

Racist Wins in London

Four men were charged in London on Monday for being involved in clashes between rightist supporters and anti-racist demonstrators, whites and Asians, in the British capital's poor East End district. The clashes had occurred a day earlier following the election on Thursday of a candidate of the extremist British National Party to the local council, the first such victory won by a racist party in Britain in 1976.

Charged with "violent disorder," the offence may seem surprisingly mild. If not acquitted, the four men may get light sentences and be back to the streets again to work with Derek Beackon, an unemployed driver, who won the election defeating candidates of three major parties.

Whatever the court's verdict against the four men—good, bad or indifferent—the victory of Beackon has been strongly condemned by all the prominent leaders of the country, ranging from Prime Minister John Major to the Archbishop of Canterbury, George Carey. Again, all other members of the Council have threatened to boycott the new man, Asians employed by the local administration would have nothing to do with Beackon and anti-racist protesters have vowed to picket against the British National Party nominee every time he attends a meeting of the Council. The idea is to make the life of this unacceptable man as miserable as possible so that he may well be obliged to resign.

The anti-racist protesters of the area and leaders of major political parties have launched their offensive a little too late. True, Beackon won the seat by only seven votes. But major parties which had put up their candidates should have sensed the growing support generated by the British National Party on its extremist platform calling for forced repatriation of such foreigners as South Asians, including Bangladeshis, and blacks, regardless of the fact that they included many British-born second generation citizens of the country. We believe, the concern felt by liberal whites about Beackon serving as a destabilising factor for the Asian population is genuine. On the other hand, the cross-section of British people see the victory won by the extremist party as a shadow of racism cast over the country, as a threat to the Jews and immigrants from East Europeans or from European Community (EC) nationals who, under the Treaty of Rome, face no restrictions on their freedom to take or seek work in Britain. In 1991, 8.1 million foreign and Commonwealth nationals, excluding EC nationals, were admitted to Britain and 53,900 persons were accepted for settlement.

Whether or not the British immigration policy is liberal or restrictive, controlled under legislations passed in the 1970s and 1980s, the fact remains that the authorities in the United Kingdom should have taken a firm line against skinheads who made their first appearance in the sixties and launched what came to be known as "Pak Bashi", a move to harass South Asians, including Bengalees. The failure of the country's law enforcing agencies in dealing with this phenomenon at the early stage and the indifference of major parties to see the need for political campaign against racism have brought about the present situation. The election that gave Beackon the victory came just a week after a Bangladesh youth was beaten into coma in another part of East London. Meanwhile, the British media has revealed that in the last four years, the number of racial attacks reported annually in Britain has almost doubled, reaching 7,993.

Many steps can still be taken to ensure that immigrants, especially South Asians, live in dignity and peace in the country they have chosen as their home and that Britain does not fall under racism which is causing havoc in a number of West European countries. A case has been made — and we support it — and more and more immigrants, again especially South Asians, should be recruited for police and judiciary. This will most certainly raise the level of confidence among the so-called foreigners who do play a vital role in the economy of Britain.

Myopic View of History

The government plans to turn the 'Andarmahal', the inner house of Ahsan Manzil, into the, till now non-existent, Dhaka city museum, as reported in the national press on Tuesday. A 'son et lumiere' show would be a part of the museum 'to give a brief history of that time to the spectators so that they can have an idea of the lifestyles of the Nawabs'.

This could be a joke. Things are all the worse because it is not. Someone on the upper perches of administration has hit the brilliant idea that, besides the Manzil being a 'museum' all by itself, it can profitably house the city museum — something resembling what we had, thanks to Bhattashali and Abul Hasnat, for over six decades at the Nimtoli palace sites of the true Nawabs of Dhaka. The idea of mixing a pleasure spot — or at best 'an old curiosity shop' — with the serious business of a depository of one national heirlooms serving mainly scholars and people interested in knowing the truths of our land as well as our human and social selves is perhaps more incongruous than brilliant. The emphasis is being shifted rather pronouncedly from one of seriousness and effective promotion of an awareness of the national and human past to something that has to do much with a weird combination of showmanship and salesmanship. This is more than proved by the 'son et lumiere' project.

