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Maika-Telekom Scandal

UNANSWERED QUESTIONS

- AN UNBELIEVABLE COVER-UP
- RELEVANCE OF MAHATMA GANDHI
- WOMEN OF SARAJEVO SPEAK



The Maika-Telekom shares investigation:

UNANSWERED QUESTIONS



ACA Director-General Zulkifli Mahmood



Samy Vellu

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The 17-month investigation into the Maika-Telekom shares scandal by the ACA concluded with its Director-General Zulkifli Mahmood clearing Samy Vellu of any wrong-doing but unfortunately without clearing the doubts in the minds of the Malaysians.

If anything, his statement had not only raised many questions connected with the Maika scandal, it had apparently undermined the credibility of the ACA as an independent organisation dedicated to fighting corruption, writes ANIL NETTO.

MIC President Samy Vellu appeared to be absolutely delighted with the recent six-paragraph statement from the Anti-Corruption Agency on August 26 clearing him of any irregularity in the Maika-Telekom shares controversy. But the verdict was hardly convincing. Indeed, it left many questions unanswered and even undermined the credibility of the ACA as an independent organisation dedicated to fighting corruption.

The ACA investigation, which lasted 17 months, appeared to be very thorough. Samy Vellu and others were grilled at length on a few occasions and the flamboyant Minister was even asked to declare his assets. Unfortunately, the declaration was never made public. A detailed disclosure of Samy Vellu's many assets would have certainly been of great interest to the public.

The ACA statement pointed out that Maika had rejected the 10 million share allocation because it was financially incapable of coming up with the necessary financing. However, this directly contradicted Maika Managing Director

"Far from clearing Samy Vellu, it has instead raised fresh concern about the independence of the ACA itself"

Did all the money go to TAFE College or was some of it diverted elsewhere?

Perhaps the most serious flaw in the ACA report was its failure to address the whole basis of special allocations of shares every time

Were similar allocations made to RM2 shell companies linked to other Barisan component parties.

What are the controls in place to ensure that the funds from the eventual sales of these shares are used for the benefit of the underprivileged



Maika investors being manhandled...

"A detailed disclosure of Samy Vellu's many assets would have certainly been of great interest to the public"

Rama Iyer's public statement that Maika had already obtained a RM50 million loan facility to buy the shares.

The ACA confirmed that most of the money was channelled to the party's education arm, the MIED. But it failed to explain in detail how the funds were used by the MIED.

there is a privatisation project.

What criteria are used to select the companies for special allocations of shares?

Who makes the final decision and approves such allocations?

How is it possible that RM2 shell companies could be entitled to three million shares each?

and not misappropriated by those in positions of power?

These are the crucial, unanswered questions which make the ACA report seem almost farcical. Far from clearing Samy Vellu, it has instead raised fresh concern about the independence of the ACA itself. It has done nothing to boost the confidence of the public in the ACA. The controversy surrounding the Maika-Telekom shares scandal appears to be far from over. Even the ACA itself seems to be having second thoughts and has resumed the investigation in earnest, but this time by going after various small fries linked to the Maika episode. ■

The Maika-Telekom Shares Scandal: An Unbelievable Cover-up!

Parliamentary Opposition leader, LIM KIT SIANG had reacted with disbelief, outrage and disgust over the ACA findings which cleared Samy Vellu. According to Lim Kit Siang it is one of the greatest cover-ups of financial scandals in Malaysian history.

I read the short six-paragraph press statement by Anti-Corruption Agency (ACA) Director General Zulkifli Mahmood clearing MIC President Samy Vellu and all others in the RM100 million Maika-Telekom shares scandal again and again, each time with increasing disbelief, outrage and disgust. It has failed to give a convincing case for the clearing of Samy Vellu.

I have totally lost confidence in the Anti-Corruption Agency in the fight against corruption. It has lost all credibility and respect. If the ACA were to conduct a survey today, it would find that over 90 percent of Malaysians have lost confidence in

it. It is nothing but a shield to protect corruption, breach of trust, abuse of power and unethical practices in high political places. The ACA should more appropriately change its name to Anti Small-Corruption Bureau.

I am greatly demoralised and discouraged because Zulkifli has failed to back his finding with facts and figures, dates and a chronology of events after 17 months of investigation. It is one of the greatest cover-ups of financial scandals in Malaysian history.

Such data is central and basic to the truth about the scandal which defrauded 66,000 Maika shareholders. My suspension from Parliament at the height of my expose of the scandal can now be seen in its correct perspective.

DOUBTFUL 'FACTS'

The following 'facts' disclosed by the ACA are open to challenge:

- The Government decided to allocate 10 million shares to the MIC for the Indian community.

- The Treasury offered 10 million Telekom shares to Maika in a letter dated 27 September 1990. The Managing Director of Maika, G K Rama Iyer informed Samy Vellu in a letter dated 28 September 1990 that since Maika's financial position was tight, it would only be able to take up one million shares.
- Samy Vellu informed the Treasury, which withdrew the offer.
- In letters dated 6 October 1990, the Treasury instead offered the 10 million shares to the following parties:

Maika	1 million
Clearway Sdn Bhd	3 million
S B Management Services Sdn Bhd	3 million
Advance Personal Computers Bhd	3 million
TOTAL	10 million

"I have totally lost confidence in the Anti-Corruption Agency in the fight against corruption"

-Lim Kit Siang



- The offer was made without any condition as to how the shares were to be utilised.

Maika not MIC

On 12 November 1992, Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister's Department Othman Abdul reiterated that the 10 million Telekom shares were given through Maika Holdings. The Maika Board as well as Rama Iyer himself publicly denied that Maika had rejected the 10 million shares allocation. In fact, Maika was able to take up the full 10 million shares because of a RM50 million loan facility obtained from Arab-Malaysian Merchant Bankers Bhd.

The Maika Board also denied Deputy Finance Minister Ghani Othman's statement on 12 May 1992 that his Ministry had diverted the nine million shares to the other three companies on the recommendation of Maika. In fact, Maika didn't even know that these three companies existed.

(Two of these companies - S B Management and Clearway - were actually RM2 shell companies.)

Did the ACA interview Finance Minister Anwar Ibrahim, Ghani and Othman - who had taken a common stand throughout 1992 that the shares were not given to the MIC but to Maika - before rejecting their version of the events?

Samy lied?

Samy Vellu had said in his 'tell-all' press conference on 15 May 1992 that the three companies had promised that the entire net proceeds from the sales of the nine million shares would be donated to TAFE College. Has the ACA seen and confirmed the documentation?

He said that the three companies had arranged loans from Commerce International Merchant Bankers through Rashid Hussain Nominees Sdn Bhd using only the shares as collateral with the stipulated condi-

tion that if the share price fell below RM7.50 upon listing, the borrowers would have to top up the balance, otherwise the financier would sell off the shares to recover the loan.

It is apparent that Samy Vellu lied at his 'tell-all' press conference when he said that the total profit of RM7.168 million from the eventual sale of 8.92 million Telekom shares by the three companies had been channelled to the MIED in three instalments of RM2.318 million (November 1990), RM100,000 (December 1990) and RM4.75 million (March and April 1992).

Samy Vellu went on to provide details of the sales of the Telekom shares:

• Clearway

Sold 3 million shares on 7 November 1990.

Profit: RM2.318 million - paid to the MIED in November 1990 ('Cash' receipt no. 3701 dated 24 November 1990)

• Advance Personal Computers/ S B Management

Sold 5.5 million shares on 8-15 November 1990. Bought 3 million Renong shares with part payment of RM1.95 million.

Profit: RM100,000 - purportedly paid to the MIED in December 1990. ('Cash' receipt no. 3702 dated 2 January 1991)

Sold 420,000 Telekom shares in March/April 1992. Profit RM4.75 million.

(Balance of Telekom shares with APC = 80,000)

Total Profit = RM7.168 million

ACA's contradictions

Samy Vellu's contention that every single sen of the total profit of RM7.168 million was handed over to the MIED contradicts some of the following findings of the ACA as announced by Zulkifli on 26 August 1993:

- Clearway sold off all the three million shares. The proceeds were given to the MIED to pay

the consultants and to reimburse the cost of construction of TAFE College. This probably refers to the RM2.318 million profit. But why were the proceeds in 'cash' and not by cheque as is the normal practice?

- S B Management sold off all three million shares.

- APC disposed only part of their shares. Part of the proceeds of the sale were used to purchase Renong shares and the balance voluntarily handed over to Samy Vellu with the instruction that the money be applied in a manner he deemed fit for the benefit of the Indian community.

Does this mean that there was no second instalment payment of RM100,000 to the MIED? The ACA did not confirm that this amount was paid to the MIED.

- Subsequently, APC disposed of the balance of the Telekom shares and handed the proceeds to the MIED.

Does this refer to the net profit of RM4.75 million (the ACA did not confirm that this third instalment was paid to the MIED either) or to the further disposal of the balance of 80,000 Telekom shares held by APC?

- Over a period of time, S B Management and APC sold the Renong shares and the proceeds were handed over to the MIED.

How much were the proceeds from the sale?

- The money handed over to Samy Vellu was used to buy three million Tenaga shares which are still in the custody of the MIC.

But it would be clearly impossible for Samy Vellu to purchase three million Tenaga shares from the profits of the sale of the

Telekom shares whichever way you look at it. Since Anwar had categorically denied allotting any Tenaga shares to the MIC, the three million Tenaga shares must have been purchased on the open market at a cost of RM25 million (it was listed at RM8.50 on 29 May 1992). This far exceeded the total profit from the sale of the Telekom shares amounting to only RM 7.168 milion.

In any case the claim by the ACA that Tenaga shares had been purchased using the proceeds of the sale of Telekom shares destroyed Samy Vellu's claim that "every single sen of that money had been spent by the party's education arm, the MIED, on TAFE College."

It is also very interesting to note that Samy Vellu never mentioned anything about the purchase of Tenaga shares at his 'tell-all' press conference. If he really did buy the three million Tenaga shares out of the proceeds of the 10 million Telekom shares, then this amounts to a criminal breach of trust because, as Samy Vellu had disclosed at his press conference, the three companies - namely APC, S B Management and Clearway - "had promised that the entire net proceeds out of the sale of the shares would be donated to TAFE College.

DEPLORABLE RECORD

Zulkifli's failure to provide facts and figures was obvious. The discrepancies and contradictions with Samy Vellu's statement would have become all too glaring. Such omissions amount to a cover-up.

These were not the only lies from Samy Vellu at his press conference. Another lie was his claim that the price of Telekom shares following the listing of the counter "went down and down from RM6 to RM5.30, so we were panicking. We consulted professional advice and decided to

"Did the ACA interview Finance Minister Anwar Ibrahim, Ghani and Othman - who had taken a common stand throughout 1992 that the shares were not given to the MIC but to Maika - before rejecting their version of the events?"

sell them off as otherwise, all three companies would go bankrupt."

In reality, the Telekom counter had never fallen to RM5.30. After once falling to RM5.85 on the day of listing on 7 November, it had kept rising for the rest of November and from 13 December 1990 went over RM7 per share.

These examples illustrate why the ACA statement clearing Samy Vellu is completely unacceptable. Recently, the Attorney General seemed to be passing the buck saying that it was up to Zulkifli to decide whether there was a case for prosecution. This is against the law, as it is clearly provided under Section 26 of the Prevention of Corruption Act 1961 that "a prosecution under the Act shall not be instituted except by or with the consent of the Public Prosecutor (who is the A-G himself)."

Actually, A-G Abu Talib has a deplorable record in upholding the law by prosecuting top officials involved in other scandals as evidenced by his failure to act in the RM2.5 billion BMF scandal and the Vijandran videotape scandal.

WHITE PAPER NEEDED

Dr Mahathir should present a White Paper in Parliament to give a full report on the scandal. The White Paper should make public the full extent of the family assets declared by Samy Vellu and other top MIC leaders.

Has Samy Vellu been able to account for all the wealth and properties which he had declared? If so, why hasn't the ACA made a full public disclosure? Let the Malaysian public know whether the

family assets of Samy Vellu are worth RM10 million, RM100 million or RM1 billion and how he amassed such wealth and assets.

When I first exposed the Maika scandal, Samy Vellu protested by asking why I didn't ask how many shares were allocated to other Barisan parties.

This outburst is significant. Samy Vellu seems to be implying that the Maika scandal is only 'small fry' compared to other bigger scandals involving other Barisan parties. **Is this the reason why the ACA and the government covered-up the scandal?**

This could also explain why the A-G failed to prosecute MIC leaders for assault and violence against Maika shareholders and others in connection with their protest over the scandal.

Malaysia today stands in sharp contrast to the other fast-growing economies in the East Asian region. In countries like South Korea, Taiwan, Japan and China, there are high-level campaigns to root out corruption and money politics. It is the top political leadership and the regulatory agencies which are setting the pace.

The fall of the Liberal Democratic Party government in Japan despite its incredible economic success should be an eye-opener. It should serve as a warning to those who argue that graft and corruption are acceptable to Asians because they are necessary evils and unavoidable "lubricants" to grease the palms of political leaders and civil servants if an economy wants to graduate into the ranks of the 'Little Dragons.' ■

What Others Say

• Is Samy Vellu Really Innocent?

The Anti-Corruption Agency (ACA) have stated they find the MIC leader, Datuk Seri Samy Vellu, innocent of any criminal wrong-doing relating to the allocation of Telekom shares to Maika Holdings. Samy Vellu, who has consistently maintained his innocence, but not been consistent about very much else, would thus appear to have been vindicated.

Samy Vellu has certainly not been consistent about who the 10 million Telekom shares were supposed to go to. First he said they were to be allocated to Maika, the investment arm of MIC; but since Maika did not have the finances, the shares were allocated to other parties representing Indian interests. Then, it was made public that Maika in fact had arranged a loan that would have allowed it to take up the full 10 million Telekom shares. Following this, Samy Vellu changed his tune. The 10 million shares were not being offered to Maika but to MIC, he now said. And MIC it seems, allocated only one million Telekom shares for Maika and the rest were for other companies that would make profits to be channelled to the MIC educational institution, Tafe College.

MOF letter

A letter was issued by the Ministry of Finance (MOF) offering Maika 10 million Telekom shares in the flotation of the utility company. Soon after getting this letter, Maika Chief Executive Officer, Tan Sri Rama Iyer, rang up Samy Vellu to inform him of the allocation.

