

A statute of liberty

Given the disagreement between delegate countries and their respective situations, Durban's action plan will be difficult to implement, writes Ansu Datta

7-11 1919
The curtain came down on the stage in Durban which hosted the world conference against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance — 24 hours after the scheduled time and only after further deliberations were cut short by blocking votes. Unending bickering fatigued many, including interpreters, who reportedly made themselves scarce at the end. Even the imminent risk of having electric lights dismantled at the end of the meet did not diminish the ardour of debaters — an indication of the contemporary relevance of the subject matter.

If this shows the complexity of the issues the conference set before itself, it also shows the tenacity and the passionate commitment of organizers and participants alike. They all knew that to agree to disagree would be disastrous. Perhaps this is what saved the conference from collapse more than once in eight days.

Durban has earned the distinction of hosting the largest world conference which tried to address the issue of discrimination. There were 2,300 representatives from 163 countries, including 16 heads of state. NGOs from around the world sent about 4,000 representatives, while more than 1,100 journalists were accredited.

The final session voted for a declaration of principles on racial discrimination and allied issues. It also adopted a 27-page action plan to combat discrimination, committing member states of the United Nations to undertake a wide range of measures to combat racism and discrimination "at the international, regional and national levels". The 163 participating countries agreed to implement the programme of action.

The conference recognized that race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origins may constitute grounds for discrimination and that other sources may include language, sex, religion, political or other opinion, social origin, property, birth or status determined by other criteria.

An issue that brought the conference on the verge of collapse was the Palestine question. It caused the early withdrawal of Israeli and American delegates from the meeting as Arab states intended to condemn Israel as a racist state. Finally, expressing concern about the plight of the Palestinian people "under foreign occupation", the conference recognized their "inalienable right" to self-determination and to the establishment of an independent state.

The conference also put on record the full enormity of the slave trade — another issue that proved equally intractable. "Slavery and the slave trade are a crime against humanity and should always have been so", solemnly announced the conference. Yet it stopped short of insisting on a formal apology from those that benefited from it and noted that "some states have taken the initiative of regretting or ex-



Fistful of anger

pressing remorse or presenting apologies, and called on all those who have not yet contributed to restoring the dignity of the victims to find appropriate ways to do so." Countries such as the United Kingdom were reportedly against such a step for the fear that a full admission of guilt might lead to litigation and demands for compensation from Africa and African-Americans. To make up for this, the meeting announced that the world owes the victims of the slave trade support and help to restore their dignity and repair the damage slavery did to them.

The final documents dealt with some other vexed issues. It emphasized that cultural diversity should be valued. It also supported the idea that the children of minority groups should be taught their own culture and educated in their own language.

The conference urged countries to address racial discrimination in their criminal justice systems. It additionally asked them not to discriminate between migrants and asylum-seekers on grounds of race. It further called on governments to take appropri-

ate action on a variety of issues, for example, to ensure that gypsies enjoy equal right to education, that people with AIDS have access to medical services, and that government agencies do not engage in racial or ethnic profiling.

It would, however, be necessary to point out that the issue of caste was not mentioned in the final documents. Some reporters have attributed this to the effective lobbying of the representatives of the government of India. This has proved a source of great disappointment to the Dalit activists who went to Durban. Nevertheless, many of them think that the conference created international awareness about the caste issue. As one of them remarked: "We are feeling connected. We are not alone".

Reactions to the outcome of the conference are as diverse as the sartorial outfits of the delegates and the activists. Predictably, to the organizers, the conference was a success. On the other hand, a spokesman of the United States, said, the US had no second thoughts about leaving the conference earlier than intended. A statement is-

‘The declaration and programmes and action were immediately cited as groundbreaking and momentous, hurtful...and everything in between’

Reaction ✓
sued by the Israeli foreign ministry said that the final document was "not the best". The Israeli foreign minister, Shimon Peres, was more blunt. He regretted that what took place in Durban "was a scandal". Taking a dig at his adversaries, he remarked that this happened because "a majority of non-democratic countries tried to give democracy lessons to democratic countries."

A number of Western nations, too, were not satisfied with the reference to west Asia in the final document. This despite the fact that "the right to security for all states in the region, including Israel was recognized", along with "the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and to the establishment of an independent state". Immediately after the adoption of this paragraph, Canada and Australia disassociated themselves from the conference.

Many black delegates thought that the paragraph on slavery was inadequate. But there was some satisfaction that the injustice and inhumanity of slavery was recognized for the first time at such an international forum. Referring to the resolution on slavery and slave trade, Kenyan representative, Amna Mohamed, said, "for the first time, the dignity of the black man has been recognized".

Given the enormity of the harm done to Africa because of the slave trade, it is indeed surprising that this issue was never addressed in like manner. According to an estimate, from 1450 to 1850 at least 12 million Africans were taken as slaves across the Atlantic — mainly to colonies in the New World. It is often forgotten that the commercial and industrial growth of western Europe owes in a significant measure to the slave trade and that the trade in humans laid the foundation of cities such as Liverpool and Amsterdam. Attempts are now being made in the US to find out how much of the country's wealth was generated by slave labour. Estimates vary from 10 per cent to 20 per cent.

The assessment of the outcome of the conference could not be better summed up than in the words of Dina Kraft, a journalist. The conference, she said, "ended... as tumultuously as it began, with a declaration and programme of action that was immediately cited as groundbreaking and momentous, hurtful and disastrous, and everything in between."

There are many countries in the world where implementation of the conference's plan of action would mean a radical change of official policy and practice. Since the documents are not legally binding, and given the enormity of social prejudice in many countries, one wonders how much one can hope for. The UN will set up a panel of five experts to help countries execute the plan and to monitor progress. However, without a time-bound framework, this becomes uncertain.

The different shades of hatred #19-16

Xenophobia, one of the major causes of intolerance driven by racism, and the related issue of asylum-seekers, has hardly figured at the Durban Conference, writes M. S. Prabhakara.

THE WORLD Conference against Racism, scheduled to conclude on the afternoon of September 7 with the adoption of its two major documents — a Declaration and a Programme of Action — went on late into the night and extended to an unscheduled ninth day of deliberations. The unresolved deadlock on the two most contentious issues in the Documents has come in the way of their adoption.

These, described by the Conference officials as the 'difficult issues', are slavery, slave trade and colonialism, characterised in the Draft Documents as 'crimes against humanity', and apology and reparations from those countries that engaged in and profited from these practices; and the formulations on Palestine and Israel and the larger dispute between political Zionism and Palestinian nationalism deeply rooted in history.

Late on Friday night there were indications of a possible breakthrough, with a carefully-worded compromise in 'acceptable language' worked out by a core group on the issues of slavery and related matters, though not on apology. This is still to find acceptance on all sides. Some of the changes proposed give a flavour of the diplomatic and verbal skills that are being exercised: 'remedial measures' in place of 'reparations'; no 'debt cancellation' but only 'debt relief', and so on. Even this kind of a breakthrough is not evident in the matter relating to Israel and Palestine.

It is easy to be cynical about the WCAR. Like all such international conferences, the proceedings have been marked by much verbiage, a lot of it of the indigestible kind. The result of all these deliberations were two documents: One, a Draft Declaration, comprising 43 preliminary paragraphs (PP) in the nature of a Preamble, articulating the ideas and sentiments that have driven the holding of such a Conference, followed by another 142 paragraphs, in the nature of a declaration of intent on the issues encapsulated in the full title of the Conference. Two, a Programme of Action.

The Secretary-General of the Conference, Ms. Mary Robinson, has only been saying that the Conference officials and delegates are working hard to achieve a consensus on the language of these formulations — a fairly typical fetish with words which seek to gloss over the historically entrenched antagonisms between political Zionism and Palestinian nationalism.

South Africa, as the host, is striving hard to secure a consensus on these issues, though till now not with much success. The apparent unity of purpose that South Africa had forged with other African countries seems to have collapsed, with only South Africa prepared to climb down on the demand for an

nel Tunnel by other asylum seekers.

All these issues, and several more, were also discussed at the accompanying NGO Forum (August 28 to September 1), a feature of U.N. Conferences in recent times. The venue for the NGO Forum was the Kingsmead Stadium, a venue adjacent to but a fair walk from the Durban International Convention Centre, the venue of the main Conference. The Forum's proceedings, as expected, were highly disorganised, a sign of both the strength and weakness of such civil society structures. There was free discussion, but little effort to arrive at a practical and meaningful consensus from where one could proceed further.

crimes, acts of genocide and ethnic cleansing' seem to have outraged even so considerate a friend of the NGO sector as Ms. Robinson who has declined to accept the Declaration and has declared that she would not recommend the Declaration to the main Conference. The issue of discriminatory practices affecting the Dalit community featured prominently both at the NGO Forum and outside. The Forum's Declaration situates the issues of caste and untouchability in their broader historical and social context, taking note of both the anti-discrimination provisions of the Indian Constitution and their lack of effectiveness in practice, resulting in the persistence of violence



The U.S. was one of the main targets of the ire of those who gathered at Durban.

unqualified apology for slavery, slave trade and colonialism.

For a Conference with such a broad theme and wide ranging concerns, it is a pity that it has got bogged down on these two issues. The result is that xenophobia, one of the major causes of intolerance driven by racism, and the related issue of asylum seekers, has hardly figured in the Conference. Ironically, even as the Conference is in progress, these issues have come into sharp focus outside, in the events in Australia relating to the Afghan asylum seekers and the 'rushing' of the Chan-

The NGO Forum too adopted an Declaration, with 62 preliminary paragraphs, each beginning with expressions such as 'acknowledging', 'saluting', 'recognising', 'taking note of', 'reaffirming', 'considering', 'appalled by' and so on.

The Declaration, not to put too fine a point upon it, is bit of everything to everyone. One gathers the impression that every lobby was able to get its own pet aversions included in the Declaration. Its formulations on Israel, described as a "racist, apartheid state", guilty of "racist crimes including war

against the Dalits. There is little doubt that the issue of caste and work based discrimination in India has now been widely recognised as one of the persistent evils of Indian society.

By openly and eloquently speaking at every available forum on these issues and disseminating valuable information, much of it based on official sources, to an audience most of whom were not even aware of these evils, the Dalit NGO representation from India has achieved a triumph in terms of visibility and impact, albeit outside the formal structures of the WCAR.

From persecuted to persecutor?

Is Zionism a form of racism? Kesava Menon details the conflicting standpoints.

HAVING BEEN victims over two millennia of some of the worst forms of racial discrimination imaginable, it is understandable that Jews all over the world should be deeply angered when they themselves are accused of racism. Such charges, the Jews believe, involve a denial of their historic experience,

ground, a state of and for the Jews does not appear so abhorrent.

While allowing the Jews to set up their state, however, the U.N. did severely dent one major slogan of the Zionist enterprise. In urging the British Mandate Government, that ruled the area between the two World Wars, to let them set up a state the Zionist leadership had coined the catchy slogan "A land without a people for a people without a land". This slogan totally denied the fact that a people — an Arab people who had also begun to define themselves as Palestinians — already owned that land and that Zionist entrepreneurs had managed to purchase only bits of it. The notion that the Jews have

tudes towards the indigenous people. There has always been a tendency to treat the Palestinians as a backward people and there is an extreme fringe in Israel that can give the impression that it regards the Arabs as a sort of *antemensen*. But if there are Israelis who believe that the Arabs are backward because of some genetic defect, there are also Israelis who recognise that Palestinian backwardness is attributable to the blows inflicted on their polity, society and economy consequent to the success of the Zionist enterprise.

The Arabs would say that the test to determine whether Zionism is racism or not should not lie in an assessment of prevalent attitudes in Israel but in



Israel faced a lot of flak too.

suggest a moral equivalence between them and historic oppressors and denigrate the humanity they have developed on account of their sufferings. Those who suffer from the actions of the Jewish state, however, insist that those actions are directed by a racist mindset.

Is Zionism a form of racism? Given the sufferings that the Jews had to undergo over the centuries, few can take exception to their belief that they became victims because they were not politically organised — because they did not have a state. Against such a back-

exclusive right to all the land between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River is still kept alive by a hardcore segment of Israeli society and this non-aversion to the thought of ethnic cleansing does carry a racist tinge. At the same time, there are just as ardent Zionists who believe that the Palestinians too are entitled to their own territorial state.

Since several prominent leaders of the Zionist enterprise were also well-established members of a European society that was colonialist at that time they also reflected the colonialist atti-

actions undertaken by the Jewish state. Israel has no doubt a long record of oppressing the Palestinians and this oppression is currently of horrible intensity.

But does this oppression flow from a racial hatred towards the Arabs or from a horrible miscalculation of the measures that can enhance Israel's security? Minorities inside Israel too suffer from various forms of discrimination but once again it is difficult to affirm that this discrimination is racist in origin and not one that stems from misconceptions about security.

can do no less.

518 **MIXED BAG** 9/8

Belligerence and compromise at Durban

WITH discrimination against ethnic groups now off the statute books of almost all countries, the spotlight is now on social rather than state legislated discrimination. That is why the UN-sponsored conference in Durban has been given the broad rubric of "World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance". It is not surprising that the conference has been buffeted by any number of controversial issues — different nations and delegations have their own priorities. There is no doubt something unpleasantly racist about the manner in which Israel culls Jewish enclaves out of Palestinian territory and maintains them by force, and Arab countries and NGOs use the conference to voice their frustration. But they took matters too far by trying to label Israel a genocidal apartheid state, causing Israel and the US to pull out. India too was in the firing line, for discriminating against Dalits. The Indian delegation has argued that caste has been officially abolished, but most countries can make similar assertions in which case there would be no point holding such a large conference. A better strategy is to acknowledge caste discrimination exists and announce remedial measures.

Understanding was reached, fortunately, on the emotive slavery and colonialism issue — this may have salvaged the conference. The issue was brought to the forefront by reparations paid to holocaust survivors, apartheid victims and the mass incarceration of Japanese-Americans during World War II. European countries will now acknowledge that the shipping in chains of an estimated 15 million Africans was a crime against humanity, and undertake remedial economic assistance to African nations. Sub-Saharan African economies are among the poorest in the world and sinking further; urgent economic assistance in the form of debt relief and fairer trade policies is urgently necessary, even if the moral imperative of recompense for the devastation inflicted on Africa by slavery and colonialism did not exist.

THE STATESMAN

Injustice of slavery recognised

ST 12 918 *Bellem*



RACE AGAINST TIME: Senior delegates discuss the final draft in Durban on Saturday. - AP/PTI

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

DURBAN, Sept. 8. — The World Conference Against Racism tonight adopted a declaration recognising the injustice of slavery and colonialism and the "plight" of Palestinians but the issue of casteism, opposed by India, found no mention.

In the closing session, delegates adopted a Programme of Action and Declaration which will serve as a blueprint to fight racism. Under the slavery deal, the declaration described slavery and the slave trade as a crime against humanity.

The compromise recognised the Holocaust and condemned anti-Semitism and Islamophobia and also expressed

concern "about the plight of the Palestinian people under foreign occupation." It did not specifically criticise Israel or Zionism.

Indian officials said the controversial paragraph clubbing "work and descent" was not included in the final document as there was no consensus on it.

Several Dalit NGOs had been pressing hard to get the caste issue included in the final declaration highlighting the alleged discrimination against Dalits.

India had opposed Paragraph 73 of the draft declaration, which sought to club discrimination on the basis of work and descent, and suggested a fresh formulation by dropping the word "work" and

MEET ON CHILDREN

UNHQ, Sept. 8. — In an effort to avoid a repetition of the verbal explosion at a UN conference against racism, negotiators preparing for a summit on children approved compromise language on the West Asia conflict. Despite agreement on West Asia in negotiations yesterday, a final declaration for the children's summit, to be attended by at least 75 Presidents and Prime Ministers, is far from complete. Talks are expected to last until the conference opens on 19 September. — **Reuters**

replacing it with expressions overtime over the contentious race, colour, national and ethnic origin besides descent. Over a week of heated debate at the global conference earlier saw the USA and Israel abandoning the meet after a compromise formula on West Asia, advocated by Norway, failed.

The conference, supposed to end yesterday, went into their condemnation of Israel

'IMPERFECT DOCUMENT, BUT HAS A BASIS TO BUILD ON'

Compromise on Palestine, slavery reached at Durban

HD-1
9/8

DURBAN, SEPT. 8. The World Conference against Racism (WCAR) adopted a declaration on Saturday recognising the injustice of slavery and colonialism and the "plight" of Palestinians, after nine days of contentious debate and brinkmanship that repeatedly threatened to unravel the gathering.

Compromises on both issues were reached only on Saturday morning, a day after the WCAR had been scheduled to end. Even as they accepted the compromise, Arab States registered their reservations that the conference would not directly condemn Israel for its treatment of Palestinians. After the conference declaration and programme of action were adopted, Australia and Canada said they were unhappy with the final documents' language on the West Asia conflict.

Earlier in the day, the South African Foreign Minister, Ms. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, told the conference she understood there was agreement reached on the two issues, and the Islamic States issued a statement confirming that. But several Muslim countries then objected to efforts to delete additional text that many delegates felt indirectly referred to Palestinians, including a paragraph that said,

"Foreign occupation... is among the forms and sources of racial discrimination."

The WCAR acknowledged that slavery was a crime against humanity and "always should have been so." It also expressed an apology in

Caste finds no mention

DURBAN, SEPT. 8. The issue of casteism, opposed by India, found no mention in the final document at the U.N.-sponsored meet on racism as there was no consensus on it. Indian official sources said the controversial paragraph clubbing "work and descent" was not included.

Several Dalit NGOs had been pressing hard to get the caste issue included in the final declaration highlighting the alleged discrimination against Dalits. — PTI

the form of acknowledgment for the wrongs of slavery and colonialism and offered a package of economic assistance to Africa. "We are happy we found a solution," Mr. Hans Winkler, an Austrian delegate, said.

It remained unclear what the new language would mean for European fears of potential

lawsuits seeking reparations, though several European delegates said on condition of anonymity that their fears had been addressed.

Reparations, which were not directly linked to the slave trade in the document, would take the form of debt relief, opening of markets and poverty-eradication efforts. "Africa had a rendezvous with history," said Ms. Amina Mohamed, the Kenyan mediator in the talks. "We have an agreement on a document that is far from satisfactory, is terribly imperfect, but that provides a basis to build on, and I think, for the first time, the dignity of the black man has been recognised." The deal on West Asia was based on a South African compromise accepted on Thursday by the E.U., but initially rejected by the Arab States. The proposal recognised the Holocaust and condemned anti-Semitism and Islamophobia and also expressed concern "about the plight of the Palestinian people under foreign occupation." It did not specifically criticise Israel or mention Zionism.

Islamic States said they had accepted the compromise, but still had serious reservations with its failure to address the Palestinian issue. — AP

9 SEP 2001

5-9/98

Conference against racism

INDIA was the first country to raise the issue of apartheid at the United Nations. It took the lead in opposing the pernicious racist doctrine of the South African regime of that time and helped mobilise international opinion against it. India's own record in adhering to UN-mandated sanctions against the apartheid regime was impeccable: no diplomatic relations, no trade, no coming and going.

There was a price to be paid, for South Africa was an important trading partner and had become home to a significant overseas Indian community.

Moreover, Mahatma Gandhi had first emerged as a supreme leader during his long sojourn in that country. But the cause of racial equality and justice was all-important and drove Indian policy without any compromise.

Now after all these years, the World Conference Against Racism has taken place in Durban. This remains a highly charged subject and the meeting has been accompanied by a series of controversies. Some groups tried to use the occasion to redress the wrongs of the past, hence the demand for reparations for the evils of slavery and colonialism. Others tried to concentrate international attention upon their special preoccupations, most prominently in the Arab-led effort to identify Zionism as a form of racism.

Beyond all such moves lay

the sense among many of the participants, perhaps most of them, that the world's affairs are not ordered in a fair and equitable manner; and more damagingly, that there is a racial divide between those who prosper and those who are being left further and further behind.

There was thus a strong response to the Durban conference from many countries, especially in Africa, where these issues are most strongly felt. The conference was a reminder that the questions that were once so prominent in Indian policy have not simply evaporated into thin air with the emancipation of South Africa.

Responding to this reality, prominent leaders from all over the globe gathered in Durban on the occasion, President Fidel Castro among them. It is a pity that India, once in the forefront, sent only a modest delegation led by a minister of state.

At the NGO forum accompanying the conference determined efforts were made to inscribe casteism on the agenda as a form of racial discrimination. This move by Indian NGOs was opposed by the official delegation from India, which took the view that this evil is being earnestly combated within the country and there was no

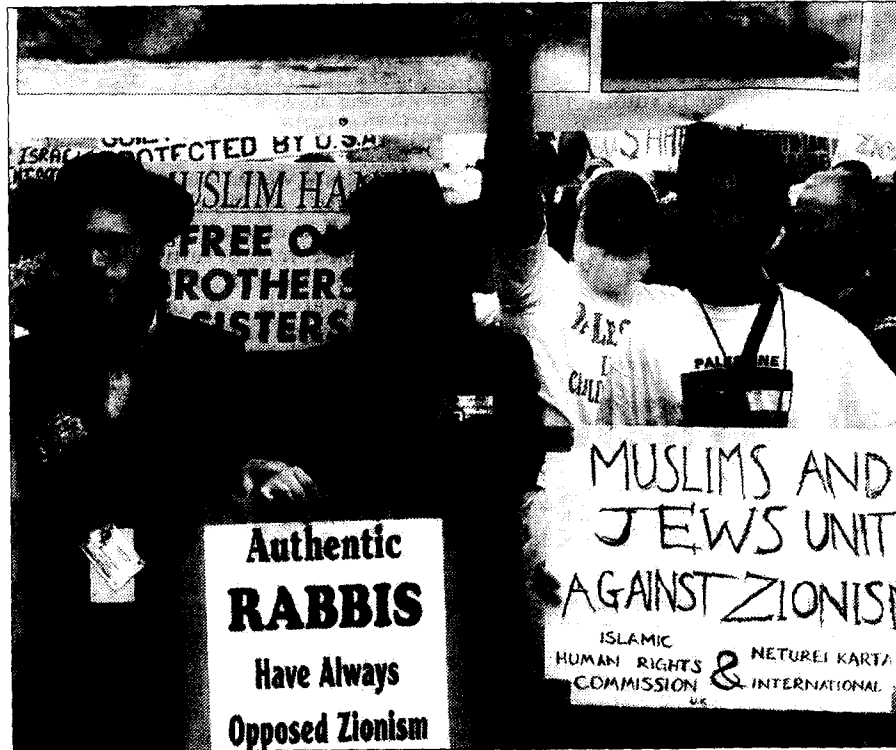
need to discuss it at international level.

Not all were in agreement with the official line. The Chairman of the National Human Rights Commission

WIDE ANGLE

SALMAN HAIDAR

in view of India's objection, the NGOs succeeded in dramatising the issue before a world audience, and this should have a beneficial impact at home.



Orthodox Jews and pro-Palestinian supporters participating in a protest march in Durban last Friday to coincide with the opening of the UN Racism Conference. — AP/PTI

see no objection to the caste issue being brought within the ambit of the conference, and he was applauded by the UN High Commissioner on Human Rights. Though the subject could not be inscribed

However, notwithstanding their strong advocacy, this does not seem like a fit subject for a conference to combat racism: one would be hard pressed to make a link between caste and race, and

it is also not easy to see how international action can address the evil effects of caste in India.

The relatively low-key response by India to the Durban conference reflects a slow reorientation of India's foreign policy away from some of its established points of reference towards rather different goals. Solidarity with the developing countries has long been an Indian stock response, whether in the Afro-Asian sphere, or the Non Aligned Movement, or in other similar groupings.

However, the coherence of such groupings has become less manifest in the current era, and the interests of member-states often drive them in different directions. As circumstances change, policy adjustments become necessary, new priorities come to be established.

