

LETTERS

Seminar examines Gandhi years

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material originating from a government which has institutionalized racism like the South African government—the only such remaining government in the World today. And in attempting to sidetrack an issue some will point fingers, throw labels around and cry red. They need, of course, to let their feelings of superiority be known. Isn't that special?

The group "Third World Forum" was formed only a year ago by a few people who sought to erase some of the misperceptions, stereotypes and myths about a vast area of the world called the "Third World." The very term "Third World" is, for us, an ideological construct borne out of the misperceptions held of the world around us. We keep the name "Third World Forum" in order to bring awareness to the fallacy of there being a first, second, third or fourth world.

Through various mechanisms, such as socialization, television, and the print media, people develop their perceptions of the world around them. Yet, some "facts" have been generally accepted, and from this we inform ourselves about theories of the world around us. "Third World Forum" seeks to question some of these "facts." It is through dialogue and discussion that we hope to unmask the various versions of reality.

An example of how reality can be masked or mystified is the painting of the world into good and evil. The good, represented by one empire, protects the innocent. The evil, represented by another, tries through infiltration, indoctrination and terrorism to control the innocent, and so ultimately to defeat the good empire. The innocent must be guided, provided with the political, technological, cultural and intellectual wherewithal in order to be as good as the good empire itself. Of course, it becomes clear that the innocent are those assumed to be incapable of genuine independent thought and action to confront and deal with their own reality. Such assumptions may guide the policies of state; it may inform the relations between national and tourist; it may inform the relationship between student and student. It is important, we believe, that people not be manipulated by an ideology. We fight against the misuse of terminology (such as liberty) and whatever other ways and means that are used to mask reality.

Naturally therefore, the "Third World Forum" resists from falling into the trap of labels. Calling us one "ism" or the other will not do, whereas they may be proper for those who do see the world in nice, neat categories such as good and evil. Such slander then, is naturally reflective of those groping in the dark, those wishing to mystify, those wishing to disinform.

Finally, we wish to invite all to our meetings. All those with a sensitivity to human problems, those seekers of truth, those wishing and hoping for a better world, free of the illusions used by the various powers to dominate and oppress, we truly welcome.

Peter Hanoomansingh
Third World Forum

By FARAH S. JAMAL

Two nations, at relatively the same point in time, found themselves in the hands of highly visible and charismatic leaders, according to a panel of experts on Indian politics. Either through "public seduction," or by ruthlessly manipulating their power, Pierre Trudeau and Indira Gandhi changed the political directions of their seemingly unrelated nations, the panel argued at an Indian Festival's seminar, "The Trudeau Gandhi Years." The consequences for India were startling, the audience in Moot Court was told, and that country would never be the same again.

Indira Gandhi's political career was a story of intrigue, self-preservation and violence, the panel maintained, but it is difficult to make an assessment of it due to the lack of documentation, and because of Mrs. Gandhi's highly secretive nature. Francine Frankel, Professor of Political Science and South Asian Studies at the University of Pennsylvania, told of her conversation with Mrs. Gandhi: "I asked her, 'Is there anything that you would like young people to know about you?' . . . She answered, 'No! I don't want them to know a thing about me. I am a

very private person.'"

Contemporary scholars generally have a very harsh opinion of Gandhi's political career, according to Frankel. Their basic charge is that she abandoned the 'inclusionary policy' that could unite opposing ethnic groups and instead, practiced an 'exclusionary policy' in order to protect her own power. She is said to have wilfully destroyed formal, political institutions in India in order to reach her own ends, Frankel explained.

Frankel conceded that Gandhi was partially responsible for deteriorating India's democratic government. As well, Frankel added, it became a money-hungry elite who manipulated government institutions—the judiciary, and the legislature, among others—and was answerable only to Gandhi, who used them to illegally raise "black" money and to enlist the support of various criminals. Despite her repeated promises to help the people, all social workers disappeared, and the poor only got poorer. "It was the greatest breakdown of political, formal institutions that we can imagine," said Frankel.

Gandhi, however, was not simply

power hungry, according to Frankel. Unlike India's first prime minister—Nehru—before her, she was faced with enemies from both sides, and she deliberately deinstitutionalized the Indian government in order to transcend this political polarization.

Nani Palkhivala, a distinguished lawyer, businessman and public figure in India, disagreed. "Our Prime Ministers die in office . . . because kings die in office . . . While I would like to say nothing but good about the dead, I must say I cannot forgive anyone the destruction of national character."

By comparison, Canada's experience with Pierre Trudeau was neither violent nor destruction, according to Christopher Armstrong, Professor of History at York. Trudeau also had a great impact on the public, and during his term in office, he affected many significant aspects of Canadian politics. Armstrong explained that in terms of his foreign policy, Trudeau was not directly concerned with India, but more concerned about the Third World in general. His policy directed 0.6% of the Gross National Product, (a substantial contribution for which he was criticized, to the aid of under-

developed countries. His promotion of North-South co-operation attempted to bring the Western world and the underdeveloped world closer together, Armstrong said, adding that most recently, Trudeau embarked on his Peace Initiative to encourage world leaders to support nuclear disarmament. Armstrong felt that in this cause, as with the others, Trudeau was hampered chiefly by the United States' lukewarm attitude.

Armstrong pointed out that "for Canadians, it is a fact of life that if we want to get anything done we have to carry Washington with us." Trudeau's attitude towards the United States was, at best, condescending and at worst, antagonistic, Armstrong continued. "It is fair to say that his efforts came to nothing largely because the United States was uninterested . . . Small pilots move in circles when they have large suns in their orbit." As a result, Trudeau's effect on India was minimal. He did succeed in creating a more caring attitude in Canada towards the underdeveloped world; but whether this will benefit India in the future remains to be seen, Armstrong concluded.



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