Curiously, Samy Vellu immediately told Tan Sri Rama Iyer there

had been a mistake and he would check with the ministry officials on how many shares were really offered to Maika.

Even before the MOF realised there had been a "mistake" in sending out the letter offering Maika 10 million Telekom shares Samy Vellu somehow already knew there was a "mistake". Subsequently, MOF officials "clarified" Maika was only being offered 1 million Telekom shares.

What was not clarified was how the mistake arose and on what grounds the MOF agreed to allocate 9 million shares to 3 other obscure companies supposedly representing the interests of the Indian community while Maika itself only received one million shares.

Maika shortchanged

Samy Vellu has not been consistent in his public statements on whether the full amount was initially offered to Maika. Neither has the leader of the Indian party in the Barisan been consistent about why Maika was not to be offered the full 10 million shares.

"...not allowing Maika to get the full allocation of Telekom shares, and thus undermining Maika's profits, is a criminal breach of trust."

First he said Maika could not afford the shares. When Tan Sri Rama Iyer produced the letter from Arab-Malaysian Merchant Bank offering Maika a loan to take up the full 10 million shares, Samy changed his tune and said the shares were not being offered to Maika because it

had a poor track record in its investments.

But what was the record for the 3 companies that together took up the 9 million Telekom shares under instruction from MIC? Two of these companies were in fact shell companies with paid-up capital of RM2 each.

Is it pure coincidence that the leader of the opposition, Lim Kit Siang found letter-heads and business cards that showed Samy Vellu's son as a director of one of the companies? Samy Vellu, of course, claimed these items were fakes.

Dubious dealings

Of the 3 companies that equally received the 9 million Telekom shares in October 1990, Clearway Sdn Bhd, sold its 3 million shares within a month for a net profit of RM 2.3 million.

The other two companies, Advance Personal Computers (APC) and SB Management Sdn Bhd (SBM) which together received 6 million Telekom shares, sold 5.5 million shares also in early November 1990 for a RM2.1 million profit. With this profit, they bought 3 million Renong shares. The remaining half a million Telekom shares were sold only in March-April 1992, just about the time the Maika controversy became public.

The companies supposedly were to make profits from Telekom shares (which was a pretty sure thing given that it was an initial flotation) to be channelled to Tafe. It is hard then to fathom why APC and SBM used the money from selling the Telekom shares to buy shares in Renong.

Why did the profits not go straight to Tafe? Why were the funds instead put in Renong shares which appear not to have been sold until 1992?

Had these companies become the investment arm of Tafe? Who

CLEARWAY SDN BHD

Oct 9, 1990	bought 3 million Telekom shares	15,000,000.00 rgt
Nov 7, 1990	sold 3 million Telekom shares at 5.95 rgt each	17,850,000.00 rgt
Less Expenses:		
Brokerage		178,500.00 rgt
Stamps, etc		17,852.00 rgt
Service fee at 1%		150,000.00 rgt
Splitting & handling charges		25.00 rgt
Interest charges		185,619.27 rgt
		531,996.27 rgt
Nett profit		2,318,003.73 rgt

APC & SB MANAGEMENT SDN BHD

Oct 9, 1990	bought 6 million Telekom shares	30,000,000.00 rgt
Nov 8, 1990	sold 5.5 million Telekom shares	32,637,000.00 rgt
Less expenses		
		899,234.00 rgt
Profit		2,100,766.00 rgt
Nov 15, 1990	bought 3 million Renong shares (part payment)	1,951,656.00 rgt
Less Expenses:		
Admin charges		34,155.00 rgt
Splitting & other charges		14,955.00 rgt
		49,110.00 rgt
Nett profit		100,000.00 rgt
The remaining 500,000 Telekom shares were transacted as follows:-		
March/April 1992	sold 420,000 Telekom shares	
Nett profit		4,750,000.00 rgt
Balance of Telekom shares in hand: 80,000(with APC)		
TOTAL CONTRIBUTION TO TAFE COLLEGE TO DATE		7,168,003.73 rgt

Source: *Malaysian Business*/June 1-15, 1992

would underwrite the losses of this further investment? In fact the Renong shares purchased in November 1990 had gradually fallen in value and by the middle of 1992 were only about half their cost. If there had been profits from the Renong investment, who would have benefited?

APC and SBM held on to 0.5 million of the Telekom shares received in October 1990 and only sold these in 1992.

Why were the shares held for so long? Was there any guarantee that when the shares were sold the profits

would go to Tafe? Is it pure coincidence that these shares were sold just about the time that the public were becoming aware that Maika failed to receive the 10 million Telekom shares it was supposed to have been allocated?

Puzzling ACA decision

For those who have been following the Maika-Telekom issue, there is now a new puzzle. How, in spite of all these coincidences and curiosities, could an investigative body like the ACA come to the conclusion that there had been no

wrong-doing on the part of Samy Vellu? Given his high position in government and allegedly close links to the Prime Minister, many would jump to the conclusion that the ACA investigation was a cover-up.

It is hard for the intelligent public to reconcile the conclusion of the agency with what is known from press reports. Prima facie, not allowing Maika to get the full allocation of Telekom shares, and thus undermining Maika's profits, is a criminal breach of trust.

Shareholders of Maika had put their faith in Samy Vellu and money in Maika. Many had borrowed as much as they could in order to buy Maika shares. Then it transpired that Samy Vellu had nominated 3 other companies to get the bulk of Telekom shares - taking away from Maika RM 120m in profit if it had just held on to the extra 9 million shares up to today.

How could the ACA say there was nothing wrong in diverting profits from Maika to obscure companies with no established record? What were the facts that supported the ACA conclusion?

Without going through all the facts discovered by the ACA it is not easy to see how it reached its conclusion.

If the report remains only for the eyes of the selected few, the credibility of the ACA will be affected. The agency must make public the reasons for its conclusion, or risk its acronym (ACA) being widely perceived as standing for something quite the opposite.

Ram
Bank Officer



AG Abu Talib: No reason to prosecute?

• SOMEBODY IS BLUFFING

Lim Kit Siang said that the ACA is the Accept and Allow Corruption Agency and I agree with him. If there is no case - then there would have been no reason for Zulkifly to submit a report to the AG. There must have been some reason to prosecute!

All along Samy Vellu has said that the shares were given to the MIC but Anwar Ibrahim has said that the shares were given to Maika - he has said that shares are not given to political parties. ACA's final report states that the shares were given to MIC - somebody is bluffing.

We just don't know how the ACA went through the whole matter and came to such a decision.

*S Arulchelvan
Social worker*

• NOT DIFFICULT TO BALANCE ACCOUNTS

In terms of corruption - what has happened is indeed corruption. It is a case of favouritism. What was supposed to go to the shareholders has not gone there. According to the Ministry of Finance the shares were given to Maika. Why is it that the

ACA has never investigated this?

Everybody expected the ACA to do a proper job. We thought that they were doing a good job - with all the hours that were spent in interrogating. However a lot of things have still not been pinpointed. The ACA has not done a proper job. They seem to be only interested in the dollars and cents aspect of the various transactions - it is not difficult to balance accounts - figures can be balanced - this is not difficult at all. They have not examined the procedures involved.

What is going to happen if every politician acts in this way - just taking care of themselves and not caring for the public. What are the ACA's own rules - in coming to such a decision, was a proper investigation carried out?

If the money had gone to Maika all the shareholders would have gained. Each shareholder would have benefited and this would have increased the buying power of the Indian community.

Now that it has been given to Tafe - nobody benefits. Many members of Maika took loans to buy shares - loans from banks like CCB or UAB - they have not received dividends from such investments except for only once all these past 8 years. They are paying interests to the banks and in actual fact are becoming poorer rather than richer by investing in Maika.

Poor people are suffering - the question of why the shares did not go to Maika has still not been clarified.

*Raj
A disastisfied/disgruntled worker*

• SMELLS OF A COVER-UP

The whole thing smells of a cover-up which leads all the way up to the top. It is not as though there was not enough infor-

mation for the ACA ... books were written about it and so many interviews conducted. The explanation by the ACA just doesn't stick.

I suspect it may have something to do with persons higher up and bigger than Samy Vellu. In my view, Samy Vellu has been around long enough and could possibly drag others down with him. In this particular issue, I strongly suspect that the Ministry of Finance may be implicated.

We have a situation where RM 10 million worth of Telekom shares were offered to Maika and the next thing we knew was that a large part of it had been diverted to three companies, one of which allegedly had Samy Vellu's son as its director. Two of them, we know, were RM 2 companies.

And two directors in two of the companies were also on the board of Maika Holdings. Moreover, it was later revealed that Maika had managed to secure financing to purchase the shares ... so why did the Ministry go ahead in diverting the funds?

The question here then would be how the Finance Ministry could approve so much shares to private firms with such vested interests. It is clearly a case of conflict of interest and surely one that could presumably implicate the Finance Minister given the way the Ministry seems to go hand-in-hand with the whole thing.

I don't think the Minister would want any controversy of such dimensions in his way at this moment in time ... one that would make him look bad, now that he is contesting the UMNO deputy president's post.

The whole thing shows very badly on the ACA and this must be questioned with all seriousness. What is the use of an anti-corruption agency that only goes for small fry and which is afraid of the sharks?

*Dr Mohd Nasir Hashim
Human Rights Activist and
Academician*

● NOT SURPRISED!

I have ceased to be surprised at what the ACA does or says. Whatever independence they may have enjoyed in the early years of their formation has been eroded by the tyranny of the executive to virtually nothing. The Samy Vellu-Maika issue is just another case proving how controlled the ACA is by the powers-that-be. Not so long ago, the ACA investigated the case of a Minister who paid RM 100,000 for a RM1 million house and concluded that there was no hanky-panky. Today the Minister is soon to become somebody even more powerful. Why should we be surprised anymore?

Ariokiadass
Union activist and Writer

● ARE WE EXPECTED TO BELIEVE?

The ACA is equipped with up-to-date facilities, trained personnel, money. It took 17 months to investigate this matter. It made Samy Vellu and members of his family declare their assets. It spent hundreds of hours interviewing people connected to the issue. And what do we get in the end? A six-paragraph statement from the ACA director-general that all is well with Maika and Samy Vellu.

Are we expected to believe that? The ACA is perceived as being incompetent and utterly useless or part of a huge conspiracy to cover up this Maika-Telekom shares scandal. Such a conclusion by the ACA does not require 17 months of investigation ... maybe 17 days would be less shocking for us considering the amount of public expenses incurred.

Many people believe that if

Maika, a largely inconsequential organisation, can be offered RM 10 million in Telekom shares, certain other parties and political personalities would possibly have been offered five or even 10 times more. Can we be blamed for suspecting a

conspiracy that involves the top political leadership? ■

Wee Choo Keong
Lawyer and MP for Bukit
Bintang.

Announcement

WE HAVE MOVED

With effect from Sept 1, 1993, our office address is 11, Lintang Pantai Jerjak 2, Century Garden, Batu Uban, 11700 Pulau Pinang.

However, our postal address and telephone/fax number remain unchanged:

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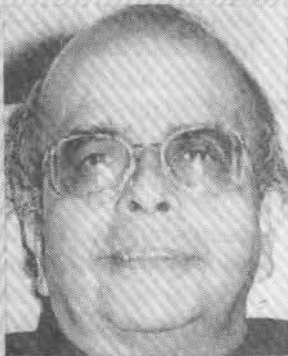
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MAIKA ALLOTTED 10 MILLION SHARES

Excerpts from the Managing Director of Maika Holdings Sdn Bhd Tan Sri G K RAMA IYER's statement on May 16, 1992.



G K Rama Iyer

"On 4 October 1990, AMMBB advised Maika to contact Cik Munirah of the Finance Division of the Ministry of Finance regarding the special allocation of STMB shares to Maika.

The MD, on 4 October 1990, thereupon contacted her by telephone and was told that Maika had been allotted 10 million shares and that she had with her, a letter addressed to Maika to that effect.

The MD immediately sent a senior officer from Maika to collect that letter of allocation.

The letter which was dated 27 September 1990, was thus received by Maika on 4 October.

In view of the offer of 10 million shares, the MD of Maika wrote to the MD of AMMBB, Dato Malek Merican, on 4 October, to raise a loan of \$50 million to finance the share allocation in full.

The MD was only able to contact Dato Seri Samy Vellu by phone at 6.10 am on 5 October 1990.

The MD told him of the offer of the 10 million STMB shares to Maika and the probability of obtaining full loan financing, and that Maika intended to take up the offer.

Dato Seri Samy Vellu replied that there must have been a mistake. The offer to Maika should be for only 1 million shares and not 10 million.

According to Dato Seri Samy Vellu, the remaining 9 million shares were for allocation to "other MIC Bodies".

Further, Dato Seri Samy Vellu stated that he would contact the Ministry of Finance to clarify the position.

On 6 October 1990, Maika received a letter dated 5 October, from AMMBB, on the offer of \$50 million to finance the purchase of the 10 million STMB shares.

On 6 October 1990, Cik Munirah of the Ministry of Finance telephoned to MD of Maika to inform him that the allocation to Maika was 1 million and not 10 million shares.

She refused to give any reason for the retraction.

She stated that she would be sending a fresh letter of offer for the 1 million shares.

The letter dated 6 October 1990 cancelled the first allotment of 10 million shares and instead allotted only 1 million shares."

I STAND BY EVERYTHING I HAVE SAID

"I made a clear statement at the earliest possible opportunity when it became obvious that I had to clarify matters, especially my role in them. At that stage, I gave a full and true factual account supported by all the pertinent documents. At no stage since then have I found it necessary to retract from, correct, add to, or further substantiate my account of the matters. I stand by everything that I have said. Hence the question of my resignation does not arise."

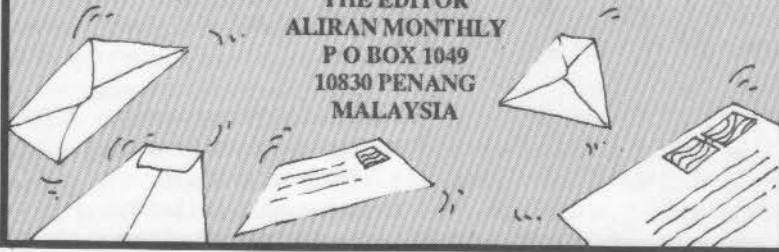
(Tan Sri Rama Iyer on Datuk Samy Vellu's statement that he (Samy) had been exonerated by the ACA and the Prime Minister and thus Tan Sri Rama Iyer should resign. Released to Bernama on 7 Dec 1992.)

