

Optimism notwithstanding, it is evident that New Delhi will move cautiously on the future talks. The following may be the reasons for such circumspection:

- Pakistan has continued to deny involvement with the Kashmiri and Punjabi militants, even when it is accepted in various capitals, including Washington and Beijing, that Islamabad is aiding, abetting, and arming militants who seek secession from India.

- There is uncertainty over the negotiations, since the present Pakistan government is highly unstable and the Sharif government could collapse.

- By raising Article VI, Pakistan is probably trying to bring to the fore the very issue of Kashmir's accession to India in 1947; this may lead to a renewed demand for a plebiscite to determine who has sovereignty over Kashmir.

- Pakistan is also under great pressure because of the backlash from the Afghan war, terrorism in Sindh, and instability in its North West Frontier Province.

- New Delhi would like to see how Islamabad discusses the Kashmir issue in the domestic as well as in the international arenas.

Enter the Carnegie Endowment

Precisely because India and Pakistan have agreed to continue with talks, the British interest in the Kashmir issue will not wane quickly. This became evident when it was reported on Aug. 16 that the senior fellow of the Carnegie Endowment for Peace, James Clad, has floated a proposal to resolve the Kashmir dispute. Clad, a former New Zealand diplomat, who had worked as a correspondent of the Hong Kong-based weekly *Far Eastern Economic Review*, with a stint at Oxford between jobs, was based in New Delhi as the weekly's correspondent in 1990. According to news reports, Clad had visited India recently and claimed to have had detailed discussions on his proposal with senior Indian diplomats and defense officials.

Clad's proposal, which reportedly has Washington's blessing, calls for both parties to accept the effective border, known as the Line of Actual Control, as their international boundary.

In addition, Clad suggests that India yield a chunk of land in northern Kashmir enabling Pakistan to secure its strategic highway with China, provided Pakistan, in return, accede some land to India in southern Kashmir; India will neither frustrate nor sabotage any future deal between China and Pakistan regarding Kashmir territory; and once the India-Pakistan border issue is settled, India should open dozens of transit points along the 2,912 kilometer border, which currently has only one such transit point.

So far, both the Indians and the Pakistanis have brushed aside the proposal as "vague" and "academic." They also do not see why such a land swap is necessary to resolve the issue. Nonetheless, it has not been denied that Clad was in India discussing his proposal with senior officials.

Sri Lanka: shedding light, casting shadow

by Ramtanu Maitra

Only Man Is Vile: The Tragedy of Sri Lanka

by William McGowan

Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, New York, 1992

398 pages, hardbound, \$25

William McGowan's book is immensely readable, having the colorful blend of compassion, frustration, anger and romanticism. Nonetheless, the journalistic treatment of a complex ethnic history, further complicated by the centuries of colonial rule in the region, does not provide an outsider, whose concept of Sri Lanka as a nation is not more than a dot on the map, the necessary understanding of why violence continues on this small island.

In his treatment of the Sri Lankan tragedy, McGowan dealt with the five-year period, beginning with the massacre in the capital of Colombo in 1983, ending in mid-1988, when he left the island. The subsequent period—the book was published in 1992—has been summarily treated in a 13-page epilogue. As a result, many important developments, elucidation of which could have helped the reader acquire a bit more insight on the Sri Lankan tragedy, have received summary comments of the author—a fact which makes the book less of a "compelling account of a society consumed by the implacable hatreds of race and class," as the dust jacket suggests, and more of a travelogue with a superficial account of the society consumed in almost four decades of violence.

British role misrepresented

That is, however, not to say that McGowan did not look at various factors which have played a major role in bringing about the turmoil. His write-ups on *1956: Cultural Revolution* and *The Sinhalese South* are useful. His treatment of Buddhism and the British is not only inadequate but highly misleading. It is misleading because it gives the impression that the British, besides training and "westernizing" a small group of wealthy Sri Lankan elite, had left the island, lock, stock, and barrel, without leaving behind institutions through which they could continue to intervene into the Sri Lankan situation. The readers could have gotten a better sense of such interventional capability of the British if McGowan

had mentioned, in his highly compressed epilogue, that the British High Commissioner to Sri Lanka, a torchbearer of the old Gladstone family, was ordered off the island toward the end of May 1991, within a few days after Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's assassination, for interfering in Sri Lankan domestic affairs. McGowan's casual mention of the Sri Lankan government's collaboration with the Keeni Meeni Services, and its links to the still-to-be-exposed Iran-Contra affair, makes mockery of what is pompously described as investigative journalism.