From the Gizeh show at the site of Pharaoh Khufu's great pyramid, projecting life and the riches of five thousand years back to the one held at Delhi Red Fort lighting up experiences of the traditional capital of the northern subcontinent hardly five hundred years old — this kind of 'sound and light' show has been a success as goodly puller of tourist crowd, what has a 'city museum' to do with that?

'Spectators' of the show are to be given, by way of the show 'a brief history of that time so that they can have an idea of the lifestyles of the Nawabs'. Why is 'that time' — less than a hundred years of British colonial dispensation as projected through the decadent ways of a house of merchant-become-Zamindars so important in annals of our nation as to merit such celebration? Were the scions of Khwaja Alimullah, the Kashmiri merchant, rulers of Dhaka? Why is this emphasis on squeezing our past to a mere hundred and odd years and on the lifestyles of four gentlemen titled by the Empress of India in Britain?

'Son et lumiere' shows are a kind of celebration of national achievements. The thought of having one at Ahsan Manzil betrays a poor idea of our true history and its achievements. And it is bound to give a very wrong historical orientation to all those that would be exposed to it. There is, as it is, enough of confusion on the point of identity and culture. Government would do well not to compound it further.

Growth of Print Media is Hampered by Unfair Government Ad Policy, Poor Support from Private Sector and Internal Inertia

THIS survey was commissioned by Asian Mass Communication Research and Information Centre (AMIC), Singapore for providing updated baseline data to facilitate the work of the of Circulation/Advertising Development Workshop held in Dhaka from 19 September 1993 to 22 September 1993. It formed the first part of a two-tier survey, the final part of which will be a follow-up of the workshop itself.

The 4-day workshop took a close look at the circulation and advertising aspect of the newspaper industry of the country and sought to provide pragmatic, constructive suggestions for developing appropriate strategies for promoting circulation of newspapers and augmenting advertising revenue.

The workshop brought together 18 participants from a total of ten newspapers of the country: 6 publications including two weeklies, of Dhaka, two regional dailies and two rural dailies. The participants from 6 vernacular dailies and two English-language dailies, one English-language weekly and one vernacular weekly were among them.

To start with, it will be interesting and pertinent to give an idea of the controversy raging on government ad policy.

Bangladesh Sangbadpatrika (BSP) is a representative body of owners of newspapers in the country. BSP has demanded that the distribution of government ads among the newspapers must be reviewed for a more balanced and more equitable ad distribution policy. Already a committee with newspaper representatives on it exists for the purpose but its work is stalled at the moment. The committee is actually a sub-committee of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. But BSP challenges the bona fide of the ad review committee's representatives who were chosen by the BSP which preceded the incumbent BSP. Newly elected BSP wants new representatives of its own choice on the ad review committee. The work of the committee is thus derailed.

Meanwhile, a great deal of

noise has been made by newspapers on the need to review government ad policy which is described as tilted specially towards two government-constituted trust newspapers. Although the government has not said 'no' to the demand for review of the ad policy, Information Minister Bariar Nazmul Huda has gone on record as saying that government ad distribution policy takes into account:

a) objectivity in news presentation in the newspapers, b) government's Audit Bureau of Circulation (ABC) report, c) readership statistics and, d) commercial needs of advertising agencies — 'Commercial need of advertising agencies may mean the individual choice of an advertising party (Ministry, Department, Directorate, Corporation and so on of the government).

Information Minister Bariar Nazmul Huda said that insertions of ads may be raised to 6 insertions and in some cases ten insertions to provide ad support to a larger number of newspapers. Incidentally, there is resentment in the newspaper industry that most newspapers in the country are discriminated against in Government ad policy, the two newspapers (Government-constituted trust newspapers) getting the lion's share of ad support of the government.

The Information Minister told the newspapers that they should try to attract more private sector advertisements instead of mainly depending on government advertisements. The reaction of BSP to the observation of the minister is: Since the government nationalization of all industries at the time of the first Bangladesh Government in 1972, the largest share of advertisements in the

country is still controlled by the government.