LETTERS

We welcome letters from readers. These letters may be edited for purposes of space and clarity. The views may not be those of *Aliran Monthly*. Pseudonyms are accepted but all letters should include the writer's name and address. Letters should preferably be typewritten with double spacing; if handwritten they should be legible.

Letters should be addressed to:

THE EDITOR
ALIRAN MONTHLY
P O BOX 1049
10830 PENANG
MALAYSIA



"New Version of 'Negara Ku' - an Utter Disappointment

It was with a feeling of "Oh no" when I first heard that there was to be a change in the rendition of the national anthem. Now how could anything that was already grand, dignified and solemn and as such supremely qualified to be the nation's anthem be improved upon?

The rationale for the change - that its tempo be speeded up to reflect the country's dynamic progress - is nonsense. It is akin to arguing that sprinters must henceforth sing only in fast tempo!

The new version is fast for the sake of being so and certainly lacking in musical worth. It is beat music employing musical cliches and will not even pass for good march music. And to think what we have given up to be saddled with this in the end!

Were the people's opinions sought on a matter so important as something that represents the country's image at home and abroad? Were our lead-musicians consulted on this?

The national anthem in its pristine state is our link with the past. It is the link between the generation of the era of independence

and that of the present. It is a living historical relic of our nation at its formation and as such warrants preservation in its original form.

Those responsible for this change have in one fell swoop removed all that. The new version? Stand to it - yes. Stand it - no!

*R K Joseph
Pontian, Johor*

Shame on You, Malaysians

What a sick society we have. When Anita Sarawak kissed a dog, many people could not sit still. Papers carried the news on front pages, with readers condemning the act. When Ramona Rahman was kissed during a drama, again people were furious. Again the headlines in the Malay papers.

But when our constitution is being raped shamelessly, people can sit still and watch without a whimper. Shame on you, Malaysians.

*Abdullah bin Ahmad
Kuala Lumpur*

Nesa Pelbagai Sdn Bhd

Many Indians who bought shares in Nesa would like to know what is happening with Nesa?

Samy Vellu had settled the matters of Maika Holdings and other matters; why is he keeping quiet about Nesa? Many Indian Malaysians had bought shares in Nesa but for too long they had not received dividends nor could they sell their shares to redeem their money. Why?

Suddenly, everything has gone quiet; why? Who had taken big loans from Nesa? Who didn't repay the loans? When will the shareholders get their money? We would like our Prime Minister, Dr Mahathir to look into this matter to help the poor Indian Malaysians get their money for the shares they hold.

*A Shareholder
Prai*

"Desert Fox" Should Read More Aliran Monthly

I refer to the letter to you by "Desert Fox", Petaling Jaya in your latest issue 1993:13(7) page 15 entitled "Saddam To Blame For Iraqi Suffering".

He said that Bush "tried all peaceful means ..." ALL peaceful means? If he had, the Gulf War would have been averted!

It appears that "Desert Fox" had not read past issues of *Aliran Monthly* on the Gulf War in 1991 regarding attempts by Russia and other countries to mediate in the Iraqi-Kuwaiti confrontation.

It was alleged that the United States, through the United Nations by manipulation, "sabotaged" attempts at holding meetings to

solve the issue. Bush wanted the Gulf War to devastate Iraq to safeguard US interests as Iraq posed a threat to them.

"Desert Fox" hopes Aliran will give "both sides of the coin." Please do to clear the picture. Other readers, who are better informed, could also do so.

*Ee Kim Chye
Penang*

Thinking About Anwar

What's wrong with Anwar? Is he any worse than Ghafar or for that matter Mahathir, even?

I'm sure if you look at your back issues, far back enough, you'll find that Ghafar too had his ways of ascending to power and surviving in the political jungle of UMNO.

And to say that Anwar is Mahathir's man ... I wonder if he EVER was? Remember the days when Anwar was an undergraduate and wanted to change the world? Who did UMNO/the government use to check his power before clamping down on the universities? Possibly Anwar's eyes were opened during those days. He must have realized that the easier way to deal with those in power was to meet them on **their own terms** (leave aside morality, decency, integrity etc.) In this he seems to have succeeded only too well - to become, from the start, Mahathir's hand-picked or chosen one. It looks as though he has learnt from his mentor and improved on him.

Your article seems to point an accusing finger at Mahathir for 'approving Anwar's decision' to go for the No 2 slot in UMNO Baru. But what bugs me is what if Mahathir did not have much choice except either to 'approve' Anwar's bid or become more and

more isolated from real power within UMNO Baru? As Mahathir became more and more powerful as an international spokesman, he seems to have lost his grasp of and his hold over UMNO Baru realities.

And it would seem that UMNO Baru is truly Baru, not only legally, but also culturally. The end seems to justify the means.

To me it is only whether Anwar still retains some of the idealism of his youthful days and how much he has changed from it.

We do not agree with the methods used, but possibly, those were the only ones he knew - his growing up years were the sixties and the early seventies; from whom could he have learnt more 'moral' or more 'honourable' methods?

*Jo-M
Kedah*

Mansor Puteh, Hudud and Religious Tolerance

I refer to brother Mansor bin Puteh's letter [AM 1993:13(9)] regarding the Hudud.

We must realize that the majority rules in a democratic system but that doesn't mean the fundamental and basic human rights of the minority citizens can be done away with.

In India the BJP party is campaigning to get rid of the Muslim courts and laws meant to handle Muslims affairs. The BJP's argument is that the Muslims must accept the common laws (based on Hinduism etc) because Hindus are in the majority in India.

Does Mansor bin Puteh accept the BJP's argument which sounds very impractical?

The problem with most of

"our" religions is that we want to "show" to others that "our" religion is the best and "our" laws are divine laws and others are "man-made".

To force the non-Muslims to accept the Hudud is like asking them to leave their religions. Why are we being involved in this Muslims problem? The Hudud may be practised by the Muslims but the non-Muslims are quite satisfied with the so-called 'English' laws. We never asked for the Hudud!

It is very clear that most of the Muslim scholars are unable to interpret the Qu'ran and also the Hadith to the satisfaction of all. The question of interpretation is yet to be settled.

Since the Hudud issue is a very controversial and sensitive matter, with due respect to the Muslims, I feel the Muslims must not force it on the non-Muslims. My earlier letters about the Hudud have made clear my views and I do not want to repeat them. To force the Hudud on us would reflect the insensitivity of the Muslim.

Saudara Mansor bin Puteh may write to the following if he is keen to know more about God and His laws, plans etc. (Since you asked about non-Muslim ways etc).

(1) *Self-Realization Fellowship*

3880 San Rafael Avenue
Los Angeles, California 90065
USA

(2) *Thirumajal Publications*

S-69 Taman Tan Yew Lai
Jalan Puchong
Kuala Lumpur

(3) *Swami Haridhus Giri*
c/o Sree Gnianananda Seva
Samajam

132 Owen Road
Singapore 0821
Tel: 2918540

(4) *Navaasakthi Nilayam Enterprise*

43 Jalan Besar
45700 Bukit Rotan

Selangor
Tel: 03-8892026

(5) *The Divine Life Society*
P O Shivanandanagar
Dt. Tehri-Garhwal
UP Himalayas
India

There are many more reliable sources which Saudara Mansor could contact if he wishes. He could also read the following books:

1. *Autobiography of a Yogi* by Paramahansa Yogananda
2. *Only Love* by Sri Daya Mata
3. *Divine Romance* by Paramahansa Yogananda
4. *Man's Eternal Quest* by Paramahansa Yogananda
5. *Talks with Swami Vivekananda*
6. *An Autobiography or the Story of My Experiments with Truth* by M K Gandhi]

Saudara Mansor could also read books about the Buddha's Law of Karma and Reincarnation, Manu's Law, the Holy Bible etc. I feel there is Truth in all religions and it is up to us to act in harmony so that we continue to keep our nation as a good example to the world where people of various ethnic, religious and cultural origins live in peace.

As I mentioned before, what may be good for someone may not be good for others. Therefore, diversity of opinions, faiths, laws etc will be there always and what is of paramount importance is that we respect all religions, opinions etc and learn to live in harmony with all irrespective of political, religious or cultural affiliations. In fact, modern science may question certain so-called religious practices and science may also recognise certain ancient religious values.

We hope that non-Muslims would be allowed to live in peace without being forced to accept the Hudud which the Muslims may have if they wish to.

UMNO Baru and PAS must not manipulate the Hudud for political gains! Do not create disunity. May there be unity in diversity always.

My regards to Saudara Mansor bin Puteh and his loved ones. God bless you always.

S Surendran
Penang

Impressed with Aliran Monthly

I came across Aliran magazines from a friend and I am very interested in the articles and reports that are published there.

With this, I would like to subscribe to the monthly magazine. I do not have the subscription form and thus, I would like to apply for one so that I may be enriched too by the magazine.

I would also like to know more about the activities of Aliran.

Chuah Kim Hong Rudeen
Muar

Support for Aliran Monthly

I have, for a very long time, been only an occasional reader of your magazine primarily because of the lack in focus and attitude of your journalist. 'Thinking Allowed' was probably the most childish and annoying section of your supposedly unbiased magazine.

However, this month I was pleasantly surprised to note that your articles focused more on the issue at hand rather than the more

trivial matters.

I sincerely hope that this attitude prevails in the coming issues of *Aliran Monthly*, for it is only now that your magazine seems to be living up to your adopted philosophy.

In light of these recent developments, I pledge support for your magazine.

Jaya Krishnan
Ipoh

Constitution Not a Sacred Document

Aliran Monthly 1993:13(6) contended that Malaysians say "No". But today our MPs said "Yes, Yes". Our senators who are not responsible to the people would also say Yes. Like senator Itam Wali, who was quoted as saying "I do not oppose it", I wish to add "me too". What else can we expect of the modified democracy that we have and the sort of "government of the people that we have?"

What are a few additional amendments to our constitution, which has been amended more than thirty times. Now we are in the second half of 1993, it is the second amendment this year. At this rate, your proposed Judicial Review Committee can hardly keep pace (!) unless you get a mandamus to stop Parliament from passing amendments; or are you suggesting that amendments must be approved by Aliran?

The views expressed seem to imply that the Constitution is sacred. Is that really so? Sacred, like the Ten Commandments and the Old and New Testaments? Or is the Federal Constitution immutable? Nay, no where does it say it is sacred or immutable or has sanctity. It is just the supreme law of Malaysia. The super human has only to sign an Act of Parlia-

ment. It has nothing to do with God; therefore it is not a sacred document. Just a scrap of paper, which a certain nation does not have (the not so Great Britain).

So Mr Editor if we have a judicial commission of senior judges trained in the British tradition, the concept of the supremacy of Parliament overrides the US' concept of judicial review. And furthermore, who cares? The ordinary electorate is not bothered with the lofty concepts such as:

- * the erosion of fundamental rights and liberties
- * the derogation of the Rule of Law (*what Rule of Law? All our laws were passed by Parliament. Constitutional amendments that require two-thirds majority were passed accordingly.*)

* the abuse of Executive power (How many petitions has the Jaga of the Fountain of Justice received from alleged victims?)

Would it not be more informative if you were to elaborate on concepts propounded by Aliran (P Ramakrishnan's own)?

* *Strengthening the democratic process* What does this mean? Easier to cast our votes? No need to register as voters, show ICs and vote? Legislative process more simplified? Simple majority? Man you talk of two-thirds majority. Why so bent on two-thirds? And why not three fourths plus the consent of two thirds of all State governments plus two-thirds of the super humans royal consent for any parliamentary Bill? i.e. make it more difficult to amend the Constitution (sacred)?

* *Eternal spirit of truth*: So we introduce philosophy at LCE?

* *Freedom*: Unlimited freedom like the decadent West? Freedom to streak naked? Freedom for gays and pansies

to marry? Freedom to get drunk at public places like the function supposed to have been held on 6 August organised by the MCA? Freedom to commit blasphemy like Sulman Rushdie?

Justice: Legally, only the judges can define it. When citizens talk, it is what they think justice should be, not what justice is. Is this not philosophy, man? or rather jurisprudence; and if it is jurisprudence, even the barristers have no clue!

Politics, Mr Editor, is the art of staying in power or else getting booted out of office. The rules keep changing. In Malaysia, it is for the convenience of those in office, inconveniencing those aspiring to get into the office of power.

Mat Serly
KOTA BARU

Habeas Corpus: Flagrant & Mischievous Disregard

On 2 September 1993 the High Court, Penang ordered the release on habeas corpus of traders, Lee Ah Goo, 43, from Sungei Petani and Liew Wee Keong, 42, from Kota Baru.

On 4 September upon the order for *habeas corpus* being served on the Superintendent of the Muar detention centre where both Lee and Wee had been detained under section 6(1) of the Dangerous Drugs Act (Special Preventive Measures) Act, 1985, both were re-arrested by police officers with impunity when they stepped out of the detention centre.

Their freedom did not last even a couple of steps away from the miserable gate of their place of incarceration despite their release

being on the authority of a solemn order of the High Court.

In our law, there is no provision for release of a detainee on *habeas corpus* on substantive grounds. The law only provides for release of a detainee on procedural grounds.

The jurisdiction of courts to exercise their time honoured duty to release anyone illegally and unlawfully detained on *habeas corpus* whether in public or private captivity has been severely restricted. It must necessarily follow, therefore, the Executive must honour orders of *habeas corpus*.

Of late, there have been repeated re-arrests of detainees released on the authority of *habeas corpus* orders even in instances where appeals have been allowed by the Supreme Court.

There is no point in Prime Minister, Dr Mahathir, accepting accolades from former British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, as being a statesman of vision if he, as a Home Minister, can condone flagrant and mischievous disregard by police officers of orders of *habeas corpus*.