But, McGowan's narrative provides some food for thought and sheds light on some areas which have remained completely unreported. The fanatic Buddhist Sangha's attack on the Catholic Church, and not on the more prominent Anglican Church, provides some handle on the instigations and provocations. It is also revealing to read the account of an interaction between "N," McGowan's "articulate Tamil friend," and "Swami," an Englishman dressed in the saffron robes of a Sinhalese monk. Swami's extreme bias in support of the Sinhala racism against the Tamilians and his total rejection of facts corroborating the systematic anti-Tamil economic and social measures brought about by the Sinhalese elite since 1956 with the help of the Sinhalese chauvinist majority, are eye-openers to those who believe that vile men only reside in Sri Lanka but not elsewhere. It will also act as an eye-opener to those who would like to hold onto the cliché that the so-called socialist policies of Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike in the 1970s were humanitarian and anti-imperialist in nature. Mrs. Bandaranaike's nationalization policies were focused on making public sector jobs exclusive to the Sinhalese. It is during this period that the "Sinhala only" movement had benefited most, and the Tamilians took to arms.

But McGowan's narrative is inadequate in many crucial areas. The Sinhalese JVP movement has been highly romanticized, perhaps because McGowan found it had grass roots among the people. However, the movement has other faces. JVP's connection to the North Koreans terrorists, its collaboration with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in India in sharing arms and in anti-India vituperations, had purposes well beyond its grassroots appeal.

India's role in the tragedy

It is also unfortunate, although not surprising from the narratives, that the author chose not to talk to the Indian government authorities in Delhi on the Sri Lankan tragedy. Instead, McGowan chose to report in detail what his hand-picked representatives among the Tamil Tigers and the Tamilians in general, Christians, Muslims, and Buddhist Sinhalese, think about the Indian role in Sri Lanka, particularly since the Colombo massacre in 1983. There is no doubt, and New Delhi would be first to admit it, that the Indian intervention as the Peace Keeping Force, following the signing of the Sri Lankan Accord in 1987, was a failure. However, the failure was not only because the Indians were less

than adequate in dealing with the situation, and in the process had committed various atrocities which further vitiated the atmosphere, but because the accord was seized upon by the Sinhala chauvinists and the Tamil Tigers alike to discredit the Indians. While the Indian failure is unquestionable, the betrayal of the other sides was equally real.

It is also interesting to note McGowan's harping on the Indian hegemonistic tendencies, spoken through the mouth of some of his friends and contacts. There is no doubt that India, with its own domestic problems largely created by the legacy of the British rule and the partition of the subcontinent in 1947, has a right to be concerned about a brewing civil war only 21 miles away from its southern coast. While the concern has been portrayed by India's hands-on/hands-off policies over Sri Lanka during the last decade, it is yet to be confirmed that such moves were driven by India's hegemonistic tendencies. Under much less provocation, the Chinese Red Army had marched across the Tibetan plateau in 1959, not to speak of the European colonialists' lame excuses to traverse thousands of miles in the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries to colonize.

It is McGowan's "populist" handling of the Indian issue which raises the question why he chose not to tell the readers about the extensive training that the Tamil Tigers had received from Israel. It is widely known that the Tamil Tigers receive their arms from Singapore, a major British and Israeli arms bazaar, and deal with drugs through an international network.

It is this blindness of McGowan's which adds bias to his summary conclusion that Rajiv Gandhi was assassinated because the Tamil Tigers "also feared Gandhi would seek to destroy the LTTE once he had resumed power." It was known to Pirbhakaran, and his elite assassins, that India would oppose tooth and nail any attempt to set up an independent Tamil nation in Sri Lanka. This little fact was known to the Tamil Tigers in 1983, when Mrs. Gandhi had allowed them shelter in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu. It was also known to them that what India, and all its major political leaders, had wanted was to turn the tide of the growing Sinhala racism and pave the way for the Tamilians and the Sinhalese to live on the same island under one flag.

The subcontinent has seen too many assassinations. Beginning with the assassination of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi in 1948 in India; a series of assassinations of heads of state—Liaquat Ali Khan, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, and Zia ul-Haq in Pakistan; Mrs. Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi in India; and Sheikh Mujibur Rehman and Ziaur Rehman in Bangladesh—during the past four and a half decades indicates that the South Asian nations continue to remain a center of political intrigues, hatched domestically as well as from abroad. Obviously, the book is incapable of handling such a broad canvas, but it is important to point out that Sri Lanka occupies a part of the same canvas and not an independent one.