In a situation like this, the newspaper owners have started arguing that unless the government would support them with more ad revenues they would not have the means to implement Fourth Wage Board Award for all categories of employees in newspapers. That would pit the employees against the employers of newspapers. Employers are also editors in many newspapers.

In the running controversy over government ad distribution policy question has been raised as to human rights to freedom of opinion and expression, and the freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through the media. It has been emphasized by BSP that this principle of press freedom is recognized and upheld in a true democracy. But the government has been criticized that the government manipulates its ad policy to gag the press contrary to the government claim that it is making efforts to strengthen democracy.

On his part, the Information Minister observed that the fact the newspapers are criticizing the ad policy of the government is proof enough the government upholds press freedom.

The BSP has urged the government to increase its ad budget and also increase the rate of ad by 100 percent. (At present government ad rate is roughly 150% less than private ad rate) BSP has expressed resentment that although Fourth Wage Board Award has been implemented, the rate of ad has not been increased. (The Wage Board Award is announced by the government after reviews of relevant issues and problems with the newspaper employees and management). Incidentally, the value of government ad for

1991 and 1992 is estimated at roughly Tk. 80 million annually. (US 1 dollar = Tk. 40 roughly).

the print media until several months back; now the airlines uses the TV.

List Showing Value of Government Advertisements Distributed among Newspapers from January to May 1993

Newspaper's Name	Amount in Tk
1. Dainik Bangla	61,99,662
2. Bangladesh Times	42,40,530
3. Dainik Inqilab	25,59,025
4. Dainik Ittefaq	24,32,150
5. Dainik Dinkal	18,73,364
6. Dainik Banglar Bani	12,57,116
7. Dainik Sangram	11,14,067
8. Dainik Al-Amin	7,65,800
9. Dainik Millat	7,35,075
10. Daily Telegraph	7,25,420
11. Dainik Sakaler Khabar	6,12,240
12. Dainik Aker Kagoj	5,90,693
13. Dainik Bangladesh Patrika	6,73,912
14. Dainik Samachar	5,72,770
15. Daily Morning Sun	5,71,030
16. Dainik Sakti	5,60,790
17. Dainik Khabar	5,58,558
18. Dainik Abirhab	5,52,000
19. The Daily Star	4,78,412
20. Dainik Sangbad	4,71,975
Total	2,30,63,489

Source: Dainik Sangbad, 9 July '93

Private Sector Ads

Incidentally while there is a mad rush for Government ads of the value of Tk 80 million annually, private sector generates Tk 430 million worth of ads yearly, the bulk of which goes to the electronic media. The advertising agencies which handle private sector ads explain that poor quality newspaper, bad printing quality and small circulation of many newspapers turn private parties away from print media. The private parties, it is said, prefer print media for its permanence but avoid it for various reasons. The Singapore Airlines is a case in point. It used to advertise its service in

Goods account for Tk 387 million and services account for Tk 430 million in the private sector advertisements.

Of annual Tk 430 million private sector ads, government-owned TV nets Tk 292.4 million, Radio Tk 68.8 million and print media gets Tk 34.4 million. The remaining amount of private sector ads is attracted by hoarding, neon signs, posters and POS (point of sales).

An insight into the not-so-pleasant atmosphere of newspaper circulation and advertising field is provided by the Research Assistants who visited selected newspaper offices in Dhaka in connection with this

survey work.

There was welcome relief, however, in an office where the officer concerned was helpful to an effort which he knew was an important for circulation and advertising development. He found time for the Research Assistant and took delight in answering circulation/advertising-related questions.

The atmosphere of circulation and advertising departments in most newspapers is marked by misgiving and suspicion. Actually, any interest in that area by an outsider is regarded as trespass into other's ground.

It is an environment in which the Circulation Officer does not care to think of developing strategies to promote circulation. Incidentally, good newspaper entrepreneurs are becoming scarce.