Perhaps, the Prime Minister should carefully consider and find time to reflect upon the followign observations of Justice Eusoffe Abdoolcader in *Yeap Hock Seng @ Ah Seng v Minister for Home Affairs, Malaysia & Ors.* on 28 October 1975, "The grant of *habeas corpus* is as of right and not in the discretion of the court as in the case of such extraordinary legal remedies as *certiorari*, prohibition and *mandamus*. It is a writ of right against which no privilege of person or place can be of any avail (*R. v Pell And Offly*). The heavy musketry of the law will always be brought to bear upon any suggestion of unlawful invasion or infringement of the personal liberty of an individual in the form of *habeas corpus* and kindred orders where necessary to grant relief

when warranted. It was aptly put in the American case of State ex rel. Evans v Broaddus that at least in times of peace every human power must give way to the writ of *habeas corpus* and no prison door is stout enough to stand in its

way."

Detention without trial is incongruous to universally accepted principles of justice and fair-play. The Prime Minister should forthwith intercede and ensure there are no re-arrests upon release

of detainees on *habeas corpus* orders.

Karpal Singh
Member of Parliament

Macallum Street Ghaut "Apartments": PDC's Misleading Details

I refer to the letter from the Penang Development Corporation (PDC) which appeared on page 39 of the Weekender supplement of The Star dated 24 July 1993 in which your paper and Air Itam Assemblyman Ong Hock Aun were criticised for publicising the plight of aggrieved purchasers of the so-called "apartments" at Macallum Street Ghaut.

Ask any clerk working in a developer's office in Penang or a draughtsman employed by an architect (like I did) and you will be told that No Certificate of Fitness (CF) is issued on the Island for completed building works. Instead, an Occupation Certificate (OC) is issued by the Penang Municipal Council (MPPP). For a detailed explanation on the difference between a CF and an OC, your paper can probably seek the official and unprejudiced view of the Municipal President.

However, I am more concerned with the other misleading facts put forward by the PDC.

For easy reference, kindly allow me to tabulate the differences between apartments and flats as commonly known within the housing industry in Penang, which I obtained from enquiries at the MPPP:

	APARTMENTS	FLATS
Density	15 to 30 units per acre.	60 to 100 units per acre.
Unit Built-up Area	800 to 1,400 sq. ft.	700 sq. ft. and below.
Car Parking Provision Required	1 parking bay for every unit.	2 parking bays for every 3 units.

Those so-called "apartments" at Macallum Street Ghaut are actually approved as flats in the relevant building plans. For verification of the differences, please obtain a copy of the MPPP's Planning Guidelines and Car-Parking By-Laws.

The PDC also disclosed that Forza tiles are being used in the renovation works. As a Government Statutory Corporation, it should be encouraging the use of local tiles rather than foreign ones.

Import duty on foreign ceramic tiles is calculated on the basis of weight and not on the number of pieces or price.

Thus, unscrupulous suppliers and contractors may peddle off thinner tiles which, although it may maximise profits, will break easily if laid improperly on badly levelled floors or walls.

And the most nauseating part of the letter is the bragging about the Corporation being a "responsible" developer!

If it were a reputable developer, why does it have to stoop to publicising half-truths?

Roads linking the Macallum Street Ghaut housing scheme to Weld Quay and the proposed coastal road leading to Glugor, as promised in the sales literature, have not yet materialised!

The first phase of Komtar was issued OC some 12 years ago and to-date, the PDC has not bothered to apply for the issue of separate strata titles for each shoplot!

As for the Prai and Bayan Lepas Industrial Estate/Free Trade Zone, up till today, there is no proper communal waste disposal/treatment/storage site!

In a more litigious society and without the numerous exemptions afforded to statutory bodies from prosecution under various legislation, the PDC would have been slammed with expensive lawsuits.

The very least that the PDC can do for the Penang community at large, after "milking" it, is to comply with every law that all housing developers in the private sector have to adhere to.

"Discipline is the building block of character and accountability is the corner-stone of responsibility".

Kapt (U) Tan Beng Swee (Rtd)
PENANG

This letter was originally sent to The Star - Editor.

Relevance of Mahatma Gandhi

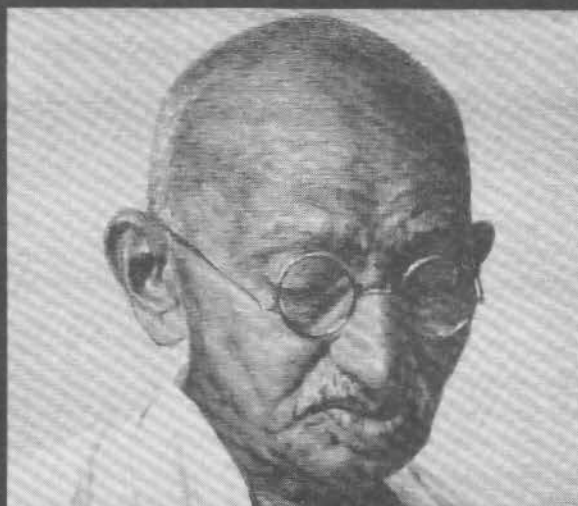
ESSENTIAL WORKS OF
MAHATMA GANDHI
(VOL 1)

Edited by Shashi
Ahluwalia & Meenakshi
Ahluwalia

Published by Indian
Publishers Distributors,
Delhi

Price Rs 500 per volume;

Rs 10,000 for a set of
twenty volumes



Mahatma Gandhi's name evokes the highest and the noblest ideals of human conduct and thought, namely, truth, self-sacrifice, self-abnegation, universal love, non-violence, peace, tolerance, equality, liberty and universal brotherhood.

These qualities were verily the characteristics of his personality. He actually lived and died for these ideals. In the manner of his living as of his death, he demonstrated the higher traits of human nature.

While his countrymen idolised him as something more than a human being, the world at large marvelled at his achievements, and admired the power and purity of his soul.

The first half of this century really belongs to Gandhi and for centuries to come, his ideas will continue to light the path of human progress.

Is Gandhi relevant today? This is

the poser put by many who doubt the efficacy of Gandhi's methods of protest - *satyagraha* and *ahimsa*.

Prof. K Swaminathan, in his 'Foreword' to the volume under review, which deals with Gandhiji's stay in South Africa, writes, "In moments of stress and strain, when mankind finds itself at the crossroads, the light which clearly shows the way out of the impasse is provided by the thoughts and deeds of a Mahatma like Gandhiji".

Before Gandhi's advent, the political scene in India was chaotic. Political activity was marked by fumbling and groping. It lacked direction and purpose. It was confusion all round.

Political campaigning seldom went beyond ceremonious speeches and ponderous memoranda submitted to the alien authority from time to time, accompanied by loud declarations of loyalty to the Sovereign. Political issues largely

reflected the interests of the educated, urbanised middle class. The involvement of vast masses of rural population was totally lacking.

Gandhi was quick to recognise this. He knew that if political activity was to lead anywhere, it must be related to the interests of the masses. He realised the importance of involving the masses and shifting the scene from city to the village where India really lived. Freedom that was sought must be defined and explained in terms of the basic needs of food and clothing for the hundreds of millions of India's peasantry, he felt. In any political activity, he stressed, direct participation by the rural masses was of the essence.

Gandhiji's transformation as a leader in fact came about during his stay in South Africa, where he had proved his worth as a barrister. There he realised that he was following the value systems of an imperfect world, where prejudices and preferences

raised barriers between man and man, stood in the way of human brotherhood. The superior postures adopted by the Whites, who held absolute power in South Africa, made life miserable for the native Blacks and the immigrant Indians.

Gandhiji, because of his origin, found himself bundled out of a train, despite the fact that he had a valid ticket for the journey. His crime: accident of birth; his origin; his roots. His response: a complete metamorphosis from a mere barrister into a sensitive, responsive human being, out to fight for justice, not merely in a court of law, but in the court of world conscience.

In the process he was emancipated. Slowly, his life's philosophy emerged. Thoreau, Emerson and Tolstoy, the best of religious teachings from the Gita and the Upanishads, as also from the Bible and the Koran, reached out to him to transform him into an apostle of peace.

Gandhi evolved the strategy of Satyagraha as a means of protest. He accepted the dictum that one must be free from malice, be kind even to one's opponents.

As the editors have rightly pointed out, it would be difficult to find a parallel in history of any one individual having said or written so much, on so many issues and for so many people. The mass of his spoken or written words is truly staggering.

All Gandhi's works are good and reflect the greatness of the man.

The selections made in the present volume represent Gandhiji's various moods - moods of anxiety and anguish, of hope and confidence - that he had to experience during the various crises - political, social, moral - which the nation in its long and arduous journey to freedom faced and passed through.

The volume under review is the first in a series of twenty-volume project entitled "Essential Works of Mahatma Gandhi" containing speeches and writings of the greatest

servant of our times.

The editors have done well in arranging the volumes chronologically. They bring out the evolution of the mind of the Mahatma, while at the same time presenting an authentic historical record of contemporary events and how Gandhiji moulded them.

In fact it is the 'timeless' quality of Gandhiji's writings which remains relevant even today. ■

Editors Note: The year 1993 marks the centenary of Mahatma Gandhi's arrival in South Africa for the first time. Many functions and seminars are planned both in India and South Africa to celebrate the occasion in a befitting manner.

The reviewer, a true Gandhian, is a freelance writer also.

***I can retain
neither
respect nor
affection for
a govern-
ment which
has been
moving from
wrong to
wrong in
order to
defend its
immorality.***

-Mahatma Gandhi



Thinking allowed



Senior Minister Ghafar?

TO BE OR NOT TO BE: THAT ISN'T THE QUESTION

The run-up to the UMNO Baru's forthcoming General Assembly has seen a lot of things happening. For one, the country's mainstream media seemed pretty occupied with matters pertaining to the party. Attention was initially focussed on the post of the party deputy president. Here Ghafar Baba, the incumbent, is being challenged by the not-so-old ex-ABIMer Anwar Ibrahim.

Some members of UMNO Baru, particularly its youth wing, had openly suggested that the winds of change is being felt, and that the party really needs fresh blood. This was how the Magnificent Trio, led by Youth leader Najib Razak, came into the scene. The three, to be sure, are vying for the vice-president's posts.

Then Ghafar Baba dropped the bombshell: he resigned as head of the Sabah UMNO Baru liaison

committee and chairman of the Sabah Barisan Nasional. Ghafar argued he made this decision because he could no longer get the co-operation of divisional heads in Sabah, except for Tun Mustapha Datu Harun, the head of Marudu division. He also received little support from Sabah members as regards his desire to defend his deputy presidency.

Then we were made to understand by the mainstream media that Tun Mustapha was terribly slighted by the announcement that Sankaran Dandan was to take over Ghafar's position in Sabah, thereby in effect side-stepping Tun Mustapha who had indeed indicated his willingness to lead Sabah UMNO Baru.

Mustapha must have felt so dejected as to have come to the point of telling the world of his unhappiness on this matter. But what's quizzical is his caution to the press that by revealing his displeasure he's actually putting himself at the risk of being declared a bankrupt.

Are we to understand from this episode that it can be pretty costly to be honest in one's criticism and opinion? Or worse still, are we to interpret that for as long as one is in the good company of the ruling party, one is perfectly safe from the otherwise long arms of the law and the claws of the loans providers.

At any rate, in a society which espouses the virtue of being ethical and sincere, this revelation is most shocking, to say the least.

In the meantime while Ghafar was away visiting his North Korean friends, an UMNO Baru politician (a Menteri Besar, no less) suggested, apparently as a way of appeasing the incumbent deputy president, that Ghafar be made a senior minister. This idea was proposed with the Singapore experience in mind. There the still powerful and still old Lee Kuan Yew has been made the republic's senior minister.

This kind of suggestion may just open up the wound suffered by the incumbent himself. For not too long ago he had already insisted that he's not old, and in fact has many more years so as to enable him to serve the country.

At the time of writing, the biggest bombshell that Ghafar Baba so far had dropped was his decision to resign from his deputy prime minister's post, a formal intention made known to Dr. Mahathir via the

former's political secretary.

• • •

TOWARDS THE CREATION OF THE 'NEW MALAY'

This must be what they meant by winds of change and the coming of the 'New Malay'. Almost suddenly there was this craving for intellectual activities in certain parts of the country.

In Melaka, Selangor and Perak, for instance, seminars had been organized to discuss issues that were purportedly important to the Malay community in particular and Malaysians in general. And more often than not, the dignitaries who were present and participated in these seminars apparently constituted the Who's Who in today's UMNO Baru.

One only hopes that this stamina and urge to debate, discuss, argue would last beyond what seemed to be the political expediency of those involved in the forthcoming UMNO Baru general assembly.

• • •

LEAVE NO STONES UNTURNED

While some people in the capital city of Kuala Lumpur are busy preparing and bracing themselves for the UMNO general assembly, some people in Penang have been keeping themselves busy in their unrelenting effort to woo the coveted foreign tourists to the island. And they seemed dead serious about their work and mission.

These people, we've been made to understand, have been cleaning some of the cemeteries on the island

that belong to foreigners, like the British, who died in Penang. It is solemnly hoped that fellow (living, i.e.) Britons, for instance, would be moved enough after knowing the existence of these cemeteries as to eventually visit Malaysia -- as well as the graves. In other words, the historical and sentimental value of these cemeteries will be explored and exploited as much as possible.

This is arguably a milestone in the history of Malaysia's tourism industry. What will they possibly think of next...

• • •

VIETNAMISING SOMALIA

The bitter experience of US intervention in Vietnam seems to have been forgotten by some Americans, including their president, when addressing themselves on the issue of Somalia.

Unlike its approach towards the Bosnian conflict, the US is apparently inclined towards burying itself deeper into the sands of Somalia. Under the UN banner, the US has displayed its military might and terrorised, and in the process killed, some of the local residents. Of course, all this is done in the name of democracy, progress and what have you.

It is hoped that the ill-armed and under-nourished Somalis, in their own little ways, would eventually be able to tell the American government that bullying a small and poor country may not necessarily upgrade its international image and stature. If anything, its action in Somalia only smears its star-studded flag.

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HOLY MALAYSIANS?

At a recent inter-religious dialogue, the Great One was reported to have said that Malaysians are now becoming more religious.

Holy smoke! Is this true?

Of course it is. More and more Malaysians are now worshipping all manner of things like Money, Power, Position, the Stock Market, and the Free Market. Trouble is, these so happen to be False Gods.

