

EXCURSUS 1

George A. Silver on
INDIA'S BLOODY PORTENT

In Gujerat—the populous and technically and economically advanced province of Western India that was Mahatma Gandhi's ancestral home—an ironic and tragic scenario is being played out. Gandhi spent his life as the spearhead of the social revolution to free India's huge (25 per cent) depressed minorities: the "untouchables;" the out-castes; the unprivileged, almost enslaved "Harijans." In modern India they are designated "the Scheduled Castes and Tribes"—presumably integrated, but still, as in ancient times, doing society's dirty work, discriminated against, and miserably underpaid.

In pursuit of integration, an affirmative action policy has been undertaken by the government to try to ensure that members of these long-suffering and persecuted elements of the population are given opportunities to obtain education and are encouraged to advance to professional ranks. This took the form of a clear-cut quota system. In medicine, for example, a quarter of the places were reserved for the Scheduled Castes and Tribes in definitely prescribed percentages: 7 per cent for scheduled castes; 13 per cent for scheduled tribes; 5 per cent for other backward classes. Furthermore, if the *nonreserved* places happened not to be filled in a given year, for the next two years these additional places could also be held for the minority groups—the "carry-forward" system.

This past fall a polio-afflicted Brahmin student applied for graduate training in pathology and was rejected. Because it was a "reserved" place, a scheduled caste student was admitted to this training. Agitation began almost immediately, and a "Students Anti-reservation Action Committee" was formed, which soon obtained the support of the medical student body, the Junior Doctors'

Association, and, more recently, even the Indian Medical Association. Caste and class is not the issue, the argument runs, but *quality*. They oppose reserved places because all students should be admitted solely on the basis of merit. Sound familiar?

The position is hard to challenge on logical grounds, except that attainting the students from the scheduled castes and tribes who are admitted seems to have no basis in fact. According to at least one Indian newspaper, the students admitted by the reserved route are no worse or much different from those accepted from the unreserved list. Nor does the quota impede the higher caste students in their aspirations. In the state of Gujerat, where this episode is in train, out of 887 places open in the past five years, 110 scheduled castes and tribes members should have been admitted. In fact only 37 were occupied, and the rest were released for general admission. Whether this is because not enough minority students applied or because those who did apply were considered unqualified is uncertain.

Brahmins and other high castes have dominated the professional fields all over India and the conflict is spreading. Minority students have been regularly insulted and humiliated by their classmates, and the minority community is now rising in response to the attacks—not only to defend the professional group of medical students, but to demand governmental action in support of their constitutional rights.

From bitter verbal feuding the struggle has gone on to physical action, police intervention, riots, beatings, arrests, stabbings, and shootings. So far there have been more than nineteen deaths (four from police action) and thousands arrested. The Scheduled Castes and Tribes Association has entered the fray, and since they represent large numbers of low-paid workers, the strikes have been large-scale and involve many companies. The picketing has led to counterpicketing, violence between antagonistic groups, police intervention, random violence, and caste-inspired murders.



"Because he is stinking rich we now confer the honorary degree of Doctor of Humane Letters on Stanley Wardlow."

This all took place in Ahmedabad, a city of three million and a center of Gandhi's most effective campaigns on behalf of the "untouchables." There is great fear that the hatred and violence triggered by the events in Ahmedabad may spread to the rest of India and release a bloodbath comparable to that of the Muslim-Hindu massacres at the time of partition.

It is not without irony that I write this from an international meeting in Calcutta devoted to considerations of public health and the medical care and health needs of developing countries. With the Indian Public Health Association as host, we are discussing how to achieve (in the World Health Organization phrasing) "health for all by the year 2000." The sympathetic and unselfish devotion of physicians to this cause is frequently discussed at the meetings as a *sine qua non* of the endeavor. Apparently this will have to be achieved, if at all, over the dead bodies of minority doctors.