Methodology

In deference to the purpose of the survey and in consideration of the short time available to complete the survey, it was decided that the final sample would cover newspaper copies of ten selected publications from 1 January '93 to 31 July '93. Since no benchmark data regarding ratio between news and Circulation/Advertising are available it was reckoned fair to study 10% of the newspapers at random. Accordingly, 10% copies of ten newspapers published from 1 January 1993 to 31 July 1993 (or 21 copies of each daily excepting weeklies) were selected and examined; and for the 2 weeklies every alternate week was selected for content analysis. The intervening holidays were accounted for by picking the copies of the subsequent opening days.

Apart from content analysis, interviews with Managers (Advertising/Circulation Department) of the selected newspapers were planned. Questionnaires were developed for the purpose and interviews were given short training on 16 September 1993 to conduct the interview. The questionnaire was finalised after pretesting it at two newspapers which do not figure in the list of selected newspapers for survey.

(To be concluded tomorrow)

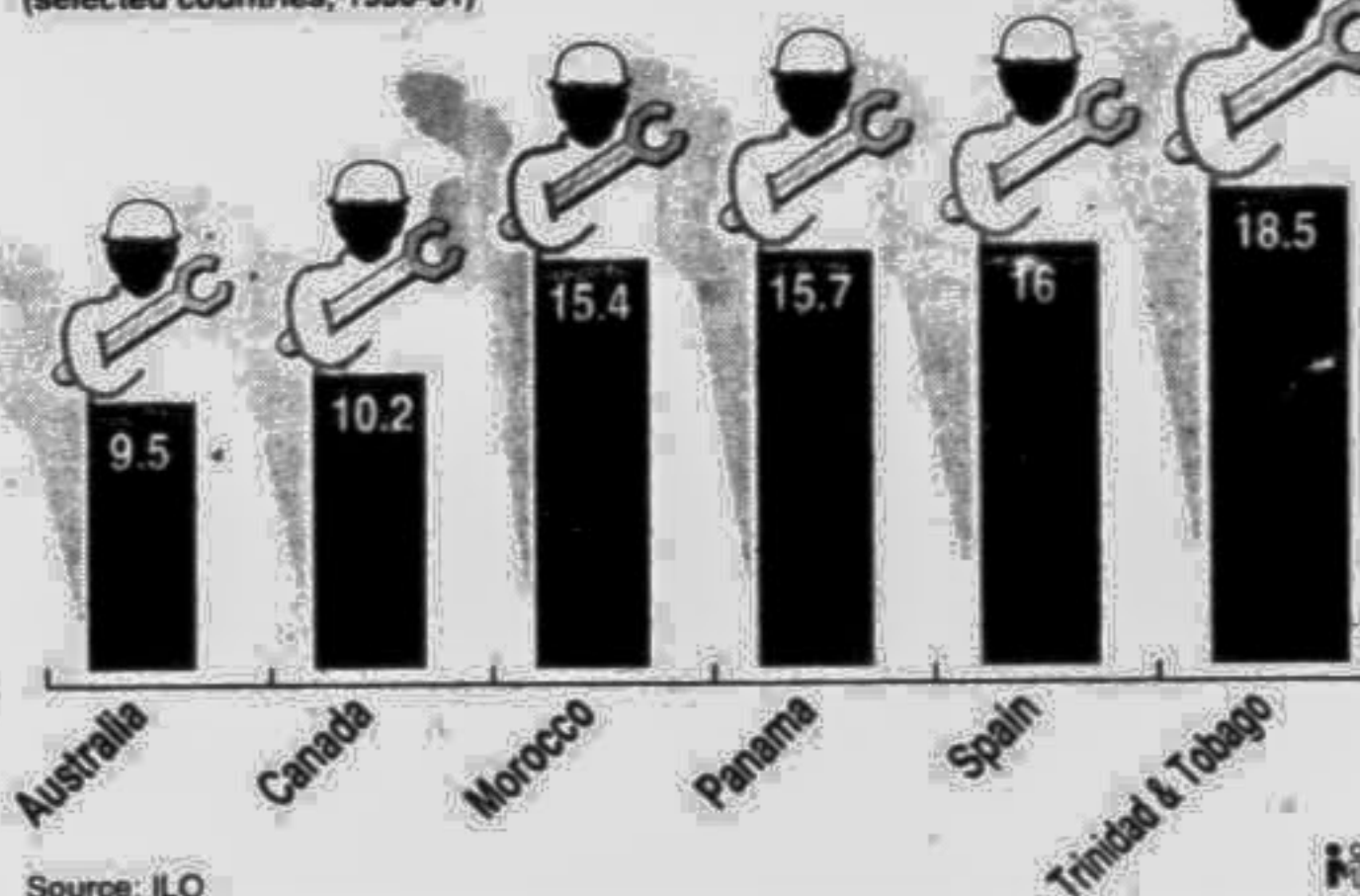
Unemployment — the Root of All Our Troubles?

