity'. And the ad said it well.

The bottomline was even more edifying - it's all on the good thing that's a tree. 'A tree keeps the air fresh and life-giving, absorbs temperature, prevents soil erosion and, on top of everything, gifts to man not only its food but also its shelter. And it keeps the earth cool. From birth till death a tree is an inseparable companion'.

The ad closes its good words with an appeal in reverse type - 'Plant more and more trees. Save environment — environment will save us all.' The eye-catching and mind-soothing ad was inserted in only one of the Dhaka morning newspapers by

the Directorate General of Environment. We are rather sceptical of the effectiveness of exhortations made through paid press advertisements. But the good copy and the worthy mission it purported to campaign made us forget our reservations. Any one having truly his wits about himself will appreciate this wonderful departure

in government advertising. Nothing comes as unmixed blessing. And unfortunately this was no exception. In a longish 27word prelude to the global warming the advertisement cited eight items of human activity as contributing to the depletion of the ozone layer and this depletion was attributed to be the cause of global warming. A double-edged mistake. Ozone layer is being depleted exclusively through the release of the chemical CFC and not by the numerous ways man uses combustion to satisfy the demands of civilisation — as itemised in the ad. And then again the globe is warming not because of ozone depletion. A spurt in the proportion of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere as a result of the mentioned — and many other ways of man including combustion is contributing

to the warming of the biosphere. Such mistakes betray very sloppy understanding of the basic challenges to man and earth in very important areas of governmental leadership.

This must change.

INDIAN ELECTION SCENE

Voters Attach Little Importance to Manifestos

by Sumanta Banerjee

EW DELHI : As the cleetion in world's biggest L V dem-ocracy began yesterday, its 571 million voters main-tained an inscrutable silence keeping the contesting parties and the candidates on ten-terhooks.

The contending forces in the fray have now narrowed down to three major parties or blocks - the Congress(I) led by Rajiv Gandhi, the BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party) with a strong llindu communal bias, and the National Front-Leftist alliance led by the former Prime Minister V.P. Singh. The other important contestant, the Samajbadi Janata Party of the present carctaker Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar, being gradually marginalized joined the ranks of 'they-alsoran'. The various regional parties like the DMK (Dravida Munnetra Kazhakam) in Tamil Nadu and Telegu Desam in Andhra in the south and the AGP (Assom Ganatantra Parishad) in Assam in the east are allies of V.P. Singh's National Front. A look at the election

manifestos of the different parties would indicate little that is new. Cliches like eradication of poverty, end to unemployment, curbing of inflation. increasing productivity have found their in almost every manifesto as echoes of promises made at every election held during the last four decades, but which remain unfulfilled irrespective of the parties voted to power. Indian voters by now have ceased to attach any importance to these phrases that seem to be obligatory rituals in election manifestos and speeches. What will concern them in the coming polls are certain immediate and local issues, which may vary from one area to another. In north and central India for instance, the controversy over the Babri Mosque in Ajodhya (which the BJP and its Hindu fundamentalist allies claim to be the site of the birthplace of Rama) loomed large over the poll campaign. A lot of blood has already flown over the issue, what with communal riots and police firing upon Hindu zealots who tried to occupy the mosque last year. The bitter trail left behind by the agitation is likely to influence the verdict of the electorate which stands divided. These among the Hindu voters swayed by the

ACOLOD CITY, Central

munists," says Monsignor

Antonio Fortich, speaking of

the makeup of the guerilla

New People's Army (NPA) in

seeking a better livelihood. But

human rights violations con-

Bacolod City office, the amiable

but spirited Monsignor Fortich

showed that retirement had

not dampened his spark as the

spokesman for the legal Left.

province's most articulate

Monsignor Antonio Fortich

He laid blame for ongoing

human rights abuses, on which

the church keeps files, at the

door of private armies main-

tained by landlords. Regarding

current behaviour of military-

controlled Civilian Armed

Forces Geographical Units

(CAFGUs) compared with their

predecessors (the Civilian

Home Defence Force or

CHDF), he declared there had

been "not very much pro-

military tagged "Red Tony,"

this may be construed as a

measure of praise, however

faint. Monsignor Fortich is ut-

terly unequivocal though when

he speaks of the military's

1989 Operation Thunderbolt

in south-western Negros.

which displaced around

Coming from the man the

nounced improvement."

was for many years bishop of

the province-wide diocese of

Negros Occidental. He retired

"It is a question of people

Puffing a pipe in his modest

Negros Occidental.

tinue to this day."

in December 1989.

