

Cecil Rhodes Makes his Mark on Clinton's America

Dan Bindman writes from London

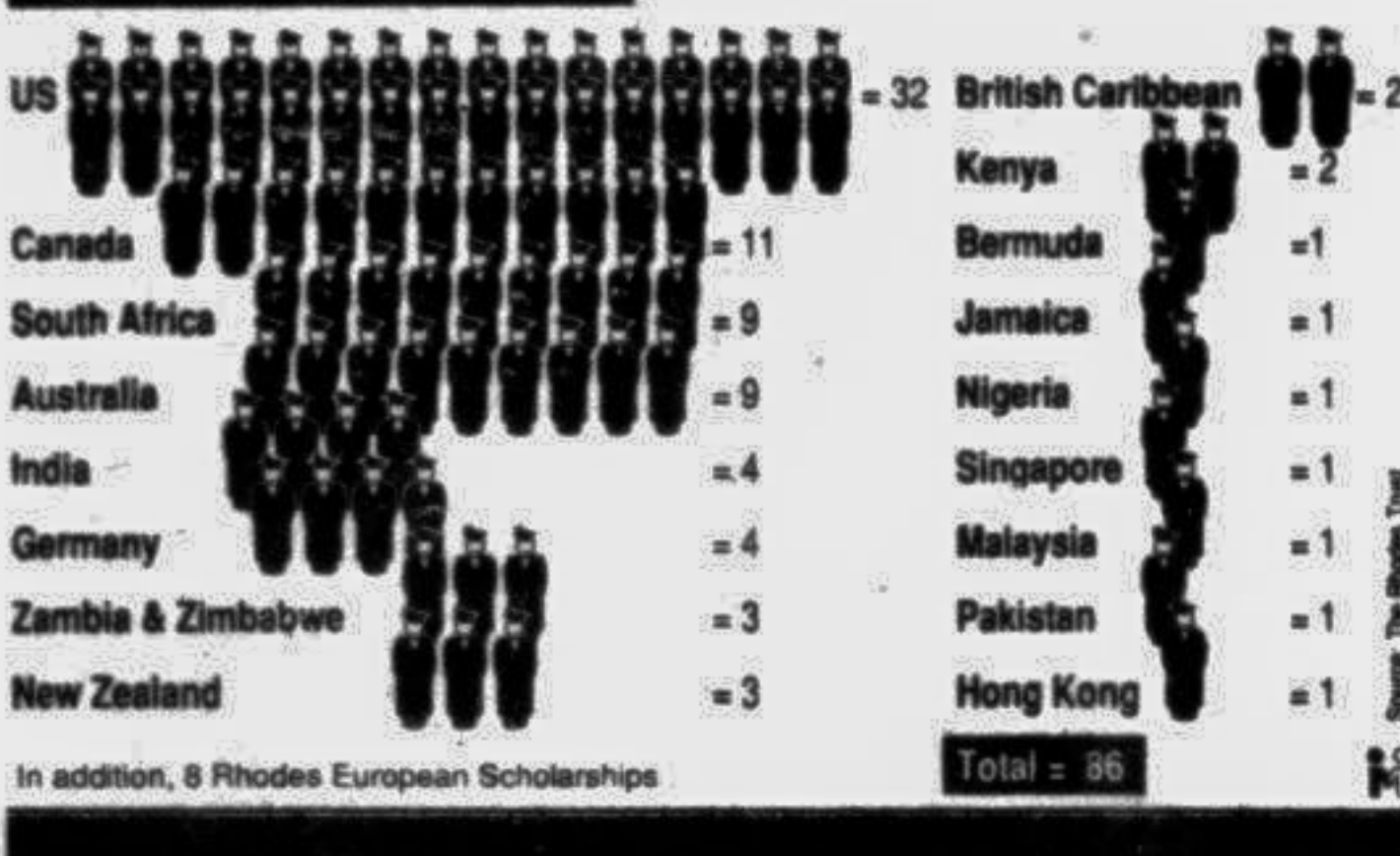
US President Bill Clinton studied for two years at Oxford University. His fees were paid for by the Rhodes Trust, a scholarship system set up Cecil Rhodes. For the benefit of American and colonial students, the system aimed, in fact, to foster respect for the British Empire, now long disappeared. Gemini News Service reports on the extraordinary influence of the 19th Century adventurer on world affairs.