Derek Ingram writes from Limassol, Cyprus

Government waste of human resources, the problems women politicians face in bringing up a family, and the 20-year failure of international diplomacy to end the Turkish occupation were among the subjects talked about when MPs from 120 parliaments got together in Cyprus. One MP from Australia, said any government that did not provide work for all its people did not deserve to stay in office.

Without work

Percentage of unemployed (selected countries, 1990-91)



Source: ILO

shop and essentially it is, but an event that brings together MPs from countries across the world, in every stage of development, is not to be so lightly dismissed.

Ideas are born in forums like this one, and this network of MPs across the world is of lasting, if unquantifiable, value. The smallest sovereign state represented here was

Nauru (Pop. 8,000) and the largest India (870 million). Other legislators came from remnants of the British Empire like the Falkland Islands (1,800), the Turks and Caicos Islands.

Four representatives from Hong Kong included the outspoken legislative council member Emily Lau.

To qualify for membership

of the CPA members must come from bona fide Commonwealth parliaments or legislatures. This includes state, provincial and central parliaments, thus drawing together MPs from the smallest bodies like the Norfolk Island Legislative Assembly in Australia to the biggest, such as the Lok Sabha in New Delhi.

The meeting thus puts round the table in panel discussion such an unlikely assortment as newly elected Kofi Annan of the Pacific, Emmerson Mnangagwa, Minister of Justice of Zimbabwe, and New Zealand-born Bryan Gould, top member of the British Labour party executive.

This year's conference acted as a curtain-raiser to the Commonwealth summit that will take place in the same hotel on Limassol beach at the end of October which will have as one focus the drive in Commonwealth countries for greater democracy and better human rights. The changes in the past year enable the CPA to bring back into membership Lesotho and Ghana, where military government has been replaced by civilian rule.

But the 15 Nigerians who came here had to sit mute as

observers. In the wake of the June 12 election the CPA was ready to welcome back Nigeria as a member after a decade's absence, but President Ibrahim Babangida annulled the election and MPs must now wait until the situation is declared properly democratic.

For one session the MPs talked about the problems of women MPs. The idea was to discuss putting women's perspectives into mainstream political issues, but they were soon exchanging views on having babies while serving in parliament, and looking after them when they are sick. There was the cultural dimension.

Celebrated New Zealander Sonja Davies, grandmother of three and fighter for many causes, pointed out that Maori women were better off because the extended family system helped to provide support for a Maori mother MP. For others it was not so easy.

Nancy Gupthill, who has three children and is Speaker of the Prince Edward Island assembly in Canada, pointed out that women in her province seemed to have no problem in getting to political peaks while at the same time coping with family life. Their

premier is a woman, as are the opposition leader, the lieutenant-governor and the deputy speaker.

And Trinidadian minister Camille Robinson-Regis said she had one child since she was in office and intended to have two more, and still remain a minister.

Running like a wide river through this conference was the political situation in Cyprus itself. Delegates were taken to points on the UN Green Line that has divided the island in half ever since the Turkish invasion of 1974.

Many from outside Europe had not realised — or had forgotten — the legacy of this earlier example of what is now labelled ethnic cleansing. Constant references to the situation were made in the debate to the way in which the big powers had allowed the situation to fester for so long.

Calls for Turkey to withdraw its troops from the one-third of the island which it occupies are backed by 50 United Nations resolutions. When the Commonwealth Secretary-General, Chief Emeka Anyaoku, addressed the delegates he was asked why the Commonwealth had not done more in the last 20 years to resolve the Cyprus problem. Had not Kuwait been freed from an aggressor in a matter of months?