In line with this trend, new religious shrines and symbols have emerged - the temple of the Kuala Lumpur Stock Exchange, the sacred letters RM and the mystical Corporate Ladder, to name a few. More and more Malaysians are also making regular pilgrimages to stockbroking firms, golf courses, pubs, karaoke lounges, Empat Ekor outlets...you name it, they are making pilgrimages there. Some of the more adventurous ones even resort to plunging into the holy waters of Sunway Lagoon.

What is worse is when Malaysians place certain mere mortals (likely to be politicians) on a pedestal and start praying to them and singing their praises in the hope of receiving favours in return. If these misguided devotees are exceptionally religious, they may even fall in a trance and start dancing to the tune of certain exalted individuals, while all the time chanting the sacred mantra "Setia, Setia" or "20,20."

At this rate, we will certainly have the most 'religious' society in the world by the year 2020 - but it will all have been in vain. Something for all 'holy' Malaysians to contemplate, meditate and reflect on.

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AIDS TO THE POOR?

Lee Kim Sai's worst nightmares have come true, or so it seems. The aids problem in Malaysia is apparently far more serious than we thought - and it looks like the poor will be the most likely victims in the future.

The Star reported this alarming development on 19 September:

He (Finance Minister Anwar Ibrahim) admitted that he was critical of the country's leadership during his younger days but it was to fight for the poor and the deprived.

"But now that I am Finance Minister, I will have to extend such aids to the poor. Such projects have nothing to do with the vice-presidency contest."

Yes, I'm sure extending aids to the poor has nothing to do with the UMNO Baru elections. Still, one can't help wondering whether "such aids" will be welcomed by the poor.

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BEWARE OF POLITICIANS

People are not only trying to avoid aids. Seems like they are also trying their darned best to avoid coming into contact with politicians.

Hot on the heels of Samy Vellu's celebrated walkout from a recent MIC-sponsored gathering on education because of poor attendance by parents, comes another case of a dismal turnout from up North.

The Road Safety Week campaign for Seberang Perai Utara had a pathetic start when only 12 of the 100 invited guests turned up for the launching recently.

State Road Safety Council chairman Dr Hilmi Haji Yahaya surprisingly (actually, not really surprising) found the hall vacant on

his arrival.

The 12 guests who did come, turned up about 30 minutes late. 10 traffic policemen were called to help fill the vacant seats and make the numbers (that leaves 78 vacant seats - but let's not quibble here). Pretty embarrassing, huh?

Poor Hilmi tried to give excuses for the low turnout: "Perhaps, there is a clash of programmes, or it could have been due to some technical problems." (Technical problems?)

To make matters worse, he had to show that he was completely out of touch with reality when he remarked, "... Penangites are known to be safety conscious and campaigns at the district levels had always been well received."

Everyone, except Hilmi, knows that Penangites are among the worst drivers in the country.

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MIND YOUR LANGUAGE

Shaik Osman Majid recently ended his weekly column on Business English in the *New Sunday Times*. Conceding defeat in his one-man crusade against the poor usage of English - even his Editor spells *Other Thoughts* as *Other Thots* - in the country, he concluded his 64th and last Biz English column as follows:

"In ending, I take occasion to apologise for the many typographical errors and solecisms that have inadvertently appeared over the last 63 articles. These are sins in an English newspaper and, therefore, totally unpardonable in a series committed to the writing of good English. A thousand apologies."

Looks like he'll have to make that a thousand and one apologies.

There was a typographical error in the word 'to' which was printed as just 't.'

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CUKUPLAH JACKING

So, Finance Minister Extraordinaire Anwar Ibrahim has been named runners-up as Finance Minister of the Year behind India's Manmohan Singh by *Euromoney* magazine. For someone who was rumoured to be reading a Form Six economics textbook not too long ago, this is apparently quite an achievement. No doubt, it will increase Anwar's valuation in the transfer market for Finance Ministers.

But before we go on to say "Jolly good show, old chap" to the Great One-to-be, let us take a closer look at *Euromoney* magazine.

What the Bernama report splashed throughout the local Press failed to tell us is that *Euromoney* magazine is published by Euromoney Publications PLC of London - a British company.

The reason for this non-disclosure of the nationality of the company making the award seems obvious. Coming so close as it does to Margaret Thatcher's gushing (to the point of being nauseating) tribute to the Great One-to-be and John Major's glowing words for everything Malaysian, the revelation that this latest honour for Anwar was from a British company would only have confirmed our worst suspicions - the Brits are reportedly out to 'jack' or curry favour with Anwar and Gang in the hope of landing even more juicy, plum multi-billion ringgit contracts for ailing British corporations.

That aside, there are a few

schools of thought on whether Anwar really deserved the accolade. There are those who feel that the only reason why Malaysia has a relatively high growth rate is because Anwar has done almost nothing since becoming Finance Minister. However, others feel that credit should go to Anwar for being smart enough to realise that the less he does the better it would be for the Malaysian economy. We leave it to you to judge.

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FOR WHOM THE BRIDGE TOLLS?

Two more lucrative privatisation deals. The Penang Bridge, famous throughout this region for its exorbitant tolls, is to be privatised to UEM (Oh no, not again) while TV4 has apparently been awarded to a consortium of companies which includes Vincent Tan's Berjaya (yet again) and Utusan Malaysia.

Can somebody please tell me why most privatisation deals invariably find their way to Brother Vincent Tan's Berjaya and UMNO Baru's Renong and UEM? At this rate, before we know it, half the country (and our collective wealth) will be privatised to a handful of select companies, to be disposed of at the whims and fancies of certain privileged individuals at the helm of these privileged companies, who just so happen to be connected to UMNO Baru.

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SURPRISE RESULT

So, our neighbours down south have got a new president. What an election it was. From the start, the

favourite was obvious and the outcome seemed predictable enough.

In fact, the other "eligible" candidate (one had to be stamped "eligible" in order to run in this presidential election, you know - can't have any undesirable elements running the country and squandering away its resources) was a very reluctant one indeed, apparently just making up the numbers.

Since voting is compulsory in this tiny republic, many voters must have been extremely frustrated having to go out and vote with so little to choose from.

Thus, it was not surprising that the "overwhelming favourite" polled only 59 per cent of the votes - a result which must have left the ruling party a little taken aback as it was widely seen as a popularity poll for the government.

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SAMY WALKS OUT

What do you know - Samy is back in the news. As they say, you can never keep a good man down for long. This time he was reported to have stormed out of a briefing on the MIC's education policy because of poor attendance by parents. There were only a handful of parents who turned up for the estate-level gathering in Kelang.

"It is sickening to realise that they don't even bother to attend functions that are meant to help raise the education standard of their children," ranted Samy. "Why should the MIC care for their future when parents themselves are not concerned?" he went on. There will be no more meetings with the parents since they are not interested, threatened the minister. He also refused to accept a souvenir from parents because there was no

support from parents (*tsk! tsk! very touchy, aren't we?*)

The invited guests were stunned by his thunderous outburst and their attempts to calm him failed. They watched speechlessly as he strode out of the hall (presumably, in majestic style). What a grand exit it must have been.

Doesn't Samy realise that parents have got better things to do than to waste their precious time listening to meaningless talk. These are smart parents indeed. They would much rather spend their precious time looking after their children at home, making sure their kids are studying instead of blown over by a gush of hot air from the mouth of some politician.

Perhaps, they were also presumably none too impressed with the way Samy handled the Telekom shares allocation, which he said was supposed to be used to improve the standard of education among the community. Or perhaps, they suspected that the gathering was held in order to give the Minister's own popularity a much needed boost instead of improving the level of education of their children.

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CHIMP PROVES THAT IT'S ALL BULL

From Sweden comes proof that you don't need much formal training to dabble in the stock market and make a pile. A newspaper there gave five stock analysts and a chimpanzee US\$1250 each to make as much money as they could on the stock market. The chimp won.

After one month, the chimp, Ola, saw his stocks rise by US\$190, the paper reported. Runner-up was a Mats Jonnerson, a market expert, whose stocks rose by US\$130 in the

same period.

While the market experts carefully considered their portfolios, Ola made his choice by throwing darts at names of companies on the Stockholm bourse. "Ola could change jobs with me," stock analyst Bo Carlsson said. Carlsson only made US\$35.

To adapt a line used by that dame, Margaret Thatcher, during her recent visit to Malaysia: if investment analysts could be transferred like professional footballers, I could think of several very much larger securities firms and fund managers who might pay astronomical transfer fees to get Ola.

This experiment confirms our worst suspicions about the other so-called experts on the stock market. One wonders, in the light of this latest study, whether securities firms will now be on the look-out for orang-utans (preferably familiar with darts) to replace their now obsolete human investment analysts. And if you really want some solid tips on the share market, why not pay a visit to the local zoo - and don't forget to bring along your darts.

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GURU THATCHER MEETS DEVOTEES

Who cares if that dehydrated Pepsi drinker, Michael Jackson only visited Singapore and Thailand and not Malaysia? We had Margaret Thatcher, the Grand Old Lady of Privatisation worshipped by millions of free-market enthusiasts the world over making a superstar appearance 'live'.

Guru Thatcher was here to deliver a talk "Towards Asian Leadership" attended by 500 corporate executives (free market devotees) under Citibank's

leadership series. Ha! Ha! Is this a big joke or what - a North American bank inviting a European (a Briton to be precise) to give a talk on Asian leadership in a country once colonised by the Brits.

Common sense tells us that Thatcher is in no position to lecture anybody on Asian leadership. Indeed, there are many who feel that she is not even qualified to lecture on British leadership, let alone European leadership, especially after the crisis of confidence over her leadership within the Conservative party in Britain which ultimately led to her stepping down as Prime Minister.

Well, Thatcher was not going to let her visit to Malaysia go to waste. She paid tribute to the Great One and the Minister-who-wants-to-be-Prime Minister. Many would agree that the tributes were so lavish they became almost embarrassing (nauseating, I thought). Here's a classic: "If Finance Ministers could be transferred like soccer players, I could think of several very much larger countries who would pay astronomical transfer fees to get him" (Anwar). Believe it or not, she was also a great fan of the Proton Saga - "It's the quality, you see."

This so irked the Deputy Prime Minister-hoping-to-be-Prime Minister that he grumbled the next day that foreigners should not get involved in local politics.

Someone else (too insignificant, I forget his name) then replied that foreigners were free to comment on anything they liked. Oh sure, if they are praising you, they are free to comment: but if they are criticising you, then that's interference in local affairs.

Personally, I think Thatcher was just expressing her heartfelt gratitude that British companies, reeling from the effects of the recession in the UK, had of late been awarded gigantic contracts in Malaysia in areas ranging from arms

to airports to sewerage systems. High level marketing, they call it - doesn't hurt to boost a few egos, does it?

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GIVE US A BREAK

If she paid tribute to local leaders, she was highly critical of Europe over its inaction over Bosnia. "I rage at the inadequacy of Europe's response to what is happening there. If we can allow that to happen in the heart of Europe, our credibility in defending democracy and human rights elsewhere is gravely undermined ... The worst thing of all was not taking effective action to deal with massacre, murder, evicting people from their homes and concentration camps on our doorstep."



Righteous Thatcher?

Credibility? A fine one she is to be talking. Wasn't it her own Conservative party in Britain which closed the files on the Batangkali case in Malaysia where innocent villagers were massacred by British troops during the Emergency? Wasn't she Prime Minister when British soldiers murdered Argentine prisoners of war captured during the Falklands War? And now she rages at massacre and murder. Come on, GUAB (Give Us A Break). ■

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Islam And The Environment

A foundation of spirituality in religion is the physical well-being of human beings. Thus, for a true Islamic spirituality to prevail, one must ensure that one creates an ecologically clean and unpolluted environment, says ASGHAR ALI ENGINEER. Conversely, those who choose to pollute the atmosphere of the earth follow in the footsteps of the devil.

Nature, like human beings, is created by God and hence, like human life, must be respected. As it is immoral for a person to exploit another person, it is unethical to exploit nature for selfish consumption.

There is much that one can draw from the Quran, the holy scripture of Islam. The Quran is the mainspring of all Islamic thought and values. But before we proceed to discuss ecological issues based on Quranic thought, we would like to say a few words about our methodology.

Symbolic Language

Firstly, we should bear in mind that the holy scriptures in general, and the Quran in particular, use symbolic language. Symbols relate to deep unconscious processes, and hence tend to be quite complex. For the same reason, a symbol touches us very deeply if it belongs to our cultural ethos. Through the use of symbols, the scriptures acquire

multi-dimensionality.

Secondly, different issues acquire centrality in different epochs. A scripture, moreover, is not expected to make direct statements on any and every issue. It would then make a scripture time-bound. It would lose its validity beyond a certain spatial-temporal context.

Since a scripture uses symbolic language, it is capable of being differently interpreted, not only by different persons, but also in different epochs. Each epoch throws up its own problems, which may not have been around in earlier epochs. Such problems which arise later cannot be directly addressed in any religious scripture. It is only through appropriate interpretation of complex symbolic language that we can draw suitable conclusions.

Interpretation or re-interpretation should, of course, not be far-fetched and in contradiction to the central value-structure of the religion. Ecology, for example, was not a central issue, at least in the sense it is today, when the scriptures were revealed or written. There may have been a reverential attitude towards nature and God's other creations, but not for the same reason.

To discuss ecological issues and religion, we will have to reinterpret the religious scriptures in the light of the centrality of ecological issues in our own epoch. It may not be in keeping with the traditional exegesis, and traditional exegeses may even be shocked with such interpretations.

With these few words about methodological issues we would now like to discuss ecological issues in the light of Islam, particularly in the light of Quranic pronouncements and the Quran's value system.

Unitarian View

The most important thing about the Quran is that it advocates a *tauhidic* (unitarian) point of view. It puts everything in a *tauhidic* perspective. This is most fundamental to Islam.

This point of view, it must be noted, has both metaphysical as well as this-worldly aspects. Theologically and metaphysically speaking, God is one and unique (112:1-4). No one can be associated with Him. No one can match His uniqueness or share His divinity. It is a great sin even to think in those terms.