Empire builder



An old drawing shows Cecil Rhodes standing with his Oxford tutor before a map of Africa. The caption says Rhodes suddenly drew his hand across an almost blank area of southern Africa and said, 'That's my dream. All rest!'

Rhodes Scholars 1992/93



University" while travelling in the Red Sea in 1893, three years before he was forced to resign as Prime Minister of Cape Colony after complicity in the Jameson Raid on the Boer state of Transvaal.

The 52 annual scholarships, for degree studies at Rhodes' alma mater, Oxford University, were to be funded from the fortune he amassed in South Africa's Kimberley diamond fields. They were to be allocated by trustees — initially friends of Rhodes — whom he threatened to "come back and worry" from the grave if they did not carry out his wishes.

His will amounted to what in 1907 was a massive £3.3 million. After death duties and other charges, the figure dropped to just under £2.3 million by 1924, although the fund has prospered since. In April 1991 the assets of the Rhodes Trust were valued at £107 million.

The scholarships were to be offered each year to 20 young men from the British colonies and 32 from the United States. The principal aim was to further their appreciation of "the advantage to the colonies as well as to the United Kingdom of the retention of the unity of the Empire."

Shortly before his death, Rhodes added five scholarships for German students in the belief that since "educational relations form the strongest tie," he could "secure the peace of the

world" by promoting understanding between the major powers. After manifestly failing to achieve its desired outcome, this project was suspended during both World Wars.

Scholars were to be chosen, in descending order of importance, for their academic ability; sporting prowess; masculine qualities (devotion to duty, unselfishness and fellowship and so forth); and for their demonstration at school of moral force of character, leadership instincts and interest in others.

Although officially a candidate's race or religious opinions were deemed irrelevant to their suitability, Rhodes Scholars have been predominantly Caucasian — not least because the lion's share of scholarships went to the white, English-speaking colonies and the US.

Indeed, the racist attitudes of the early American and South African scholars brought with them to Oxford were blamed by the Master of University College — which had 26 Rhodes Scholars in 1922 — for inculcating prejudice and exacerbating racial tensions between Indian and British students.

Cecil Rhodes himself was a shameless racial supremacist, although he clothed his objectives in terms of a benign Pax Britannica. He even contemplated setting up an organisation dedicated to bringing about global governance by the

British race — which he contended was "the first race in the world and the more of the world we inhabit, the better it is for the human race."

In his vision, British imperialist expansion was justified by the need for Lebensraum (living space) in which Anglo-Saxons could go forth and multiply.

In 1944, a plot to assassinate Adolf Hitler, whose views on race were not unlike those of Rhodes, was carried out by, among others, two former Rhodes Scholars, Count Bernstorff and Adam von Trott zu Solz. Both were executed for their pains.

Rhodes was a confirmed bachelor who reportedly found it hard to forgive his male friends for getting married, so he made no provision for women in his scholarship programme — presumably because they lacked the necessary quality of "manliness." The Rhodes trustees did make donations to Oxford's impoverished women's colleges from time to time, but not until 1977 did women become eligible for the awards.

Of the total 5,300 Rhodes Scholars so far, many have achieved positions of great power and fame in their home countries — after having been exposed to the quintessentially British influence of Oxford University. They include a Nobel prizewinner, prime ministers, governors-general (of Canada and Australia), and numerous judges, US senators, lawyers, doctors, and writers.