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EXCURSUS 2

Walter C. Clemens, Jr., on THE LEGACY OF ERIC WILLIAMS

Small countries are overshadowed by large ones. The passing of one of the developing countries' most outstanding leaders was overshadowed by the assassination attempt on President Reagan. But Dr. Eric Williams, prime minister of Trinidad and Tobago since independence in 1962, has left a legacy that is almost a model for other Third World leaders.

First of all Williams knew his business. The leading scholar of all statesmen in the world for over a generation, he had written widely on the history of capitalism and slavery; on relations between Europe and the Caribbean; on the history of the Caribbean and his own country. Indeed, he produced almost overnight a major history of Trinidad on the eve of independence. A lecturer at Howard University in the 1950s, he returned to the Caribbean and to Trinidad as independence swept the region. But he never gave up his scholarly pursuits. During my year at the University of the West Indies in 1977-78, for example, he gave a long and detailed speech on Islam, relating it to the Muslim minority of Trinidad.

Second, he was a skillful politician. He set up a powerful political machine that ensured his primacy in the elections and within the government even as he promoted parliamentary democracy. Leader of what was perceived as the black man's party, he included a sufficient number of East Indians in cabinet and party leadership to lend hope that the party would be multiracial. Though very stern against leftists and Rastafarians, Williams treated the other major party—composed mostly of East Indians—with the kid gloves respect of the British parliamentary system.

Third, he maintained a semblance of order without terror or paranoia. Though Williams's police force was brutal in rooting out marijuana cultivators in the hillsides, his practices were almost angelic in comparison with the terror in Haiti or Uganda, the one-party rule of Cuba and Grenada, and the street violence in Jamaica and Guyana.

Fourth, Williams knew how to mix private and government enterprise, fusing foreign investors and developers

with gradually increasing local responsibility. He chafed at the multinationals and resented Trinidad's dependence on them, but he recognized this dependence as a fact of life. How then to make the most of it? He pressured the foreign oil companies to train and elevate nationals to positions of responsibility at every level. As I can testify from visits to various oil facilities, this principle was implemented and worked to mutual advantage.

Fifth, the ex-professor knew the importance of education. He invested much of the national wealth in education at every level, from primary to university extension programs. A foreigner might think the curriculum and methods too nationalistic, too conservative, too rigid, but important resources were invested and, with time, have yielded good if not ideal results.

Williams's legacy also includes major warnings to the Third World. His country was blessed with oil and the wealth it generated. Williams tried to develop a program to use this wealth wisely—for the present and the future. Unfortunately, such programs are not easy to plan and even more difficult to implement. Attempting to use oil wealth to create a kind of WPA, for example, Williams drew off labor from coconut plantations and other difficult but important jobs. The results were that weeds were cut along roads and some potholes were filled, but the country became more and more dependent upon imported food, which needed to be subsidized. Political influence could also be gained from distribution of petro-dollar riches, and this generated corruption and cynicism.

A second signal concerns personal and political succession. Having run his party since the late 1950s, Williams became more and more rigid, if not dictatorial (senile, some said). The decisions of his later years were not up to those of earlier years in office. His handling of a British West Indies Airways strike in early 1978, for example, proved costly in every sense. His handling of autonomy demands from the sister island of Tobago was high-handed and arrogant. Still he held on, without training or designating an able successor.

Withal, Williams did not stomp out the critical genius of his culture—Carnival and Calypso. The islands of Trinidad and Tobago continue to have major problems, as do most nations; but the Republic is richer for having had a gifted leader. And his legacy is important to us all.

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EXCURSUS 3

John Crothers Pollock on THE IMPACT OF BELIEF

A national survey taken last fall and released this spring provides important new information about the influence of religious commitment on American attitudes toward family, work, and civic affairs. The *Connecticut Mutual Life Report on American Values in the 80's: The Impact of Belief* is the result of a national sample of over two thousand members of the public, conducted by Research & Forecasts, a New York City-based survey research firm.

The study set out to explore American values in the coming decade: what Americans think about their families, their occupations, civic affairs, and the national polit-