

fascist Croatian Ustashi and by the Serbian Chetnik extremists. What these accounts fail to mention is that the very horror experienced by these peoples at the hands of cruel, merciless fanatics, has also produced another, very deep emotion in the population, both Serb and Croat, which can be expressed in this way: "As much as I can't stand them, we must never, never, again go through what we experienced from 1942 to 1945. May our children and grandchildren never, never see what we saw."

The actions of the churches may have turned the corner in time to brake the momentum toward civil war. On the morning of May 9, after three days of deliberations, the Yugoslav collective State Presidency announced that an agreement had been reached to defuse the crisis, speaking of "important concessions by Croats and Serbs." Under the announcement, Croatia agreed to disarm all paramilitary groups and demobilize Croatian police reservists who had been called up to meet the Army threat. Similarly, all armed bands of Serbs on Croatian territory are to be disarmed. Finally, the agreement provides for holding direct talks between the republics of Serbia and Croatia to settle the crisis. The disarming of paramilitary groups on both sides will be carried out by the Army.

Weeks of decision

May 19 is the date of a scheduled referendum in Croatia on the future of Yugoslavia, a referendum that will produce a resounding vote in favor of ending the current federation and replacing it with a loosely affiliated league of sovereign states, a referendum which the Serbian cabal is trying to torpedo at all costs. After May 15, the Serbian cabal's "legal" capability to continue to order Army units into Croatia will be gone. The State Presidency, and with that the political command of the Armed Forces, will pass from Borisav Jovic, a Serb, to the Croat, Stipe Mesic.

Simultaneously, Serbia's current assured five "yes" votes on the collective State Presidium, the minimum required for deploying the Army into a republic, will be reduced to four. Serbia had acquired the vital "fifth vote" through a byzantine arrangement made with the centrally located Yugoslav republic of Bosnia, a republic with a Muslim majority and a large Serbian minority. In exchange for Serbia refraining from activating its armed minority in Bosnia, Bosnia had sent an ethnic Serb as its representative to the State Presidency. But after the explosion in Croatia, Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic had canceled this arrangement.

This political battle suggests that Bosnia is moving toward becoming the next theater of armed combat, a danger which Izetbegovic specifically alluded to over the May 4-5 weekend. Since then, tensions in Bosnia have been on the rise over the daily troop movements through its territory. Even should the Serb-Croat clash cool off, a major flareup in Bosnia would bring the Yugoslav situation once again to the brink of civil war.

Bangladesh cyclone disaster not 'natural'

This article was based on reporting by Ramtanu Maitra and Susan B. Maitra in New Delhi and Mary Burdman in Wiesbaden, Germany, and was written by Ron Kokinda.

As many as 500,000 people are likely to have died in a cyclone that pounded and flattened the southern coastal areas of Bangladesh on April 29. Nearly a week after the storm, the official death toll stood at 125,000. According to official sources, another 1.3 million people living in coastal areas and offshore islands remain untraceable. Former Vice President Moudid Ahmed stated that 60% of the victims were women and children. A few relief helicopters that could brave the continuing inclement weather have reported hundreds of thousands of human bodies floating in the water—all presumably dead.

In addition, because of the delay in relief efforts to survivors of the storm, "an estimated 4 million people are now at serious risk from lack of fresh drinking water and food," according to the Red Cross/Red Crescent. Cholera had already broken out in the country before the storm, and is now spreading rapidly. The May 9 London *Guardian* reported that in Chittagong, the main city of the stricken area, hospitals are "filled to overflowing." On Hatia Island, there are 2,300 reported cases alone. Diarrhea is a killer disease, especially in so hot a climate, of undernourished children and women. With clean water lacking, the spread of water-borne disease is now the gravest threat.

Addressing the nation soon after the news of devastation began to filter into the capital of Dhaka, Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia told her countrymen with a broken voice: "It is a tragedy of great magnitude, surpassing all natural calamities." She appealed for international aid, including capital and technology to cope with the longer-term effects of the disaster.

Yet, in contrast to the estimated losses of \$1.5 billion, only about \$350 million in emergency aid has been pledged so far. Bangladesh has asked for 20 helicopters, 50 jeeps, and 15 ships or other sea transport for the relief operation. But pledges are "inadequate, inappropriate, and even non-existent," a Bangladeshi official told the BBC May 8.

