

THE POLITICAL ABUSE OF HISTORY

The following statement, issued two years ago by a group of academics at the Centre for Historical Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, responds to the Hindu fundamentalist appropriation of Indian 'history' in militant communal politics. It is signed by the following historians: Muzaffar Alam, Neeladri Bhattacharya, Sabyasachi Bhattacharya, Kunal Chakravarti, R. Champakalakshmi, Bipan Chandra, B. D. Chattopadhyaya, Sarvapalli Gopal, Rajan Gurukul, Suvira Jaiswal, Bhagawan Josh, K. Meenakshi, Aditya Mukherjee, Mridula Mukherjee, Harbans Mukhia, Madhavan Palat, S. F. Ratnagar, Himanshu Ray, Satish Saberwal, Yogesh Sharma, Dilbag Singh, Romila Thapar, K. K. Trivedi and R. N. Verma

Behind the present Babrimasjid-Rama janma-bhumi controversy lie issues of faith, power and politics. Each individual has a right to his or her belief and faith. But when beliefs claim the legitimacy of history, then the historian has to attempt a demarcation between the limits of belief and historical evidence. When communal forces make claims to "historical evidence" for the purposes of communal politics, then the historian has to intervene.

Historical evidence is presented here not as a polemic or as a solution to the Rama janmabhumi-Babri masjid conflict, for this conflict is not a matter of historical records alone. The conflict emerges from the widespread communalization of Indian politics. Nevertheless it is necessary to review the historical evidence to the extent it is brought into play in the communalization of society.

Is Ayodhya the birth place of Rama? This question raises a related one: Is present day Ayodhya the Ayodhya of Ramayana?

The events of the story of Rama, originally told in the Rama-Katha which is no longer available to us, were rewritten in the form of a long epic poem, the Ramayana, by Valmiki. Since this is a poem and much of it could have been fictional, including characters and places, historians cannot accept the personalities, the events or the locations as historically authentic unless there is other supporting evidence from sources regarded as more reliable by historians. Very often historical evidence contradicts popular beliefs.

According to Valmiki Ramayana, Rama, the King of Ayodhya, was born in the *Treta Yuga*, that is thousands of years before the Kali Yuga which is supposed to begin in 3102 B.C.

- i) There is no archaeological evidence to show that at this early time the region around present day

Ayodhya was inhabited. The earliest possible date for settlements at the site are of about the eighth century B.C. The archaeological remains indicate a fairly simple material life, more primitive than what is described in the Valmiki Ramayana.

- ii) In the Ramayana, there are frequent references to palaces and buildings on a large scale in an urban setting. Such descriptions of an urban complex are not sustained by the archaeological evidence of the eighth century B.C.
- iii) There is also a controversy over the location of Ayodhya. Early Buddhist texts refer to Shravasti and Saketa, not Ayodhya, as the major cities of Koshala. Jaina texts also refer to Saketa as the capital of Koshala. There are very few references to a Ayodhya, but this is said to be located on the Ganges, not on river Saryu, which is the site of present day Ayodhya.
- iv) The town of Saketa was renamed Ayodhya by a Gupta king. Skanda Gupta in the late fifth century A.D., moved his residence to Saketa and called it Ayodhya. He assumed the title Vikramaditya, which he used on his gold coins. Thus what may have been the fictional Ayodhya of the epic poem was identified with Saketa quite late. This does not necessarily suggest that the Gupta king was a *bhakta* of Rama. In bestowing the name of Ayodhya on Saket he was trying to gain prestige for himself by drawing on the tradition of the Suryavamsi kings, a line to which Rama is said to have belonged.
- v) After the seventh century, textual references to Ayodhya are categorical. The *Puranas*, dating to the first millennium A.D. and the early second millennium A. D. follow the Ramayana and refer to Ayodhya as the capital of Koshala (*Vishnudharmottara Mahapurana*, 1.240.2)
- vi) In a way, the local tradition of Ayodhya recognises the ambiguous history of its origin. The story is



that Ayodhya was lost after the *Treta Yuga* and was rediscovered by Vikramaditya. While searching for the lost Ayodhya, Vikramaditya met Pragaya, the king of tirthas, who knew about Ayodhya and showed him where it was. Vikramaditya marked the place but could not find it later. Then he met a yogi who told him that he should let a cow and a calf roam. When the calf came across the *janmabhumi* milk would flow from its udder. The king followed the yogi's advice. When at a certain point the calf's udders began to flow the king decided that this was the site of the ancient Ayodhya.