His answer: "Some might say that Kuwait has crude oil and Cyprus has olive oil."

— GEMINI NEWS

DEREK INGRAM is Editor of Gemini News Service.

To the Editor...

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.

Of insurance

Sir, The Finance Minister, Mr Saifur Rahman, while addressing a seminar arranged by the Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce recently, remarked that insurance companies were swimming on money and that they should reduce the premium rate. Unfortunately, the remark of the Finance Minister was not possibly based on any comparative study of the insurance premium rates prevalent in Bangladesh, India and Pakistan which have more or less the same economic and industrial tradition. Premium rates in the cases of fire and motor are lowest in Bangladesh. Premium rate on marine hull is almost same for all, as this is

determined by the reinsurers abroad particularly those in the Lloyd's market, London.

Though the Finance Minister has not given any reason for his observation that the insurance companies are swimming on money yet it is surmised that possibly the rates of dividend declared and building up of assets by some of the companies have persuaded the Finance Minister to conclude like this. If he could go deep into the issue then he would not have suggested the reduction of premium. According to the Insurance Act and rules, the capital required for a general insurance company is Tk. six crore and for a life insurance company it is Tk. three crore; 50% of the capital is to be sub-

scribed by the sponsors before they start business and 50% is to be raised by selling shares to the general public within a period of three years. Out of 16 companies, only four companies have raised their capital by selling shares to the general public within the stipulated period and thereby have become public limited companies in real sense.

The four general insurance companies which have sold their shares to the public have been paying 10% to 16% dividend on the subscribed capital of Tk six crore. On the other hand, some of the companies who have not yet sold their shares to the public have been paying dividend @ 15% to 26% on the subscribed capital of Taka three crore. This is happening because of the inaction of the government to enforce the relevant law. If the Controller of Insurance and the Controller of Capital Issues compel these companies to raise their capital by selling shares to the public then the share of dividend will be half. This will also help the members of the public having

small savings to earn an income a bit better than bank interest.

As has been the practice throughout the world, no insurance company retains full risk with it. It shares the risk by reinsurance. In the case of Bangladesh, a substantial portion is reinsured with foreign reinsurer. The retention of risk by an insurance company depends on its assets. Bigger the assets the bigger is the retention. So every insurance company tries to increase its assets as quickly as possible. In order to help the company to increase its risks bearing capacity the insurance law provides for setting aside a substantial portion of its premium income as reserve fund. This reserve fund ultimately goes to build up assets of the company. If the asset is more than ceding of premium for reinsurance is less. Since the premium ceded for reinsurance ultimately goes out of the country to foreign reinsurers, the country gets benefits when the asset of an insurer is more. If the premium rate is decreased then the rate of accu-

mulation of asset will also decrease and consequently the outflow of foreign exchange for reinsurance will increase.

A A Q Kabir
Juarshahara, Dhaka.

ICB

Sir, I would like to refer to Mr Adeebur Rahman's letter dated the 13th August, in your esteemed journal regarding performance of ICB. It is indeed unfortunate that such a state of affairs has gone unnoticed by the government specially the Finance Ministry.

The entire matter has to be carefully investigated and the public should be apprised of the exact situation. By now, at least a rejoinder should have come out of the organisation.

Essentially the ICB was meant for the small investors and I would consider it a great slur on its good name, if members of the middle-income group are allowed to suffer for

no fault of theirs. Corruption is alleged to be rampant in the country; but ICB to be associated with this quality should be unthinkable.

Our honourable Prime Minister is an able dynamic personality and she has an equally able colleague in charge of financial matters. May I humbly draw their vigilant attention in the matter?

Asheque Mahmud
Maghbazar, Dhaka.

Strange bed-fellows!

Sir, The picture in several newspapers on 9th August of Dr Kamal Hussain with his recent allies reminds one of the adage that politics make strange bed-fellows. Any student of recent political course will be re-educated.

Next what?

M A Haq
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