In India, there seems to be a tougher audit of policy and the benefit it provides. With that, perhaps the feeling arises that rhetorical flourishes and pursuing ancient associations for their own sake are gestures that carry little meaning today. We are driven by a closer view of our own direct interest. It is a subtle, only half-expressed and dimly perceived change of attitude.

An important ingredient in

this evolving state of affairs is the change for the better in our relationship with the USA. This has emerged by degrees over the last few years, to the point that today the way is open for a greatly enlarged association between the two countries.

From it can flow a sense of partnership in global affairs that seems commensurate with our capacity and aspirations. Thus, there is talk of an Indian role in the region from the Gulf to the Straits of Malacca, and openings in the IT field and other economic areas are there to develop. Greatly significant is the ostentatious US de-linking of India from Pakistan in its approach to South Asia, which is a long-standing Indian demand.

There is more besides, and improved understanding with the USA is welcome and overdue. Yet this is no panacea and there are many areas in which US interests are not congruent with, or even opposed to, ours.

These limitations need to be recalled even while we proclaim the "natural alliance" between the two countries. While we seek broader horizons for the future, it remains important to maintain and strengthen long established friendships with the developing world.

Otherwise we risk the paradox of pursuing a larger role for ourselves in the world but with a narrower vision of where we stand.

(The author is former Foreign Secretary.)

HD-1
8/9

Hectic parleys on to ^{racism} save Durban meet

DURBAN, SEPT. 7. In an apparent softening of stand, the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) tonight declared that it would not "blockade" the World Conference Against Racism (WCAR) on the West Asia issue, raising faint hopes of saving the meet from a total collapse.

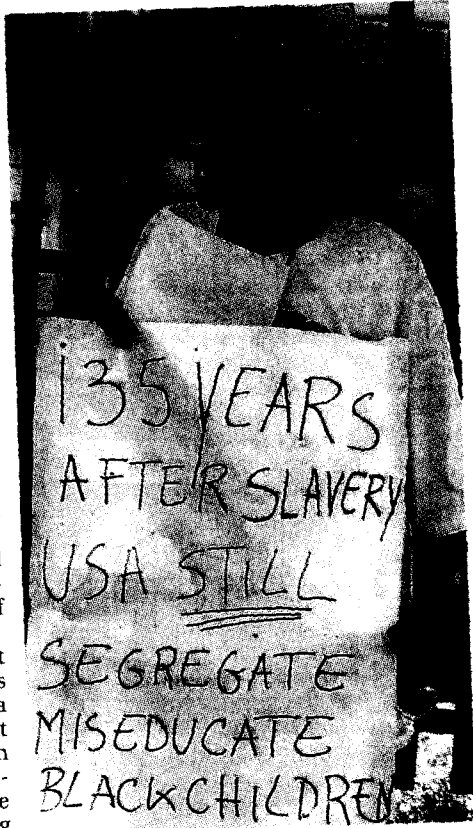
"We are not going to blockade WCAR as we do not want to embarrass a friendly country and host South Africa," Mr. Munir Akram, Pakistan's permanent representative at Geneva, told presspersons here. However, the OIC had serious reservations on the fresh compromise draft which did not mention Israeli "atrocities" in occupied territories, he said.

The Arab countries had earlier rejected a document for a compromise on the West Asia issue saying it had omitted all reference to Zionism as a "new form of apartheid." As frantic negotiations continued behind closed doors to achieve limited success, leading negotiators privately admitted that one of the remaining questions was how the conference was going to signal its failure on issues on which a consensus had not been reached. The concluding ceremony of the WCAR was indefinitely delayed tonight as the conference was yet to iron out the differences on the language to be used on West Asia and on clubbing discrimination on the basis of "work and descent."

The conference was yet to firm up the draft declaration and the programme of action as several clauses, including paragraph 73 — seeking to club discrimination on the basis of "work and descent" — were yet to be finalised.

New Delhi opposed it and suggested a fresh formulation. It said the word "work" could be replaced with other expressions — race, colour, national and ethnic origin — besides descent, a move totally rejected by the Dalit NGOs which insisted that "work and descent" be bracketed together to focus attention on caste discrimination in India. The Dalits, meanwhile, continued their protest and hunger strike on the final day of the conference in an attempt to express their concern at being "ignored."

The WCAR secretary-general, Ms. Mary Robinson, was engaged in hectic parleys to reach some agreement on the contentious issue in the final declaration. — PTI



A member of a U.S. NGO holds a placard at the U.N. racism conference in Durban on Friday. — AP

THE HINDU

India opposes racist label for Israel

EU, Arabs reject fresh draft on West Asia

Racism 5-5-78

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

DURBAN, Sept. 6. — The European Union and the Arab countries today rejected a fresh South African draft on West Asia at the World Conference Against Racism.

The Arabs objected to the text insisting that Israel must be declared a "racist" state. The European Union said the draft did not speak of the sufferings of the Jewish people.

The Asian countries termed the draft "imbalanced." With just a day left for the conference to end, South Africa, Belgium, Norway and Namibia will try to hammer out a compromise document tomorrow.

The Working Group on reparation and slavery has also reached a deadlock and the committee will work on a final text tonight.

India has come out strongly against equating racism with Zionism, an issue which bogged down the week-long meet.

Expressing its opposition to the Arab demand to equate Zionism with racism, India did not go along with the stand of

African countries on the issue of seeking reparation from western nations for colonising the continent.

"India will not support any demand for terming Zionism a racist religion," an Indian official said. Declaring India's position on the South African demand for reparation at WCAR, the official said New Delhi would expect the western countries to come up with some form of regret for colonising Africa and indulging in slave trade for centuries.

The Indian delegation, led by the foreign secretary, Mrs Chokila Iyer, was attending closed door meeting of the working group to reach an acceptable final declaration and a programme for action.

The concept of clubbing work with descent, opposed by New Delhi at the Conference, was also being debated but with West Asia and African issues taking centre stage, this might be put in the backburner.

So far, there has been no consensus on the issue, conference officials said.

The fresh draft suggests not to

name Israel for its alleged racist policies. But it also recognises the right of the Palestinian people and establishment of an independent state. It also voices concern over the holocaust of Jews saying it couldn't be forgotten.

The EU, which has threatened to pull out of the conference, has rejected Arab League's attempt to characterise Israeli practices in Palestinian territories as racist.

Arab leaders don't seem to be very receptive of the change in wording as they feel a declaration that doesn't criticise Israel is meaningless, the officials said.

Supporting right to security for all states in the region including Israel, the draft also expresses concern over anti-Semitism and Islamophobia, while recognising the plight of the Palestinian people.

On the issue of apology from the western countries for colonisation and slave trade, the South African public administration minister said: "Apologies from individual countries are very important. It's the essence of this conference."

EU cloud on Durban meet

FROM ED STODDARD

Durban, Sept. 5 (Reuters): France warned today that the European Union could quit a UN race conference in a row over West Asia, but a bloc spokesman said there were no plans at this stage to leave.

A French government spokesman issued the warning in Paris as representatives of the 15-state EU huddled with hosts South Africa and Arab representatives in a bid for a compromise on how to refer to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

The United States and Israel have already pulled out of the meeting in protest at draft conference documents branding Israel an apartheid and racist state and the EU has warned that it too cannot accept the wording.

"If the link between Zionism and racism is maintained, the issue of our departure — along with the Europeans — will come up immediately," French parliamentary affairs minister Jean-Jack Queyranne quoted Prime Minister Lionel Jospin as telling a Cabinet meeting. However, a spokesman for Belgian foreign minister Louis Michel, whose country holds the rotating EU presidency, told Reuters that nobody was calling yet for the bloc to withdraw.

"There is no question of pulling out at this stage. No member state has called for it," spokesman Koen Vervaeke told Reuters when asked to comment on Queyranne's remarks. While dismissing suggestions of an ultimatum, the EU has said it plans to review the state of negotiations

on the West Asia issue to see whether any compromise is possible. It will then decide what action to take.

"We are not just going to go on talking about this (West Asia) and if no accord is possible then there can be no accord on the overall conference documents because everything must be agreed," the spokesman said. The eight-day World Conference Against Racism is due to end on Friday.

An EU withdrawal, which could prompt other developed nations to quit, would be a death blow to a conference intended to be a landmark in the international fight against racism.

But South Africa, proud of its victory over White minority rule seven years ago, has called for tolerance and said it is seeking compromise wording acceptable to all.

The US pullout triggered a storm of criticism, including harsh words from South Africa and African-American activists who accused Washington of seizing on the West Asian row to avoid uncomfortable conference themes such as colonial-era slavery.

"A historic opportunity could have been lost to make a breakthrough in closing the gap between North and South in material wealth, a gap which so closely coincides with delineations of race," *The Mercury* newspaper said in an editorial today.

South African deputy President Jacob Zuma called the US move "unhelpful". He defended the right of Arab states to raise the Palestinian question. "They (the US) cannot say 'Every issue in the world you can touch but this issue'."

THE TELEGRAPH

6 SEP 2001

U.S. walkout not unexpected

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

WASHINGTON, SEPT. 4. The decision of the United States to walk out from the world conference against racism in Durban may have brought criticism from expected quarters but the move was well on the cards.

The Bush administration had made no bones of the fact that the U.S. will not be a party to any hate language, especially if directed against Israel. More generally, when it comes to conferences and treaties, this Republican administration has given the definite impression that it will not lose much sleep over what others say, rather "national interests" will be the deciding factor. The decision to walk out of the Durban meeting was made by the Secretary of State, Gen. Colin Powell, who in the first place sent a low-level team of officials led by a Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of International Organisations. But for all practical purposes, the American delegation was headed in sessions by a charge d'affairs in

the local Consulate. Denouncing the "hateful language", the Secretary of State issued a statement which said, "Today I have instructed our representatives at the world conference against racism to return home. I have taken this decision with regret because of the importance of the international fight against racism and the contribution that this conference could have made to it". The official decision to pull out may have been made by Gen. Powell, but it was not before the White House too concurred with the move. Media reports say that the President, Mr. George W Bush had been in touch with his key foreign policy advisors before making the decision.

The view in some quarters here is that the Durban conference fell into the hands of extremist Arab States who were keen on denouncing Israel in language that was unacceptable to the U.S. Now that the U.S. and Israel have walked out, the feeling here is that many others, particularly from Europe, will follow suit if the final

statement is not toned down. In the run up to the Durban meeting and in the final negotiating sessions at Geneva, the Bush administration had said a compromise would have to be worked out on attempts to equate Zionism with racism and the issue of slavery and reparations as demanded by some in Africa.

The Bush administration played it politically correct when it chose to have the Democratic lawmaker, Mr. Tom Lantos of California as one of the leading members of the American delegation. Mr. Lantos is a Holocaust survivor and a ranking member in the House International Relations Committee. While the Congressional Black Caucus had been critical of the attitude of the Bush administration to this conference, Mr. Lantos argued that a conference which should have been about the horrible practice of discrimination around the world had been "hijacked by extremist elements" to serve its own purposes. "The conference will stand self-condemned," the law maker said.

THE HINDU

- 5 SEP 2001

U.S., ISRAEL PULLOUT A SETBACK

Talks on to salvage Durban meet ⁵¹⁹

DURBAN, SEPT. 4. South African and European officials began negotiations on Tuesday to salvage the world racism conference following a U.S. and Israeli walkout over Arab efforts to condemn Israel for its "practices of racial discrimination".

Both countries had warned they would pull out if language in a final declaration singled Israel out for criticism. When a Norwegian compromise was rejected by Arab delegations on Monday, the close allies decided to go home, accusing Arab nations of hijack-

racism ing the conference as a platform to embarrass the Jewish state. *HO-1*

The conference had been envisioned as a constructive forum to develop a plan to combat discrimination.

In an effort to reach a compromise, the European Union, the Arab League and South Africa held a meeting which lasted until early today, said Mr. Olivier Alsteens, spokesman for the Belgian Foreign Minister, Mr. Louis Michel, who represented the E.U. at the meeting. In a statement released here on Monday evening,

the U.S. Secretary of State, Gen. Colin Powell, who remained in Washington, denounced the draft declaration's "hateful language" and said he was recalling the delegation. "I have taken this decision with regret because of the importance of the international fight against racism and the contribution that this conference could have made to it," the statement said.

The U.N. Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, called the U.S. withdrawal "unfortunate."

Jewish delegations at the conference were pulling out as well, according to Mr. Shimon Samuels, an official with the Simon Wiesenthal Centre and chair of the Jewish caucus.

The European Union said it had no current plans to leave the conference, but if it did, it would be as a bloc, along with the E.U.'s 13 member-states.

The draft document recognised with "deep concern the increase of racist practices of Zionism," and said Zionism "is based on racial superiority."

The Palestinian Ambassador, Mr. Salman el Herfi, said the Arab delegations had been very reasonable, but the U.S. delegation had refused to compromise, and he accused the U.S. of pulling out because of its own refusal to own responsibility for slavery and the injustices done to native Americans.

Mr. Alan Baker, an Israeli delegate, said Norway had proposed "very general language" that would call on all parties in West Asia to end the violence and return to negotiations. Participants have complained that the West Asia dispute has overshadowed other important issues.

Outside the conference centre, chants of "Reparations Now" mixed with native American drumming and singing, as about 200 demonstrators from a wide range of groups tried to make their voices heard. — AP

More reports on Pages 13, 17

United States: in or out?

By M. S. Prabhakara

DURBAN, SEPT. 4. The United States has not withdrawn from the World Conference Against Racism (WCAR). The U.S. flag at the conference has not been taken down. The U.S. Consul-General in Durban will continue to represent his country at the WCAR, not as an observer but as a delegate.

This clarification on the withdrawal of the U.S. and Israel from the WCAR came from the WCAR Secretary-General, Ms. Mary Robinson, at a media briefing here this afternoon. She said the U.S. Ambassador to South Africa had explained that only the U.S. delegation which had come from Washington had returned home, on the instruction of the Secretary of State; but that the U.S. itself continued to be represented at the conference. The position on Israel, Ms. Robinson said, could be clarified when a Israeli representative addressed the media later.

(According to an AP report, Ms. Judy Moon, spokeswoman for the delegation, said the U.S. had completely withdrawn from the conference, and that Mr.

Craig Kuehl, U.S. Consul-General, would be observing it, not as a delegate, but in his role as the official responsible for reporting on events in Durban.)

Many of the problems the conference was facing, Ms. Robinson said, were related to the fact that this was the first world conference against racism where civil society structures had taken part in such large numbers. Applauding such active participation, Ms. Robinson, however, said she was distressed by the "inappropriate" and "vitriolic" words that remained in the final declaration of the NGO Forum. She was particularly critical of the NGO Declaration's formulations on "genocide".

India unhappy

PTI reports from New Delhi:

India today joined other participants in expressing regret at the withdrawal of the U.S. and Israel from the international meet. "All participating countries including India have expressed regret over the decision of the U.S. and Israel to withdraw," an External Affairs Ministry spokesperson said.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 5, 2001

110-12

A PROXY WAR OVER RACISM 579

A UNILATERALIST TREND in the United States foreign policy has been disturbingly noticeable in recent months. Not surprisingly, the Bush administration seems to be gaining the dubious distinction of excelling its own record by resorting to a cynical proxy war over Israel's identity in regard to the ongoing World Conference against Racism in Durban. Without much finesse Washington has exploited the efforts by the Arab delegates to portray Israel as a racist incarnate. Exuding a sense of outrage at this move by the Arabs and other friends of the Palestinians, the U.S. has now pulled out of the Durban conference after sending a low-level delegation for troubleshooting on the Israeli issue behind the scenes. Yet, there are no two opinions about the salutary importance of an international conference to address the horrific practices of racism as also xenophobia and other related forms of intolerance within and across societies in today's increasingly interdependent world. Of direct interest to the participants gathered under the auspices of the United Nations is a vast array of issues in societal and individual justice. These range from the changing patterns of a more familiar divide between the Whites and the non-Whites to some arguably novel notions about the need for human rights-related apologies or reparations by the 'civilised' West which had historically fattened itself on slavery in the not-so-distant past. There are also questions whether the Dalits of India should qualify for international patronage despite their constitutional safeguards and whether the Jewish state of Israel, founded by the motive force of Western-backed Zionism, is waging a racist war against the Palestinians and other Arabs.

While the anti-Israel lobbies were osten-

sibly the prime target of Washington's ire, hardly concealed is the Bush administration's determination to strike out a unilateral path over conspicuously multilateral matters. This certainly is in sync with the American President's go-it-alone preferences. Just two examples are his cavalier disdain for an arms control accord like the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty of 1972, which had facilitated a global strategic stability for decades, and his expressed doubts over the wisdom of the international community, which included the U.S. under his predecessor, in having crafted the Kyoto protocol on urgent global climate issues. The question is whether America's pride and prejudices constitute the real problem.

On paper, the official and non-governmental discourse at Durban should impose no moral or material burden on the U.S. except for the controversial notion of reparations for the injustice of operating a system of slavery in the past. Yet, if the U.S. has now chosen to play the card of Israeli innocence after vaguely indicating a certain willingness to evaluate medieval slave-control policies as a possible subject for some form of apology, the reason can only reinforce the impression that Washington wants to demonstrate its ability to chart out its own global agenda for tomorrow. In contrast, the U.N. Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, opened the Durban conference with a balanced call for fair play in treating not only the past crimes against humanity such as the anti-Jewish holocaust but also the present plight of Palestinians under Israeli occupation. Both he and the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms. Mary Robinson, have rightly cautioned against allowing the Durban exercise to fail despite the immense challenges.

THE HINDU

5 2001

AD-17

Uncertainty looms over racism meet

By M. S. Prabhakara

DURBAN, SEPT. 4. The fifth day of the World Conference Against Racism resumed its deliberations on Tuesday morning with some uncertainty among the delegates about the shape and direction of the conference, following the decision of the United States and Israel to withdraw from the meet.

As expected, the formulations on the situation in West Asia have led to the decision by the U.S. and Israel. Though the directive to the U.S. delegation to leave the conference was given by the U.S. Secretary of State, Gen. Colin Powell, he continues to be projected in the South African media as the "unwilling victim", forced to take these decisions at the behest of the President, Mr. George W. Bush.

However, sustained efforts continue behind the scenes to salvage the conference. A spokesperson for the U.N. Secretary General said that Mr. Kofi Annan, who has left Durban but is closely monitoring developments here, while "disappointed" at the decision of Israel and the United States, urged all the countries to stay the course. "The conference cannot afford their defections", Mr. Annan said.

Dr. Nkosasazana Zuma, President of the NCAR and South Africa's Foreign Minister, said on Monday evening that efforts were on to adopt an "entirely new document" which may find acceptance. She wondered why the U.S. and Israel decided to withdraw on Monday when the conference was still discussing the Draft Declaration and which was due for adoption only on Friday. A statement issued



Members from the Indigenous People's Group in Brazil attending the World Conference Against Racism, shout in anger over the U.S. and Israel decision to pull out of the meet, in Durban, South Africa, on Tuesday. — AP

by Dr. Zuma said fresh proposals had been made to the Conference Bureau for reaching "a consensus on the particularly difficult issues relating to the Middle East".

Another hopeful sign is the decision of the 15-member European Union to remain united "on the substance as well on the format, whatever development may occur during this conference". According to Mr. Louis Michel, President of the Council of the European Union, the 15 members of the E.U. had "mandated" him to accept the proposals made by

Dr. Zuma "which consists in drafting a completely new text that could lead to a consensus".

In essence, these efforts seek to project the dispute, and the disputatious formulations that have given rise to the dispute, on the present situation in West Asia and its historic roots as essentially a matter of reconciling the "language" of the Draft Declarations. Indeed, the emphasis all along has been on the language of the Draft Declaration, not the substance of the issues formulated.

U.S., Israel pull out of Durban meet

10/1
9/9

DURBAN, SEPT. 3. Resenting the "hateful language" used against Israel in the final declaration, the United States today pulled out of the World Conference Against Racism declaring that the global meet had been hijacked by "rigid and extremist" Arab countries wanting to equate Zionism with racism.

Israel also announced it was withdrawing from the meet protesting anti-Israel and anti-Semitic remarks.

"The U.S. delegation consisting of both Republicans and Democrats are in full agreement with this decision," Mr. Tom Lantos, a Democrat Congressman, told reporters here while announcing the decision. The U.S. Secretary of State, Gen. Colin Powell, said in a statement here that "...You do not combat racism by a conference that produces declarations containing hateful language..."

Arab countries and non-governmental organisations had pressed for tough wordings in the meet's final document against Israel and the U.S. action came after efforts for a compromise failed.

The U.S. delegates to the conference insisted on deletion of four clauses from the draft declaration condemning Israel.

Preparing for 'jihad'

An appeal, signed by Rabbi Francois Garai and historian Mr. David Littman, who represent the World Union for Progressive Judaism at the U.N.'s European headquarters in Geneva, said the



Mr. Tom Lantos, a U.S. delegate, at a press meet after the U.S. announced its pullout of the World Conference Against Racism at Durban.

Durban conference was being used to prepare a 'holy war' against Israel and could wreck the world body.

Regretting the U.S. decision, hosts South Africa said "the withdrawal (of the U.S. or any other delegation) was unfortunate and unnecessary."

The Minister in the office of the Presidency, Mr. Essop Pahad, said it was regrettable that the U.S. and Israel had pulled out, adding, "the work of the conference will not be affected. We still have the declaration and the programme of action to be finalised..." — PTI, AP, Reuters

THE HINDU

4 SEP 2001

Pakistan raises Kashmir issue at racism meet

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

DURBAN, Sept. 2. - Pakistan today raked up the Kashmir issue at the World Conference Against Racism, accusing India of "brutal repression" that it said had led to killing of 75,000 people in the past decade.

Pakistan foreign minister Mr Abdul Sattar criticised India, without naming it, saying: "It is sad that, in our own region, this theme of denigrating the struggle for self-determination as terrorism and associating terrorism with Islam, is being actively promoted to justify the ongoing brutal repression of the Kashmiri people."

Mr Sattar's comments come three weeks ahead of a scheduled meet between Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee and President Pervez Musharraf in New York.

Mr Sattar's raking up of the Kashmir issue also comes in violation of Islamabad's promise not to rake up Kashmir issue in international fora.

Militants kill cop: A report from Jammu said a sub-inspector was killed and six wounded when militants attacked the police line in Doda district of Jammu and Kashmir tonight.

THE STATESMAN

- 3 SEP 2001

Castro raises race debate pitch at Durban meet

Durban, September 2

CUBAN PRESIDENT Fidel Castro raised the volume of the debate on Israel and slavery at the UN conference on racism as secretary-general Kofi Annan called in vain for calm.

Castro declared that the "rich and squandering" developed countries should pay reparations to the victims of slavery and that Israel should end "the ongoing genocide against the Palestinian people that is taking place while the world stares in amazement."

His comments, even harsher than those delivered by other leaders from the developing world, were countered by German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer, one of few senior western ministers attending, who said that "one-sided condemnations will ... jeopardise this conference, perhaps cause its failure." Annan, the man in the middle, appealed to delegates not to allow the conference to be hijacked by the two issues, which have swamped discussion of other subjects since the meeting began on Friday.

"We should not allow one or two issues to derail the conference," Annan told a press conference.

Cuba supports reparations



Mary Robinson, High Commissioner for Human Rights, addresses a news conference at the start of the third day of the UN Racism Conference in Durban on Sunday.

"based on a major precedent, that is, the indemnification being paid to the descendants of the Hebrew people which in the heart of Europe suffered the brutal and loathsome racial holocaust," according to the official translation of Castro's

speech.

Speaking of developed countries "and their consumer societies," he said, "The rich and squandering world is in possession of the technical and financial resources necessary to pay what is due to mankind." AFP

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

- 3 SEP 2001

W Asia shadow on racism meet

Durban, September 1 *HR 11*

THE WORLD conference against racism entered its second day on Saturday with attention focused on accusations of racism in West Asia, an issue that threatens to overwhelm the gathering's agenda.