This myth of "rediscovery" of Ayodhya, this claim to an ancient sacred lineage, is an effort to impart to a city a specific religious sanctity which it lacked. But even in the myths the process of identification of the sites appears uncertain and arbitrary.

If present day Ayodhya was known as Saket before the fifth century, then the Ayodhya of Valmiki's Ramayana was fictional. If so, the identification of Rama janmabhumi in Ayodhya today becomes a matter of faith, not of historical evidence.

The historical uncertainty regarding the possible location of the Rama-janmabhumi contrasts with the historical certainty of the birth-place of the Buddha. Two centuries after the death of the Buddha, Asoka Mayura put up an inscription at the village of Lumbini to commemorate it as the Buddha's birth-place. However, even in this case, the inscription merely refers to the village near which he was born and does not even attempt to indicate the precise birth place.

II

Ayodhya has been a sacred centre of many religions, not of the Rama cult alone. Its rise as a major centre of Rama worship is, in fact, relatively recent.

- i) Inscriptions from the fifth to the eighth centuries A.D. and even later refer to people from Ayodhya but none of them refer to its being a place associated with the worship of Rama. (Epigraphica Indica, 10. p 72; 15 p. 143; 1.p.14)
- ii) Hsuan Tsang writes of Ayodhya as a major centre of Buddhism with many monasteries and stupas and few non-Buddhists. For Buddhists Ayodhya is a sacred place where Buddha is believed to have stayed for some time.
- iii) Ayodhya has been an important centre of Jain pilgrimage. To the Jains it is the birth place of the first and fourth Jaina *Tirthankaras*. An interesting archaeological find of the 4th-3rd century B.C is a Jaina figure in grey terracotta, being amongst the earliest Jaina figures found so far.

- iv) The texts of the eleventh century A.D. refer to the Gopataru *tirtha* at Ayodhya, but not to any links with the *janmabhumi* of Rama.
- v) The cult of Rama seems to have become popular from the thirteenth century. It gains ground with the gradual rise of the Ramanandi sect and the composition of the Rama story in Hindi.

Even in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries Ramanandis had not settled in Ayodhya on a significant scale. Shaivism was more important than the cult of Rama. Only from the eighteenth century do we find the Ramanandi *sadhus* settling on a large scale. It was in the subsequent centuries that they built most of their temples in Ayodhya.

III

So far no historical evidence has been unearthed to support the claim that the Babri mosque has been constructed on the land that had been earlier occupied by a temple.

- i) Except for the verses in Persian inscribed on the two sides of the mosque door, there is no other primary evidence to suggest that a mosque had been erected there on Babur's behalf. Mrs Beveridge, who was the first to translate the *Babur Nama*, gives the text and the translation of these above verses in an appendix to the memoirs. The crucial passage reads as follows: "By the command of the Emperor Babur, whose justice is an edifice reaching up to the very height of the heavens, the good hearted Mir Baqi built the alighting place of angels. *Bawad [Buwad] khair baqi* (may this goodness last forever)" (*Babur Nama*, translated by A.F. Beveridge, 1922, II, pp LXXVII, ff).

The inscription only claims that one Mir Baqi, a noble of Babur, had erected the mosque. Nowhere does either of the inscriptions mention that the mosque had been erected on the site of a temple. Nor is there any reference in Babur's memoirs to the destruction of any temple in Ayodhya.

- ii) The *Ain-i-Akbari* refers to Ayodhya as "the residence of Ramachandra who in the Treta age combined in his own person both spiritual supremacy and kingly office." But nowhere is there any mention of the erection of the mosque by the grandfather of the author's patron on the site of the temple of Rama.
- iii) It is interesting that Tulsidas, the great devotee of Rama, a contemporary of Akbar and an inhabitant of the region, is upset at the rise of the mlechha but makes no mention of the demolition of a temple at the site of Rama *janmabhumi*.



- iv) It is in the nineteenth century that the story circulates and enters official records. These records were then cited by others as valid historical evidence on the issue.

This story of the destruction of the temple is narrated, without any investigation into its historical veracity, in British records of the region. (See P. Carnegy, *Historical Sketch of Tehsil Fyzabad, Zillah Fyzabad, Lucknow, 1870*; H.R. Nevill, *Faizabad District Gazetteer, Allahabad, 1905*).