Targeted for triage

The death toll in Bangladesh is not the result of "natural" causes. Since its inception in 1971, Bangladesh has been relegated to the "Fourth World" of nations designated for triage, as stated by the World Bank and the International

Monetary Fund. This policy-designation has enforced a practice in which Bangladesh has been systematically denied investment and any aid for infrastructure development.

For example, in 1975, American statesman Lyndon LaRouche, along with friends in Europe, attempted to negotiate the sending of dredges to Bangladesh from the Netherlands, which would have permitted Bangladesh to deepen its river channels for flood control. The potential deal was directly sabotaged by Henry Kissinger, then U.S. secretary of state.

Today, Bangladesh is one of the world's ten poorest countries, with an average per capita national income of \$160, according to the World Bank, and an infant mortality rate of 117.8 per every thousand babies born. Life expectancy at birth is 50 years.

Bangladesh had severe economic problems before the cyclone, including having to repatriate about 100,000 workers from the Persian Gulf oil producing states at enormous cost during George Bush's war. The workers, whose remittances are a major source of foreign exchange for Bangladesh, are only now returning to the Gulf.

Such dire poverty, imposed by the international bankers, is responsible for the magnitude of the calamity that hit Bangladesh, not "Mother Nature." The vast majority of those who died were the poorest Bangladeshis, who, without land of their own, have occupied the low-lying islands, where occupancy is officially illegal. These islands have been built up from the silt brought by the huge Ganges-Brahmaputra rivers that course through Bangladesh, and are subject to precisely the type of inundation that swept through them in April.

Secondly, Bangladesh lacks the capability to relocate millions of people on the 24-48 hours notice provided by storm warnings. A coastal defense plan, devised against such storms, has not been carried out for lack of funds. Under this plan, embankments and concrete bulkheads would break the power of the tidal waves that hit the country's coast.

Thirdly, the financial crunch imposed on the country has prevented the Bangladesh government from building cyclone shelters, as was planned following the 1970 cyclone, a storm of comparable magnitude which claimed 100,000 lives. The London *Guardian* noted May 6 that the cyclone shelters that had been built since 1970 all stood through the storm intact, and everyone who made it into a shelter survived.

The long-term problems

The longer-term effects of the cyclone could be as tragic as the immediate disaster. In addition to more than \$500 million in estimated damage to Bangladeshi agriculture, including the destruction of the winter rice crop, which was ready for harvest, and nearly all livestock in the 200,000 square mile stricken area, the Chittagong oil refinery, the most important in the country, was badly damaged and huge quantities of fuel contaminated by salt water. The "export-processing zone" in Chittagong, where about 70 processors earned vital foreign exchange, has also been wiped out. The

entire salt-producing industry has been destroyed, as well as shrimp cultivation. Hundreds of fishing boats have been destroyed, and the lucrative shrimp industry in the city of Cox's Bazaar has been wiped out. There will be more loss of livestock because there is no fodder, the government reports.

But this human catastrophe has been a cause for rejoicing among the international financiers who have written off the "Fourth World," who are committed to eliminating the darker-skinned populations of the world's South. Writing from Tokyo, where she attended the recent meeting of the conspiratorial bankers' society, the Trilateral Commission (see page 8), *New York Times* senior columnist Flora Lewis hailed the news of the death of thousands of Bangladeshis, noting that the region's fertility allows people to "proliferate to the very brink of survivability. Only recurrent, quite expectable natural disasters put some limit on population growth, and not much at that."

The caste factor in Indian elections: a poll analyst's myth

by Ramtanu Maitra and Susan B. Maitra

When the results of the tenth Lok Sabha elections are out by the end of May, the myth of caste division within Hindu society playing a major role in deciding the polls' outcome will be shaken up. Equally certain is that the analysts, bereft of real contacts with the majority of Indian voters, will cling on to the myth, rationalizing the election outcome through a myriad of equally mythical assumptions and calculations.

With less than two weeks now left before the election (at the time of this writing), the Indian media are churning out article after article harping on the old theme: how the caste factor is going to influence the vote. So far, this election, held in the shadow of some political parties' relentless campaign on behalf of caste solidarity, has been a delight for Indian and foreign poll analysts. They are busy calculating and re-calculating caste and ethnic combinations based on demographic figures extrapolated from an ancient census carried out by the British Raj. It is interesting to note that the British were always careful to enumerate caste, sub-caste, ethnic and religious strengths in the censuses they carried out. Although the practice was abandoned following Independence, the intrepid election analysts carry on with figures provided by those same censuses, scaled up, of course, to account for population growth in the interim.

This demographic game played by analysts here, and