Conference committees were to work on the wording of a final declaration to be adopted at the end of the eight-day UN summit, a draft of which has been condemned by the United States for its anti-Israel language.

The White House, which has called parts of a draft declaration anti-Semitic, said American diplomats would leave the conference if the provisions weren't removed. Despite an announcement on Friday by the Rev. Jesse Jackson that the Palestinians had decided not to derail the conference by singling out Israel as a racist state, Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat accused Israel of "racist practices" against the Palestinians. Almost a year into the Palestinian uprising, Arab nations have pushed to make Israel the main issue at the conference. Arafat's harsh words undercut Jackson's efforts to solve the symbolic and semantic nature of the dispute. Jackson said he had urged Arafat to drop his support for a summit declaration that would attack Israel as a racist state and equate Zionism with racism.

Zionism, the religious and philosophical underpinning of the movement, which founded Israel as a homeland for the Jewish people, has also come under attack in street demonstrations. Palestinian officials later accused Jackson of being "overzealous" and said they would still seek condemnation of

29 *Religion*
what they called Israel's "racist practices." "What we can hope for is that this conference will say what is bad, what is just in the face of this bloody tragedy that has befallen the Palestinian people," Arafat told a round-table of world leaders. "This brutality, this arrogance is moved by a supremacist mentality, a mentality of racial discrimination." Israeli Foreign Ministry spokesman Noam Katz reiterated that his country felt that the racism conference wasn't the appropriate forum to discuss the Mideast conflict.

"We are not here at the conference to discuss, to deal with specific political problems," Katz said. "We are here to create a united front against racism." Jackson, when asked for his reaction to the speech, pointed out that Arafat had not condemned Zionism.

Before Arafat's speech, the American civil rights leader announced that the Palestinian leader had indicated to him that he would lobby against a conference declaration condemning Israel as a racist state.

Jackson produced a document written by Palestinian Minister for International Cooperation Nabil Shaath that said the Palestinian delegation did not want the conference derailed by attempts to criticise Israel.

The document also said the Palestinians would support language recognising the Holocaust as the most murderous crime of the 20th century. "Anti-Zionist is out, definitely. We are not labeling Israel as a Zionist state, we are only against practices by Israel as an occupation authority that discriminates against the Palestinian people," Shaath said.

AP

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

- 2 SEP 2001

Durban draft bristles with ambiguities

Racism
HD-14

By M.S. Prabhakara 1/9

DURBAN, AUG. 31. As the World Conference against Racism opens in Durban this morning, the Draft Declaration continues to bristle with many tentative formulations, ambiguities and unresolved disputes.

Nothing illustrates the tentative nature of the Draft Declaration, supposed to have been processed over three prolonged Preparatory Committee meetings, than the note by the U.N. Secretary-General that appears at the beginning of the document.

"This draft declaration contains three types of paragraphs: (i) paragraphs adopted at the second and third sessions of the Preparatory Committee, held respectively from 21 May to 1 June 2001 and from 30 July to 10 August 2001; (ii) paragraphs marked "ongoing" that were discussed, either at the second or third sessions of the Preparatory Committee but were not adopted; and (iii) paragraphs that represent proposals made by one or more States during the first and second inter-sessional open-ended working groups, held respectively from 6 to 9 March 2001 and from 7 to 11 May 2001, and issued in document A/CONF/PC2/27 that were subsequently reformulated by the Group of 21, without amendment of the substance of the proposals, and issued in document A/CONF/189/PC3/7.

The paragraphs in category (iii) were not considered by "the

Preparatory Committee at any of its sessions".

A similar paragraph, in form word for word with only the document related changes, appears at the head of the rather longer (173 paragraphs) Draft Programme of Action, also to be adopted at the end of the WCAR.

As a matter of record, five of the 16 preliminary paragraphs of the Draft Declaration are described as "ongoing", with several of these having passages within square brackets.

A whole section, comprising only "ongoing proposals on the issue of grounds", lists such proposals under three different groups: the Latin American, the European Union joined by Australia and New Zealand; and the Asian Group, supported by the African Group.

The main section, sub-divided under various heads and altogether comprising 142 paragraphs, has as many as 82 paragraphs under the description "ongoing".

All these paragraphs also bristle with different kinds of brackets, some of them nestling within brackets.

Some of these "ongoing" formulations are themselves entirely within square brackets.

Another interesting feature is the unresolved dispute about how to spell the word, "holocaust", the controversy apparently being whether this should be spelt "Holocaust" with a capital 'H', or "holocaust" with the initial letter in the lower case.

YAP 1000

- 1 SEP 2001

World has two nations, says Mbeki

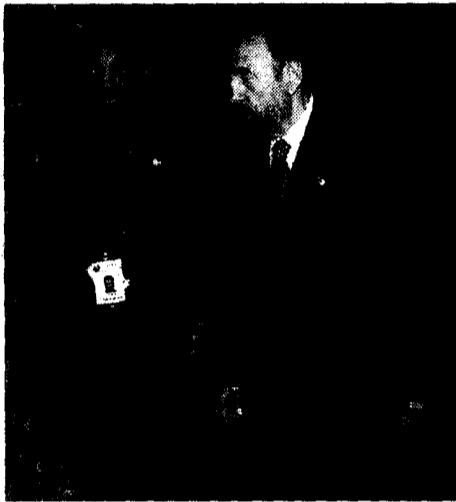
REUTERS

DURBAN (South Africa), Aug. 31. — The South African President, Mr Thabo Mbeki, today jolted a UN racism conference when he told thousands of delegates that the world remained two nations, one black and poor and the other white and rich.

"It became necessary that we convene in Durban because, together, we recognised the fact there are many in our common world who suffer indignity and humiliation because they are not white," Mr Mbeki said in his opening remarks at the eight-day World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance.

"Their cultures and traditions are despised as savage and primitive and their identities denied. They are not white and are deeply immersed in poverty. Of them it is said that they are human but black, whereas others are described as human and white," he added.

Mr Mbeki used a blues song to illustrate his theme, "If you're white you're alright; if you are brown, stick around; if you are



US civil rights activist Rev Jesse Jackson and Cuban President Mr Fidel Castro at the UN racism conference opening in Durban on Friday. — PTI

black, oh brother! get back, get back, get back." Mr Mbeki's "rainbow nation" is held up as an example to emulate after its overthrow of apartheid. He challenged the del-

egates to rise against oppression and discrimination of any form.

"Our common humanity dictates that as we rose against apartheid racism, so must we combine to defeat the consequences of slavery, colonialism and racism which, to this day, continue to define the lives of billions of people who are brown and black, as lives of hopelessness," he said.

The eight-day UN conference was opened by the UN Secretary-General, Mr Kofi Annan.

Mr Annan called for a minute's silence to honour Mr Mbeki's father, Govan Mbeki, who died yesterday at the age of 91. Mr Mbeki's aides said he decided to go ahead with his speech to the conference because that was the best tribute he could pay his father.

Some 6,000 delegates from 150 countries will seek to hammer out a declaration of principles and a plan of action to tackle racism and protect the rights of ethnic minorities.

Mr Mbeki avoided the West Asia minefield today by supporting the right of Palestinians to self-determination and at the same time reminding the world of the gruesome history of the Holocaust.

THE STATESMAN

- 1 SEP 2001

Non-whites denied identity: Mbeki

By M.S. Prabhakara

DURBAN, AUG. 31. *If you are white, you are all right; If you are brown, stick around; If you are black, oh brother, get back, get back, get back.*

Poetry has always been central to Mr. Thabo Mbeki's formulations. Thus, citing this poem, Mr. Thabo Mbeki, President of South Africa, in his address to the opening session of the World Conference against Racism today, said that they still defined the condition of the majority of people who were not white. Their cultures and traditions are despised as savage and primitive and their identities denied. They are not white and are deeply immersed in poverty. Of them, it is said that they are not human but black, whereas others are described as human and white.

In reaffirming such an uncompromising identification of two different worlds whose essence is defined by race and colour, a hallmark of his political understanding, Mr. Mbeki extended the application of this worldview to the international arena. The response to his address indicated that such a view found a very large resonance among the delegates.

Characteristically, Mr. Mbeki began his speech with an expression of thanks to the messages of sympathy he had received on the death of Govan Mbeki, describing him as an outstanding "son of our people" and pointedly omitting



The South African President, Mr. Thabo Mbeki, greets the U.N. Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan (right), during the opening of the U.N. Conference on Racism in Durban on Friday. — AP

to mention that Govan Mbeki also happened to be his father.

Earlier, in his opening address, the U.N. Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, referred to the exceptionally difficult problems that the preparatory process of the Conference faced, because the issues before it were not the ones where consensus was easy to find. While everyone condemned racism, this very fact also made the accusation of racism against any particular individual or group particularly painful. "It is hurtful to one's pride, because few of us see ourselves as racists. And it arouses fear, because once a group is accused of racism, it be-

comes a potential target for retaliation, perhaps for persecution in its turn," Mr. Annan said.

Later, the Conference unanimously elected Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, Foreign Minister of South Africa, as President of the Conference. The proposal, made by Kenya on behalf of the African group, was seconded by India on behalf of the Asian group.

Annan recalls Gandhi's struggle

PTI reports:

Mr. Kofi Annan recalled the anti-racist struggle of Mahatma Gandhi in South Africa and made a fervent plea to all countries to

draw up a national plan to combat racism.

Mr. Annan also referred to the controversy over the Arab world demand for clubbing Zionism

Dalits protest

DURBAN, AUG. 31. Hundreds of Dalits from India marched through streets here demanding inclusion of caste on the agenda of the first-ever U.N. World Conference against Racism.

The Dalit activists carried placards that read "casteism is racist" and "put caste on the agenda". They were among thousands of demonstrators, mostly Arabs, who demanded among other things, Israel's withdrawal from occupied territories. "The Government of India is neglecting the plight of the Dalits. Why is the Government opposed to caste being put on the agenda of the conference?" Mr. Sam Paul, secretary of All-India Christian Council in Karnataka, said.

The Minister of State for External Affairs, Mr. Omar Abdullah, who is heading the Indian delegation, rebuffed the Dalit NGO's demand for clubbing casteism with racism and asked them to join in the Government's efforts to eradicate the scourge. — PTI.

with racism and other contentious issues and said "let us rise above disagreement. Wrangling has gone on long enough".

See also Page 14

THE HINDU

- 1 SEP 2001

NGOs will raise issue of casteism at UN meet

By Vidyadhar Date
Times News Network

MUMBAI: Around 150 activists, including several from Maharashtra, left for Durban, South Africa, on Tuesday to raise the issue of caste discrimination at the United Nations-sponsored World Conference on Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerances.

The Indian government has strongly opposed the move to discuss, what it calls, an "internal matter" of the country at the world conference, which is scheduled to begin on Friday. However, India can seek cold comfort from the fact that other countries too will be hauled up for their alleged "anti-discriminatory practices."

Incidentally, the two previous conferences held in 1992 and 1996 dwelt on foreign policy matters while the forthcoming one will discuss internal problems in every country's backyard. "Casteism can thus be raised at the forum, but there is a lot of nervousness about

it," said an Indian activist.

Prakash Ambedkar, MP and grandson of B.R. Ambedkar who attended the last two conferences and left for Durban on Tuesday, feels that there is no need for such negativity. "Countries such as Japan and Korea, too, have accepted that there was caste discrimination in their country and have taken corrective action. There is no reason for India to feel uncomfortable if the issue comes up at a world forum," he said.

Even academics such as law professor Suresh Mane and P.G. Jogdand, sociology professor in Mumbai university, have strongly supported the move of Dalit groups to raise the issue of casteism at the meet. "India has opposed racism in other countries so there is no reason why it should not oppose casteism in its own territory," they said.

All the Indian participants are attending the meet as accredited members of non governmental organisations (NGOs). Mr

Ambedkar who is representing the World Council of Churches defended the move by NGOs to raise the subject at a world forum saying that for some time it had been an emotive issue that people felt strongly about. "After all, India, as a signatory to the international convention prohibiting discrimination in any form, should take steps to stop the injustice meted out to Dalits," he pointed out.

At the same time, he said, inclusion of casteism on the UN meet's agenda had not been an easy task. He claimed that he, along with Bishop Azraiya and Henry Thiagarajan, had been pressing for a discussion on casteism at the conference since 1992. "We provided data, which had been prepared from government documents, on caste discrimination to the conference committee," he recalled.

The issue was also pursued by Paul Diwakar, Martin Macwana and Mr Ambedkar himself at another conference held in Geneva.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

31 AUG 2001

DURBAN MEET / CASTE ISSUE LEFT OUT

FD-13
21/8

Annan ignores Dalit activists' plea *Racism*

By M. S. Prabhakara

DURBAN, AUG. 30. The United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, today declined to respond to the demand from the Dalit activists that the issues of caste and untouchability should find a place on the agenda of the World Conference Against Racism, opening here tomorrow.

The occasion was Mr. Annan's plenary with the NGO Forum, where the issues of caste and untouchability in India and elsewhere in South Asia have figured and continue to figure prominently. Mr. Annan's listing of people still suffering discrimination took note of the Roma, the Sinti and people of African descent in the U.S., but did not mention any

other people. During the questions that followed, one person identifying himself as an untouchable from India, asked Mr. Annan how this "evil" could be eradicated. Mr. Annan did not respond. Later, another person pointedly asked why the issues of discrimination against the Dalits did not find a place in the listing of the sources of discrimination or sources of multiple discrimination in the WCAR's Draft Declaration. To this too, Mr. Annan did not respond, except to say that he had noted that his interlocutor had made a statement.

At this point, there were noisy interruptions from the Dalit activists as well as some others. This drew the following admonition

from Mr. Annan: "You come here to listen to each other, not to behave as you are doing." To further noisy protests, he only said that he had heard what the questioners had to say and the message will be passed on.

The Dalit activists to whom this correspondent spoke after the Plenary were quite upset over the failure of Mr. Annan to respond to their pleas. One of them described Mr. Annan as arrogant.

Others maintained that the questions had been framed badly. Ms. Smitha Narula, an activist who has been speaking on the issue in the South African media, said she had no comment to make because she was not present.

THE HINDU

31 AUG 2001

Deeper challenges of racism summit

By MARY ROBINSON

At the end of a period of intensive negotiations in preparation for the Durban Conference it is timely to reflect on just why the issues are so important. Much attention to date has focussed on the impact on the negotiations of the West Asia conflict, but this should not deflect us from the core questions. Why is it vital to achieve a breakthrough against racism at Durban? What would constitute a breakthrough?

The answers may seem obvious: racism, discrimination, ethnic conflict, xenophobia, marginalisation, stigma and intolerance are pressing problems throughout our world, north and south, developed and developing. We need strategies to combat these scourges. But there is a more profound reason - a deeper chord which Durban can strike. And the timing is right - the frame provided by a new century.

This conference will have a practical agenda and far-reaching consequences. But if we are to seize the unique opportunity it offers, then we have to go deeper than that agenda. We have to look at the subtle and often harrowing realities which can hide themselves in the titles and papers and propositions. We have to find, in other words, the beginnings of a conversation which will let us talk about the extraordinary pain we have inflicted on one another on this planet.

Pain inflicted by words. Pain inflicted without words. In his path-breaking novel *Invisible Man* the African-American writer Ralph Ellison wrote "I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me." His powerful suggestion of wilful exclusion - of the decision we can all make to demote the humanity of other human beings - should be in our minds at Durban. Unless we can find a way to talk about the ragged edges of human hatred, unless we find a dialogue where the deep hurt of individuals, and peoples and cultures at their invisibility and exclusion can find expression then we will return to a silence which is itself damaging.

One of the reasons the conference in Beijing was so successful was because women could feel that their rights were not sectional or factional, but that they were human rights in the broadest sense. In the same way, if this conference can reassure those who have been injured, made invisible, made less human by language that their

rights are central to all human rights then we will, I believe, have started on that conversation we all need to have.

Human relationships are at the very core. Over the past months I've had a unique opportunity to listen to individual victims of racism and discrimination, to meet NGOs representing those of African descent in the Americas, indigenous peoples, minorities in Europe such as the Roma and travellers. For them, this conference can "break the silence", "make us visible", "put our agenda on the table at last." Coming out of one of the sessions of the preparatory committee a few days ago, I was surrounded by young people eager to press their points. The passionate views of an indigenous girl were translated



Mary Robinson, UN Human Rights High Commissioner, at the youth summit in Durban. The city will hold the racism conference from Aug 31.

by her young colleague, who then spoke of the exclusion he suffers as an Afro-Latino. "The world must listen to our views in the Youth Summit. More of us need to be able to get to Durban to participate." This, for me, sums up one of the most positive aspects of the preparatory process: that it is helping to create and to shape a global alliance against racism and discrimination and in support of inclusion and human rights.

We cannot avoid beginning with the past. I have become increasingly aware of the extent of deep hurt felt in many parts of the world at the lack of recognition of the impact of mass slavery and also of the exploitation of colonialism. There is a sense that the deaths and sufferings which resulted from slavery have never been adequately marked, much less mourned. There is a

sense, too, of lost generations and lost opportunities which have stunted the development of poorer countries, particularly in Africa.

It can be hard to shape a new future if old wounds are still hurting. Language adopted by the global community which solemnly recognises the hurts and exploitations of the past at the beginning of this new century could help to heal these wounds. It could also harness new energies in a revitalized campaign against racism, discrimination and intolerance. Solemn language would need to be underpinned by a commitment to solidarity in practical terms through a programme of support, such as for the New African Initiative, the goals of the Millennium Summit and other measures to promote development. The tasks facing us are daunting. As Secretary-General Kofi Annan warned: "The months leading up to the conference have opened up deep fissures on a number of sensitive issues, such as the legacy of slavery and colonialism, and the situation in the West Asia."

If this conference is to succeed, there is an acute need for common ground. The conference must help heal old wounds without reopening them; it must confront the past, but most importantly it must help set a new course against racism in the future."

This will be the first global anti-racism conference of the post-apartheid era. It has a very broad remit. It will address every manifestation of racism and discrimination in the modern world. It will confront traditional forms of racism and the plight of groups at particular risk: indigenous peoples, ethnic, religious and cultural minorities. At the same time, it will break new ground by considering victims who have not received much attention at previous international events: refugees, asylum seekers, migrants; the Roma, Sinti and Traveller communities; trafficked persons; those of African descent in Latin America and the Caribbean. There will be particular emphasis on the root causes of racism and discrimination and the linkages, for example, with extreme poverty. We will be looking at the phenomenon of multiple discrimination - a striking example being women who belong to a particular ethnic group and find themselves discriminated against both because they are women and because they belong to a minority.

• This article is an exclusive to the Times Of India

THE TIMES OF INDIA

29 AUG 2001

Racism meet split on Israel, US threatens boycott

Durban, August 28

GLOBAL ANTI-RACISM organisations met at a UN-backed conference on Tuesday with the divisive issue of Israel expected to take centre-stage.

The start of the United Nations World Conference Against Racism NGO Forum came after the United States said it would not send Secretary of State Colin Powell to the main meeting starting on Friday because of "offensive" language about Israel in some texts.

Arab and Islamic states had moved to brand Israel a "racist" state and equate Zionism with racism.

"The exact nature and level of our representation, if any, is not clear," State Department spokesman Richard Boucher told a news briefing on Monday.

The US has threatened to boycott the conference, which its organisers had hoped would be a turning point in the fight against racism.

President Bush said on Friday the United States would not go to the conference in Durban at all if the participants "picked on" or denigrated Israel.

A draft declaration before 7,000 delegates at the non-governmental meeting urged the UN to accept that Israel was a

"discriminatory" State and that Palestinians could resist "occupation by any means."

The document also demands that Israel pay "full compensation," effectively reparations, to Palestinians who are described as people living under a foreign military occupying power.

"The Palestinian people are one such people currently enduring a colonialist, discriminatory military occupation that violates their fundamental human right of self-determination," the draft said.

Pro-Israeli groups in Durban denounced the proposed NGO document and plans for the official conference to focus on Israeli actions in West Asia.

"The conference has been hijacked, hijacked by those with political agendas. What we are seeing here for example is total, disproportionate emphasis on the question of the Middle East which is not a race issue at all. It's a political conflict," Shimon Samuels, Director for International Liaison at the Simon Wiesenthal Centre said.

"It's a total gangling up on Israel... Neo-Nazism should be on the agenda," Samuels said.

Anne Bayefsky, a visiting law professor at New York's Columbia Law School said the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 was at

risk by a process where the Jewish Holocaust was questioned and where anti-Semitism was permitted.

"This conference has been manipulated to such an extent that the outcome threatens to jeopardise the protection of human rights for all of us... it's a scandal," said Bayefsky.

But pro-Palestinian groups said Israeli actions against the Palestinian people showed the country was racist.

"Inside Israel itself there is institutional racism against the Arab minority. In the occupied territories of the West Bank, Gaza and Jerusalem there is colonialism, occupation and a new form of apartheid," said Shauqi Issa, executive director of Jerusalem-based The Palestinian Society for the Protection of Human Rights and the Environment.

"Israel, after 50 years of its existence, is still a institutional racist state," Issa, who represents Arab NGOs in Durban, told Reuters.

The NGO meet runs to September 1, culminating in an anti-racism march by an expected 10,000 people. Delegates will discuss the source and contemporary forms of racism and broach issues such as slavery and caste-based discrimination.

Reuters

I killed as Israel pushes tanks into Palestinian village

Jerusalem, August 28

ISRAELI TANKS rolled into a Palestinian village on the southern fringes of Jerusalem early on Tuesday in an effort to halt persistent Palestinian gunfire on a nearby Israeli neighborhood. At least one Palestinian was killed.

Israel's night incursion into the village of Beit Jalla was the latest in a series of violent events that stretched through the day on Monday, increasing tensions in the West Asia conflict.

On Monday night, the Palestinian militants in Beit Jalla opened fire on Gillo, a Jewish neighborhood on the far side of a valley separating the two communities. Gillo was built on land Israel captured in the 1967 West Asia war and now forms the southern edge of Jerusalem. The Palestinians want it as part of a future state.

Israeli troops and Palestinian gunmen exchanged fire on-and-off for several hours, and then



An Israeli Tank and an armoured personnel carrier take position in the West Bank town of Beit Jalla, on the outskirts of Jerusalem on Tuesday.

the Israeli tanks, accompanied by bulldozers, rumbled into the village. Mohammed Samur, 25, a Palestinian policeman, was killed in a firefight, said Dr Peter Qumri, director of Beit Jalla Hospital. Two other Palestinians were lightly injured.

Despite the incursion, gunfire from Beit Jalla at Gillo continued after sunrise, Israel radio report-

ed. Beit Jalla is next to Bethlehem. A heavily Christian community, Beit Jalla has several important churches and Christian holy sites, making the Israeli action especially sensitive. Israeli tanks took up positions near the Anglican Church in the village, while additional tanks were poised on the outskirts, near the traditional burial spot of the biblical Rachel. Israeli forces will carry out their mission while taking care to prevent, as much as possible, harm to innocent civilians, foreign residents and holy sites," the army said. Prime Minister Ariel Sharon had pledged that the military would take strong action if Gillo came under fire again.

AP

India for moderation at Durban meet

By C. Raja Mohan

NEW DELHI, AUG. 27. As a series of divisive issues cast a political shadow over the United Nations conference against racism, beginning in Durban on Friday, India hopes to take the middle path and promote compromise and consensus.

Although the Indian debate in the run-up to the conference has been riveted to the relationship between caste discrimination and racism, the real battles at the week-long deliberations in South Africa will be centered around other issues. Despite a clamour from Indian non-governmental organisations for a few words condemning caste discrimination, the issue is unlikely to demand too much of the energies of either the Indian delegation or the conference itself. Caste oppression is among the many skeletons in the cupboards of nations that radicals and NGOs dragged out into the public realm at Durban. But no multilateral confer-

ence can depart too far away from the original agenda — in this case racism and racial discrimination — and yet come out successful.