Philippines: "There are

very few diehard com-

appeal of 'Hindutva" (which implies and aggressive selfassertion of Hindu identity) and the glorification of 'martyrs' who fell to police bullets while trying to occupy the mosque last year, are sure to have voted and vote for the BJP. But the large Muslim community - varying from 30 to 40 per cent in some constituencies in north and central India - as well as the secular-minded Hindu voters are probably voting for either the Congress(I) or the National Front-Left alliance.

In south India again, the is-

sues are completely different. The regional parties like the DMK and the Telegu Desam who are the main rivals of the Congress(1) - are highlighting the question of more autonomy for the states which implies increased financial powers and rights to decide, independent of the Centre, on their respec tive policies relating to taxation, etc. As in the south, so in the east, Centre-state relations have emerged as a major issue in the poll campaign. In Assam and West Bengal, the AGP and the CPI(M)-led Left Front respectively tried to convince their voters that the economic problems that their states are

The Daily Star Special Correspondent Indian nation in order to centralize their hegemony over a vast Indian society that is heterogeneous and defies any attempt at centralization. But such regional grievances seek justification from historical facts in post-Independence India. To start with, till today Prime Ministers in India had always been from the north, and particularly from Uttar Pradesh - a state with about 120 million population (the largest among all the states) and claiming the single largest chunk of seats in parliament (85), while the seats allotted to other states vary generally from 20 to 40. Right from

Prime Ministers have been from Uttar Pradesh. There is a growing suspicion among politicians in the south and the east that the Uttar Pradesh lobby along with other Hindi-speaking states (Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, facing are due to the discrimi- Haryana and Rajasthan) has natory policies followed by the been monopolizing power at

Jawaharlal Nehru, through Lal-

Bahadur Shastri, down to

Indira Gandhi and her son Ra-

jiv, and even to the non-

Congress(I) V.P. Singh and

Chandra Shekhar - all the

The large Muslim community — varying from 30 to 40 per cent in some constituencies in north and central India — as well as the secularminded Hindus are probably voting for either the Congress(1) or the National Front-Left alliance.

Centre. More autonomy and financial powers for the states are their main demands. A more strident expression of this sentiment came sometime ago from a veteran politician from the east - Biju Patnaik of Orissa (a dynamic ex-Congressman who is now with V.P. Singh's National Front) who shocked the senuments of soft hearted Indian liberals by stating bluntly that politicians from the north had been monopolizing power in India all these years and that they had to be ousted.

Patnaik's outbursts reflect indeed the muffled sentiments nursed by many in south and east India. They might be considered as regional chauvinism by old nationalists and the new breed of authoritarian New Delhi-based politicians who evoke the notion of a unified

the Centre and discriminating against the non-Hindi speaking areas. This suspicion has been strengthened by the behaviour of the Centre which, whenever an opposition party came to power in any state in the south and the east through elections, sought to oust it by imposing Presidential rule under Article 356 of the Indian Constitution. This had happened in Kerala, West Bengal, Assam, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and other states during the last 40 years. It is in the context that the National Front-Left Alliance

- which has the support of regional parties of the south and the Communist parties which rule West Bengal and Kerala - in their manifestos have insisted on a change in Article 356 of the Constitution which empowers the Centre to impose presidential rule on