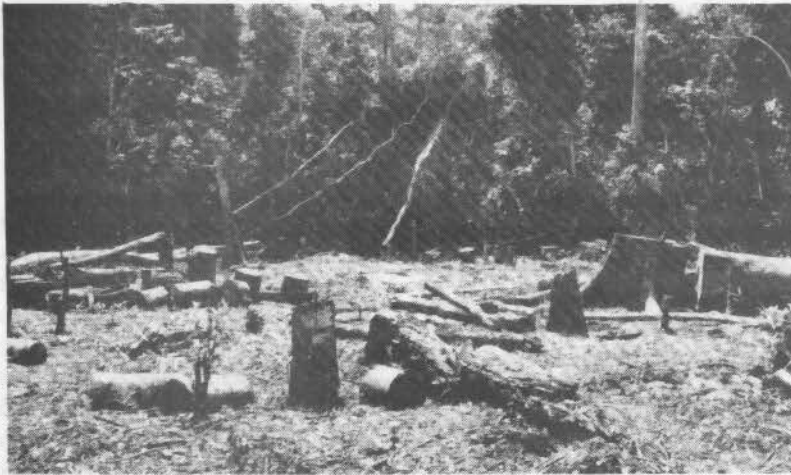
Seen in this perspective, the unity of God is the unity of all His creation, or what can be termed as the '*integrity of creation*'.

His entire creation is deserving of respect. One cannot distinguish between one human being and another, whatever his/her skin colour, caste, creed or race. Race, colour, creed or nationality may provide him/her with identity, but cannot enhance or degrade his/her human value (49:13).

Even, the diversity of tongues and colours is among His signs (30:22). No language group or colour group can have superiority over another group. This is the *tauhidic* concept.

Also *Shir'ah* and *minaj* may be different (i.e. rituals and ways may differ), but values remain the same. If one discriminates between one community of human beings and another, it would be a non-*tauhidic* point of view.

This applies not only to human beings, but also to His non-human creations. His entire creation - human, non-human, organic, non-organic - is worthy of respect.



"The affluence of the advanced industrialised nations has made them oblivious of the consequences of their rapacious treatment of nature."

Unfaithful Humans

Human beings, gifted with the faculty of reason, enjoy an element of superiority over other creatures of nature. The Quran declares that *We created man in the best mould.* (95:4)

But the Quran also says that *Then We render him the lowest of the low.* (95:5) Though the human being was created in the best mould, gifted as he is with the faculty of reason, he also degenerated to the lowest of the low due to selfish motives.

His sincerity, commitment to divine guidance and rational faculty can raise him to the highest and noblest; his selfishness, lack of belief and rejection of divine guidance can push him to the lowest depths. His selfishness can also make him oblivious to the sanctity of other creations of God. He may be carried away by his selfish motives, ruthlessly exploit nature and create ecological imbalances which ultimately endanger life on the planet. Thus, the non-*tauhidic* perspective is conducive to selfish conduct and ultimately dangerous for human survival.

Referring to human beings, the Quran also says, *Surely We offered the trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, but they refused to be unfaithful to it and feared from it, and man has turned unfaithful to*

it. Surely he is ever unjust, ignorant. (33:72)

Thus, while nature remained faithful to the laws ordained by Allah and refused to carry the burden of the trust (out of fear that it might not be able to carry the burden), man became unfaithful after accepting the trust (*amanah*). The human being was gifted with the rational faculty to learn and understand natural laws and to respect them strictly observing them, but he became unfaithful and violated these laws for selfish ends as he is unjust and ignorant.

Unjust And Ignorant

The Quranic description of humans as 'unjust and ignorant' is quite significant. He is unjust because he is selfish, and selfishness makes him shortsighted, leading him to his own destruction. Had he been just, he would have respected God's laws and God's other creations and would not have acted in his own selfish interest utterly disregarding other interests.

It is his unjustness which leads to exploitation by him, not only of other human beings, but also of nature.

Also, he is ignorant and often acts out of ignorance. He tends to exploit nature, not only out of selfish motives, but often out of ignorance too. Therefore, while fighting

against those who exploit nature due to selfish motives, one must also try to enlighten those who do so out of mere ignorance. Those who are unjust are more dangerous than those who are merely ignorant.

Stressing *tauhidic* values, God in the Quran is often described as *Rabb al Alamin* i.e. Sustainer of the Whole Universe. He is also described as Compassionate, Beneficent and Merciful. Since God is the sustainer of the whole universe, His servants should see to it that the delicate balance in nature is not destroyed by their rapacious acts. This would violate the divine act of sustenance. Human beings, as servants of God, cannot, and should not interfere with the divine act of sustenance of this universe. If they do so, they are guilty of violation of the limits set by Allah.

God's Limits

It is interesting to note that the Quran gives the concept of *hudud* Allah (i.e. limits set by God). If human beings respect these limits, they will be able to create a just, and balanced society free of exploitation. If they transgress these limits, they will be in serious trouble as the delicate balance of nature will be upset.

The Quran also describes the transgression of these limits as *zulm*, i.e. a wrong and oppressive action. There is great wisdom in sticking to the limits (*hudud*) fixed by Allah in His divine wisdom.

It would also ensure observation of nature's laws which, according to the Quran, are unchangeable. *That was the way of Allah concerning those who have gone before; and thou wilt find no change in the way of Allah.* (33:62) Thus, Allah's way - *Sunnatullah* - is not amenable to change. Whatever laws Allah has made are for the benefit of human beings. They must learn to respect them rather than violate them.

But the rich, seeking their own comfort and satisfaction, violate these limits, laws and the way of

Allah. Their own lust for more makes them blind to a sensible course; they invite God's wrath and destroy themselves. Thus, the Quran says *And when we wish to destroy a town, we send commandments to its people who lead easy lives, but they transgress therein; thus the word proves true against it, so we destroy it with utter destruction.* (17:16) The same warning is repeated in verse 23:64.

Utter Destruction

This is the Divine way of saying that those who exploit others (including nature) for their own ends, disregarding natural laws, will be utterly destroyed. Thus today, we see that the rich industrialised nations and the rich of the Third World are utterly disregarding all the limits set by Allah, and violating the laws of nature for their own satisfaction, and leading humanity to disaster.

Worse still, no amount of exhortation will conscientise the rich, blinded as they are by their own selfish interests. They hardly think of the long term consequences and put off the day of reckoning until they witness it themselves, but then, it would be too late. The Quran puts it in its own inimitable way, *(your) affluence diverts you, until you come to the graves. Way you will soon know, way, again, you will soon know. Nay, would that you know with certainty of sight. Then on that day you shall certainly be questioned about the boons.* (102: 1-8)

The affluence of the advanced industrialised nations has made them oblivious of the consequences of their rapacious treatment of nature. Not only are they destroying forests along with the fauna sustained by them, they are also emitting dangerous fumes and chemicals poisoning the atmosphere, all for their own profit and comfort. They will soon know (it is repeated twice in the Quran for emphasis) the consequences of their evil deeds.

Would that you know with the

certainty of knowledge that which is in store for you, but you would know it with the certainty of the knowledge that which is in store for you. But you would know it with certainty only when you experience hell and you see it with the certainty of sight. And it is then that you would be questioned as to what you did with the boons of nature. You destroyed, for your selfish ends, what was a boon, what was the means for sustaining your lives. However, it would be too late for you. It would not be possible for you to enjoy that boon any more. You destroyed it, you poisoned it. Thus, it is your affluence which is your enemy. It is this affluence which makes you rapacious, which makes you violate all the limits set by God.

Divine Sustenance

The Quran also repeatedly exhorts believers and others that Allah has created nothing in vain. He sent water from clouds which revived the Earth and caused grains and fruits to grow. Thus, Allah says, *Who made the earth a resting place for you and the heaven a structure and sends down rain from the clouds, then brings forth with it fruits for your sustenance.* (2:22)

Thus, it is Allah who created heaven and earth - the entire universe - and humankind not only exists, on earth, but also extracts from it what is necessary for its sustenance. Such cycles - e.g. clouds, rain and the growth of life-sustaining fruits - are created by God. Anyone who interferes with such cycles - and we are doing precisely this by emitting poisonous gases and other polluting material - is interfering with God's creation and is committing an unpardonable sin.

The symbolic expression in this verse - of the earth as a resting place, of heaven as the roof structure above, and of water and fruits as sustaining life for all - is strongly reflective of the oneness of God's creation on the one hand, and of humankind on the other. It is thus the

duty of humankind to maintain the integrity of God's creation apart from ensuring the equality of all of humankind.

Preserving Greenness

The Quran says *Seest thou not that Allah sends down water from the cloud, then the earth becomes green ...* (22:63) Thus, Allah sees to it that water is sent down from above so that our earth remains green, but we interfere with that process and destroy the greenness of the earth in various ways. Since God sends down rain from clouds to keep our earth green, it is our religious duty to preserve this greenness at any cost. Anything that destroys this greenness must be opposed.

It does not mean that industrialisation should be opposed. Industrialisation has been a boon for humanity in many respects, but it has not been an unmixed blessing. It has thrown up many problems, the ecology being one among many, and the most serious one at that. It is, as pointed out above, threatening our very survival. Unless we resolve it satisfactorily, industrialisation can wipe us off this earth.

The problem is not very difficult to solve if only the affluent would agree to bring down their standards of living, which would considerably reduce the level of pollution and of other emissions. Also, it would be necessary to introduce intermediate purification processes which might be expensive for industrialists, but this price will have to be paid in the interest of our survival. God has made our Earth green by sending water from above. Let us not do anything which interferes with this natural process and destroys the greenness of our earth.

Also, forests greatly add to the greenness of our earth. These forests are part of the process which keep our earth green. Forest cover is highly necessary for adequate rainfall on earth. Cutting down forests interferes with this process and the quan-

tity of rainfall goes down, which in turn destroys the greenness of our earth.

This cycle is vital for our very survival, which God, in His wisdom, has ensured through the greenness of our earth. Today, the affluent nations and the rich in the Third World are the greatest culprits. They cut down forests to satisfy their insatiable demand for wood - mainly for furniture, paper and construction and to clear land for urbanisation. They destroy forests for constructing huge dams to generate more and more electricity for ever expanding industrial complexes and metropolises, which also, need ever increasing quantities of water. Thus, we seem to be caught in a vicious circle which is difficult to come out of.

Ecologically Balanced Path

But get out we must. No straight path can be adhered to without considerable sacrifice. Muslims pray to Allah five times a day, and in every prayer, repeat the words: *Guide us on the right path. The path of those upon whom Thou has bestowed favours (an amta).* (1:5-6)

These are important words and constitute a significant invocation. In order to lead a purposeful life, we need to be guided on the right path, both spiritually and materially. The word for 'favour' or 'blessing' used in this verse is *an'amta 'alaykum* (i.e. they have favoured or blessed them).

In fact, this translation is inadequate in many respects. No other words truly captures the essence of this word. In fact, *an'amta* also means worldly goods which enrich our life both materially and spiritually. Thus, interpreted in an ecological sense, it would mean 'O God lead us on the right path which is ecologically balanced and thus enable us to enjoy material and spiritual bliss. This is possible only if Thou guide

us and grace us with Thy favour'.

The next verse says: *Not (the path of) those upon whom (Thou hast) brought down wrath.* Naturally, those who do not follow a balanced and straight path, pollute the earth, emit poisonous gases and destroy the greenness of the earth upon which God has bestowed rain water, are invoking the wrath of Allah. Thus, the prayers of these polluters would be an empty ritual. They are praying to *Rabb al-'Alamin* (Sustainer of the Universe) while violating the function of sustenance by polluting the Earth's atmosphere. How can one who negates the very fundamental function of *rububiyyah* (sustenance), be a true servant of God, 'abd Allah?

It is true that it is very difficult to tread the right path. One has to show the utmost patience and avoid a life of affluence and meaningless consumption. It is *takathur* (abundance, affluence), though pursued for the comforts of life, which turns our earth into *jahim* (hell). Nothing can be more true. It is *takathur*, as the Quran calls it, which is turning our planet into hell.

The Quran also reminds us that human beings are at a loss (*khusr*) except those who have faith (in God's laws which are unchangeable) and who do good (*salihat* - healthy actions leading to a life-sustaining environment on earth).

These people are also exhorted to be truthful and patient. Only those who follow the path of truthfulness and patience can control their desire and avoid what the Quran calls *takathur*. Those who indulge in *takathur* think that they have all the good things in life, but in fact, those who are farsighted know that they are at a loss (*khusr*), as the Quran says (103:2).

Halal And Haram

One will have to evolve a proper ecological strategy to ensure a healthy life-sustaining environment. In several places, the Quran exhorts

human beings: *O people, eat halal and good (unpolluted, tayyib) things from what is on earth, and follow not the footsteps of the devil (pollutants). Surely he is an open enemy to you (2:168).*

I know many traditional commentators would be aghast at my taking liberties with the traditional meanings of these words. However, as I pointed out at the very outset, symbolic language tends to be very complex and multi-dimensional. Its meaning and interpretation depends on the centrality of the issue one is dealing with.

Halal, tayyib and Shaitan (lawful, clean and good, and the devil) are often used by the Quran and have their own meaning in the context of Islamic theology and jurisprudence. I do not challenge these meanings at all.

I am reading other significant meanings into them in relation to the environment. What is *halal* and *tayyib* (lawful and good) is ecologically clean, unpolluted. Only that is permissible. What is polluted is *haram* in an ecological sense, and since what is spiritually and physically harmful is *haram*, ecologically pollution is also physically and spiritually harmful. Those who pollute the atmosphere of the earth follow in the footsteps of the devil, their enemy. As *Shaitan* pollutes our spiritual life and leads us astray, the ecological devils pollute our material life and tend to destroy our life on earth.

There are many verses in the holy Quran which can guide us in ecological matters provided we set our hearts to read appropriate meanings to them. The very foundation of spirituality in every religion is the physical well-being of human beings. Thus, for a true Islamic spirituality to prevail, one must ensure that one creates an ecologically clean and unpolluted environment. Only then can we have *halal* and *tayyin rizq* (provision). ■

Anglo-Irish relations: The Search for Healing

Troubled by the Irish question, English doctor JOHN LESTER, feels the need for a clinical examination of his own attitudes. "What is needed," he observes, "is a search not for solutions but for healing ... the kind of healing that is not the result of accurate analysis or great wisdom but is a gift from God."

On 7 February 1991, three IRA mortar bombs were fired at 10 Downing Street while the War Cabinet was meeting about the Gulf. Eleven days later, another bomb killed a commuter in London's Victoria Station and injured 39 others.