Informed sources here said the diplomatic play at the conference would be on how to characterise the inhuman slave trade of the past, whether there should be reparations for past abuses of slave trade and colonialism and the restitution of cultural property to their rightful owners.

Meanwhile, as at every international conference on any subject, passions about the Palestinian question and Arab-Israeli tensions dominate the political mood and this one at Durban is no exception.

Whether by design or accident, the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance might have forced many countries to debate issues that official establishments would have preferred to sweep under the carpet. As Ms. Mary Robinson, for-

mer President of Ireland, who is serving as the Secretary-General of the conference, said it might have turned the light "on the many dark corners" across the world. India is not the only country upset at uncomfortable issues coming up at Durban. References to the rights of "indigenous populations" irritate the Americans, Canadians, Australians.

At the regional preparatory conference of the Americas at the end of last year, the U.S. delegation put it down that references to the rights of indigenous people should by no means construed as the "right of self-determination".

Arab Gulf nations might want strong condemnations of Zionism but are not prepared to countenance any references to the rights of "guest workers and migrant labour". The wealthy nations of West Europe and North America do not care much for strong words on the "rights of asylum seekers".

In the end, all these issues are

likely to be peripheral to the central debate on slavery, colonialism and reparations. The U.S. might be prepared for some contrition on slave trade but has dismissed out of hand any fund for reparations (compensation). But many African nations and their supporters in the developing world want such a fund. The United States, however, has its own domestic politics to manage on the issue.

India would like to see the avoidance of extremist positions at the conference, official sources here said. It would like to see a "constructive and forward looking approach" on key issues, rather than a recrimination about the past. India's voice would be "one of moderation" and would seek to build bridges among different positions. New Delhi believes that a contested final document at Durban might allow some nations to claim political victory, but would hardly help realise the basic objectives of the conference.

THE HINDU

28 AUG 2001

India opposed to isolating Israel at Durban meet 27/8

By C. Raja Mohan

NEW DELHI, AUG. 26. Any attempt to dredge up the divisive question of equating Zionism with racism, the Government believes, could only help undermine the international conference against racism opening at Durban, South Africa, next Friday.

India has not been in favour of overloading the Durban deliberations with a range of extraneous issues that might take the focus away from the stated purpose of the conference to combat racism and racial discrimination.

The Minister of State for External Affairs, Mr. Omar Abdullah, is leading the Indian delegation to the Durban conference. As many contentious issues cloud the deliberations at Durban, it might fall upon the Indian delegation to act as "a bridge builder" at the conference, observers here say.

India believes the international community has gone through the divisive debate on equating Zionism as racism before, and that no point is served in raking this up again at Durban.

In 1975, the United Nations General Assembly had declared that Zionism was racism. But the following the initiation of a peace process in West Asia in 1991, the UNGA repealed the earlier formulation. Since then this consensus has been upheld in all the declarations of the international community.

India is a party to the consensus that Zionism is not racism; it will not support any move at Durban to overturn that formulation. In the run up to the conference, India had cautioned against extremist

positions that would raise hackles and undermine the very purpose of the Durban debate.

At the same time India is realistic enough to see that criticism of Tel Aviv's policies in the occupied territories may be inevitable. There will be "some reflection", diplomatic observers here say, of the current depressing state of the peace process in West Asia, in the deliberations at Durban. The policies of the current government in Israel are certainly not designed to gather international support, they add.

But India would not like to see the Arab-Israeli tensions derail the deliberations at the "World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance", that is taking place after extraordinary consultations and preparations.

With barely five days to go before the inauguration of the conference, the prospect of radical states wanting to isolate Israel at Durban and the threat of an American boycott of the conference remain in diplomatic play.

India, which is looking for a successful outcome at Durban, hopes the unfolding confrontation will not be allowed to drift towards a breaking point. It is in touch with key players. It expects moderation and political realism will eventually prevail and let the conference focus on the stated agenda.

The issue is also likely to figure in Monday's discussions with a senior Israeli official who is here to brief the Government on the current situation in West Asia.

S. African unions firm on strike

By M. S. Prabhakara

Racism
119-16
27/8
DURBAN, AUG. 26. With only four days to go before the World Conference Against Racism (WCAR) begins in Durban, there is still no resolution of the confrontation between the unions and the Government on the threatened two-day general strike on the issue of privatisation.

Though the strike ends before the WCAR opens on August 31, the disruption caused by the strike will undoubtedly affect the conference. The NGO Forum affiliated to the WCAR will begin its four-day meetings on August 28. Delegates have already started arriving for the conference.

The strike, called by the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu), a partner of the tripartite alliance led by the African National Congress, is scheduled for Wednesday and Thursday. In a statement yesterday, the South African Communist Party, another member of the tripartite alliance, came out in support of the strike.

In his strongest intervention disputing Cosatu's stand on privatisation, the President, Mr. Thabo Mbeki, writing in his capacity as ANC President in the latest issue of the party's newsletter *ANC Today*, put out on its website on Friday, accused Cosatu, without directly naming the trade union federation, of "telling lies and claiming easy victories" — echoing the admonition of Amilcar Cabral of Guinea-Bissau, an icon of African liberation movements. In one way or the other, Mr. Mbeki has used this formulation to criticise his opponents in the alliance on several earlier occasions, most notably at the 10th Congress of the SACP in July 1998.

Comparing his critics within the alliance, "those apparently from 'the left' (who have) joined hands with the right wing", to leaders of the old South Africa such as Louis Botha who were congenitally opposed to the aspirations of the black majority, Mr. Mbeki says: "Like Both and his progeny, these resort to misinformation... As part of this cam-

paigned, they turn their backs on the long-standing morality of our movement, never to tell lies and never to claim easy victories... One of the lies they tell is that our Government has betrayed policies agreed by the broad democratic movement with regard to the issue of restructuring of state assets... Everything our Government has done since 1994 with regard to the public sector has kept to these positions. Any claim to the contrary is absolutely false and cannot be substantiated with any facts whatsoever. The question that arises is why lies are being told and false claims made of the possibility of easy victories over the colonial and apartheid legacy. Whose interest they serve, who abandon the morality of revolutionaries, so that they can use workers as cannon fodder to launch an offensive aimed at defeating their own liberation movement!"

A full page Government advertisement today specifically juxtaposed the strike with the opening of the WCAR. Noting that the

conference, being held in Africa for the first time, would be discussing "issues at the core of our own society's transformation", the advertisement asked the question: Why try to hold a paralysing strike on the eve of the Conference against Racism, when delegations are arriving?

Interestingly, the advertisement claimed that "restructuring of state assets", a key item of the Reconstruction and Development Programme, is "not necessarily privatisation", the advertisement claimed.

This resurrection of the RDP, in contrast to the virtual absence of any reference of late to its antithesis, the macroeconomic strategy adopted in June 1996 and encapsulated as Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR), has been a feature of recent verbal polemics, though the Unions insist that the essence of GEAR, envisaging growth of a particular kind along a particular trajectory, all informed by market orthodoxy, has not been abandoned by the Government.

27 AUG 2001

27 AUG 2001

Debate on Zionism, racism unabated

By M.S. Prabhakara

CAPE TOWN, AUG. 21. The agreement on removing from the draft declaration of the World Conference against Racism (WCAR) the controversial formulations equating Zionism with racism and demanding reparations for slavery and colonialism from the U.S. and former colonial powers has not dampened the debate on these issues in South Africa.

The debate on the linkages between Zionism and racism, with its interesting historical and contemporary nuances in South Africa, goes beyond the pressures brought by powerful lobbies for and against pressing such a linkage. Apart from the compulsions of the host Government which cannot appear to yield to such pressures, the fact is that the debate has a relevance to the very essence, indeed the very origins of the struggle against apartheid and racism in South Africa.

Early manifestations of Zionism in South Africa were informed as much by socialist ideas as by the search for a home, not necessarily exclusivist, for the Jewish Diaspora. For instance, of the six organisations which took part in the founding conference of the Communist Party of South Africa in July 1921, two were explicitly Zionist. These Zionist tendencies in no way affected the Communist Party's commitment to an inclusive non-racialism, a point noted by all leaders of the South African liberation movement.

However, it is also true that barring this radicalised minority of Jewish origin, who indeed rejected political and territorial Zionism, the majority of the Jewish population, who at one point accounted for nearly four per cent of the white population, loyally supported apartheid. Jews without high professional qualifications who engaged in trade and commerce also were in direct competition with the Indian shopkeeper, in most cases Muslim, a feature which has also influenced South African Indian Muslim attitudes towards Zionism and the State of Israel.

The remarks made recently by Mr. Kader Asmal, ANC leader and South Africa's Minister



Protesters march in support of the Palestinian cause in Cape Town on Tuesday. Thousands of the city's Muslim community, many carrying posters equating Zionism with racism, joined the march 10 days before the start of the World Conference on Racism in Durban. — Reuters

for Education, cautioning against the "glib equation" of Zionism with racism, reflect these complex factors. At the South African Human Rights Commission's preparatory conference for the WCAR, Mr. Kader said: "Those who think that Zionism is inherently racist must reckon with the fact that some of the most courageous anti-apartheid whites in South Africa happen to have been Zionists as well. On the other hand, none of these courageous anti-apartheid Zionists could condone the violence that is systematically carried out in the name of Zionism in parts of the world today."

In an interesting amplification that fol-

lowed, his colleague, Mr. Ronnie Kasrils, himself of Jewish origin, made the important point that among the many white South Africans who courageously opposed apartheid were persons of "Jewish origin who rejected Zionism". This radical divide between such two contradictory manifestations of Jewish identity was perhaps most dramatically evident during the Rivonia trial. All the six whites arrested at Rivonia were Jewish. As against this was the prosecutor of the case, Mr. Percy Yutar, demonstratively Jewish, whose conduct of the case became a byword in viciousness, directed in particular against the two Jewish defendants who finally stood trial.

THE HINDU

THE HINDU

22 AUG 2001

HP
W/O
U.S.-Arab
deadlock at
Geneva meet

GENEVA, AUG. 10. Officials from the United Nations and world capitals joined in a last-minute push on Friday to break a U.S.-Arab deadlock over the proposed documents to be adopted by the upcoming World Conference Against Racism, diplomats said. With a midnight deadline approaching, the fast-moving negotiations were seeking to bridge the wide differences between Arab countries and Israel, said the diplomats. The U.S. has said that if language it regards as offensive about Israel remains in draft statements, it will boycott the conference, which starts on Aug. 31 in Durban, South Africa.

The Israeli Ambassador, Mr. Yaakov Levy, noted that the proposed Arab wording still uses charged language about Israel and denigrates the suffering of Jews under the Nazis. One passage implies "the Jewish Holocaust in Europe" should be treated on a par with "the ethnic cleansing of the Arab population in historic Palestine and the Golan." Even if a general agreement is reached, it appeared unlikely that all the negotiations could be finished by the deadline and talks will have to continue either informally or resume in Durban, officials said.

The shift in the talks to Government leaders at home followed a U.S. and Israeli walkout on Thursday evening from an attempt to work out compromise language on the basis of a proposal by the 57-country Organisation of the Islamic Conference. — AP

THE HINDU

17 AUG 1991

U.S. reports progress in battling racism

GENEVA, AUG. 7. The United States has made significant strides in reducing discrimination against minorities, Bush administration officials contend in the first report by the United States to the U.N. body monitoring discrimination worldwide.

"There is considerable good news emanating from the century-old struggle of the United States against racism and bigotry," Mr. Ralph Boyd Jr., the new director of the civil rights division of the Justice Department, said as he presented the report here. African-Americans "in significant numbers serve at the highest levels of Government," as well as in numerous other professions, said Mr. Boyd, a former prosecutor.

The presentation and questioning took place on Friday and Monday, under procedures established for the 157 countries that have signed the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, which was approved by the General Assembly in 1965 and which Washington joined in 1994.

The report was prepared by the State Department, beginning under the Clinton administration in 1997, with suggestions from the White House and other agencies. But human rights groups, 12 of which presented their views here, rejected the report, saying the Government had ignored the pervasiveness of racial discrimination in the U.S. and that the report had omitted pledges of action to solve remaining problems.



Mr. Ameer Makhoul (right), director of the Ittljah Network of Palestinian NGOs in Israel, briefs the press in Geneva, Switzerland, on Tuesday, while Mr. Muhamad Abou Eihija, representing 40 unrecognised Arab villages in Israel listens. — AP

Ms Nancy Chang of the Centre for Constitutional Rights, one of the groups that addressed the panel, said at a news conference that "almost every member of the committee raised the question of why there are vast disparities with respect to race in every aspect of American life, from education, housing, health, welfare and criminal justice."

Signers of the convention agreed to submit periodic updates, and the American report was long overdue. The reports were supposed to have been filed by each country ev-

ery two years, but signers routinely do not meet the schedule. The U.S. Government filed its report while it continues an internal debate on whether to take part in the first U.N. conference on racism, scheduled for Aug. 31 in Durban, South Africa. Mr. Boyd told the review panel here that the Bush administration was committed to stepping up anti-discrimination efforts, including eliminating racial profiling, enforcing fair-housing and disability laws and ensuring voting rights reform. Widespread reports by black voters that they had been dis-

enfranchised in last year's presidential election have prompted the administration to commit itself to ensuring that "it will never occur again," he said. The panel questioned him and the State Department's human rights director, Mr. Michael E. Parmly, on a variety of issues including bombing practice on Vieques Island in Puerto Rico and the rights of Alaskan natives.

They also asked why Washington had refused to sign the part of the treaty barring racist speech, which is punishable in many countries. "The right to speech is deeply rooted in America," Mr. Boyd replied. "The right to speak freely, even views repugnant to others, is virtually an article of faith. Our answer is more and better speech, not censorship."

The U.N. panel will deliver its conclusions on American compliance and its suggestions for how the country can improve its record later this month. The American report coincided with the final preparatory session to iron out issues over which the U.S. has raised objections before the World Conference on Racism in Durban this month. The preparatory session, the third, was scheduled recently because of deep disagreements over whether compensation for slavery and stringent criticism of Israel should be included in the conference agenda. This left officials from the State and Justice Departments shuttling between the room where the experts were asking questions to other meetings down the corridor to work out compromises. — New York Times

THE HINDU

- 8 AUG 2001

Durban: U.S. presence hinges ^{for now} on agenda

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

WASHINGTON, AUG. 2. The Bush administration has once again maintained that the participation of the United States in the World Conference on Racism depended on the outcome in Geneva at the final preparatory round.

"We are very concerned about these statements about interjecting the Middle East conflict into this conference, equating Zionism with racism or almost in effect doing that. And those are the issues we are working on in Geneva", the State Department spokesman, Mr. Richard Boucher, said.

10-16 398
The Republican administration has made it known that it will skip the conference in Durban, South Africa, this month if some nations insist on bringing up the Zionism issue or an apology with reparations for slavery as some African nations say the West must do.

At the United Nations, both the Secretary General, Mr. Kofi Annan, and the top person in charge of Human Rights, Ms. Mary Robinson, have said the conference will be a non-starter if a common ground is not reached on divisive issues. The argument has been that in coming to grips with what happened in the past, nations must not become a hostage to the past either.

If slavery, the apology and reparations are issues that the Bush administration is hanging tough on, the subject of Zionism and its equation with racism is another strong point of contention here. In fact, the point has been made that more than a decade ago, the United Nations deleted the reference and linkage and, therefore, it is nothing but a futile exercise to start it all over again.

The Bush administration is not going to lose much sleep if there is world criticism for staying out of the Durban meet. Right from the beginning, the Republican ad-

ministration has been making the point that it is less interested in popularity contests and more in the way of securing the interests of America and its allies. Seen in that perspective, Washington will continue to hang tough on references to Zionism and racism or any criticism of Israel that is deemed offensive.

Diplomats and officials have been making the point that certain Arab nations have been insistent on having paragraphs in major international meetings that are highly critical of Israel even if they may be totally extraneous to the gathering. For instance, it is being pointed out at the United Nations that in a recently concluded special session on the Habitat, a few West Asian nations held up the final draft for several hours insisting on a reference to Israel with condemnation of its settlement policies.

The argument is being made in some political circles that the increasing frustrations in West Asia as a result of unmet expectations is contributing to a hardening of the stance of some Arab nations. But what is also being said is that the attempt to hijack important meetings by raising marginal issues is not only creating larger political problems but taking the focus away from the immediate problems — in this case, on fighting discrimination globally.

The Bush administration received a shot in the arm for its stand on the Durban meet when the House of Representatives by a 408 to 3 non-binding resolution called the U.N. Conference on Racism and Xenophobia "a unique opportunity to address global discrimination". That said, the resolution also made the point that efforts by some to "resuscitate the divisive and discredited notion equating Zionism with racism... would undermine the goals and objectives of the conference".

THE HINDU

3 AUG 2001

Annan for common ground on Durban meet

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

UNITED NATIONS, JULY 31. Delegates to the World Conference on Racism to be held between August 31 and September 7 in Durban, South Africa, have been told that they would have to find common ground on such issues as Zionism and slavery reparations if the meeting is to make any headway at all.

"We need to acknowledge the tragedies of the past, but not become captive to them... If this conference is to succeed, there is an acute need for common ground. The conference must help heal old wounds without re-opening them", the United Nations Secretary General, Mr. Kofi Annan, has said.

In a speech to the National Urban League Conference in Washington on Monday, Mr. Annan argued that preparations for the gathering had opened up deep fissures. "The months leading up to the conference have opened up deep fissures on a number of sensitive issues such as the legacy of slavery and colonialism and the situation in the Middle East", Mr. Annan remarked.

Mr. Annan's remarks seemed to go with the Bush administration's stance that singling out Zionism and slavery reparations will be non-starters; and there is the plain warning that the

U.S. may decide to sit out the meeting in South Africa. But human rights activists are making the point that by sitting on the sidelines, the Bush administration would not be able to influence the debate.

The Secretary General's remarks came on a day when in Geneva the final Preparatory Meeting for the conference got under way with the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms. Mary Robinson, also sending a similar message to the delegates. "The best preparation we can make for Durban at this stage is to identify the areas of common ground quickly, to find clear language and express them. Where real differences arise, I ask for flexibility and a sense of realism", Ms. Robinson said.

One of the things that Ms. Robinson sought to do was to warn delegates from West Asia against pressing the demand for equating Zionism with racism which has found its way into the draft document. "As delegates are well aware, the United Nations has already dealt with this issue at great length. The Resolution stating that Zionism is a form of racism was repealed a decade ago. I believe that it is inappropriate to reopen this issue in any form here and that anyone who seeks to do so is putting the success of the Durban Conference at risk",

Ms. Robinson noted. Ms. Robinson is said to have departed from the text of the prepared speech — distributed here — to say that she had great sympathy for the Palestinians.

"I am acutely aware of the suffering of the Palestinian people and dismayed at the continuing toll of deaths and injuries on a daily basis", she said.

The Bush administration has made it known that in spite of all the heat coming its way in not attending the Durban Conference, the U.S. will stay away if there is the insistence on the particular language with Zionism and the African demand that countries that prospered from slavery should not only apologise but also pay compensation.

Last week in Geneva as negotiators were looking at ways to enforce the global ban on biological weapons, the U.S. stunned the international community by saying that it will not be a party to the germ warfare talks. The impression now is that both Mr. Annan and Ms. Robinson are trying to ensure that the Durban meeting does not meet the same fate.

The view is that if the Zionism issue does not emerge at the Geneva session, it was unlikely to surface at Durban as a formal vote would be required to make it to the final document.

Racism HD-16 118

APR 2001

HD-14
28/7

U.S. wants thorny issues out of racism meet

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

WASHINGTON, JULY 27. The Bush administration has warned that the United States will not be in Durban, South Africa, for the International Conference on Racism if contentious issues are not sorted out, *The Washington Post* says, quoting senior administration officials. The contentious issues relate to equating Zionism with racism and reparations for slavery and colonialism.

According to the report, the State Department is planning to inform some three dozen envoys of the administration's position. "We need to be really clear about our position. We don't want anybody to be surprised when they look up on the day of Durban and wonder why we're not there", a senior State Department official said. Foreign envoys will be meeting the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, Mr. Marc Grossman, as also Under Secretary of State, Ms Paula Dobriansky. Washington has been displeased at the way the agenda for next month's meeting is proceeding and has decided to voice its opinion.

Senior officials of the Bush administration like the Secretary of State, Gen. Colin Powell, and the National Security Advisor, Dr.

Condoleezza Rice, have been in touch with the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms Mary Robinson, who is the main organiser of the Durban meet. Next week, the final round of meetings begin in Geneva for firming up the agenda. The U.S. has a five-member team from the State Department.

If the Bush administration does stay out of the Durban meeting, that should not come as a surprise. Nor would it be for the first time that Washington is keeping away from the mainstream. Washington faced a lot of criticism recently for refusing to sign the Kyoto Protocols. The administration has firmly said that the U.S. will not be a party to anything that is not in its national interests.

One perception here is that the Durban meeting is going to be nothing more than a big shouting match with the ensuing media hoopla. African Americans and some African nations are of the view that reparations are due from countries that participated in the slave trade in the 18th and 19th centuries; and some Arab organisations have been looking at a 1975 United Nations Resolution that equates Zionism with racism.

The argument has been made

in some quarters that given the frustrations in West Asia and the rising tempers and tensions there, Arab nations would seek to use the Durban meeting to condemn Israel and Zionism. "I think the U.S. should vigorously protest. If it's going to be a circus, the U.S. should send a very low level delegation", Rabbi Marvin Hire of the Simon Wisenthal Centre of Los Angeles has told *The Post*. In fact, it is being said that discussions are already under way within the administration on the composition of the delegation should the U.S. decide to go to Durban.

Participating or staying out of the Durban meet is a domestic problem for the Bush administration as well; and tempers are really hotting up on Capitol Hill where a Congressional hearing on the Durban conference was postponed at the last minute on the ground that a staffer was unable to attend.

"They (the administration) want to prevent black people from having an opportunity to discuss the World Conference Against Racism in an official setting", charged Ms. Cynthia McKinney, a senior member of the International Operations Sub Committee of the House of Representatives.

THE HINDU

THE HINDU

THE HINDU

28 JUL 2004

28 JUL 2004

More racial violence feared in Britain

2877

By Hasan Suroor

LONDON, JULY 22. More racial violence in Britain is feared with the extreme right groups such as the National Front and Combat 18 reported to be preparing to step up their hate campaign in coming weeks by holding rallies in sensitive areas, including Burnley which saw widespread rioting recently.

According to reports, the NF has sought permission to organise marches in a number of towns where there is a large ethnic population and though the permission is unlikely to be granted as the new Home Secretary, Mr. David Blunkett, has taken a tough stand against racist groups there is nothing to prevent NF supporters to gather under some other pretext—as happened in Oldham and Bradford. Their sheer presence and the odd racist gesture or comment could provoke a riot given the prevailing tension.

This is what happened in Stoke

last weekend when rumours about an NF march brought Asian youths into the streets leading to a confrontation with the police.

Revealing a "secret plot to stir riots", The Observer today said experts were worried that violence could spread beyond northern



Ms. Violet Bennett, mother of Derek Bennett (29), who was shot dead by police in Brixton, south London last week, is comforted by family members after they laid flowers at the site of the shooting. — AFP

towns which, so far, have borne the brunt of this summer's wave of racial disturbances. Birmingham, which has a big Pakistani and Bangladeshi concentration, could be the next target as the NF planned a march there on August 4, it said. There are nearly 100,000 Asians in the area which is known to be prone to tension and commentators warned that even a small spark could cause a conflagration. Particularly worrying, however, is the NF's plan for a rally in Burnley on September 1 to coincide with an Anti-Nazi League carnival. The NF has been accused of deliberately timing its rally in such a way as to provoke a confrontation. A repetition of what happened in Bradford early this month when ANL and NF supporters clashed is not ruled out, especially as Burnley is yet to recover fully from recent riots allegedly caused by the presence of NF activists.