The other major issue much dominate the poll campaign is the imbroglio over Punjab and Kashmir - the two states in the north which have been ravaged by secessionist terrorist activities for the last several years. Successive governments from Indira Gandhi's regime, through Rajiv's and V.P. Singh's down to Chandra Shekhar's, have seen a gradual escalation in terrorism in these two states in spite of increasing development of security forces by the Centre there. In order to persuade the terrorist outfits in Punjab to join the parliamentary process, Chandra Shekhar initiated a

half of candidates by threatening voters who may refuse to support their candidates. They were kidnapping rival candidates and their campaigners. So many have been killed in connection with poll campaigns in different parts of india. Musclemen and gangsters are not satisfied with remaining hired mercenaries of candidates. A large number among them are directly contesting the elections as candidates. In Uttar Pradesh, notorious bandits and criminals have joined the fray. Out of the 85 parliamentary and 425 state legislature seats in the state (state legislature elections are also being held simultaneously with the general parliamentary poll), contestants for over 100 seats have been known to have a criminal history. While some

Lest one rushes away with the impression that it is all bleak and sombre, there is enough comic relief to entertain the voters even in the midst of bomb blasts. Eccentrics of all types have turned up in different states to try their luck at the hustings.

dialogue with some among them. While a few groups are setting up candidates for the coming state legislature elections there (to be held later in June), others have decided to boycott them. Chandra Shekhar's attempts to hold elections in Punjab and invite the terrorist groups to participate in them have drawn flak from the other political parties - the Congress(I), the BJP and the Left. The latter fear that elections will be held at gunpoint by the Punjab terrorists, who once they win majority in the state legislature may adopt a resolution declaring Punjab as 'Khalistan' (a separate Sikh homeland ruled by the tenets of Sikh religion) and separate from India.

But terrorism is not confined only to Punjab and Kashmir. In large parts of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and northern India, gun-toting gangsters joined the election campaign on behalf of one party or another. The Home Ministry at the Centre has identified 448 out of 537 parliamentary constituencies in India as "sensitive" - a term which implies the possibility of violent activities which might affect free and fair poll. Paid hoodlums were campaigning on be-

of them had been arrested in the past on charges of murder, arson, loot, others are known for smuggling and drug peddling activities. Apprehending troubles on the election day (when polling booths could be captured, ballot boxes snatched away and voters intimidated by the gangsters), the Central government has rushed 350 additional companies of para-military forces to various states to assist the local police to ensure fair polling.

The picture that emerged from review of pre-poll atmosphere in India looks quite ominous. But lest one rushes away with the impression that it is all bleak and sombre, we must hasten to add that there is enough comic relief to en tertain the voters even in the midst of bomb blasts. Eccentrics of all types have turned up in different states to try their luck at the hustings. There is this man who calls himself M.L. Mahatma Gandhi and is contesting a parliamentary seat in New Delhi, supported by the Bharatiya Awasaavadi Dal (Indian Opportunist Party). An ex-typist, he now dresses like Gandhi in a khadi loin cloth, puts on a pair of glasses (Gandhi type) and with a stick, moves around the

constituency claiming that he is a reincarnation of Gandhi who has come to save the Indian nation. Some of the eandidates seek to impress their voters by assuming striking names like Bomb Bomb Ma haraj and Kutta Dhartipakad (a dog who clutches at the earthl

Some have drastic recipes for India's problems, like Shyam Lal - a contestant from South Delht - who sees himself as a future Prime Minister and promises to attack Pakistan. Russia and the USA to remove all hurdles in the path of india's progress !

While these eccentries standing as Independents aspire for a short-lived limelight, there are the glamorous gliteratti who seem to nurse more lasting ambitions and have tagged themselves on to the bandwagon of some political party or other. The filmstars are in the lead, following the success of the matinee idol Amitabh Bachchan who got elected as a Congress(I) MP at the 1984 polls. This time, Rajesh Khanna, another Bombay filmstar is fighting as a Congress(I) candidate in New

In Calcutta in West Bengal, Victor Banerjee (who has starred in several Bengali films as well as in David Lean's 'A Passage to India') has been fielded by the BJP. The BJP has also fielded stars from the "Ramayana' television series flike Deepika who acted in the role of Sita) in a bid to win over the devotees of Rama.