Such campaigns have inflamed British public opinion for more than 20 years - and reveal the depth of feeling that exists in some Irish hearts.

Events like these distort the English view of Ireland. The vast majority of people there are opposed to violence. Ireland produces a great number of men and women of faith who have chosen to serve, heal and educate, founding and running some of the best hospitals and schools in many countries. Its economic performance at the moment is high in the European league.

In England we have got used to a caricature. A century ago Thomas

Carlyle said that the Irishman was 'the sorest evil this country has to deal with ... There abides he, in his squalour and unreason, in his falsity and drunken violence, as the ready-made nucleus of degradation and disorder.' When Disraeli asked for a Treasury grant to build Irish railways, a bureaucrat replied, 'Who'd ever travel on an Irish railway? A passenger booked for Dublin would inevitably find himself in Cork!' Echoes of this view continue to this day.

Something Wrong

Quite apart from the violence, therefore, something is clearly wrong in the relationship between Britain and Ireland, and it needs addressing. This took me to the history books and to Ireland itself, where I met people with the widest range of views in both North and South. Above all it led me to a search of my own heart. For I am English.

And here I would like to differentiate between Britishness and Englishness. We tend to use both words to mean the same thing, because the English culture has been dominant. The English establishment, for instance, has attracted to itself for generations those with an essential English expectation of governing. For this reason some Scots and Welsh may feel part of the establishment while others feel excluded.

Black immigrants to Britain can be caught in a similar trap. They can hope to be black British, but to be black English they would have to

relinquish their right to their own heritage.

And the Northern Ireland Protestant community can feel British and at the same time estranged from the English.

The Division

Ireland was divided into two by Britain in 1922. The South, overwhelmingly Catholic, became independent. Six northern counties remained part Britain because the Protestant majority there would not agree to a united Ireland, and persuaded Westminster to accept their view. Some of the Catholic minority in the North have continued the struggle for a united country. This remains anathema to the Protestant community. In this division lies the immediate cause of the present problem.

One Catholic farmer told me, 'We have every right to take up arms against a foreign power to attain a united Ireland. And a Protestant cleric said to me, 'I wouldn't condone terrorism, but to defend our citizenship, we have the right to take up arms if necessary. I would die to remain British.' He had provoked a senior English politician into exclaiming, 'But you're not British, you're Irish!'

One cannot understand the present without looking at the past, and certain events in the complex historical saga focussed the relationship for me. We English are apt to feel that the Irish cannot forget history. But perhaps our problem is that we do not know enough history.

English Involvement

During the four hundred years in which England was under Roman occupation, Ireland remained a free collection of kingdoms linked by a common Gaelic language and tradition. St. Patrick converted the people without destroying their culture, and this began Ireland's close relationship with the Christian church.

Over 800 years ago the first Norman-English settlers crossed the sea from England, and were followed by Henry II, who sought to maintain his control over them. England was involved in Ireland from that moment.

By the end of the 16th century, when Europe was convulsed by the Reformation, England had become Protestant, while Ireland remained loyal to Rome. So she was seen in England as being both in need of correction and a strategic threat. We did not want France and Spain, the great Catholic nations of Europe, to make common cause with Ireland against us.

Henry VIII claimed all lands in Ireland for the Crown, and Elizabeth I made that claim a reality. The two most powerful Gaelic Irish Earls were finally forced in 1607 to flee to France. Their lands - comprising much of modern-day Northern Ireland - were settled by Protestants from England and Scotland. Fifteen years later there were already about 13,000 Protestant settlers.

Cromwell's Curse

In 1641 there was a Catholic backlash against the settlers and 12,000 were massacred. Cromwell used this to justify an invasion of Ireland and a series of massacres. In 1649 he wrote about Drogheda: 'The enemy was about 3,000 strong in the



William of Orange at the Battle of the Boyne:

"The Protestants determined on a policy of 'no surrender' - and to stand alone because England might be unreliable, a feeling which remains to this day."

town ... I believe we put to the sword the full number of the defendants.'

And in another letter: 'I am persuaded that this is a righteous judgement of God upon these barbarous wretches, who have imbrued their hands in so much innocent blood.' He then confiscated the Irish Catholics' land and banished them to the barren lands of the west.

Three hundred years later, Winston Churchill was to write: 'The consequences of Cromwell's rule in Ireland have distressed and at times distracted English politics down even to the present day. To heal them baffled the skill and loyalties of successive generations ... Upon all of us there still lies "the curse of Cromwell".'

No Surrender

After Cromwell, England returned to the monarchy. Charles II was followed by James II, who had

converted to Catholicism. James appointed Catholics to high offices of state in Ireland and it looked as though he would be able to repeal the Cromwellian land settlements. But before he could, William of Orange emerged from Holland, married Mary, who was next in line to the throne and, after agreeing to the Bill of Rights, they were jointly proclaimed King and Queen of England. The Protestant line was restored.

James fled to Ireland to enlist support but the Protestant settlers in Londonderry slammed the gates in his face and he besieged the city. After much hesitation, the siege was lifted by English ships. This made the Protestants determined on a policy of 'no surrender' - and to stand alone because England might be unreliable, a feeling which remains to this day. In 1690 James was finally defeated by William at

the Battle of the Boyne. These events and feelings are kept alive each year in the Orange Marches.

Harsh Penal Laws

In the eighteenth century harsh Penal Laws were enforced. Catholics were excluded from Parliament and any kind of government service. They could neither teach nor maintain schools. Barred from owning land, they could only lease it, for up to 31 years. When they died the land had to be divided between all the children unless one of them became Protestant. Then he inherited everything. By the end of the century, only five per cent of the land remained in Catholic hands, and many Catholic Irish lived in great poverty.

So the Protestant faith was officially established in Ireland not by the conversion of the Irish but by the rule of England, through the 'Protestant Ascendancy' of wealthy settlers, and members of the old Gaelic Catholic families who in some cases changed religion to retain land and other privileges. The magnificent country houses they built can still be seen all over Ireland. All Irish churches were given to the Protestant Church of Ireland, and no Catholic churches were allowed till the middle of the nineteenth century. Dublin today is 97 per cent Catholic, but its two historical cathedrals are Protestant.

Starvation

By 1841 Ireland had eight million inhabitants. Many of the very poor, with tiny plots of land, subsisted only on potatoes. In 1845 the potato in both countries was destroyed by a fungus. In England, where no one was dependent on one crop, it was a minor irritant. In Ireland, it was a catastrophe.

The English Government of the day believed passionately in the free market. They were afraid that giving food to the Irish would distort it.

They had been conditioned to think of the Irish as an 'indolent' people. And since Ireland was a long way from London, in terms of the travel of the day, many found it hard to grasp the scale of the tragedy which was unfolding.

An Englishman, Charles Trevelyan, was put in charge. Before long he discontinued relief operations, writing, 'It is my firm opinion that too much has been done for the people ...'

The reality is revealed in the writings of others on the spot. A Justice of the Peace wrote, 'I entered some of the hovels ... and the scenes that presented themselves were such as no pen or tongue can convey the slightest idea of. In the first, six famished and ghastly skeletons, to all appearances dead, were huddled in a corner on some filthy straw, their sole covering what seemed a ragged horsecloth, and their wretched legs hanging about naked above their knees. I approached with horror and found by a low moaning that they were alive. They were in fever - four children, a woman and what had once been a man.'

A parish priest wrote, 'Deaths, I regret to say, innumerable from starvation, are occurring every day; the bonds of society are almost dissolved ... The pampered officials ... removed as they are from these scenes of heart-rending distress, can have no idea of them and do not appear to give themselves much trouble about them.'

By 1849, 800,000 to 1,000,000 Irish had died of starvation. A further 1,500,000 had been forced to emigrate, mostly to America or Canada. The population of Ireland decreased in ten years by a third.

From that time and experience can be traced both modern Irish nationalism - with its deep wish for freedom and independence, its heroes and martyrs - and the conflicting pressure upon successive British governments from those who demanded an Irish state and from the

Protestant community who regarded themselves as unalterably British.

Caricatures

Many people and groups are trying to bridge the divide. Sadly, some in each community, including our own, live up to the caricatures. A conversation at Stormont, the Northern Ireland government HQ, made me feel I was in Lagos or Delhi during colonial days.

A Protestant church dignitary described to me how the doctor, a Catholic, invited him to his retirement party in a village just two miles from the Protestant's home. 'It was a fine affair,' he said, 'but with whisky, which I abhor, and Gaelic songs and Irish dancing, there was nothing with which I could identify. I might as well have been in Soweto.'

One senior Catholic figure told me of being invited to a mess dinner by the Commanding Officer of the British Army in his city. He expected to have a chance to explain some of his community's feelings. But the talk was of whether the helicopter pad could be marked out as a croquet pitch.

Enormous Pressure

People live under enormous pressures. A doctor who treats Catholic families told me that the IRA often seek to use his patients' homes as hide-outs. If the house holders protest, guns are brought out. When 'the boys' leave, the Security Forces, who have been watching, come in. The people are under pressure to tell - but if they do, they know the IRA will return. Not surprisingly, there is a high incidence of stress-induced illness.

If the security forces were placed on a war footing and could intern suspects without trial, a senior policeman explained, they could radically reduce IRA activities. But though the IRA regards their campaign as a war, internment without trial is seen as counter-productive.



Over 2,850 have been killed - two-thirds of them civilians - since the latest troubles began in 1969.

The laws of peacetime apply, with proper convictions required through the courts. He accepts this, and the resultant danger to himself and his men. Such people demonstrate the great courage of many in Northern Ireland.

Flawed Relationships

The more I read and listened, the more the thinking and perspective of these different communities became clear. But what about us? We in England decry Irish nationalism but do not so easily understand English nationalism.

I was taught to be proud of my country. When I was a child, much of the world map was still coloured red, but each year more and more countries obtained independence. I was proud of what Britain had achieved in founding the empire and in winding it up with so little bloodshed.

Later I discovered that people from other parts of the world had a different perspective. The Poles reminded me of Yalta, the Chinese of the Opium Wars, the South Africans of our concentration camps in the Boer War and the Irish of the events I have outlined. We have flawed relationships with many countries.

I realized that our policies in Ireland over many centuries had produced the current situation. But this did not entirely satisfy me. How could we have deliberately done such terrible things in Cromwell's time and in the famine, even though values then were different? I assumed there must have been extenuating circumstances.

Or was it because of characteristics we still had?

Our family lived for some years in Birmingham and our older boy went to a Catholic inner-city com-

prehensive school. Many of the boys were the sons of working-class Irish fathers. I thought I was free of prejudice, and I was quite happy with the school until the language, accents, culture and attitudes of the boys began to rub off onto my son. I was concerned that the school was spoiling his Englishness.

We were then invited to a Mass at the school for parents and boys and as I sat there, English and professional, among many less academic parents and children, I was in turmoil because, in spite of myself, I despised them.

I did not mind my son associating with them but I did not want him to become one of them. Something akin to hatred of what they might do to our family welled up in my heart. Yet we were supposed to be taking Communion together.

Suddenly I saw that that would be hypocrisy. I sensed Jesus saying,

'I died for them as well as you. I love them as well as you. Why do you not love them?' For me, it was a choice. I liked to think of myself as balanced and objective and unprejudiced but I had suddenly seen that without God, deep down there were very unpleasant streams which needed healing and cleansing.

I can now say that true equality came as we knelt at the altar before God. Aware of my own need I realized for the first time that equality has everything to do with forgiveness. And at that moment, a great weight of unrecognized and unjustified superiority was taken from me and affection took its place. This has grown enormously. I began to see too the enormous debt we owe to Ireland for the faith and education which it has contributed to Europe and far beyond.

This is a simple, personal illustration. It was a necessary step for me, and it gave me some insight into how British policy could have been the way it was. Historical events arise because of policies. But policies depend on attitudes.

Need For Repentance

If our policies have been moulded by our character, certain other traits which I recognize in myself seem relevant: the expectation of supremacy and control, for instance; a self-confidence in one's own judgements; and an ability to keep emotion under control in order to 'stay above the fray' and appear objective. These are among the qualities which made empire possible, and were shaped by it. They lie at the heart of English nationalism. They have a positive side. But the down-side - the sinful side - has been brought to bear on Ireland and has harmed it.

The violence of the IRA is rightly condemned and confronted in Britain. It is also condemned in Ireland by many who share Republican aims and by the Church which feels responsibility for the

young men and women involved. Others must be responsible for their own actions, but if our policies have led to and sustained a situation full of injustice, we may have been the means of them being tempted to violence.

The Protestant community was placed in Ireland to serve our interests. They see themselves as a beleaguered community, without friends, threatened by others' desire for a united Ireland in which they will lose security and identity, and by the fear that Britain will leave them to their fate. 'Why are we not accepted as British in the way the English, Welsh and Scots are?' they ask.

We cannot condone the actions of their extremists either. Yet it is our policies that brought their forebears to Ireland to manage our affairs, to uphold the Protestant faith, to keep Ireland loyal to Britain. We are embarrassed now that they continue the aims and attitudes we initiated. We have found them difficult and distanced ourselves from them, adding to their isolation. All this revealed to me our part in creating the situation in which they now live. So often conflict becomes inevitable because of the sin or failure of earlier years.

These insights have made me feel a deep need for repentance over Ireland.

Seek Forgiveness

The British position, too, is a difficult one. We acknowledge our responsibility to the extent that we know we cannot wash our hands of the matter. When cases arise - for instance the Guildford Four, the Birmingham Six and the UDR Four - in which it appears that British justice has failed, we become rightly troubled. The saddest aspect is that there appears to be no overall political 'solution'; no way out which does not do serious harm to the legitimate hopes of one group or another.

It is not possible, for example, to honour the wishes of the Republican cause without betraying the Protestants and vice versa. We also have to reckon with those who ruthlessly use the historical wrongs to gain their own ends.

By our very presence, and that of our army, we have become a target. We cannot withdraw without abdicating responsibility. We too have been hurt. We are the third wronged community. Violence against us will not make us withdraw. But it has created yet more injustice, forging further links in the chain of hate. So we as a community also need to learn to forgive.

Politicians must keep exploring possible ways to an eventual solution. But there is an essential precursor: a search not for solutions but for healing; personal healing and a healing of the flawed relationships between us; the kind of healing that is not the result of accurate analysis or great wisdom but is a gift from God whenever, before Him, people feel real sorrow.