"Another fear is that a football match between Bradford City and Burnley on September 1 will generate racial tension," The Observer said pointing out that the start of the football season next month could lead to an increase in racial tension with "hooligans" using the occasion to target Asian communities. The Commission for Racial Equality is concerned over the growing activities of far right groups and wants police to be firm with them. During the recent riots in Oldham, Leeds, Burnley and Bradford police were accused by ethnic groups of being "soft" on white racist elements. The government however defended it and blamed the violence on "thugs" on both sides.

There has been a disturbing rise in the presence of NF, particularly since the general elections in June. Its supporters actively, and often provocatively, campaigned for the British National Party (BNP) which contested the election on "rights for whites" slogan.

50 arrested in race violence: UK police

REUTERS

Police 5/5/77

STOKE-ON-TRENT, (England), July 15. — Police said today they arrested nearly 50 people, 31 of them whites, in the English midlands town of Stoke-on-Trent after the latest round of racial violence to hit inner-city Britain.

A police spokeswoman said the new unrest was set off when up to 100 South Asian youths gathered in the Cobridge area of Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire and hurled bricks and broken paving slabs at police.

The violence may have flared after a false rumour that members of the ultra-rightist British National Party planned to march through the city centre.

"We can confirm that no march by the British National Party took place, but certainly rumour was rife in the Asian community," the police spokeswoman said.

There was also an attack on a car driven by an Asian by a group of white youths and reports of a burglary at a mosque where many of the city's Pakistani and Bangladeshi immigrants and their children worship.

THE STATESMAN

Labour MPs want ban on racist groups

By Hasan Suroor

LONDON, JULY 11. Labour MPs have called for a ban on neo-fascist groups in the wake of Bradford riots, but there is widespread scepticism if this would help.

The Government, meanwhile, has warned that lawlessness by any community would not be tolerated whatever the cause of provocation.

Speaking in the House of Commons on Tuesday, the Labour MP from Bradford North, Mr. Terry Rooney, suggested that far right parties such as the National Front and the British National Party be proscribed because of their role in whipping up racial tension.

"Communities like Bradford will never feel safe so long as these people are about," he said. He pointed out that while what happened in Bradford was clearly mindless and criminal violence, the similarities between Bradford, Oldham and Burnley could not be ignored.

"The common thread there is the presence on the street of the far right groups of the National Front and the British National Party," he said.

A similar demand came from a Tory frontbencher, Mr. David Lidington, who urged the Government to look at the role played by both Right and Left extremist groups. He was concerned that the police was reported to be "too stretched in Bradford and said this encouraged criminals and political extremists. His demand echoed concern over the allegedly negative role of some anti-fascist groups such as the anti-Nazi League.

It has been alleged that rather than defusing tension some of them fished in troubled waters to mark their presence.

Critics have questioned the anti-Nazi League's decision to go ahead with a protest meeting in Bradford on Saturday even after a National Front march had been banned.

The meeting, it is stated, gave NF supporters a chance to provoke trouble. A Labour MP from Birmingham Erdington, Mr. Sion Simon, in a newspaper article, accused the anti-Nazi League of making political capital out of racial tension and said that in his constituency they contributed to it by holding a "counter demonstration" against the National Front.

The League refused to cancel its demonstration even the NF march was banned.

"It was now to be a 'celebration' that the streets had been reclaimed from fascists," he said pointing out that this led to more tension as "shops pulled down their shutters and the riot police lurked warily".

Fortunately, no NF activist was around or it could have led to a confrontation, according to him. He argued that fringe groups such as the NF were being given too much importance.

"The NF is a pathetic and puny group of stupid and cowardly hooligans rarely ca-

pable of more than getting drunk..." he said suggesting they should be ignored.

In the Commons, meanwhile, Mr. Marsha Singh, Labour MP from Bradford West, called for a 'healing' touch for Bradford saying it was 'bleeding' after the recent riots. He said while the attacks on the police deserved to be condemned, the problems of the local community also needed to be appreciated.

He also cautioned against portraying the entire Asian, overwhelmingly Pakistani, community of Bradford in a negative colour saying: "The vast majority of the Muslim community in Bradford is peaceful, decent and law-abiding."

The Home Secretary, Mr. David Blunkett, made it clear that whatever be the underlying causes "wanton destruction and violence" would not be tolerated. He said the Government would work with the people of Bradford to restore calm.

Race violence rocks Britain yet again

Vijay Dutt
London, July 8

HF-11 9/7

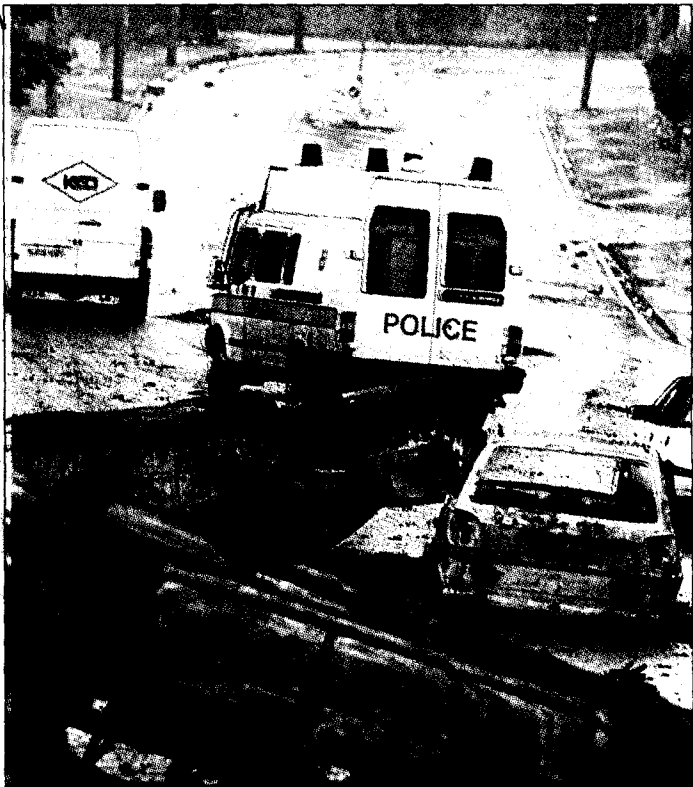
FIERCE STREET battles erupted last night between the police and Mirpuri and Pakistani youths in Bradford, which left more than 80 police officers injured and stab wounds to two white youths.

Violence erupted after a group of 300 mainly Asian youths gathered yesterday afternoon for a rally held by the Anti-Nazi League after the extreme right-wing National Front indicated it was planning a march in Bradford, north England, which has an Asian population of about 100,000.

Trouble began after groups of white youths marched through the centre of the Yorkshire city and past the predominantly Asian district of Manningham chanting racist abuse. Soon Asian youths grouped to counter the marchers.

The authorities claim that the police officers were injured while trying to disperse nearly 1,500 Asian youths who set up burning barricades and pelted them with stones. The police said they were also attacked with petrol bombs when they tried to disperse the rioting mob. Many cars were burnt, a pub and a Labour club set on fire, and beer kegs were rolled down the streets into police lines during a three-hour-long confrontation.

More reinforcement was brought in but many Asian youths continued to block a mile-long street even on Sunday morning. Police said six members of the public had been



AP PHOTO
A police van drives past a barricade of burnt out cars in Bradford on Sunday after Saturday night's violence in the city which was sparked by an Anti-Nazi League demonstration against the National Front.

reported injured and 18 people had been arrested. One of those stabbed was said to be in a serious condition.

Chief Superintendent of West Yorkshire police said "What we are seeing is wanton violence which is putting lives at risk."

Community leader Mohammed Riaz said the situa-

tion was out of control. "What is happening here is terrible. Businesses are being attacked, cars are being set on fire and I cannot believe these scenes are taking place in a city in England."

Local residents told *Hindustan Times* that the violence had been once again caused by outsiders and not the locals.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

Blair orders probe into racial bias

By Hasan Suroor

LONDON, JULY 5. The Prime Minister, Mr. Tony Blair, is to set up what is claimed to be the most comprehensive inquiry ever into racial discrimination and factors behind economic and educational backwardness among ethnic minorities. This follows increasing racial tension across Britain and the recent riots in several north England towns where there are large numbers of uneducated and unemployed Pakistanis and Bangladeshis.

The inquiry, to be supervised by a senior Minister, is expected to be more wide-ranging than previous reviews of race relations and specifically look into the role of public and private sectors in contributing to a sense of unfairness among ethnic groups. In recent weeks, there have been a number of independent reports highlighting widespread discrimination in public services such as the National Health Service, the police and civil services. Official figures show that unemployment among immigrants is twice as high as that among whites, and within ethnic groups there are wide variations with Indians and Chinese doing better than blacks, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis.

There is concern that even as ethnic groups find themselves at the bottom of the heap and suffer racial prejudice they are often seen as being pampered because of the racially coded political rhetoric. This is said to be one of the reasons for the rise of far-right groups such as the National Front and the British National Party in racially mixed areas. In Oldham and Burnley, where tension still persists after the recent racial flare-up, there is a widespread impression that immigr-

groups are "getting everything", as a number of white residents told BBC's Newsnight. "We are the lost race" was a refrain heard again and again among the white community in Burnley where the BNP polled an astonishing 11 per cent of the votes in last month's general election.

Though technically the remit of the inquiry is to look into the reasons for the widening "wealth gap" between immigrants and whites, commentators said it was also likely to study the underlying causes of racial tension in the ethnic belt. "Ministers are particularly concerned to tackle what appears to be an emerging black 'underclass' of jobless youngsters

who reject the traditional codes of their elders and drift into crime", *The Independent* said quoting a Government source as saying that the Prime Minister was determined to improve policies on race relations, particularly those relating to the labour market.

It said a worrying aspect was that the gap in the rate of unemployment between ethnic groups and whites was growing despite a booming economy. Normally, the gap widened only during recession and narrowed during a boom.

While the Commission for Racial Equality welcomed the inquiry, sceptics reacted with a sense of *deja vu*. "There have been so

many inquiries and the facts are already known", said Prof. Gautam Sen of the London School of Economics.

He said clearly the Government was responding to the recent events — the riots in Oldham and Burnley and the raft of independent findings — and wanted to be seen to be doing something.

The move itself was "not to be negated", he said but was not sure if it would necessarily lead to any significant improvement on the ground.

A representative of an ethnic group dismissed it as an "eye-wash" arguing that what was needed was the "political will, not yet another inquiry."

OLDHAM RIOTS UNDERBELLY OF MULTICULTURAL BRITAIN

The riots involving white racists and Asian youth in Oldham reveal that multiculturalism still is just rhetoric in many parts of Blair's Britain, writes Anjali Mody

98-7
8/15
racism

Postures before polls

BRITISH police in full riot gear in pitched battle with 500 young Asian men armed with bricks, bottles and belligerence is almost unremarkable in that it has happened before and will happen again. The location: another depressed former mill town. The cause: an attack by a group of white men on houses, shops and cars owned by Asians.

Tony Blair has said that the rioting by Asian youth last weekend in Oldham, near Manchester, was not "symptomatic of race relations in Britain today because, on the whole, communities live together perfectly well". Blair's Britain is a multi-cultural heaven in which chicken tikka masala is the national dish and a white Jewish comedian dressed up as a black rap artiste turned chat show host, is the poster boy of racial cohesion.

Against the background of a general election campaign in which Conservatives have upped the ante on race claiming that Britain was becoming a 'mongrel race' because of immigration, Blair's version of Britain may be a tad closer to reality. The Conservative myth that Britain is a white Anglo-Saxon Christian country is a reflection of how out of touch it is with reality and rather harder to back up than Blair's that it is a multi-cultural haven.

But, having said that, Oldham's politicians, social workers and community leaders would be hard put to

accept Blair's cosy image of his country and especially his claim of communities "living perfectly" well together. In Oldham the view is that the riots were 'waiting to happen'.

The explanations of local politicians, social workers and community leaders have all been heard before, in some other derelict industrial town or inner city: young men without a future (25 percent unemployment, compared with 4 percent among whites); hemmed into ghettos of poor quality housing, unwilling to take the

racist abuse that their parents lived with, simply gave vent to frustration, anger and — after one too many attacks by white racists — the hopelessness of those who feel there is nothing more to lose.

The police, as always, one of the targets of attack, have their own explanation. They say the presence of the far-right British National Party (BNP) and National Front provoked the rioting. While the police's explanation may have some merit, the BNP's presence is indicative of the

problems that exist rather than being the cause. The BNP has been rather active in Oldham recently since it is contesting two constituencies in the forthcoming elections, although it is by and large a marginal political force. It got just one percent of the vote in a local election in Oldham some years ago.

But, the fact that the party's national organiser is a candidate from Oldham West is a signal that neo-Nazis see potential in the racial tensions that divide the town. The BNP



Oldham, feeling the heat. Reuters

campaign calls for 'Rights for Whites' and a boycott of Asian businesses. It has used police statistics which show that 60 percent of the victims of racially motivated crimes in Oldham last year were white; the image supporting their claim is of a badly battered 75 year old white man who was beaten up by four young Asians. The police claim this was a racist attack.

The national press, whose interest in Oldham rarely goes beyond its football team, was collectively horrified by the bloodied face of an old man who was also a second world war veteran. By and large the press accepted the police version that this was a racially motivated attack. Their stories were bolstered by police statistics that the majority of racist attacks in Oldham were against whites and claims that some Asian neighbourhoods had been declared no-go areas for whites.

Yet, anyone familiar with race issues in Britain would have looked for explanations for these rather untypical claims and found them easily enough. Asian community leaders say that police statistics are a joke and reflect the fact that Asians do not report racial attacks as they have no confidence in the police, which far too often ignores their calls for help. They say that while the attack on the 75-year-old man was an act of savage thuggery it was not, as the police insisted, a racist attack; in fact the victim's family denied it was racially motivated.

This story and how it unravels is the story of racism in Britain. Despite Blair's claims that Oldham is an aberration, the facts seem to suggest that for some communities little has changed. The rhetoric of multiculturalism may find echoes in cosmopolitan London, where the Blairs were until recently happy to party with the Hinduja's. But even on London's fringes in Southall or Newham, never mind in Oldham, or Blackburn, Wolverhampton or Luton multiculturalism means very little.

Is race scientifically less accurate than ethnicity?

By DEBORAH KONG

SAN JOSE: The daughter of a white mother and a black father, Veronica Keiffer has short, curly, dark-brown hair, brown eyes and olive-brown skin dusted with freckles. People have called her "exotic," addressed her in Spanish and asked to touch her hair. If Keiffer ever forgets about race, she's soon reminded by someone asking: "What are you?"

To her, race is something that permeates life. But at the California Childcare Health Program in Oakland, where Keiffer works, her supervisor, Dr Rahman Zamani, wants to stop using the term "race" and instead use "ethnicity" in staff training discussions and newsletters.

Their workplace debate is being echoed across the US as scientists, academics and advocates question race's role in research, medicine and data collection by the government.

Keiffer contends race is integral to shaping how people view themselves and are treated by others. She says downplaying it won't make it go away - it's better con-

fronted head-on. Zamani, who classifies himself as Afghan American, believes ethnicity is more scientifically accurate and that race is a broad, misleading term with no biological basis. He argues that ethnicity allows for more precise conversations about specific groups when discussing child care and health issues - for instance, talking about "Chinese" rather than "Asians."

While the 1990 Census allowed Americans to choose only one of five race categories, the 2000 count let people choose more than one of six categories, increasing the possible number of race classifications to 63.

But while those numbers highlight differences, scientists who sequenced the human genome announced last year that the DNA of human beings is 99.9 percent alike, regardless of race.

"This is proof positive that race is not a biological concept," says Monique Mansoura, a policy analyst for the National Human Genome Research Institute at the National Institutes of Health.

Some are advocating against doctors' habit of beginning pre-

sentations by describing a patient's race.

In an article published this month in the journal *Family Medicine*, Dr Matthew Anderson and his colleagues give an example of a presentation that started out by describing a patient as a "34-year-old, black, cocaine-using mom who just delivered her 11th child prematurely."

Anderson, an assistant professor at Albert Einstein College of Medicine in New York, argues that pairing race with behavior perpetuates a stereotype that could affect the medical care other black women receive.

He and co-author Susan Moscou want patients to be presented "as non-judgmentally as possible." "The minute a person hears a person's black, Latino, white, that already comes with a set of assumptions," says Moscou, a family nurse practitioner at Montefiore Medical Group in New York. The American Anthropological Association has recommended eliminating the term "race" in the 2010 census.

In California, backers of a 1996 initiative that ended most govern-

ment affirmative action programs are now preparing for a new campaign to prohibit state and local governments from classifying or sorting students, contractors or employees by race or ethnicity.

"It's an intrusive inquiry on the part of government, and government should have no business sorting or separating people on the basis of race or ethnicity," says Kevin Nguyen, executive director of the American Civil Rights Institute. For John Tateishi, executive director of the Japanese American Citizens League, growing up in a government detention camp and experiencing discrimination has meant "the distinction has always been race."

Part of the challenge may be just figuring out how to shape the debate. Charles Kamasaki, senior vice president of the National Council of La Raza, a Hispanic advocacy group, says he doesn't think any of the current terms for discussing the concept really fit.

"We still haven't found the language of discourse about how to talk about these questions," he says, "because they're all emotionally and politically charged." (AP)

Oldham police patrol keeps rioters in rein

Oldham, May 29

SEVERAL ISOLATED incidents broke out overnight Tuesday in Oldham, northwest England, but a strong force of police managed to avoid a third night of riots between young Whites and Asians.

Eighteen youths, all White, were arrested for minor incidents that did not degenerate into the violence of the two previous nights, Manchester police said.

Shortly before midnight there was a tense face-off between riot police and about 50 White youths trying to head towards the Glodwick area which is mostly Pakistani and Bangladeshi.

Police blocked off Abbeyhill road, leading to Glodick, provoking the wrath of skinheads who shouted "we hate Pakis" as a helicopter with a powerful searchlight flew over the area.

An hour later several young people threw up a barricade and set fire to it in the same neighbourhood, but they were again prevented from heading for Glodwick where young Asians were holding a peaceful meeting.

In other parts of the town young Whites and Asians damaged cars and broke windows of houses and two bars without injuring anyone, police said.

Earlier Monday, crowds of angry Asian youths gathered on the streets and a petrol bomb was thrown at Greenhill Mill community school in Glodwick, epicentre of the weekend riots which were among the worst witnessed in Britain for a decade.

Police assistant chief constable Alan Bridge, rejecting claims that a heavy-handed approach

EURO NOT POLL ISSUE: BLAIR

BRITISH PRIME Minister Tony Blair declared on Tuesday that the country's current election campaign was not about the European single currency — but his opponents were not listening.

Blair launched his Labour Party's business manifesto, boasting of the four years of solid economic growth that his Government has presided over. His spokesman, Alastair Campbell, said the Premier would focus "relentlessly" on the economy, investment in public services and leadership in the nine days remaining before the election. But at a morning news conference questions focused stubbornly on Europe.

Reuters, London

from his officers had fuelled the weekend violence, said they would be turning out in force again.

The unrest, which the authorities said was provoked by White extremist groups from outside the Oldham, shocked local community leaders and the nation at large in the run-up to the election.

Police arrested 18 white youths and three Asians, mainly for public order offences, during a night of relative quiet. "The evening has been more vandalism than violence," a police spokesman told Reuters.

As day broke, teams of workmen took to the streets to clean up the debris, trying to restore an air of normality to a town whose ethnic tensions exploded in a weekend of petrol bombs, stone-throwing and skirmishes.

Police said they had arrested a total of 49 people in riots over the three-day holiday weekend, two-

thirds of them White, the rest Asian. "A lot of videotape is being examined and we'll be making a lot of arrests in coming days," said police chief superintendent Eric Hewitt.

As workmen started the big clean-up, senior police and council officers held lengthy talks with leaders of Oldham's Asian minorities — mainly Pakistani, Kashmiri and Bangladeshi — to try to repair community relations.

The continued presence of ultra-Right racist youths remained the Asians' main concern. Two far-Right groups — the National Front and the British National Party — have stepped up their activities in the town, casting a menacing shadow over already strained race relations.

Police say they have looked at ways of curbing the activity of Fascist-style White youths but, beyond banning all political marches in the town, they say they are almost powerless to intervene until the law is broken.

"If the police can give us assurances there'll be no further trouble from BNP members, then hopefully things will normalise very quickly," said one Asian community leader.

But the shutters were still up on restaurants and shops, while black scars across the tarmac bore witness to the barricades of burnt tyres and the petrol bombs.

It will be weeks before some of the white-owned pubs targeted by stone-throwing gangs of Asian youths open for business. The Live and Let Live pub, every window boarded up, is still surrounded by a sea of smashed glass.

Agencies

U.K. RIOTS / ROW OVER ATTACK ON ASIAN LEADER

Police get the stick

By Hasan Suroor

LONDON, JUNE 27. Police in the riot-hit Burnley were today portrayed as a bad advertisement for race relations after a prominent Asian community leader complained that he was assaulted by policemen and arrested for allegedly creating disturbances when he was in fact trying to calm down a group of rioters on Monday.

Meanwhile, the fragile peace in Burnley came under pressure when a white man was knocked down by a car allegedly driven by Asians. Police said they were treating it as a racist incident. It was stated that two white men were walking down a street when a car, in which there were some Asians, pulled up. There was an argument and the car sped away. "It then turned around and came back towards them," said the police. While one man quickly got out of the way, the other was hit. He was admitted to hospital with a broken leg.

The widely reported incident involving Mr. Shahid Malik, a high-profile Labour activist and member of the Commission for Racial Equality who had been praised for his role in pacifying the Asian youth, deeply embarrassed the police, already under pressure to improve their image. An investigation, announced by the Lancashire police, was dismissed as a formality even as Mr. Malik insisted on an apology and threatened legal action.

Mr. Malik, whose bleeding visage and heavily stitched eyebrow told their own story, said the episode was the "biggest (police) botch in history" and had badly damaged race relations. "The community desperately wants to have confidence in the police service. On this occasion by hurting someone who has been very supportive, they have made the biggest botch in history," he said describing the attack on him as "completely unprovoked". He was surrounded by riot police officers and assaulted with shields even as he kept protesting that he was on their side, and was trying to help ease the situation. He said he had been telling Asian youths that they should not target the police when he himself became a target of police attack.

His father, Mr. Rafique Malik,



Mr. Shahid Malik, a community leader and son of Burnley's deputy mayor, talks to people from his community in Burnley on Tuesday — AP

deputy mayor of Burnley, was distraught. He said he had always believed that the community should help the police but the assault on his son had shaken him. "That part of my job will become terribly hard now. How on earth can I say to any young person that their complaints against the police are wrong. They will say: look what happened to your son." He said he was an eyewitness to the police clobbering of his son. "I couldn't believe what I saw. I saw the police officers hitting him when he was on the ground," he told journalists.

Mr. Paul Stephenson, deputy chief constable of Lancashire police, admitted that there had been 'confrontation' but said it would be wrong for him to comment on the "rights and wrongs" of the incident which would be established by an investigation. "There is video evidence, and there is evidence we have. It would be quite wrong for me to sit there and listen to the allegations made in the media and not respond. That is why I have launched an investigation. We have to wait for the outcome of that investigation," he said. Asked if it was proper to hit someone with a riot shield, he said it would be justified if the officer's safety was threatened.

Local Asians said the incident simply confirmed their charge of racial bias against the police, and argued that if this could happen to someone who was seen as an

'apologist' for the authorities, how could anyone have faith in them? Commentators feared the police had further alienated the ethnic groups, and made its own job more difficult. "The incident marred what otherwise was considered to be a successful night for the police, said *The Times* .

Meanwhile, Burnley started to return to an uneasy normality amid continued verbal sniping from both sides. In media interviews, both Asians — nearly all Pakistanis and Bangladeshis — and whites blamed each other for creating tension, each side accusing the other of causing provocation. "We are not looking for trouble, but if they come after us we are going to go after them," an angry Asian youth told a TV channel echoing a widespread sentiment among young Asians that unlike their parents they were not prepared to turn the other cheek in the face of racial abuse.