Then there are the athletes and sportsmen. A former weight-lifter, Manohar Aich is a BJP candidate in West Bengal, while the former Test. cricket captain Pataudi has been nominated as a Congress(I) candidate in Bhopal. These people had never had anything to do with politics. But they appear to seek fresh pastures outside their familiar fields of vocation, and the political parties also have roped them in hoping to manipulate their popularity among the masses.

The 1991 general elections in India therefore in seeing an incongruous combination of glamour and blood-bath, elegance and monstrosity, dazzlers and gangsters, the comic and the tragic.

Unrest Astir in Sugar Bowl

Depthnews correspondent visited Negros Island, Central Philippines, the country's sugar bowl. In an exclusive interview, he talked with outspoken Monsignor Antonio Fortich, a prominent government critic, as well as Major Edwin Recabe, the army's spokesman.

Below are parts of the interviews, showing different perspectives of the same island, its vast sugar 'haciendas' and the landless people who till it.

35,000 villagers along with the NPA presence it had targeted.

Caught unawares, the government and the church lacked the resources to deal with sickness and malnutrition among the refugees; hundreds died. "One month after commencement of Operation Thunderbolt, over 800 children had died, and that's only the number our church has registered," he said. "No one ever counted how many NPAs were killed."

In reality, Monsignor Fortich said, the problem is "the use of land. A plastic solution cannot be adopted." Citing lack of agrarian reform as the reason for Philippine insurgency problems, he decried the lack of action on the issue by early presidents. "In the time of (deposed ex-President) Marcos came the NPA, clamouring for genuine land reform," he said. "Now President Cory Aquino has ordered that the whole country will be subject to land reform.

"But the defect is that the mechanisms were given to Congress, and since Congress is also managed by landed people they were looking for loopholes; only a trickle now will go to the tillers of the land. There is no real, sincere vision of listening to the masses, but they must be listened to if peace is to be achieved.

A suggestion that dividing large holdings into tiny ones is inefficient for marketing is refuted by Monsignor Fortich. "because in Japan when MacArthur was there he brought in land reform with small pieces of land, and in Taiwan Chiang Kai-Shek instituted land reform with small plots. It all depends how you manage those pieces of land; turn them into cooperatives."

"The real need," he insists. is that "the poor man is assured of the papers of ownership."

For Major Edwin Recabe, army spokesman, "there would be no conflict in Negros Occidental if it were not for the presence of the CPP-NPA-NDF." The NDF stands for the National Democratic Front, the communist legal front organisation. The CPP is the outlawed Communist Party of the Philippines and the NPA is the New People's Army, its armed wing.

Major Recabe is a Philippine army civil-military operations officer. He is a serious man. His job is not one for the frivolous or shallow.

"Many senators and cabinet ministers would be prepared to recognise the CPP/NDF on condition they abandoned their armed struggle," he declared, adding that many senior military officers were of the same mind - if only the NPA would surrender their firearms and disband.

"By the NPA's own analysis, according to diskettes and papers we have captured, it has lost 70 per cent of its mass bass here - and is trying to

regain it," asserted Maj. Recabe. He considered the rebels too much of a spent force to establish any new "liberated zones," but acknowledged they were still capable of harassment.

As evidence of this, he produced a letter from Juan Gatmaitan, head of the NPA's finance committee, to the Lopez Sugar Central in the town of Sagay. The letter demanded 30 per cent of the company's profits as NPA taxes, and contained a thinly veiled threat of punitive action if this demand was not met.

The letter was self-styled a "second warning." Its language was polite but ominous. Army statistics indicate 13 cases of arson by the NPA this year up to mid-April.

Major Recabe predicted that the run-up to next year's elections will more peaceful than that for 1987. The military has more resources than we did then to ensure peace and order," he said. NDF front

people and organisations will as before field "sympathetic candidates," he claimed.

Echoing current military policy emphasis from Manila, Major Recabe declared that "we are following a community action strategy. Basic government services are being brought to far-flung areas under a programme inaugurated by the province's vice-gover-

We're helped by our CAFGUs' local knowledge," he said. He added that the selection process in Negros Occidental for the usually parttime CAFGU troops is unique; they are selected by members of local Peace and Order Councils, rather than by landlords as before.