Mrs. Beveridge in a footnote to the translated passage quoted above affirms her faith in the story. She suggests that Babar being a Muslim, and "impressed by the dignity and sanctity of the ancient Hindu shrine" would have displaced "at least in part" the temple to erect the mosque. Her logic is simple: "...like the obedient follower of Muhammad he was in intolerance of another Faith, (thus he) would regard the substitution of a temple by a mosque as dutiful and worthy." This is a very questionable inference deduced from a generalised presumption about the nature and inevitable behaviour of a person professing a particular faith. Mrs Beveridge produces no historical evidence to support her assertion that the mosque was built at the site of a temple. Indeed the general tenor of Babur's state policy towards places of worship of other religions hardly justifies Mrs Beveridge's inference.

To British officials who saw India as a land of mutually hostile religious communities, such stories may appear self-validating. Historians, however, have to carefully consider the authenticity of each historical statement and the records on which they are based.

While there is no evidence about the Babri mosque having been built on the site of a temple, the mosque according to the medieval sources, was not of much religious and cultural significance for the Muslims.

The assumption that Muslim rulers were invariably and naturally opposed to the sacred places of Hindus is not always borne out by historical evidence.

- i) The patronage of the Muslim Nawabs was crucial for the expansion of Ayodhya as a Hindu pilgrimage centre. Recent researches have shown that Nawabi rule depended on the collaboration of Kayasthas and their military force was dominated by Shivaite Nagas. Gifts to temples and patronage of Hindu sacred centres was an integral part of the Nawabi mode of exercise of power. The dewan of Nawab Safdarjung built and repaired several

temples in Ayodhya. Safdarjung gave land to the Nirwana akhara to build a temple on Hanuman hill in Ayodhya. Asaf-ud-Daulah's dewan contributed to the building of the temple fortress in Hanuman hill in the city. Panda records show that Muslim officials of the nawabi court gave several gifts for rituals performed by Hindu priests.

- ii) In moments of conflict between Hindus and Muslims, the Muslim rulers did not invariably support Muslims. When a dispute between the Sunni Muslims and the Naga Sadhus over a Hanumangarhi temple in Ayodhya broke out in 1885, Wajid Ali Shah took firm and decisive action. He appointed a tripartite investigative committee consisting of the district official Agha Ali Khan, the leading Hindu landholder, Raja Mansingh, and the British officers in charge of the Company's forces. When the negotiated settlement failed to control the build up of communal forces, Wajid Ali Shah mobilised the support of Muslim leaders to bring the situation under control, confiscated the property of Maulavi Amir Ali, the leader of the Muslim communal forces, and finally called upon the army to crush the Sunni Muslim group led by Amir Ali. An estimated three to four hundred Muslims were killed.

This is not to suggest that there were no conflicts between Hindus and Muslims, but in neither case were they homogeneous communities. There was hostility between factions and groups within a community as there was amity across communities.

The above review of historical evidence suggests that the claims made by Hindu and Muslim communal groups can find no sanction from history. As a sacred centre the character of Ayodhya has been changing over the centuries. It has been linked to the history of many religions. Different communities have vested it with their own sacred meaning. The city cannot be claimed by any one community as its exclusive sacred preserve.

The appropriation of history is a continual process in any society. But in a multi-religious society like ours, appropriations which draw exclusively on communal identities engender endless communal conflicts. And attempts to undo the past can only have dangerous consequences.

It is appropriate, therefore, that a political solution is urgently found: "Rama janmabhumi-Babri Masjid" area be demarcated and declared a national monument.

REASON AMIDST MAYHEM

The following excerpts of interviews with two distinguished Indian historians are reproduced, courtesy **Frontline** January 29, 1993. Professor Ifran Habib is with the Centre for Advanced Study in History, Aligarh Muslim University, Lucknow. He is also the Chairman of Indian Council of Historical Research (ICHR). Professor Sarvapalli Gopal is with the Centre for Historical Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.



Interview with Ifran Habib

As a historian, how do you view the events of December 6 at Ayodhya?

First of all, I would like to say that a structure which is more than 450 years old is normally, in a civilised country, not destroyed. Even in this country, it is protected by the Ancient Monuments Act— if ought to have been so protected. The Prime Minister himself now says it was a structure which was so old and it should not have been destroyed. But he should have gone further and seen that under the Ancient Monuments Act, it is the responsibility of the Central Government. So first of all, purely as a citizen, this is my response.

Was the Babri Masjid an important monument?

I cannot say the Babri Masjid was a major monument, but it is a monument all the same. And it is a significant instance of Sharqi architecture. Essentially, this school of architecture developed around the Jaunpur region during the Delhi Sultanate. Jaunpur was built in the time of Mohammad bin Tughlaq—the latter half of the 14th century. Previous to that, Ayodhya (or Awadh) has been the capital.