Mr. Nick Griffin, chairman of the far-right British National Party which has been blamed for tension in mixed neighbourhoods, repeated his demand for racial segregation. He said the white and Asian communities should be separated by building walls between their homes. He denied his party was stoking trouble and said tension was inevitable when "liberals in ivory towers" tried to push 'multiculturalism' down people's throats.

9
APD-129

'Caste is discrimination based on descent'

27/6

By Garimella Subramaniam

CHENNAI, JUNE 26. The United Nations World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance (WCR), to be held in Durban, South Africa, in the first week of September would be a meeting of all U.N. member-states. Mr. R.V. Pillai, Expert-Member on the Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) and former Secretary-General of the National Human Rights Commission, said countries would be represented at various levels; some by heads of state, others by heads of government. Apart from the official representation of countries, a large number of Non-Governmental Organisations fighting for justice and nondiscriminatory policies in different parts of the globe were also expected to be present on the occasion and hold a parallel conference.

On consideration of the institution of caste as a form of racial discrimination, Mr. Pillai said the CERD had merely viewed the matter against the definition of racial discrimination in the 1966 convention. The aspects to racial discrimination entailed therein were discrimination on the basis of descent, colour, race, nationality and ethnic origin. The CERD had merely emphasised this definition and maintained since 1996 that caste discrimination was discrimination based on descent and as such fell within the purview.

Elaborating the role of the CERD, Mr. Pillai said it had come into being in 1970, after the adoption of

the first International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination by the United Nations in 1966. The CERD had submitted its inputs to the draft declaration and programme of action to be adopted at the end of the September 2001 conference. The issues raised in the declaration had relevance to the 1966 convention, which had been ratified by 156 countries, including India, South Asia, Japan, the United States, Britain, France and Germany.

But, this number should be viewed among the most ratified of all U.N. conventions, the one concerning the Rights of the Child, with 193 ratifications. Interestingly, the convention that is at the centre of the forthcoming world conference until recently led the tally of U.N. conventions which had received ratification from member-states.

The fulfillment of the obligations arising out of ratifying a convention is altogether a different matter. The commitment of different countries to the convention can be measured from their assent to provisions that are more specific in nature. Consider for instance the article that relates to a declaration by the ratifying country to permit individual citizens and groups to voice their grievances to the CERD when these are not addressed to their satisfaction at the national level. Only 32 out of the 156 countries that have ratified the convention have given a declaration to this effect under Article 14. India is not one of them.

THE HINDU

Fear of 'Asians taking over' behind riots

racism
18.10.16

By Hasan Suroor

LONDON, JUNE 26. Far right extremists, leading a hate campaign against non-white immigrants, have been blamed for the racial flare-up in Burnley over the weekend, the latest in a wave of such riots which have coincided with the growing visibility of racist groups such as the National Front and the British National Party (BNP) in sensitive areas.

The Government was reported to be looking into the common elements behind the riots in Oldham, Leeds and Burnley, even as the police maintained that these were not connected. While the Home Secretary, Mr. David Blunkett, attacked right-wing groups, the Labour Party was being asked to explain how such groups had been able to establish significant presence in its traditional strongholds. In both Oldham and Burnley, which have been a Labour turf, the BNP picked up over 11 per cent of the vote in the recent general election on a provocatively racist platform raising serious questions about Labour's record in addressing the underlying causes.

As Burnley, a mill town not far from Oldham and with a large impoverished Pakistani and Bangladeshi population, started picking up the pieces after three days of rioting, tension built up over the alleged police assault on an Asian community worker and a member of the Commission for Racial Equality, Mr. Shahid Malik. Mr. Malik, with blood streaming down his face, told a TV channel that he was attacked with riot batons and handcuffed even as he pleaded with them that he was not part of the mob and was in fact trying to defuse passions. He said he had received five stitches on his forehead.

The attack on Mr. Malik was widely condemned as a 'proof' of the alleged police high-handedness towards ethnic groups. Police were also criticised for giving a clean chit to extremist elements, and there was resentment that an incendiary banner put up by the BNP during the elections had not been removed. Contrary to the

police claims, Asians insisted that many of the white youths involved in rioting were not from Burnley, and had come in from other places to stoke trouble. Similarly, whites said that a lot of Asian youths came from outside.

The town's deputy mayor, Mr. Rafique Malik, added a new element saying: "My information is that people involved are known to the town and the police and the communities. They are very violent people, not normal people and that's the point." He was seen to be referring to the NF and BNP activists. There were reports of messages being put on the Internet asking people to come to Burnley "if you love your country"; and of white youths making Nazi salutes and shouting "Niggers out".

A BBC Newsnight report contradicted attempts to portray Burnley as a racially tolerant town with no history of tension. It reported an "alarming climate of distrust and racism" which came through interviews in which whites said that Asians were "taking over" Britain and were a drain on taxpayers. "We are the forgotten race," said one man proudly saying he had voted BNP. "They get everything...it is ridiculous...it is dictatorship," he said.

A teenaged boy said Asians "cause a lot of trouble". "They are not like us...they have a different religion," he said. When the reporter suggested that he was talking like a racist, he said he didn't mind.

Most of the whites interviewed by Newsnight said there was a perception that Asians were a pampered lot and received 'favourable' treatment. More than one person said that taxpayers' money was used to support the Asian community while whites suffered. Asian community leaders said these perceptions had been created by racist groups by spreading 'misinformation'.

Meanwhile, even as a huge clean-up operation was under way in Burnley to get rid of the more tell-tale signs of destruction, both communities were conscious that this was not the end of the story.

Racism still central issue, says Mbeki

By M. S. Prabhakara

KAPE TOWN, JUNE 22. The South African President, Mr. Thabo Mbeki, told the National Assembly on Friday that racism remained the central issue in the country. Mr. Mbeki was replying to the debate on the budget vote on the Presidency. As always, racism remains central issue in this country. Every aspect of social, economic and political life continues to be informed by overt or covert racism, either an offensive manifestation or a defensive denial. This was again evident in Mr. Mbeki's speech yesterday initiating the debate, the debate itself as well as his reply this morning.

Mr. Mbeki refuted in particular the charges by the Opposition that his Government often played the "race card", leading to feelings of "marginalisation and disempowerment" among the Afrikaners; that any discussion of racism led to mutual accusations, more racism and new tensions; and that the real issue that divided the country was poverty, which could be addressed only through higher rates of economic growth.

What this meant, Mr. Mbeki said, was that

any discussion of racism was itself both racist and fomented racism.

"We will not be persuaded that the best way to deal with racism in our country is to pretend that the problem does not exist", Mr. Mbeki said. He agreed that issues like national reconciliation, self-determination for the Afrikaners, poverty and economic growth were important. But none of this was "colour-blind", given South Africa's history.

There was no way he could be persuaded to claim that South Africa did not face the problem of racism, with the exception of occasional incidents of black and white racism; or that South Africa had become a society of equals, regardless of race, colour, gender or geographic location. "Respect for the truth as I see it obliges me to say that it would be eminently dishonest to pretend and assert that the legacy of centuries of colonialism and apartheid has been wiped out in a period of seven years, since our liberation. Such an assertion would obviously be false", Mr. Mbeki said. Putting his finger in the nub, Mr. Mbeki said the real problem was that "some of our compatriots, including

some in this House are uncertain and deeply fearful of the future. Trapped in the entrenched consciousness of the past, they cannot define themselves outside the categories of the past. Accordingly, they see our country as one that is divided according to racial majorities and minorities, with conflicting and irreconcilable interests. It is in this context that they decry what they describe as 'majoritarianism'".

Mr. Mbeki also challenged the rights of some parties to claim that they represented the minorities, in particular the Afrikaners.

"The overwhelming majority of our white citizens see South Africa, quite correctly, as their home. They have no desire to and will not go anywhere else. They are committed to work to rebuild this country as their own. They do not see our black citizens as a threatening horde of barbaric natives, but as compatriots with whom they work together everyday for the common good. I would never insult them by suggesting that they say agreeable things when they talk to me, while they tell a tale of fear for the future when they interact with particular political parties," Mr Mbeki said.

No Belfast model in Oldham, says Blunkett

By Hasan Suroor

19-12
LONDON, JUNE 16. The Home Secretary, Mr. David Blunkett has opposed racial segregation in Oldham criticising attempts to fence off Asian quarters from white areas.

"There will be no 'no go' areas," he said reacting sharply to the idea of fencing off Asian quarters.

In one neighbourhood, a metal fence has already been erected after the recent riots, ostensibly to "protect" Asians from outside racist elements and the media here has focussed on it to underline the far-right British National Party (BNP)'s idea of physically separating Asian and white areas.

The BNP leader, Mr. Nick Griffin has openly favoured the Belfast model of ringing Catholic and Protestant quarters.

Mr. Blunkett accused the BNP and the neo-Nazi group, Combat 18, of causing

"havoc" in Oldham which was rocked by racial violence recently.

"It is a very dangerous situation where there are genuine problems and people have grievances and others come in from outside to stir them up," he said denouncing the idea of constructing the so-called "peace walls" to keep the communities apart.

"If there's a particular problem up an alley...they have been from time to time blocked off, but the idea of ringing a neighbourhood would be totally unacceptable," he declared a day after a meeting a delegation of M.P.s, councillors and police officers from Oldham.

Mr. Blunkett attacked attempts to politicise the absence of any Asian representative on the delegation saying it was more important to make real progress than engage in "gesture-ism".

He explained that the Deputy Mayor, Mr.

Riaz Ahmed was not included in order to ensure that the delegation was politically balanced, but he was invited — at Mr. Blunkett's request — to attend as an observer. However, he decided to stay away, fearing problems at the local level, the BBC said. Mr. Ahmed, whose house was petrol-bombed recently, had said on Thursday that he was strongly advised by some "very senior" people not to join the delegation.

The non-inclusion of any Asian representative was reported to have caused resentment in the community.

Mr. Blunkett, who has ordered a review of race relations in Oldham, said the idea was to engage with local communities and rebuild confidence.

He clarified that there would be no direct Home Office intervention but it would support local initiatives to find solutions to the problems of Oldham.

Degrees of separation

But will the UN conference help in fighting casteism?

THE failure of the constitutional mechanism to address social evils like casteism is highlighted by periodic reports — like the recent one of a Dalit being murdered for entering a temple in Rajasthan's Bhilwara district. Unfortunately, an issue like this has tended to become the subject of learned treatises and little else, as sociologists of various hues debate endlessly on the subject of caste and race. Sooner than later, the debate will acquire a political dimension, what with the Central government already indicating subtly its opposition to the clubbing of casteism with racism at the UN-sponsored 'World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance' to be held at Durban, South Africa, in August. The Centre has taken the stand that casteism is India-specific and highlighting it at Durban will only blur the focus of the conference. Obviously, it is sensitive about, if not allergic to, earning opprobrium at an international forum for its failure to contain caste discrimination in the country. Whatever the semantics, the truth is that caste discrimination has not vanished despite having been outlawed. If this indeed is the case, why not acknowledge the fact and grapple with it, instead of adopting the posture of an ostrich? The heavens will certainly not fall if the Durban deliberations also focus on an aspect of Indian life that everybody says should have by now been history.

That casteism is far more difficult to tackle than racism is borne out by the experience of India and South Africa. Apartheid in South Africa became a thing of the past the moment political power changed hands from the minority Whites to the ma-

ajority Blacks. But the same thing did not happen in India, when the Indian Constitution declared the right to equality as a fundamental and enforceable right of the citizen. Even half a century after the declaration, caste-based discrimination is a reality in many spheres of life. Of course, in cities and big towns, there may not be any visible signs of casteism but in villages, educational institutions, hostels, worship centres and wherever untouchability is practicable, discrimination is a reality. In short, to be born a Dalit is still to be discriminated against, no matter what the Constitution lays down by way of affirmative action. The hope that with reservation and similar steps, the 'untouchables' will be brought socially on a par with others has been belied. In fact, reservation has only helped to perpetuate casteism. How pernicious and all-encompassing caste feelings are is denoted by their prevalence even in religions which otherwise proclaim the equality of all human beings.

There is no disputing that casteism is the single most important factor that has stood against the country's progress. It even helped foreign powers to subjugate the nation by preventing the diffusion of knowledge. In fact, it has no religious sanctity — the particular verses to which it is attributed are considered an interpolation of the sacred Vedic text. The constitutional mechanism against casteism would have yielded better results if it was accompanied by a sustained, vigorous and wide-spread campaign at all levels of society. Nothing short of an all-out offensive against casteism will do. If discussions at Durban help in this process, there can be no harm in them. Nonetheless it needs to be said, casteism is not racism.

...y, Labour's landslide win addresses none of them.

9/10

Castes of Mind *9/10*

Given our hypersensitivity to international opprobrium, it comes as no surprise that the Indian government is trying hard to scuttle any discussion on caste-based discrimination under the auspices of the forthcoming UN-sponsored 'World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance' in Dublin. The government's contrarian case rests on two contentions. One, that caste is 'unique to Indian society and its historical processes' and hence should not find a place in a conference that is discussing issues which cut across national boundaries. Secondly, that caste discrimination is essentially social and class based in nature and falls outside the definition and purview of racial discrimination. The first part of the contention is too facile to merit a retort. It is nobody's case that caste and race are conceptually identical. There is no denying the uniqueness of caste. But if caste oppression can be likened to racial discrimination in some essential respect, then for the purposes of the conference, caste may be legitimately subsumed under the rubric of race. Consequently, it is the latter part of the government's stand that merits a more serious response. For one, anyone who invokes the 'unique' history of caste must disabuse herself of the disingenuous idea that caste discrimination was, in essence, no more than an economic division of labour gone awry. A contention put forward, incidentally, with much gusto by no less a person than attorney general Soli Sorabjee before the Human Rights Commission in Geneva.

The conceptual and ideological origins of the caste system lie not in any universal economic imperatives but in a worldview that views reality in the Manichean dualism of purity and pollution. Or, to put it differently, economic and social discrimination is not the essence of the caste system but only an effect. The reason why caste discrimination may be equated with racial discrimination is that they classify, rank and valorise entire social groups and populations on the basis of accidents of birth. Put simply, caste as much as race is nothing if not a marker of bodily difference. It is relevant to remember as well that the purported difference between ideologies of caste and race has been whittled down by the findings of the Human Genome Project. It is now widely accepted that the biological myth of race, which derived its power and credibility from the visually irrefutable difference in the colours of people's skins, is no more than a figment of the racist imagination. This implosion of the idea of race has equally salutary lessons for the believer in caste. As the tragic history of the 20th century repeatedly demonstrated, however, the truths of science are often no match for the entrenched prejudices of the human mind. The undeniable fact of continuing caste oppression must therefore not be allowed to become a victim of false nationalist pride. The irony of Indian opposition to racial discrimination in other parts of the world will be doubly compounded if we do not let others question the pernicious practices in our own backyards. It will be a sign of our coming of age as a nation if and when we stop betraying a pathetic adolescent anxiety about international image and start confronting the uncomfortable, not to say institutionalised, truths of our present and past life.

Racial riots rock Britain again

REUTERS

LEEDS, June 6. - Gangs of Asian youths fought running battles with riot police in a suburb of the English city of Leeds today, as racial violence hit northern England for the second time in little more than a week.

The 300 youths, mainly of Bangladeshi descent, hurled petrol bombs and set 25 cars and a shop ablaze before a tense calm was restored after seven hours of night battles on the eve of voting in Britain's general election.

Witnesses said the trigger for the disturbances were reports that police used excessive force on a local Bangladeshi man arrested on the weekend for a minor traffic offense.

A police spokesman confirmed that a local man had earlier been arrested, but could not say whether the incident was linked to the rioting.

A Bangladeshi community leader, who did not want to be named, said the man had been sprayed unnecessarily with CS gas used to subdue violent criminals at the Leeds police station where he was taken after his arrest.

"It's all quiet now," a police spokesman said. However riot police remained at the scene patrolling streets that had been closed to head off new outbreaks.

"Four people have already been arrested and further arrests are anticipated" the assistant chief constable in



ENGLAND IN BLACK & WHITE: The clean-up gets under way at a vandalised laundrette after riots between Asians and riot police in Leeds on Wednesday. - AP/PTI

charge of operations for West Yorkshire, told a news conference.

He said the violence flared in the mostly Asian and run-down suburb of Harehills at 8 p.m.

Witnesses said rioters burned barricades. Cars were hijacked and set on fire in streets. "They were taking cars and rolling them downhill at us..." one police officer said.

The rioting broke out just a week after three nights of racial violence ended between whites and Asians 65 km away in Oldham, also an area where many Bangladeshis and Pakistanis live.



Mr Tony Blair talks from behind a glass lectern on Wednesday. - AP/PTI

the agenda.

Mr Hague has spent much of the four-week campaign pushing Europe and the euro single currency as key battleground issues. He says he wants to keep the pound for at least the five-year duration of the next parliament and wants Britain to be "in Europe but not run by Europe."

Mr Blair on the other hand favours greater engagement with other European Union states and supports euro entry after the election subject to the right economic conditions and approval by Britons in a referendum.

ensure his Labour Party a convincing victory tomorrow.

Opposition Conservative leader Mr William Hague, kicking off his final day of campaigning with a 6 a.m. visit to London's Smithfield meat market, insisted he could still beat Mr Blair.

Mr Hague's Conservatives have tried to make election issues out of crime and a growth in the number of refugees and immigrants coming to Britain.

Mr Blair, anxious that opinion poll forecasts of a landslide do not trigger voter apathy says he wants to put improving Britain's schools, hospitals and other public services at the top of

Racism spreads to Internet, says UN

GENEVA: Warning that the idea of racial superiority has spread to the Internet, United Nations says that globalisation with its potential benefits carries risks that can lead to increased inequality, very often along racial and ethnic lines.

A paper distributed to delegates from 180 countries attending a preparatory committee meeting here, ahead of the world conference

against racism to be held in Durban in August, cautions that even as technology brings people of the world together, racial discrimination, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance continue to ravage societies. A new term, "ethnic cleansing", has been coined to describe an old horror, it says.

Over the last ten days delegates from India and other participating nations, have been trying

to reconcile differences over what the Durban conference should focus on. Since the differences remain unresolved, the current meeting is likely to be extended by a week.

India had opposed bracketing together of racial discrimination and the caste system. If the international community wanted to deliberate on caste system it should widen the ambit of the Durban meeting. (PTI)

Second night of racial riots in UK

AFP & PTI

OLDHAM, May 28. - Britain saw a second night of racial riots overnight as Asian and white youths clashed in the town of Oldham, northwest England, police said today. Police made 12 arrests overnight - seven white and five Asian youths - news reports said, but the violence was not on the same scale as on Saturday night when 500 youths rampaged through the town, injuring a number of policemen. Yesterday, an Asian supermarket was set on fire, barricades were set alight and a petrol bomb was hurled through a plate glass window at the office of the local newspaper, BBC reported. There were, however, no injuries.

Oldham, a former mill town, has become a flashpoint for racial tension between young men in the town's Asian community and local white youths, fanned by far-right extremists. Twenty people were also arrested after disturbance in Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire last night. Thirteen of them were Asian and seven white. Thames Valley police downplayed reports that Asian youths were arrested after raiding a meeting of the National Front, a right-wing extremist group that opposes the presence of Jews, Blacks and other ethnic races in Britain.

The trouble sparked off at Oldham following a fight between a white and an Asian youth, both aged 14, near a local fish and chips shop on Saturday night. Later it turned into a pitched battle between rival groups lasting several hours. Bricks, stones and petrol bombs were hurled, five cars and a police van were set on fire and trolleys of a supermarket were hijacked as batons and weapons. Calm was finally restored with the arrival of rain and daylight.



A person is led away by police in Oldham, England, in the early hours of Monday. - AP/PTI

Hundreds of riot police were patrolling the streets last night to prevent recurrence of the incident. Last night, a mob of upto 40 people was involved in a brawl outside a town centre pub. Windows were smashed with bricks and drinkers trapped inside the Jolly

Carter had to be freed by police. Later, police reported "sporadic fighting and stone throwing" in various parts of the town.

Racial tension in the area came to light a month ago when the engagement ceremony of a Hindu girl to a white man was disturbed by a gang of whites youths. Subsequently, a group of Asians of Pakistani origin turned their ire on minority Hindus residing there.

The outburst of rioting has pushed the issues of race and immigration to the top of Britain's campaigning for general elections on June seven.

Home secretary Mr Jack Straw said the violence was "serious and it is unreservedly to be condemned." Former Pakistani cricket captain Imran Khan and one Opposition lawmaker charged that some politicians had contributed to racial tensions by using incendiary language in campaign debates about race and immigration.

THE STATEMENT

10 MAY 1985

'Caste system not same as racial discrimination'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

GENEVA, May 28. - India has strongly opposed all attempts of putting "racial discrimination" and "caste system" in the same basket at a United Nations meeting here and said if the international community wanted to deliberate on the latter it should widen the ambit of the forthcoming World Conference on Racism to be held in Durban, South Africa.

"We have heard references being made to the caste system and to the members of the traditionally disadvantaged castes in our country. We are, however, not persuaded that such issues fall within the ambit of the World Conference," the Indian delegates said at the on-going 'Second Preparatory Committee for World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance' (II Prepcom), convened by the UN here.

While NGOs and other social organisations were trying to put caste system in the ambit of the conference to get international attention on the issue, the officials have been maintaining that both were different as racism was based more on biological basis whereas caste system was more on social set up.

"Even though the caste system has been based on birth, it is obvious that the term "descent" in the Convention (on racial discrimination) clearly refers to racial descent. The term "caste", on the other hand, is not based on race. It has its origin in the functional division of the Indian society during ancient times," the officials said at the II Prepcom meeting.

The two-week long meeting, which will end on Friday, is preparing the draft declaration and programme of action for the World Conference which will be held in Durban from 31 August to 7 September.

The Prepcom has divided the delegates into two sub-sections, one to prepare the document and other to make the action programme.

India is part of both the working groups and has been active in highlighting the reform actions being taken in the country for the uplift of the "traditionally disadvantaged castes".

THE STATESMAN

25 MAY 2001

Sunday. — AP/PTI

Police restore order after racial clash in Oldham

REUTERS

OLDHAM (England), May 27. — Police restored order to the violence-scarred streets of this northern English manufacturing town today after race riots involving whites and Asians injured 30 people and led to 25 arrests.

The violence last night thrust race relations, crime, immigrant numbers and asylum seekers all high up the agenda for Britain's 7 June general election.

A police spokeswoman said the fighting, was sparked by a gang of white youths who threw bricks at a house belonging to a Bangladeshi family earlier yesterday.

As news of the attack spread, hundreds of Asian youths, many born in Britain after their Bangladeshi families moved to Britain as textile factory workers from the Indian sub-continent in the 1960s, descended on Oldham's run-down town centre. Some 500 youths hurled bricks and petrol bombs at hundreds of police who were rushed several miles from nearby Manchester, England's main northern city. Cars were set on fire, at least five pubs firebombed and police cars badly damaged.

"There were fires burning in the streets, there was rubble all over the road and the air was full of smoke," the police spokeswoman said.

"They threw quite a lot of petrol bombs," Manchester police superintendent Mr Eric Hewitt told reporters. "I am very angry. We could have had someone killed," he added.

"We have seen tensions building here for many months, but not on the scale we saw last night. No one can provide an explanation for this at the moment. We will be looking to rebuild confidence in the community," Mr Hewitt said.

Home (Interior) minister Mr Jack Straw said yesterday's violence was "initially set off by the whites and later, more seriously, involved Asians."

THE STATESMAN

Race divide gets wider in US cities

Washington

NEARLY 40 years after the American civil rights movement brought an end to official racial segregation, children in the United States are growing up in less racially integrated neighbourhoods than they were a decade ago, researchers have found.

Last year's census has confirmed that America is now a more multi-racial society than at any time in modern history, with non-Hispanic whites now a minority in several major cities.