He insisted that landlord private armies, often blamed for ongoing human rights abuses, no longer existed as such. "Nowadays, the plantations have only security guards." he claimed.

Major Recabe was anxious to dispel misconceptions about the term "total war" used by the military to describe its anti-insurgent strategy. "It means a military, political and community approach," he said.

'Total war for the benefit of the people, including the war against poverty, illiteracy and injustice." he said. The Left has predictably seized upon what he insisted was merely unfortunate phrasing, suggesting as it does a war of annihilation.

- Depthnews Asia

Letters for publication in these columns should be addressed to the Editor and legibly written or typed with double space. For reasons of space, short letters are preferred, and all are subject to editing and cuts. Pseudonyms are accepted. However, all communications must bear the writer's real name, signature and address.

Campus violence

Sir, Who is to bell the cat? Prof Mofizuddin (The Daily Star, May 15) has presented a lucid background to the issue. While he has not exactly hit the nail on the head, he has beamed the light in the direction where the solution lies.

Each society has its taboos. Certain issues are open secrets, and are not officially discussed or admitted; while the grapevines are thick with the palatable juices. One is the political exploitation of the students, the other is corruption; to name only two issues.

The society should be gravely concerned on the fu-

ture leadership of the country, which would be provided by the major section of these students who are now in the universities (or higher educational institutions) today. Some big employers in the

private sector are already fidgeting with misgivings. They are rather scared of hiring the products of some of our universities. Business is business, and such places are not future centres for revolutionary activities. Keeping in view the background of the academic atmosphere of some of these candidates applying for entry into well-known commercial firms, some bosses might hesitate to give the benefit of the

doubt to deserving applicants. This is unfortunate, and such tendencies should be nipped in the bud by cleansing the atmosphere on the campus.

The culprits form a very small minority, but there is a tendency to judge a person by the company the keeps. Outside it is free competition; and any group pressure would evoke sharp reactions from the free marketplace.

In newly emerging freed countries, involvement of the student body in politics is difficult to avoid due to high illiteracy of the majority of the voters. The latter are unsuitable for party field activities. The other main cause is poverty.

The parents are dismayed about the future of their wards. Many students would like to avoid Dhaka or Bangladesh for higher studies. The only alternative is to go abroad, which few can afford. Studentship is a period which comes only once in life — it is a non-reversible

activity. This is the time for serious preparation for entering the world. Once the entry is made, there is no turning back; as in the industrialized countries where there is some economic independence for the younger generation. The student community has to follow the slogan "Make hay while the sun shines". The student days never come back.

Therefore, those who are directly or indirectly responsible for campus violence should come to a gentlemen's agreement, not to spoil the budding careers of our future leaders. A. Mawaz

Dhaka

Development research

Sir, Polish "Order of Merit" has been awarded to Chairman, Center for Development Research, Bangladesh. A European communist country, Poland has replaced her dictatorial regime with an elected

government recently after civil liberty movements for about two decades.

The trend-setting instance of Poland is no less significant than a revolutionary outcome, of a research anywhere anytime. Unquestionably, the conferral of such an honour to a Bangalee has justifiable merits in itself; otherwise, development research in Bangladesh must have been provided with an impetus on

Ever since the dawn of civilization, research has almost always been the first step forward in the development process, as is often the base for any development plan in the present world. An example, for now, is the outcome of the foreign supported research - and development-oriented projects in Bangladesh that have contributed substantially to the country's development schemes reflected by the high-

rise office/residential compiexes, roads, bridges, factorics, schools, etc.

Although developed countries have been blessed with the majority of the modern inventions and advances as the fruits of researches that include Test Tube Baby, Artificial Heart, Synthetic Blood, Cloning, Robot, Solar Engine, Space Laboratory, Space Telescope, Spy Satellite, and Home-made UFO, developing countries can possibly develop many of their indigenous resources up to modern stan-

In the matter of LDC Bangladesh, however, development phases - feasibility study to implementation - are likely to encounter various limitations, so is her development research.

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