Such healing might make possible some otherwise unexpected development. It would be a valuable example of something the world needs.

Our histories are intertwined. The British, like many other people, prefer being in control to being in need. Yet our common sense of need is the strongest bond and the finest gift which Britain and Ireland could offer the world together.

Britain has long-term links with people in many parts of the world. Many of these relationships require healing, like the English-Irish one, because the same attitudes have applied. If we could dare to recognize, acknowledge and seek forgiveness for our failings, we might contribute more than we imagine. It is there, with myself and my own community, that I feel the need to start. ❖

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Europe: Opening or Closing?

Mohamed Ennaceur

Although I am Tunisian, Europe is not unknown to me. I have lived some years in Europe, where I have studied.

The rapid changes in Europe arouse both admiration and anxiety.

Admiration because Europe is succeeding where others have so far

which is being built is a Europe of large economic interests. It is not sufficiently social. Many have hoped that Europe would be something other than a big market. They feel that Europe has not affirmed its mission on a universal level at a time when the world is shaken by great

nia-Herzegovina.

How will post-Maastricht Europe affirm its identity on the international scene? Will she have a distinctive role to play, throwing her whole weight behind the reinforcing of peace, supporting the development of the countries of the South, and promoting the values of civilization, culture, solidarity and social progress? Or will she subordinate everything to economic imperatives?

To these anxieties, which I share, I would add some which are personal to me as a non-European, an Arab and a Muslim. Until quite recently my regional or cultural identity, and my nationality, have never been a handicap in Europe, where I have always felt at ease. But today I increasingly feel a stranger, and I sense that more and more foreigners are no longer welcome. For us, it seems, Europe is closing in on itself.

On arrival in European airports, you have the feeling of being suspected of I don't know what. You are made to feel undesirable.

So Europe's move towards oneness, which is meant to indicate an opening, is paradoxically accompanied by an opposite movement of withdrawal into itself - as though the prospect of belonging to a supra-national entity provokes in some Europeans a compensatory reflex.

What characterizes Europe today is a wave of xenophobia. Some reject foreigners in the name of preserving their own identity; others do so in the name of fighting against illegal immigration.

This trend was started by political movements of the extreme right but increasingly the media has



Europe is not facing up to its moral issues at a time when serious universal conflicts are taking place around it.

failed. Its unity, which was a dream 40 years ago, is becoming a reality with disconcerting speed. The development of the European Community is a history-making move which is preparing Europe to face a new century of global economic integration. The EC is also forging new links with other European countries, including those to the east.

Yet these changes also give rise to anxieties: first for the people of Europe, not all of whom seem to share the enthusiasm of their leaders.

For many Europeans, the Europe

regional conflicts and faces a serious moral crisis.

Anxieties

At a time when international relations need rebalancing, one has the impression that Europe's international ambitions are limited to the defence of European's economic interests.

I believe that Europe should have played a more decisive role in the settlement of conflicts which are shaking several regions of the world, especially the Middle East and Bos-



Cambodians at a summer conference in Europe: Immigrants are increasingly being blamed for many ills in their host countries.



Europe is presently very sensitive to the growth of Muslim fundamentalism.

focussed public attention on immigrants so that they have been blamed for all the ills.

It is no longer their irregular situation with respect to the laws of the countries where they live which causes immigrants to be denounced and rejected. It is their way of living, their way of dressing, their traditions - in a word, their differences - which disturb. What used to be slogans of the extreme right minority have gradually become government

policy. Always under the cover of putting an end to illegal immigration, one country reforms its nationality law, while another limits the right of asylum. Such actions are part of a strategy to encourage the return of refugees and foreign immigrants to their countries of origin.

Passing Phase

What shocks me is that this strategy seems to aim at Muslim foreigners in particular. Certain

European public opinion is sensitive to the growth of Islamic fundamentalism and to its violent manifestations. But not every Muslim is a fundamentalist and not every fundamentalist is a terrorist.

I can only deplore the tendency for Europe to close in at a time when it is preparing a new destiny for itself.

But I would like to end on a note of hope, hope that the millions of Europeans who have demonstrated against the anti-minority, anti-immigrant stands of certain groups may now take the stage. Herein lies the hope that what we are living through is just a passing phase and that Europe will catch its breath, rediscover its soul and bring all its weight to bear for the building of a world of solidarity and brotherhood. ■

Mohamed Ennaceur is Tunisian Permanent Representative at the UN in Geneva and this year's President of the UN Human Rights Commission.

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CURRENT CONCERNS

Joint Statement on the Fifth Anniversary of Military Coup and Repression on Pro-democracy movement in Burma

18 September marks the fifth anniversary of the military crackdown on the pro-democracy movement in Burma. On 18 September 1988, the Burmese military staged a coup and declared martial law. Thousands of students and leaders of the pro-democracy movement were put in prison. More than 8,000 people were killed in the military crackdown.

Today, despite strong international condemnation, the Burmese military junta - the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) - continues its repression against

the Burmese people. Thousands of political prisoners are still imprisoned and subjected to torture. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, the 1991 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, has started her fifth year under house arrest.

We strongly condemn the Burmese military practice of kidnapping and brutalizing hundred of thousands of civilians as slave porters and labourers. Many die from exhaustion or beatings. Some porters are used as mine-sweepers. At the same time, many villagers in ethnic minority areas are forced by the military to relocate to military-controlled "strategic hamlets". These people are forced to abandon everything they have built up for their lives. These over-crowded relocation sites lack food and medicine.

We are deeply concerned

about the growing number of abuses on Burmese women and children. A large number of rapes committed by Burmese troops were reported in the areas of armed conflict. Many women porters were repeatedly raped. Thousands of women and children are trafficked to Thailand and forced into prostitution. Many of them are infected with HIV in Thailand.

Nowadays the Asian and Western businesses continue to invest enthusiastically in the brutal regime. These foreign investments help provide the money for the SLORC to buy arms and support its army to repress the people. They also contribute to the present massive environmental destruction in Burma.

We hereby express our support for the Burmese people and urge that:

- * the SLORC immediately release Aung San Suu Kyi and all other political prisoners unconditionally, stop forced portering, and all military measures against the ethnic minorities, transfers power to the elected representatives of the people;
- * the international community enforces an economic sanction and arms embargo on Burma;
- * foreign investors stop investing in Burma as this has benefitted the SLORC and helped repress the Burmese people.

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 SUARAM
 TENAGANITA
 WORKERS ORGANISATION

20 September 1993

A NEW PARTNERSHIP

Free to roam the land, Aa-u-oo ...

My voice reverberating in echoes
 Across the hills and valleys - my oikos;

When I recline with cheek to earth

I breathe the mother's warmth;
 Food, clothing, medicines, fuel
 Everything for life provide she will.

You are the Guru at whose feet
 In a forest class classroom we sit
 You reveal to us the mysteries of nature

We learn to live by your code
 We become indigenous to each other.

Alas! Rumbblings of sounds alien
 A monster's head rearing over the horizon;

A divider, a destroyer, an exterminator

The modern Nation State - enter

Greenland, USA, Russia and Canada

Into my flesh each has sunk its teeth.

I am the Inuit.

Chad, Senegal, Mali and Nigeria
 And States four other

Have broken me a quarter of a quarter.

I am the Fulani of West Africa.

Bolivia, Peru and Ecuador

Have trisected my torso.

I am the Quechua.

Torn between Malaysia and Indonesia

My allegiance is to the land not state

I am the Dayak.

Dispersed from hinterland to ululand

By roads, mines, dams and plantations

Driven from our ancestral land
 Severed from group support and clan

In the name of economic development.

Our economic life of low impact technologies

Was with Nature symbiotic, not destructive.

You exhaust our habitats;

Guilty of ecocide!

You expose us to unknown diseases;

Guilty of genocide!

What survival for landless orphans!

No way to retain our tribal identity

No strength to maintain our cultural entity.

Forced to co-exist

With one foot in the river

The other in the mud.

Goodbye to the idyllic past

Of free hunting and joyous gathering;

What strength a fragmented three million

Isolated by powerful political forces.

Come what development

Share our jungle

Let us also benefit

The Earth is mother to all

Learn to conserve

Lest perish we all.

DAVID ANTHONY
Petaling Jaya



Sarajevo: sorrow and shock at the death of relatives and friends.

“...the worst pain of all is the thought that there will be no end to this: that there is no future, no progress, no prospect of relief...”

we scabble for food at the roadside like animals, now we can't offer a guest even a cup of coffee.'

Everyone has a story. Of husbands killed, being used by the Cetniks (Serbs) as human shields, of brothers who died on the frontline only two kilometres away, of friends killed by shellfire as they queued for bread, of homes destroyed, of children sleeping in cold beds when bullets peppered their room with destruction. As they told their stories, many shook with fear and exhaustion.

Their weakness is caused by 14 months of bad diet, the endless terror for loved ones, the prayers to keep them alive and the fear every time they leave your sight that you will never see them again, that their end will be violent and painful and bloody. Fourteen months of keeping your children inside for fear that they will be killed by sniper fire or an arbitrary shell as they play in the street. Fourteen months of carrying every drop of water up 10 flights of stairs to your damaged apartment which has no electricity or gas. Of

dry bread, unflavoured rice and boiled beans. Of hearing the shells fall around you, wondering whether the next one will rip through the walls of your apartment and blow your body apart. Fourteen months of keeping going, of turning the radio up and playing games with the children to keep some of the fear out of their young lives.

And that, perhaps, is the worst deprivation, the grief of the parents for their children, for their inability to feed them; for the lack of stimulation, learning, freedom and growth that define childhood. The powerlessness of parents to nurture and protect their children is the deepest source of the despair slowly suffocating this city.

All the women to whom I spoke were nervous and depressed; I observed a great deterioration of spirit since my earlier visit in March. When they had to fight the cold as well, there was a spirit of resistance, a hope that 'if we can just get through the winter ...'

The winter is over and nothing has changed. If anything, people feel

their incarceration even more as the passing of time and season brings the realisation that life and hope are mocked by this war, by the gruelling struggle to survive in an existence reduced to pain and deprivation. And the worst pain of all is the thought that there will be no end to this: that there is no future, no progress, no prospect of relief.

Bravery in Sarajevo is not some heroic, swashbuckling, risk-taking quest for Grail or glory. Bravery in Sarajevo is the daily, hourly decision to carry on, to get up, to dress, to make the best you can of the flour and oil ration, to visit a friend despite the sniper bullets, to keep clean and tidy for no reason other than that it is a way of fighting back. All this despite the sickening fear, the loss of hope, and the growing realisation that everything you once had and everything you once were is gone for ever, and the brutality of life now reduces it to a bitter memory of a fool's paradise.

Hope has died in the city; so the city is dying. The death of hope is no media event - there are no pitiable



Camp for Bosnian Muslims: her husband and sons have been lost in the war, she is an illegal refugee in Croatia.

"...The people of Sarajevo lived in such genuine acceptance of each other that a couple could marry before it even occurred to them to ask what religious beliefs their families held..."

figures in black defying the snipers to bury the dead - so the surrender of hope's last few positions in Sarajevo goes unnoticed and unmarked by outsiders. International indifference assists the intimate tyranny of the Cetnik, who is using siege, starvation, terror and despair to destroy the people of Sarajevo. The people of Sarajevo lived in such genuine acceptance of each other that a couple could marry before it even occurred to them to ask what religious beliefs their families held. That acceptance, that example of what human society can be, persists despite the last 14 months. But it is dying as hope dies in the city.

I visited the poor districts of the city and met again some of the women I had visited before. Visibly thinner and weaker, struggling to manage on the basic ration, which is inadequate for the special circumstances of Sarajevo, they are slowly and painfully slipping away from life. Their bravery is sickening, their perseverance senseless except as a denial of the inevitable. There was no more interest in events outside, no laughter, jokes, conversation.

'Why has the rest of Europe

abandoned us?' I was asked. 'Why do you feed us for the bullet and shellfire?' I had no answer.

The people kissed me and told me how much it meant to them to receive gifts from outside. Not simply because of their need, but because it meant that somebody out there cared. Nonetheless, their gratitude exists alongside a bitter appreciation of the political realities of the way in which aid is used by countries like our own. Some said:

'You are feeding the Muslims to be killed by Cetniks.'

'It is not lack of food that is killing us. It is the war. You give us aid only to salve your conscience.'

'You won't let us defend ourselves, and you do not protect us.'

'The Cetniks will wait until we are too weak to fight and then they will kill us all.'

On my first two visits to Sarajevo, the people had told me their stories because they assumed that the rest of Europe did not know what was happening to them. If it did, it would surely be doing something to stop the slow, terminal violence being done to civilisation in their city, and the prospect of civilisation elsewhere. On my last

visit, the stories came without thought or purpose, simply because I was there. The people know they are abandoned, and that any attention from us is due only to their usefulness in an international game of political and economical advantage, played by those whose privilege and wealth have made them heartless.

I did not need to tell the people that the world has failed them, not because of the lack of stories told, but because of the lack of people willing to hear or to act. I have tried to be a channel for the voices of the women of Sarajevo to be heard across the siege lines of indifference.

• (Source: *INDEX ON CENSORSHIP* 7/1993)

• *Writer LOUISE MCCORKINDALE is a university lecturer in Scotland. She visited Sarajevo between March and June 1993 as part of an aid team. She prepared this piece for the London International Festival of Theatre, July 1993.*

HEART TO HEART

What comes from the lips reaches the ear, what comes from the heart reaches the heart. -Arab Proverb

WOMEN OF SARAJEVO SPEAK

*"Why has the rest of Europe abandoned us?
Why do you feed us for the bullet and shellfire?"*



A mother mourns the loss of her son.

My words represent many voices. There is my own, the voice of the outsider and aid-worker. More important are the voices of the women of Sarajevo who have told me their stories: voices which would not otherwise be heard because they are imprisoned in

a dying city in another country.

Many of the women wept as they told me their stories, as they described what life is like in Sarajevo now, how it was in the past and will never be again. 'We did not always live like this,' they would say as they fought off the humiliation of

their inability to offer the tiny cup of coffee and glass of water that is the foundation of their traditional hospitality. 'Before the war we had everything, like normal European people. We travelled, we had jobs, went to the theatre, went shopping, had friends round for dinner. Now

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