But along with the successful graduates of this exclusive club are the failures — in Rhodes' terms at least. Several must have had their patron turning in his grave as they rallied against British colonial rule.

Norman Manley, Rhodes Scholar, socialist prime minister and founder of Jamaica's People's National Party, made it his life's work to win self-government for his country. Another Rhodes Scholar, Dominic Mintoff of Malta, was less dogmatic but no less a thorn in Britain's side during his 13-year prime ministership from 1971-84.

Even in Rhodes' own domain of South Africa, lawyer Abram Fischer, a Rhodes Scholar from 1932-4, became an outspoken campaigner against apartheid until he was jailed for life accused of being a communist.

There will be people who believe that President Clinton, who, after all, agitated against his country's war in Vietnam while at Oxford, will one day be added to the list of progressive Rhodes Scholars. Others, though, are not so sure.

Former Rhodes Scholar, Indian Professor of English Alok Rai, who was with Clinton at Oxford in '68, wonders whether any of the heady idealism that affected them all at the time remains, and fears that "with Bill Clinton becoming President of the US, it might well be Cecil Rhodes who has the last laugh, in whatever circle of hell they keep wicked old imperialists."

DAN BINDMAN is a British Journalist.

Bangladeshis in Britain — Profile of a Professional Family

by Lindsay Mackie

THE Bangladeshi community in Britain is not large in numbers, but it is significant in impact. Around 200,000 people have come from Bangladesh to settle in Britain over the past 30 years, and by large it has been a successful migration.

Bangladeshis, for example, have found the truth of the proverb that the way to a man's heart is through his stomach. Most of the so-called "Indian" restaurants in Britain — from the windswept country of Caithness in the Scottish north, to the sunny meadows of Cornwall in Southwest England — are actually owned and run by Bangladeshis. And much of what the British youth wear on their backs — leather bomber jackets and motorcycle gear — has been made by Bangladeshi firms working in London's East End.

Bangladeshi children do well educationally, and this is another area where Bangladeshis can feel justifiably proud. Teachers talk of how bright their children are, and Bangladeshi girls in particular do well at school, being educationally keen and highly motivated.

Typical Professional

Some 8% of the Bangladeshi population in Britain are members of the professional classes. The flourishing Bangladeshi Medical Association has 500 members all over Britain, and the Bangladesh Centre, in London, is a thriving social and cultural centre where Bangladeshis can meet and discuss their own culture and that of their homeland.

For a typical example of a successful professional person, one could not do better than Dr Mohammed Lutfor Rahman, who emigrated to Britain in 1973 and went to Glasgow to be a junior doctor. Ten years later he took his family to London, joined a general practice and then in 1989 branched out on his own and started a new practice in the capital's North Kensington district.

Today, his surgery, in a lively and colourful neighbourhood, occupies what were two shops. He works hard and

knows a great deal about the area. His patients include people of many nationalities, among them fellow Bangladeshis — "good, hard-working people," he says.

Does Dr Rahman ever look enviously at more prosperous localities with perhaps an easier workload for the general practitioner? "No," he says, "to tell you the truth it is an interesting practice. I see such things here. It is demanding but you feel better if you can help people, and I think I do help a lot of people, with the cooperation of the social workers of course, and I get a lot of job satisfaction."

Proud of Tradition

Dr Rahman has had the joy of seeing his three children — two sons and a daughter — follow in his successful footsteps. His daughter has just graduated with honours in biochemistry and is working at a leading London hospital; his elder son has just won a scholarship from Oxford to go to America to study for a doctorate; and his younger son is a medical student. At school the children achieved excellent exam re-

sults and Dr Rahman is pleased with the quality of state education in Britain — particularly the Scottish system.

But he is proud of the Bangladeshi tradition and its emphasis on a close and loyal family structure. "People from our part of the world keep a close eye on their children — we motivate them and we believe that education does not just stop at 18."