But researchers at the State University of New York say the same census reveals that Ameri-

can cities are becoming more racially divided than ever. Detroit, Chicago and Milwaukee have all become more segregated than they were in 1990, the researchers found.

The reality is that young black Americans are growing up in a black America, while young whites are growing up in a white America. Social integration and even contact between the two races is rare and getting rarer, especially among school-age children. The problem diminishes once young people reach college, where integrated living accommodation is enforced.

Levels of racial segregation are especially marked in urban

schools and in the use of urban community services, largely as a result of "white flight" from the cities to the suburbs.

Even when black middle-class parents flee the cities in search of the same improvements as white people, the result is the creation of largely black suburbs, rather than integrated ones.

The researchers calculated the extent of segregation by comparing census enumeration areas in different cities between 1990 and 2000. The results show that the five most segregated cities are, in order: Detroit, Milwaukee, New York, Newark and Chicago.

The most rapid increase in segregation since 1990 has been in Milwaukee, followed by Chicago, Detroit and Birmingham. In Milwaukee, black people now account for about one third of the city's inhabitants, but nearly two-thirds of the pupils in state schools.

"It's white flight and it's increasingly difficult to have any kind of meaningful desegregation or integration," a spokeswoman for the Milwaukee school system said. The findings underscore the extent to which racial divisions remain an integral aspect of everyday life in modern America, in spite of the progress which has been

made in achieving formal equality between the black and white communities over the past 40 years.

"It's a very big problem for white children who may think that they're experiencing diversity in the country, but they are only getting a taste of it," researcher John Logan said.

In cities such as Seattle and Portland, Oregon, in the northwest, the trend is towards more integrated neighbourhoods. Several cities in the South — such as Norfolk, Charleston, Augusta, Greenville and Jacksonville — have relatively low levels of segregation.

The Guardian

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

8 MAY 2001

Mandela given hero's welcome as race row rages in Britain

By Rashmee Z. Ahmed
The Times of India News Service

LONDON: Like a timely messiah from the official 'Rainbow Nation' to a struggling multi-racial one, Nelson Mandela is being hailed as a hero across Britain as part of six-week celebrations to mark the seventh anniversary of the end of apartheid in South Africa. But the hero's welcome offered to him is seen as an ironic side bar to Britain's own domestic debate over race relations.



Nelson Mandela

On Sunday, Mr Mandela made pop history by upstaging hip young pop stars including Spice Girl Mel B, the Irish group Corrs, Atomic Kitten and REM at a 20,000-strong free rock concert here. It was one of the few rock concerts at which the audience had largely turned up to hear the guest of honour speak, and not to listen to the music.

The concert was held at Trafalgar Square, once the scene of anti-apartheid protests and described by Mandela as "the place where the anti-apartheid movement was born". Mr Mandela paid tribute to "the international community and the people of Britain" for helping to dismantle apartheid.

Mr Mandela used the concert to endorse his chosen successor, the embattled president Thabo Mbeki who is increasingly accused of "political paranoia" by senior African National Congress members.

The seventh anniversary of the end of apartheid is being marked with several set-piece events in Britain, even as Mr Mandela pointedly referred to the British people's and not the British government's support during the apartheid era.

Mr Mandela was evidently skirting around a touchy subject, with post-apartheid South Africa still remembering that Britain maintained links with the apartheid regime and the fact that then Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher described Mr Mandela's ANC as "ter-

rorists" and refused to meet them.

Meanwhile, the hero's welcome offered to Mr Mandela is seen by some black British politicians, including a senior peer of the main opposition Conservative Party, Lord Taylor, as ironic. He said Britain could praise the man who fought apartheid, but it remained mired in racist arguments.

The Indian-born Baroness Shreela Flather, who also belongs to the Conservative Party, has supported her fellow peer, Lord Taylor in his criticism of the Conservative's handling of the race row. The two peers want the Conservatives to expel an MP who recently denounced immigration into Britain as racial mongrelisation.

Baroness Flather said the term "mongrel" was more generally used for dogs and it was shocking that a mainstream political party could continue to count as its member a person who held such views.

The Conservatives remain convulsed by the controversy, with many MPs defending the right to speak their minds on the issue of immigration and asylum, even as black and Asian politicians warn that the issue is too sensitive to be discussed in intemperate terms. The three-week row has been making headlines and exciting callers of radio phone-ins.

It originally began when a retiring MP, John Townend, criticised "Commonwealth immigration" as dangerous to Britain's homogeneous Anglo-Saxon purity. The British foreign secretary followed up with a speech on *chicken tikka masala* as the gastronomic symbol of British multi-culturalism and criticism of Tory racism.

But, columnists of some British broad sheets have recently dismissed the debate as unimportant for coloured people. *The Guardian's* leading black writer Gary Younge said the black and Asian press had relegated the debate to its inside pages.

Even so, there is general agreement that for better or worse, race has become a campaign issue during elections widely expected to be held in June.

Black, Asian leaders protest MPs' remarks

By Hasan Suroor

FD-16

LONDON, MAY 4. In the first non-political reaction to the deepening race row on the eve of next month's general election, a group of independent blacks and Asians today warned that racist remarks of the kind made by some Tory figures recently could make ethnic groups more vulnerable to racial hostility.

They quoted the police as saying that such remarks tended to lead to an increase in racist attacks because "they create the misleading impression that such views are legitimate." In a separate development, a newspaper said the Commission for Racial Equality had reported an increase in hate-mail since the row erupted two weeks ago over the Tories' refusal to sign an anti-race pledge prescribed by the Commission. This was exacerbated by stridently anti-immigrant remarks of some Tory MPs.

In an open letter, signed among others by Mr. Lee Jasper, race adviser to the Mayor of London, Mr. Ken Livingstone, black and Asian professionals accused politicians of exploiting the race issue and urged them to put an end to "this cynical" debate as it did not reflect the

concerns of ethnic communities. In a clear reference to the right-wing Tory MP, Mr. John Townend, they pointedly condemned the "irresponsible comments" of some politicians and the "inflammatory" language used by them to whip up passions.

Mr. Townend infuriated his own party leadership when he said recently that unchecked immigration was turning Britain into a "mongrel race". He was forced to apologise, but reports suggest that he intends to press on with his race agenda after the election.

Another Tory MP, Mr. Laurence Robertson, who apologised, has since spoken out again saying that Britain was becoming too "crowded" because of the influx of immigrants. He insisted that he was not a racist but maintained that it was turning into a "struggle" to come to terms with mass immigration.

Those who signed the letter, urging political parties to respond to the genuine priorities of ethnic groups, include Mr. Ravi Chand, chairman of the National Black Police Association, Ms Tara Mukherjee, president of the Confederation of Indian Organisations, and Mr. Simon Woolley, Director, Operation Black Vote.

Mr. Woolley told *The Independent* which published the open letter that ordinary black people became easy targets of abuse and attack as a result of irresponsible comments of politicians.

Meanwhile, in an indirect acknowledgement that the Tories were scoring over Labour on the asylum issue, the Prime Minister, Mr. Tony Blair, promised to get tough on undeserving asylum seekers. He denied the Tory charge that his Government was "soft" on asylum seekers or was trying to silence the debate on the issue — a charge which the Tories have been able to drive home with some success.

In an article in *The Times* today, Mr. Blair said his Government in its second term would reform the rules on asylum to ensure quicker decision on applications. The Tories have charged that Britain has become a "soft touch" for asylum seekers because of the Blair Government's indecisive approach, resulting in a backlog of nearly 80,000 applications.

The Times said that Mr. Blair's intervention was an "acknowledgement" that the Conservatives' campaign on the issue was working.

THE HINDU

5 MAY 2001

Tory MPs regret apology over racist remarks

By Hasan Suroor

HQ-16
4/5

LONDON, MAY 3. The much-trumpeted truce in the Tory party over the race row appears to have collapsed even before it got into place.

Hours after the party chief, Mr. William Hague got two of his MPs to apologise for their racist remarks amid a lot of self-congratulatory hype about his tough handling, the two men were reported to be making familiar noises again.

Mr. John Townend, who was forced to withdraw his remark that unchecked immigration was turning Britain into a "mongrel race" after a black Tory peer, Lord Taylor threatened to quit over the issue, was said to be having second thoughts whether he should have apologised.

Newspapers today quoted him as suggesting that the apology was a mistake and that he would speak out his mind after next month's general election.

In an undertaking he gave to the party leadership, Mr. Townend had promised not to "repeat them (such remarks) under any circumstances." A day later, however, *The Yorkshire Post* quoted him telling friends: "I have probably made a mistake but I was only given ten minutes (to apologise or face action)."

Asked by another newspaper, *Hull Daily Mail* whether he regretted the apology, Mr. Townend, who is not contesting the election, said: "I will tell you all after the election." When summoned by the central leadership to explain, he denied the remarks attributed to him but the impression remained that the smoke hadn't been without fire. "It is understood that Mr. Townend is angry over the way he has

been treated by the Tory leadership," *The Guardian* said suggesting that the MP was peeved at the fact that he was given only minutes to shut up or face disciplinary action.

Another MP, who was said to be bristling, was Mr. Laurence Robertson who had publicly supported Mr. Townend's offensive remarks and was forced to apologise.

He was reported telling party colleagues that his endorsement of Mr. Townend's comment had got him a lot of support and even his constituency chairman had told him that he should not have apologised. Public support is also claimed by other Tory figures such as Lord (Norman) Tebbit who have taken an aggressively anti-immigration position.

The Tory central office was apparently inundated with phone calls supporting Mr. Townend as the party leadership struggled to cope with the crisis which his remarks had created. Meanwhile, yet another Tory member stepped into the row prompting demands that Mr. Hague stand up to the extremists in the party.

Mr. Simon Pearce, who is a Tory candidate in the coming election, warned of the "dangers posed by large-scale immigration" thus joining the growing anti-immigration chorus in the party.

Labour demanded that Mr. Pearce be dropped as a candidate and that Mr. Hague should show greater firmness in dealing with such elements in the party.

These developments are seen as a setback to Mr. Hague in his bid to unite the party on the eve of a crucial election and to broaden its appeal beyond its traditional right-of-the-centre white constituency.

THE HINDU

4 MAY 2001

NOT SAYING SORRY

The Aussie split personality

INDIGNATION, if not outrage, would be the reaction in Australia if the treatment of its indigenous population were to be compared with apartheid in South Africa or what the Blacks were subjected to in the United States. Yet the refusal of successive heads of government to tender an apology for the sufferings of the Aborigines at the hands of the settlers - and their descendants to be sure - is indicative of a mindset that persists despite all current talk of Australia being a multi-cultural society. The current Prime Minister has not obliged despite political pressure.

It is true that the "White Australia" policy was abandoned decades ago, equally true that migrants from the less-developed countries of Europe as well as those from various parts of Asia have found life good in their adopted land and would reject suggestions of serious discrimination on the basis of race. Those truths actually amplify the plight of the Aborigines, for they point to a lack of effort, or serious efforts, of the authorities towards a social and educational revolution that would bring the indigenous people to the level from which they could partake of the juicy meat-pie. For several reasons the rest of the world is not terribly aware of all that took place in Australia, it has its equivalents of Little Rock and Soweto and perhaps worse. But that is beginning to change and there are likely to be revelations of more horror stories like that of the "forgotten generation." As the nation seeks to project itself as an international front-runner, as it did by conducting the "best ever" Olympic games and the lead role it played in peacekeeping in East Timor, its domestic affairs will increasingly come under global scrutiny. Despite the accomplishments of Cathy Freeman and Evonne Goolagong-Cawley, what it will have to show on the Aboriginal front will not be laudatory. Sure the Commonwealth and state governments will cite having spent millions of dollars on their welfare, but the average Aussie still perceives the "Abos" as drunken layabouts and petty criminals. Maybe John Howard's saying "sorry" will not change much of that, but at least it will assuage feelings, provide a glimmer of hope, and a glimpse of what the Torrens Strait islander had crooned about: Sunshine On A Rainy Day.

THE STATESMAN

- 3 MAY 2001

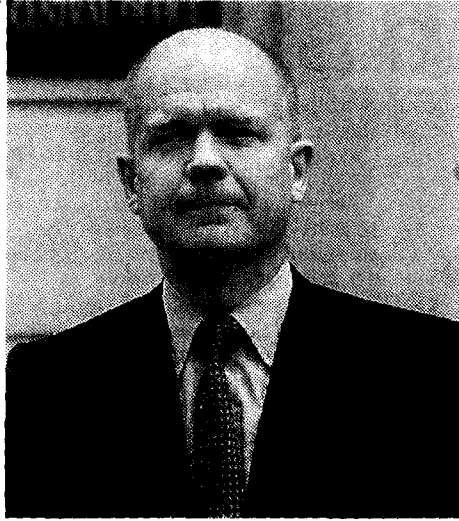
Tory MP apologises for racist remarks

MS
By Hasan Suroor HD-12

LONDON, MAY 1. The abrasive right-wing Tory MP, Mr. John Townend has apologised for his racist remarks after the party threatened him with disciplinary action on Monday, but there was no end to the embarrassing race row which has dogged the Tories in the run-up to next month's general election.

Critics were not convinced that the Tory chief, Mr. William Hague had acted decisively to put down racism in his party and maintained that an apology coaxed out of a reluctant M.P. at "gunpoint" was a cover-up, particularly as at the same time he got all his Asian and black M.P.s to sign a loyalty pledge. This seemed like a balancing act where, in fact, no balancing was required as the provocation had come entirely from the party's racist fringe which apart from Mr. Townend included another MP, Mr. Christopher Gill and several minor players.

Observers found the loyalty pledge amusing considering that only a week ago the party's leading lights had declined to sign an anti-racist compact, prescribed by the Commission for Racial Equality, on the plea that signing "bits" of paper made no sense. The black Tory peer, Lord Taylor, whose campaign against Mr. Townend created a crisis in the party, was pointedly asked to sign the loyalty pledge in what was seen as an attempt to prevent him from defecting to another party. Lord Taylor's sharp criticism of Mr. Hague's leadership had prompted speculation that he planned to quit the party, and on Sunday he openly indicated that he could not afford to stay on in a party which sheltered "racist" elements like Mr.



The Conservative Party leader, Mr. William Hague, addressing newsmen in London on Tuesday. — AP

Townend. Lord Taylor agreed to sign the pledge but continued to chafe at the leadership. "It (the apology) is too little and too late. Mr. Hague has been forced into this position which is pretty weak anyway. He has vacillated over a number of days. He should have taken strong action," he said making no attempt to put a lid on the speculation about his future plans.

More embarrassing for the party, however, was a sharp attack by the Tory veteran and former Prime Minister, Sir Edward Heath whose tough action against Enoch Powell in

1968 for his Townend-like remarks has been repeatedly recalled as a contrast to Mr. Hague's "weak" response. Sir Edward echoed the criticism that Mr. Hague had not acted firmly in dealing with Mr. Townend but what must have really riled the party's central leadership was his description of it as right-wing. "Of course, with an Opposition in the position that they are, which is on the extreme Right, you can't expect them to do what I did. So many of them feel and think the same way (as John Townend)," he said.

And a report in *The Times* confirmed this. "The truth, as one Tory frontbencher acknowledged yesterday, is that many Conservative voters agree with Mr. Townend's views on race. The frontbencher said the (Conservative) Central Office switchboard had been inundated with messages of support for the MP," it said. One Tory MP openly told T.V. channels that Mr. Townend's remarks about immigrants "undermining" the Anglo-Saxon culture and threatening to turn Britain into a "mongrel" race were "basically true". "Cramming" too many people from different backgrounds was troublesome, he said.

The row has shown up the deep division in the Tory party between the "liberals" who want to mould it into a forward-looking party with an "inclusive" agenda and the hardliners who fear that any "dilution" of its traditional image could provoke a backlash from grass roots voters — the party's vote bank. This is proving to be damaging and as *The Times* commented editorially: "The Tories have come across as a shambles through most of April. They have little time left in which to correct that impression."

THE HINDU

2 MAY 2001

Race panel chief regrets furore

By Hasan Suroor

LONDON, APRIL 23. The chief of the beleaguered Commission for Racial Equality (CRE), Mr. Gurbux Singh has admitted that the Commission's bid to prevent race from becoming an issue in the upcoming general election has boomeranged with political parties using its anti-racism pledge for political propaganda. His comment came as race looked like emerging as a major campaign issue surrounding the Tories' refusal to sign the pledge which, they think, is a Labour "conspiracy" to embarrass them.

Reacting to the controversy, Mr. Singh said he was "deeply saddened" that a well-intentioned move had turned into cross-party "squabbling" on "who is more or less racist than each other." The debate, he told *The Times*, had shifted from something altogether different from what the Commission had intended. "I want to see a positive discussion about race relations as opposed to political parties throwing mud at each other," he said.

The newspaper, however, was not impressed by what it called Mr. Singh's "blanket condemnation of politicians" and argued that the boot was in fact on the other leg. "It is the nature of his (Mr. Singh's) declaration and the demand that every single M.P. sign up or be denounced for not doing so that has sparked this destructive controversy," it said in an editorial. The pledge, which requires all political parties and candidates to promise not to use the race card, has provoked a major row with Tories denouncing it as "silly" and "insulting". What has particularly upset them is the Commission's move to get individual M.P.s and candidates to sign the pledge even after their party leader, Mr. William Hague endorsed it on their behalf. When the Commission started putting out on its website names of M.P.s who refused to sign it, there was outrage and the move was condemned as a "witch hunt".

THE HINDU

25 APR 2001

U.K. sees racism again... by Asians

By Hasan Suroor

LONDON, APRIL 24. And now a face story with a twist. Years of frustration and a sense of hurt — part genuine, part imagined — are driving Asian youths in certain predominantly non-white neighbourhoods into racist territory and the whites suddenly find themselves at the wrong end of the divide.

A new generation "physically stronger and cockier than their immigrant parents", as a newspaper dubbed them, is playing out the familiar role of the angry young man out to get even, employing the very means that were once used against him, his family and his community. Racist attacks on whites in some areas are reported to be on the rise in what is seen as an ethnic backlash, raising fears of a counter-backlash from such white racist organisations as the National Front.

Oldham town in Greater Manchester is suddenly in the headlines following police statistics which show that 60 per cent of the victims of racist attacks in the area last year were whites. Newspapers have carried interviews with white victims of such violence — allegedly unprovoked and part of a pattern — and reported rumours about the existence of "no-go" areas for whites and inflam-

matory anti-white graffiti.

The Guardian reported the case of a white teenaged schoolboy who said he was punched and set upon by a "gang of 12 Asian youths, who left him with a broken cheekbone and severe cuts." *The Times*, in a special report titled "When the Racists are Asian" quoted a white youth who was allegedly assaulted by Asian youths while he was on his way to meet his girlfriend. He said he was knifed and thought he was "going to die". "What gets me is that I am not a racist. Many of my friends are Asians," he said declaring that Oldham was "at breaking point" and he planned to move out of the area. "...You can't live your life in fear," he told a *Times* reporter who also heard parents of a white schoolgirl complain that she suffered a "black eye, burst lip and chipped tooth in an attack by Asian boys...while 20 other Asians looked on."

Oldham is an impoverished town with a large population of Pakistani and Bangladeshi immigrants, most of whom are poor and live in crowded, rundown houses. Unemployment is rampant, education levels are poor and add to this the anger bred by years of perceived discrimination and humiliation their parents suffered and you have an explosive mix. "There is a strong feeling

among a generation physically stronger and cockier than their immigrant parents, that they will not put up with the jibes and ill-treatment their elders suffered," *The Guardian* said quoting an Asian youth who recalled with horror the National Front's racist march through Oldham in 1987. "Our parents stayed at home and kept us in all day. They were really afraid. But now young people have developed confidence. Some Asian lads can be quite rough when provoked by racist groups," he said.

One Asian youth said in a radio interview that "they still remember from being kids watching their elder brothers or parents getting attacked and that's stuck in their minds. What they want to do now is turn it totally around."

Reports of ethnic "offensive" have also come in from a number of other areas including Cheshire, Lincolnshire, Gloucestershire, Suffolk and Surrey and local Asian politicians admit that it is a worrying trend. They attribute it to a combination of ignorance, poverty and frustration, pointing out that today's youth are taking out their anger after having seen their parents struggle against economic and racial odds. Whatever the reason, it is likely to feed the xenophobia of the anti-immigration lobby.

THE HINDU

19 APR 81

Tories accuse race panel of McCarthyism

By Hasan Suroor

LONDON, APRIL 21. The race row in the run-up to the June general elections has turned nasty with the Conservatives accusing the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) of a "witch hunt" and "McCarthyism" by making public the names of M.P.s who have refused to sign its proforma pledge not to stoke racism in the election campaign.

In what is seen even by its sympathisers as a botched-up exercise in political correctness, the Commission has been putting on its website the names of "refuseniks" in a bid to shame them. This, it is stated, is unnecessary because, for one thing, the pledge is entirely voluntary and, more importantly, the leaders of the three major parties, including the Tory chief, Mr. William Hague have already signed it on behalf of their members. Why should then

individual M.P.s be asked to sign it again and why should their reluctance to do it be seen as coded racism when their leaders have committed them to the pledge?

The difficulty inherent in such public demonstrations of good intent is highlighted by the fact that whereas the right-wing Shadow Home Secretary, Ms. Ann Widdecombe, known for her hardline on a sensitive issue such as asylum, has signed the pledge, the Tory's in-house liberal intellectual, the Shadow Chancellor, Mr. Michael Portillo, has refused. Does it make him less committed to racial equality than his hardline party colleague? "I don't think there are many people who have been quite as outspoken as I have been about the need for inclusiveness and equality of esteem. I think that speaks volumes, much more than signing bits of paper, honestly," Mr Portillo said.

Ms. Widdecombe said though she was signing the pledge, she thought it was a "great insult" to her to suggest that she might "wish in any way to stir up racial hatred." Other Tory members have been more outspoken accusing the Commission of resorting to "blackmail" tactics. A former Tory Minister told the Commission to "go to hell" denouncing the pledge as a "loathsome, offensive document" while another prominent Tory said: "This is where it ends up — a McCarthyite witch hunt where you are what you pledge."

The Commission's clarification that it is not forcing anyone to sign up to the pledge or making any value judgment about those who refuse has not washed. Nevertheless, the row has embarrassed the Tory leadership and Mr. Portillo's intervention on behalf of "refuseniks" — mostly hardliners — is seen as an at-

tempt to broaden his appeal within the party as part of a power struggle in which he is pitted against Mr. Hague. "There was also speculation over Mr. Portillo's motives in refusing to sign, with one Shadow Minister suggesting that he was trying to shift back towards the right to ensure he was not outflanked by Ms. Widdecombe in any future leadership contest," a newspaper reported.

The leadership has been less than consistent in its handling. First, it asked its M.P.s to sign the pledge but when faced with a virtual revolt it said the fact that Mr. Hague had already endorsed it was enough. It also irritated its M.P.s and prospective candidates by warning them against using racist language during the election campaign which the Opposition quickly seized on to suggest that it implied there was latent racism among the Tory rank and file.

THE HINDU

22 APR 2001

57-5
177

Whites, Asians clash in England

LONDON, April 16. - Hundreds of youths ran amok in Bradford throwing petrol bombs and bricks following tension between white and Asian youths in the city, which has a large Asian minority.

Police said today three people had been arrested and four slightly injured by flying glass and stones in the riot. More than 100 additional officers were drafted into the city and were deployed in riot gear.

Cars and pubs were the main targets of violence in the Liggett Green area of the West Yorkshire city. Eight vehicles were set on fire and destroyed in a pub car park.

The riot, which broke out at around 8.30 p.m. "These disturbances were spread over a large area and involved a number of groups," police said. - DPA

THE STATESMAN

17 APR 2001

COMMISSION BLAMES MEDIA AND GOVERNMENT

UK 'most racist' against refugees in Europe

Brussels

RACISM AGAINST asylum seekers and refugees is "particularly acute" in Britain, according to a Council of Europe survey of prejudice across the continent.