Awadh or Ayodhya began to lose its importance in the 14th century. Earlier it was the centre of the kingdom and had a big Muslim settlement. The VHP (Vishwa Hindu Parishad) historians who say Ayodhya had no Muslim settlement prior to Babar have simply not read their history. Outside Jaunpur, the Ayodhya mosque was the most significant Sarqi monument. It is not in the classical Mughal style. It is pre Mughal, in an architectural sense. For that reason perhaps, its destruction is an even greater assault on our heritage than the destruction of a Mughal monument—which I hope will never take place.

How about the recurrence of non-Islamic motifs within the mosque? Is that a feature of Sharqi architecture?

How do you define 'non-Islamic'? There are floral designs often found in mosques, about which there is nothing Islamic. What happens often is that in mosques, as in temples, stone pillars are used. Nobody is denying that the Babri Masjid contained slabs and stones obviously taken from temples.

What the VHP forgets is that each of these pillars is of a different pattern. They do not come from

the same temple. To go on saying that there was a Ram temple at the very site where the mosque was built — that is not justified. Because, if that was so, there are several inscriptions from that period and they would certainly have said that a temple at Ayodhya was converted into a mosque. Why should they have suppressed a fact like that, since it only adds to the merit of the construction?

Some observers have referred to the destruction of the Babri Masjid as a reversion to medieval ways of thought and action. Others have said it was a peculiarly modern phenomenon — that religious intolerance was not of quite such an order in those days. How do you react, as someone who has studied the medieval period in some depth?

The question is whether this kind of behaviour is sanctioned by medieval precedent. Now, in one way it is, and in another, it is not. If you believe that India now is no longer in 1992 but, let us say, in 1492 — not Akbar's time but in Babar's or Lodi's time — then I would say that destruction or usurpation of religious places has occurred. The Mahabodhi temple is one well-known example — it was built in the time of the Sultans, the early 14th century according to the inscription. It was purely a Buddhist place of worship, but it was later occupied by Saivites. The Parsis usurped Buddhist viharas — Alberuni has pointed this out, and there is archaeological evidence that this has happened. In India, of course, the Muslim rulers did it. So the first question is whether we are going to repeat that kind of thing.

But in another way, this is totally different from medieval times. First of all, when those things were done they were done by individual rulers. They did not mobilise large mobs and carry out a general slaughter. It never was a political programme of this dimension, which means that the object is not merely building a place of worship. Rather, the object is the total change of a state, a polity and culture, and the decimation of a large section of the population. That is, I think, very modern.

Secondly, from medieval times, there are also the positive features—Hindu masons building mosques were allowed to leave invocations to their gods; Rana Kumbha, building his famous Victory Tower, put 'Allah' in Arabic characters on it. And then, Akbar is so well known that I need not mention his case — the immense grants to temples which marked his reign and the reign of his successors. So I don't know if destruction of places of worship



is the only medieval precedent. Because the other kind of precedent—of tolerance and coexistence—is also there.

Would you say that religion was in those days a political institution in a manner that it should not be today, in a secular republic?

The state then was different. The concept of a secular state is very recent in origin. It has grown along with the concept of the nation. First there were the nation-states which were not secular. And then the concept of the secular state was developed basically from the French Revolution and also partly from the American Constitution. When we in India constructed a nation from the 19th century onwards, with the national movement, we also took over the vision of the secular society — in the Karachi Congress resolution of 1931, for instance.

As far as the medieval times are concerned, the concept of a religious community as a political entity is not present. The concept of religion is present. There is a conception that since a particular religion is that of the ruler, he would have an interest in showing its superiority. But that is totally different from the concept of a religious community as a ruling community—which belongs to modern communalism. That Muslims, for example, are a political community, or that Hindus are not only a political community, but the Indian nation, Now it is this kind of concept which is totally modern. This is totally different from the medieval concept of religion.

Are you saying the medieval ruler was obliged to seek legitimacy by portraying his religion as superior...?

I do not think rulers in India rested their sovereign power on religion. So this legitimisation theory—that sovereignty is based on religion—has really come from Europe, from the church's theory (though not actual practice). There is no similar concept in India, where the possession of power was in itself sufficient legitimisation. What I wanted to say is that in order to stress the power of the sovereign, a particular emphasis would be given to the religion of the sovereign—either by building a big mosque or a big temple or whatever. That emphasis was not given to the religious community of the sovereign. In the Vijayanagar empire, for instance, there is no concept that there is a Hindu community which constitutes in any sense a political community. Or even in the Sultanate or the Mughal empire, there is no

concept of a Muslim community. There is a concept of a particular class—the nobility, which also includes Rajputs and Marathas, and other Hindu elements.