Dr Rahman and his wife have found that the mix of their own family and religious customs and a more liberal British style of upbringing has worked well for their children. Dr Rahman praises his wife in particular for this and says she has skilfully combined the traditions of East and West so that their children have always had British friends and British style hobbies, but have also always read the Koran and stayed within the family unit. "When there are events like parties and weddings and funerals we all go together, as a family."

Philosophical Outlook

There is still the pull of Bangladesh. Dr Rahman says

his children, now 22, 21 and 19, went back to Bangladesh last summer and loved it. "They found the people there so caring."

This is something — though Dr Rahman says he believes most Bangladeshis have integrated well into British society — that people miss when they come to Britain. It particularly affects older people. Emigration is a young person's game. Dr Rahman's parents feel uneasy in Britain he says, and long for their return to Bangladesh when they visit the United Kingdom.

However, Dr Rahman is philosophical. He remembers a neighbour of his from Glasgow, who retired to the seaside town of Brighton and returned to the Scottish city after six months out of homesickness — feelings of belonging can develop wherever you are.

Britain now has Bangladeshi doctors in large numbers, local councillors, businessmen, artists, civil and other public servants. It is a vibrant community, which has added to the strength of British life and culture.

The writer is a contributor to 'The Guardian', London.



Shops in the predominantly Bangladeshi Brick Lane in London's East End.

A Paris First: Botero in the Champs-elysees

by Pascale Teinac

THE peaceful invasion of Paris by the most famous Colombian artist, organised together by Paris City Hall and by the manager of a big Paris art gallery, Didier Imbert, took place simultaneously in three places: the prestigious Champs-Elysees for the huge sculptures, the Gallery itself for an exhibition of fifty works on paper (drawings, watercolours and pastels) and some twenty small and medium-sized sculptures, and the Grand Palais for a hundred or so paintings on the single them of the corrida.

As further homage, the Paris mint had brought out a medal on this occasion: "Botero in the Champs-Elysees", designed by the artist himself, while the flowerbeds decorating the Rond-Point des Champs-Elysees were created by the Paris City Hall gardeners following designs by Botero.

Next year, Botero will have an exhibition in the Popes' palace in Avignon, during the Festival, before doing the same at the Pushkin museum in Moscow.

"Putting art in the street means allowing everybody to be affected by this art", Botero said concerning his installation in the Champs-Elysees.

Even if, like some of the critics, the Parisians sometimes tend to make ironical comments on Botero's "fat ladies", they are obviously moved. If they are left rather puzzled by the huge trunk of a man (3.9 meters tall), standing in the middle of the Rond-Point, the bulky, placid characters forming a kind of guard of honour in the side-lanes have a cheerful side to them which appeals to the public. And what fun to be able to have one's photo taken with one's hand on the plump rump of a reclining Venus, to try to climb onto the shoulders of the Roman soldier with his helmet and his

In the history of Paris, the Champs-Elysees has never been offered up to a sculptor as a place for an exhibition. This is the gift that Paris City Hall recently made to the Colombian sculptor Fernando Botero, whose 31 monumental sculptures, all representing huge, obese characters, have been installed in the most beautiful avenue in the world, for four months, to the greatest joy of the Parisians.



Sculpture of Fernando Botero at the Champs-elysees

shield or to sit, on all fours, on the massive horse which already carries a plump, replete, moustachioed gentleman wear-

appear to have been pulled out one at a time.

Pre-Columbian and Italian Renaissance Art

Fernando Botero was born in Medellin in 1932, at a time when the town was not yet known as a turntable for drugs. He has kept the nostalgic image of the town as a lost paradise at the time when it was "one of the quietest and most religious towns in Colombia and where people went to mass every day". From it, he drew all the elements of popular imagery which are the feature of his paintings and, from the time when his father sent him to a school for matadors, he has kept a passion for the corrida.