The council's European commission against racism and intolerance blames the media for "xenophobic and intolerant coverage". But it also criticises the Government for adopting and enforcing "increasingly restrictive asylum and immigration laws".

The Council of Europe, in Strasbourg, promotes democracy and human rights in its 43 member States. Today's report is the second in almost as many weeks to single Britain out for its negative attitude towards refugees. Last month, the EU's racism and xenophobia monitoring centre in Vienna found that, of all 15 member States, Britain was the most hostile to political refugees.

Field work for the latest report, carried out last May and June, raised concern about the "general negative climate concerning asylum seekers and refugees in the UK". The print media were blamed for "contributing to creating such a climate" by "consistent inflammatory attacks" on asylum seekers and migrants, in local and some national newspapers.

The new report said it was "ill-suited to countering the publication of articles containing general racist assumptions and stereo-

types against particular groups of persons". But the council also said that frequent changes in immigration and asylum policies had played a fundamental and negative role. The report added, "Many politicians have contributed to, or at least not adequately prevented, public debate taking on an increasingly intolerant line with at times racist and xenophobic overtones. Public statements have tended to depict asylum seekers and 'economic migrants' explicitly or by inference, as a threat to security, economic stability and social peace.

Politicians should not only avoid promoting the general assumption that most asylum claimants are not genuine, but also the vilification of those who are considered by the authorities not to have valid asylum claims and who are sometimes defined as 'economic migrants', 'economic refugees', or 'bogus asylum seekers'. "It is unacceptable for politicians to direct the general public's feelings of insecurity on one specific group of persons, irrespective of whether these persons have a valid claim to remain in the country or not."

The researchers praised attempts to counter institutional racism in the police after the Stephen Lawrence inquiry report, but said racial prejudice in the police "continued to constitute an element of concern".

The Guardian

Animal activists vow to take on bat shooters

Melbourne

ANIMAL ACTIVISTS vowed on Tuesday to attack workers at Melbourne's Royal Botanic Gardens (RBG) who are shooting a colony of bats infesting the famous park.

Garden authorities want to kill an unspecified number of the 20,000-strong population of gray-headed Flying Foxes to prevent them doing further damage to the Garden's plant life.

Activists from the Humane Society for Animal Welfare held a protest outside the Garden's main gates, before setting up a protest camp outside a nearby cafe. Society president Lawrence Pope said the plan by the garden's management to cull the bats represented "an ecological crisis being responded to in a 1950s way."

He said members of his group would occupy the tents 24 hours a day, seven days a week, in an attempt to ensure the animals' safety. "We'll be over the fences and wrestling the guns off the people doing the shooting," Pope said. "Make no mistake of that, we're animal activists not just letter writers." Unidentified protesters have threatened to cut down a tree in the garden for every bat killed.

Pope said his group had attempted to raise concerns with RBG's director Dr Phil Moors and Environment Minister Sheryl Garbutt but all pleas had fallen on deaf ears.

Moors said last week the bats, which have destroyed some valuable plant life in the gardens, would either be shot with low-velocity, short-range weapons or given lethal injections.

AP

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

10 APR 2000

The U.N., racism and caste — I

By Gail Omvedt

10-12
9/4

THE WORLD Congress on Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance will be held in South Africa from August 31 to September 7, marking the culmination of the International Year of the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. The conference itself is a testimony to an ongoing fight for social justice, to battles won as well as battles remaining. The very fact that it is being held in South Africa is a tribute to Mr. Nelson Mandela and a symbol of the victory won when the apartheid regime, representing one of the most extreme examples of racism, yielded to world-wide democratic movements. The decision to hold such a conference marks the determination not to be content with a few significant steps forward, but to move ahead and annihilate all the vestiges and forms of the brutal discrimination that for so long has tyrannised over the majority of the peoples of the world.

The South Africa conference also marks a big step ahead for the global Dalit movement. After over two-and-a-half decades of organising, caste is being recognised as a form of racist-related discrimination and will be discussed in United Nations forums. Two-and-a-half decades of obstructionism by the Indian Government and the Indian elite is being overcome.

The beginnings of this world-level Dalit organising can be traced to the period of the Emergency, when in August 1975 Dalits in the U.S. under the leadership of Dr. Laxmi Berwa organised a demonstration against the visit of Indira Gandhi. Dr. Berwa, a physician practising in Washington D.C., had mobilised under the banner of VISION, "Volunteers in Service to India's Oppressed and Neglected." Dr. Berwa's organising had also illustrated one of the first examples of unity between Dalits and Black Americans (African-Americans), for he was offered the chance to present his case on radio stations controlled by African-Americans in Washington. For perhaps the first time, in the very backyard of the Indian Embassy, stories of atrocities on Dalits and the continuing burden of casteism could be heard by Americans, whose image of India

had been only that of the "land of Gandhi." About the same time, a small businessman in Toronto, Mr. Yogesh Warhade, founded the Ambedkar Mission and began efforts to take the cause of Dalits to the forums of the United Nations. In England, Mr. T. Hirekar began to work along similar lines, and Buddhist groups began to organise. Gradually, a world-wide Dalit movement began to take shape.

It has not been easy. Since Dalits are among the poorest sections of India, migration has been a rare option for them; even among migrants to the Gulf, Dalits from Kerala have been very under-represented compared to the general popula-

kar Mission have paid off, and the growing human rights movement has begun to hear the slogan, "Dalit rights are human rights." Not only have Dalit-oriented NGOs sprung up to take the issue to the new World Conference on Racism, but a group of enterprising activists has begun Dalit and Bahujan e-mail forums and an excellent website, www.ambedkar.org. Similarly, efforts to build connections between African-Americans and Dalits have gone on. One of the first attempts was a conference in 1986, also organised at Columbia University, dealing with Untouchability and Racism, drawing together Black scholars and Indian Dalit scholars as well as non-Dalit scholars

that this would only lead to "diluting" the efforts to eliminate racism. This official position has most recently been put by the Attorney-General, Mr. Soli Sorabjee, who argues in addition that the issue of caste is an "internal" matter. It is sad that the country which has not hesitated to condemn racism and apartheid elsewhere should be so sensitive on the issue of caste that it should oppose this form of "globalisation" and try to retreat behind a saffron curtain on the issue of human rights within the country. As Ms. Smita Nirula, a well-known activist on the issue of Dalit rights, has argued, India is a signatory to many U.N. rights documents condemning discrimination on the basis of "descent"; yet in this case it has made every effort to block the issue and has never been ready to have it discussed in Parliament. "While countries may ignore the pronouncements of U.N. treaty bodies, they cannot ignore their own Constitutions or the voices of their citizens. The spirit of this conference and own constitutional commitment to freedom of expression, equality, and the abolishment of untouchability demands no less." Indians may find it demeaning to be condemned for forms of racism, but what is truly demeaning is the effort to block discussion, the refusal to have social transparency before the world.

Unfortunately, leading intellectuals too have supported the Government position. A major example was an article in *The Hindu* on March 10, 2001 by Mr. Andre Beteille. Mr. Beteille, however, indulges in some rhetorical overkill; for he not only denies that caste has anything to do with racism, but even appears to be against the effort by the U.N. to deal with racism. "What is neither understandable nor excusable," he writes, "is the attempt by the United Nations to revive and expand the idea of race, ostensibly to combat the many forms of social and political discrimination prevalent in the world." Mr. Beteille has taken an extreme position, but it would still be useful to deal with the questions raised by his arguments: what is racism, what is race, and what is the relation between race and caste, or racism and casteism?

Indians may find it demeaning to be condemned for forms of racism, but what is truly demeaning is the effort to block discussion, the refusal to have transparency before the world.

tion. In the U.S., the situation is even more severe. Historically speaking, there were never large sections of working class Indians who migrated to the U.S., unlike Chinese and Japanese populations; those who did (Sikhs to California) were forbidden to bring their wives. For this reason, the NRI community in the U.S. today is one of the most affluent among minorities, and it is even more upper caste-dominated than India as a whole. Perhaps this explains why, when NRIs in the New York area raised money to finance a chair of South Asian Studies at the University of Columbia, they refused suggestions to let it be named after Columbia University's most famous Indian graduate, Dr. Ambedkar. The Vishwa Hindu Parishad and similar organisations have found fertile field among Indians in the U.S., and sites relating to India on the Internet are clearly Hindutva dominated. Those Dalits going abroad have rarely been in the universities, more often working outside as engineers, doctors, or occasional small businessmen.

However, long years of organising work by groups such as VISION and the Ambed-

dealing with issues of caste. In more recent years, journals such as *Dalit Voice* have organised tours of India by representatives of African-American groups. The Conference Against Racism is one example of such linkages being recognised.

Unfortunately, the Union Government has from the beginning offered adamant resistance to taking up the issue of caste at the U.N. — just as it has resisted the efforts of adivasis to be included among "indigenous peoples." Scholarly study of caste issues has been discouraged (students proposing to do their Ph.D. work on this issue tend to get their visa applications refused) and, following the Columbia conference not only did the Government refuse to let a follow-up conference be held in India, but American organisers of the Columbia conference were denied research visas.

This unwillingness to recognise that caste is a persisting problem of Indian society, with global implications, has continued during recent years, and government spokesmen have opposed having it taken up at the South Africa conference, arguing

THE HINDU

9 APR 2001

The U.N., racism and caste — II

40-12 199
By Gail Omvedt

MR. ANDRE BETEILLE has argued two major points in his article, "Race and Caste" (*The Hindu*, March 10). One is that racism was based on false science; there are no genetically and biologically different races among human beings. The other is that caste has nothing to do with race, and therefore to include caste in a discussion of racism is erroneous, however politically useful it may seem to some people. In fact his two points contradict one another. Neither caste as a social system nor "racism" are based on actual biological differences among human beings. Both, though, are systems of discrimination that attribute "natural" or essential qualities to people born in specific social groups. In other words, while caste has nothing to do with "race", the justifications of caste discrimination have a lot to do with the social phenomenon of "racism".

As Mr. Beteille has argued, "race" in terms of naturally different species does not exist among human beings. The science of genetics is now strikingly clear on this — there are no significant genetic differences among socially identifiable groups of people; the genetic variation among individuals is by far greater than any among any society group. But, this is only to say that "racism" as a social phenomenon is based on a lie; it does not provide us an analysis of why that lie has come to exist.

Racism, which is the attribution of "natural" characteristics to groups of human beings, came into full-scale existence in the last few centuries, largely in connection with imperialism. In order to justify the brutalities of conquest and subjugation, the non-white peoples conquered by the colonial powers had to be viewed, and were viewed, as less than human. The new biological sciences and even genetics came in handy for this purpose. Suddenly skin color and the shape of heads could be taken as representing some inherent biological and genetic features which had larger implications. Dominance was asserted to be the result of the "natural" (biological, genetic) superiority of white European peoples, who

had the god-given charge of caring for the "lesser" peoples of the world.

This connection of racism with recent European-based imperialism is not to say that cultures of non-white peoples, whether Chinese or Japanese or the Africans themselves, have lacked systems of discrimination similar to "racism". It is simply that the European form has been dominant in the world over most of the last centuries, and has been linked with the strongest forms of oppression.

Racism, or ideas of innate, biological

and Tamil Brahmins and Tamil Untouchables were not racially different.

However, what has to be answered is why this "Aryan theory" proved so attractive to Indians themselves, why interpreting caste in terms of race has been so pervasive. The reason is precisely because of its resonance with indigenous themes of caste. For caste, like race, is based on the notion that socially defined groups of people have inherent, natural qualities or "essences" that assign them to social positions, make them fit for specific duties

The fact that the United Nations is holding a conference on racism is not a matter of perpetuating notions of 'race'... Racism and casteism cannot be annihilated by ignoring their existence.

superiority and inferiority is, as Mr. Beteille himself has noted, a very "plastic" concept. All kinds of "races" have been postulated; class differences themselves were even interpreted at times in terms of race. It was quite natural, then, that when the British conquered India at the time of the full-fledged flourishing of racist concepts, when they were puzzled by the phenomenon of caste, that they should interpret it in terms of race. Thus, linguistic similarities among many of the languages of India and European languages were linked to groups such as the Aryans, identified as racial types, and using the notion of an "Aryan conquest", the argument was made that the upper three *varnas* were descended from the Indo-European "Aryans", and the Shudras, Adivasis and Dalits from non-Aryan indigenous people. In fact, racism in India has been as much a lie as elsewhere; the millennia of mixing of linguistic-ethnic groups, Aryan, Dravidian, Sino-Tibetan, Austro-Asiatic, has resulted in little clear distinction between caste categories. Ambedkar himself was categoric in rejecting the "Aryan theory" or the racial theory of caste. Caste was not a racial division but a division of races, he said (still using the category); Punjabi Brahmins and Punjabi Untouchables were ethnically the same,

and occupations; it is their *swadharma* to carry out these duties. The word *jati* has been applied to species of plants and animals; and quite naturally many Indians thought of human castes as similar to such species. Thus, when the Buddha sought to refute the notion of birth-determined caste, two and a half millennia ago, he referred to the basic physical similarity of all human beings. According to the Sutta-Nipata, when asked by Vasettha, a Brahman, to settle a debate between him and a friend about whether it is "birth" or "life" that makes a Brahman, the Buddha replies that whereas grass and trees, insects, snakes, fish and birds have diverse species — he uses the term *jati* — among humans this is not so. "Men alone show not that nature stamps them as different *jatis*. They differ not in hair, head, ears or eyes, in mouth or nostrils, not in eyebrows, lips, throat, shoulders, belly, buttocks, back or chest." He then goes on to say that one who lives by keeping cows is a farmer or *kassako*; one who lives by handicrafts is a tradesman or *sippiko*; one who lives by selling merchandise is a *vanijjo*; one who lives by services done for hire is a *peppiko* or wage-worker; one who lives by taking things not his is a robber; one who lives by warfare is a *yodhajivao* or soldier; one who lives by

sacrificial rites is a *yajako* or priest; one who rules is a monarch or *raja*. This denial of innate, inborn differences between *jatis* contrasted with arguments in the Manusmriti that, for example, Shudras were by essence, by nature, designed to serve, that they were created as servants. Thus, because such notions of "natural" differences lay behind justification of the *varnas*, it is perhaps not so surprising that when the British put forward their racial theory of caste, it was accepted by so many Indians also. The original theological justification — *varnas* created out of the original Purusha — could be replaced by a pseudo-scientific justification. Thus, caste is not based on race; but the theories justifying caste, or caste as an ideological construct, were similar enough to racism to allow a racial interpretation of caste. (It has to be added also that many of the Indian elite, including Gandhi, used sociologically themes of a harmo- niously functioning society to justify an idealised *varna* system).

The fact that the United Nations is holding a conference on racism is not a matter of perpetuating notions of "race". Indeed, significant progress in most countries has been made over the last decade in fighting existing forms of racism, caste discrimination and similar social forms. This is true also in India. Yet it would be foolhardy to say that racism or caste discrimination do not exist, whether we are talking about the United States, South Africa itself, Japan where an indigenous group similar to Untouchables, the Burakumin, have been organising, or India. Racism and casteism cannot be annihilated by ignoring their existence. Policies to eradicate these social evils require full consciousness of their extent, knowledge of their various expressions, and will to take public action. In a global age, fighting racism, caste discrimination and similar phenomenon means global alliances and international as well as national policies. There is no reason for a government representing the Indian people to fight this; if the government does so, that means it is representing very different interests.

(Concluded)

THE HINDU
10 APR 2001

Racial violence in Cincinnati subsides

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

WASHINGTON, APRIL 13. After four days of racial violence the mid western city of Cincinnati is quiet as police went about the task of apprehending violators of a 10-hour curfew imposed on Thursday night.

The Mayor, Mr. Charles Luken, clamped the curfew after police witnessed an orgy of violence and sporadic looting in the aftermath of Timothy Thomas, African American lad, being shot dead by a white police officer. The officer was trying to apprehend Thomas and arrest him for failing to appear in court on misdemeanor charges and traffic violations. He has been placed on administrative leave.

The officer, according to one version, shot and killed Thomas at close range when he believed that the victim was reaching for a weapon. And this set off widespread rioting in the city of about 350,000 people.

While the Governor of the State of Ohio ordered the Highway Patrol to assist the city police, the Mayor has said that he will request for the National Guards if the situation went out of hand. As of early Friday morning the indications are that the city may be limping back to normality.

Cincinnati has not witnessed this kind of scene since the time Dr. Martin Luther King was assassinated. But what has been building up in this city is a perception of the local police harassing African Americans. Statistics have it that since 1995, some 15 African American men have been gunned down by the police, four since last November.

Officials in the city like the Mayor have been asking people to separate the issues—the issue of harassment of African Americans



Mr. Kweisi Mfume, president of the NAACP, hugs Ms. Angela Leisure, mother of Timothy Thomas, at a meeting in Cincinnati, on Thursday. Thomas was shot and killed by Cincinnati police over the weekend. — AP

by the police and the ongoing violence.

The situation appeared to get out of hand on Wednesday when rioters aside from damaging local businesses and looting also dragged a white motorist out of a

car. But the neighbourhood came to the help of this motorist. A police officer was also shot at but escaped with minor injuries.

The President for the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People, the NAACP,

has appealed for calm. "Everybody is angry. I'm angry, but anger has its place", remarked Mr. Kweisi Mfume. And the President, Mr. George W Bush, called the Attorney General, Mr. John Ashcroft, to discuss ways of restoring calm.

THE HINDU

14 APR 2001

HD-12 The Tories' xenophobia

12/4
By Hasan Suroor

NOT SINCE Enoch Powell's infamous "rivers of blood" speech on immigration nearly four decades ago has a responsible British politician's statement provoked so much outrage as the Tory leader, Mr. William Hague's remark at a party conference recently that Britain would become a "foreign land" if the Labour Government was allowed to go ahead with its pro-Europe policy and "soft" approach to asylum seekers. It was not a fleeting, off-the-cuff remark, which would have been bad enough, but a well-rehearsed performance clearly intended, as his own party veteran, Mr. Michael Heseltine, pointed out, to pander to a "growing xenophobia" in the country. Mr. Heseltine, who is a former Deputy Prime Minister and remains a considerable presence in the party despite his strong pro-Europe views, was so infuriated that he publicly voiced doubts about voting for his own party in the coming general election.

Any doubts that Mr. Hague may have not meant exactly what he said were removed after he insisted that he stood by his remarks and indeed would not hesitate to repeat them. He accused his critics of making a virtue of political correctness and of being afraid to speak the truth. His speech, he claimed, represented the "commonsense instincts" of the British people and his critics could cry themselves hoarse if they so wished. "Tony Blair and his Ministers can sneer all they like. But they're not sneering at me. They're sneering at the British people whose opinions they hold in contempt." Brave words but the fact is that his comment has caused embarrassment in his own party and even the Euro-sceptics and those who favour a tougher asylum policy regret Mr. Hague's choice of words at a time when the party is trying to soften its public image in the build-up to the elections. This is how he put it: he invited his audience to a "journey to a foreign land — to Britain after a second term of Tony Blair" in which the British currency would be "gone forever" and asylum seekers would be lurking at every street corner. Declaring that the general election would be the last chance to "save

Britain" from foreigners — the bureaucrats in Brussels on the one hand and asylum seekers at Dover and Heathrow on the other — he said a Tory Government would not allow Britain to become a "soft touch" for people fleeing their own countries for greener pastures.

The speech was drafted by Mr. Hague's new speech writer Mr. Daniel Hanman, known for his rabid anti-Europeanism, and there is no doubt that the anti-Eu-

whether Britain should or should not join the single currency need not be reduced to bashing the Germans and the French by portraying them as ugly foreigners out to overrun Britain. As Mr. Heseltine said: "Does anyone really think that France is a foreign country? Or that Germany is a foreign country? These are great giant nation states fighting for their self-interest and they believe their self-interest is better sought and protected and advanced in

the other hand, has shot up to a formidable 20 points despite the foot and mouth crisis and the shadow of sleaze.

Why is he then persisting with it? One argument is that Mr. Hague is whipping up xenophobia against his better instincts, and perhaps on bad advice from his aides. This has an echo of the familiar argument used in India to whitewash a certain BJP leader despite his own pride in being an unadulterated RSS product — that he is a "good man" but caught up in bad company. Good men do not have to fall in bad company and even if they do they are expected to have enough moral courage to renounce it — or at least avoid flirting with their company's more dangerous ideas.

The real reason why Mr. Hague and other "good men in bad company" behave as they do is because of the absolute intellectual bankruptcy on the Right which, after the collapse of socialism, has lost even its pretensions to engage in ideas. The result is an agenda solely designed for short-term gains by playing on people's basest of instincts — their racial and religious prejudices, and the imaginary fear of the "foreigner", the outsider. A false sense of combative nationalism which sees all other nationalities as necessarily hostile is deliberately promoted and those who do not agree are cast as "anti-national" who — in Mr. Hague's language — would hand over Britain to "foreigners", pound and all. The Indian electorate is all too familiar with such tactics — right-wing campaigns run in the name of "sentiment", "faith" and "feelings"; and it is also all too familiar with their disastrous consequences.

In Britain, liberal opinion is still deeply rooted and the state enlightened enough not to let the Tories get away with what their more rabid peers in India were able to do. More importantly, the country is enjoying an economic boom and people are too busy reaping its benefits to care for such distractions. But seeds of prejudice, once sown, yield a bitter harvest on a bad day; and Mr. Hague is doing his best to sow those seeds. He may be acting against his better instincts but as a right-wing politician, exhausted of ideas, he is acting true to type.

In Britain, liberal opinion is still deeply rooted and the state enlightened enough not to let the Tories get away with what their more rabid peers in India were able to... But the seeds of prejudice, once sown, can yield a bitter harvest on a bad day.

rope and anti-asylum sentiment in Britain is very high which the Tories are keen to exploit — and legitimately so. But what has surprised commentators is the coded racism of Mr. Hague's rhetoric and the length to which he is inclined to go to capitalise on fears essentially arising out of ignorance. Those who know him say it is particularly unfortunate because personally Mr. Hague is not a racist — or even as congenitally right-wing as some grassroots Tories or some of his colleagues in the Shadow Cabinet. Certainly he is no Enoch Powell and yet he has spoken a language which is dangerously close to "Powellspeak".

The Liberal Democrat leader, Mr. Charles Kennedy, echoed this saying: "I don't believe that William Hague is a racist. But by his use of emotive language over the issue of asylum and immigration and now by his claim that Britain is becoming a 'foreign land' William is playing on some people's fears and pandering to some people's prejudices... by choosing his language so carelessly he shows himself to be soft on racism and soft on the causes of racism." It is argued that the Tories have every right to raise issues which they think would help them in the election and asylum and Europe are two such issues but they must ensure a certain literate and civilised level of debate. A debate on

concert with their neighbours than apart from them."

Raising the bogey of "foreign-ness" on the asylum issue is even more dangerous because there are hundreds of asylum seekers in Britain and such inflammatory statements can make them more vulnerable to prejudice than they already are. Even *The Sun*, not known for restraint at the best of times, found Mr. Hague's speech extremely distasteful though the Tories have sought to dismiss it as a part of its pro-Labour campaign. The tabloid accused Mr. Hague of "flirting" with "extremism" and said his speech "left a nasty taste in the mouth." *The Times*, which has strong reservations on Europe and the Blair Government's somewhat vague policy on asylum, was equally critical of Mr. Hague's tactics. A commentator, Ms. Mary Ann Sieghart, argued that Mr. Hague, by claiming to appropriate the "commonsense instincts" of the British people, had "underestimated the tolerance of the British people and his rhetoric will have struck a chord only with those who would never have voted Labour anyway". There could not be a more emphatic popular rejection of his theme than the fact that according to a recent opinion poll 58 per cent of the people think that the Tories cannot win the next election under Mr. Hague. The Labour's lead, on

THE HINDU

82 APR 2001