Then he went to study art in Europe, and, more especially, in Florence, Venice, Siena and Ravenna, where he was awestruck to discover the painters and sculptors of the Italian Renaissance. If he himself places the roots of his work mainly in pre-Columbian art and the popular imagery of Latin America, he also conjures up, this Italian influence and even that of Ingres.

In fact, he achieved international fame when, in 1961, the New York Modern Art Museum bought one of his paintings, "Mona Lisa at the age of 12" and exhibited it. Botero thus interpreted Leonardo da Vinci and Velazquez (the Nobels) in his own way, as well as Manet ("Dejeuner sur l'Herbe"). He has now become an expensive painter and no longer wants to sell but prefers to keep his paintings at home.

In 1973, in Paris, Botero branched out into sculpture. He gave his statues the same smooth and replete form as the puffy-cheeked and big-bellied characters in his paintings.

The Peruvian writer Mario Vargas Llosa points out, however, that "associating beauty with thinness is western and modern, and a probably Anglo-Saxon and certainly protestant prejudice".

Likewise, Botero's bullfighters are as plump and heavy as his bulls and a far cry from the legendary self-sufficient and adulated matadors, but they are part of a kind of big popular ritual feast.

Due to unavoidable reasons, "Write to Mita" has been held over for this week. We regret any inconvenience caused to our readers.

Historical Suvarnagram Sonargaon is our Pride

by Mohammad Amjad Hossain

ascertained from the accounts of the Chinese envoys and travellers. But what is distressing is that the only living remnant of the great benevolent statesman is the tomb at Mograpara which also remains unprotected. The people of the locality have made the tomb a sacred place like other mazaars of the saints. A mosque has been set up on the highland a few yards behind the tomb, but hardly any effort has been made to improve the condition of roads. This area could be made an interesting tourist spot.

From present modern Sonargaon, Mograpara which was once the capital of Suvarnagram (Sonargaon) is

linked by narrow passage, but the connecting bridge is about to be collapsed to snap this link too.

Mograpara also have shrines and tombs of saints of 16th and 17th centuries. Of these, tomb of Manna Shah Darwish which is surrounded by houses, big and small, of the locality; tomb of Shaikh Muhammad Yusuf and tomb of Shaikh Mahmud are the remnants of the past. A few old mosques of 16th and 18th centuries like the Goadith mosque, which was erected in 1519 during the reign of Hussain Shah; Ahmed Shah's Mosque of 16th century and Abdul Hamid's Mosque of 18th century, which was possibly

established during the reign of Emperor Aurangzeb, stand today as witness to the history of Suvarnagram (golden village). The people, both local and tourists, feel that a new bridge needs to be constructed soon to maintain the link between new and old Sonargaon.

Modern Sonargaon took a festive look from 20th January 1993 because of Poush Mela (festival). People from far flung areas enjoyed week-long traditional cultural programmes sponsored by Bangladesh Folk Arts and Crafts Foundation at Sonargaon. Added attraction was the three-day soiree on Baul Songs which was held from 27th January. This is undoubtedly a laudable venture.

Hundreds of people are coming to this place and there is no arrangement to store throwaway litter, which turns the surrounding areas filthy. It could have been better had there been litter baskets at important places to keep the area clean.

To fulfil the dream of the famous painter Shilpacharyya Zainul Abedin, a folk art museum was established in 1975 at Sonargaon which has a collection of different types of old folk objects. The museum which is an attraction needs to be expanded house a few other items, both old and new, including folk objects of the tribal people.

If we look at the history of Sonargaon, it appears really prosperous in all aspects. Even after the fall of Ilyas Shah dynasty, Sonargaon again pros-



Mazaar of Sultan Ghiyas-ud-din Azam Shah at Mograpara, Sonargaon.

ANNOUNCEMENT
Starting this weekend, "My World" by S. M. All will not be published during this month, due to the writer's other pressing preoccupations at home and abroad. Mr All will resume his column from the first week of March.

Editor-in-charge
Weekend Magazine