Does this mean the religious identity was in a popular sense not very strong in medieval times, that there was no differentiation between people on the basis of their religion?

Statistically, if one knew the religion of the ruler, one could say to which community most of the nobility would belong. Say, for a Rajput ruler, if he had ten nobles in all, two or three of them would be Muslims. This is a peculiar feature of the Indian polity. Right from the Delhi Sultanate, there are always Hindu nobles occupying important positions in the polity which is not the situation in any country outside India.

But as far as ordinary people were concerned, they were the subjects—they were subjected to the same kind of oppression. In India, there was no provision that Muslims should pay a lower amount of land tax than Hindus. There is no real evidence of such discrimination.

Interview with Sarvapalli Gopal

After the demolition of the Babri Masjid, several rationalisations of the act have appeared. An instance is the belief expressed by certain commentators in the national press that Muslims act as cultural drag upon the rest of the country — that the consolidation of the Indian identity is impeded by their insistence on maintaining a separate identity. By implication, the Indian identity is synonymous with the Hindu identity. How do you view this line of argument?

I don't accept for a moment the argument that Indian nationalism can only be rooted in a Hindu ethos. I don't think any such an argument is in accord with our own history. Indian nationalism has never been a religious nationalism and to the extent that religion has come into politics it has weakened our nationalism. What we have had in India for centuries is that Hindus and Muslims lived side, by side, interacted with each other, and produced a composite culture—in music, architecture, food, dress. Even in matters of religion, the Sufis have drawn much from Hinduism and the Bhakti movement owes a great deal to Islam.

There was one weakness, of course, and that is the dichotomy in social habit—Hindus and Muslims did not inter-marry or dine with each other.



This was the flaw which the British exploited to create two imagined religious communities. The British worked on an understanding that Indians are not a nation, but a cluster of religious groups. This suited the British in the maintenance of the raj. And, therefore, we had the introduction of this phenomenon of communalism— which, to our shame, is our contribution to political practice in the world. I think communalism, looked at in historical perspective, is only skin-deep. Communalism in the sense of claiming a real, distinct identity in politics on the basis of religion does not go back more than 150 years. As it suited the British, they developed it through the creation of separate electorates and pitching Muslim politicians against Hindu politicians. And with all that, of course, we had the horrors of Pakistan.

I am of the view that Indian nationalism has to be rooted in secular ways of thinking. Even more important, I am of the view that secularism is not, as some people suggest, something that we have borrowed from the West. Of course, our secularism has had weaknesses. It is our duty to strengthen secularism and get rid of those weaknesses—the weaknesses of our social practice, the weaknesses foisted by the British— rather than say that nationalism is basically religious, and that Indian nationalism is Hindu nationalism. That is something which I find abominable as a thought, and totally incorrect as a statement of the historical processes in our country.

The theme of Partition has come up repeatedly in relation to the Ayodhya dispute. Commentators seeking to justify the demolition have said effectively, that the country is entitled to demand recompense from Muslims for Partition. In fact, the VHP, when asked by the Babri-Masjid Action Committee how it accounted for the sudden and mysterious appearance of the Ram idols in the masjid, replied that as Muslims had voted overwhelmingly for Partition in 1946, this was a natural backlash from the Hindu community. And that indeed the Muslims who had stayed back in India should respect the sentiments of the Hindu Majority and hand over the sacred spot at Ayodhya to them. There is a tendency, even today, to hold Muslims responsible for Partition. How do you react to this?

Obviously nobody is happy about Partition. We would all have liked to have seen, after the British left, the old boundaries of India retained. But there has been a Partition, and that is an accomplished fact. As to who is responsible for it, I think many people are. I think the British are respon-

sible, I think the desire for office and the frustrations of politicians such as (Mohammed Ali) Jinnah are responsible. And I think the leadership of Indian nationalism made a gross number of mistakes. I think, for example, that the Mahatma is a very great individual—probably one of the greatest of the 20th century. But the Khilafat campaign was a mistake. Then, Gandhiji tended to talk in the religious idiom, and that obviously offended the religious susceptibilities of those who did not belong to the Hindu faith. I think the Congress made a mistake in accepting office in 1937 in the provinces with very little power. It only made it easier for the Muslim League to say that the Congress has a majority since the Hindus are in a majority, and therefore the Congress is a Hindu party.

I do not think the responsibility for Partition can be laid at the door of any one individual or any one party. But there it is, you accept that as they are. Let us also face this fact, that since 1947, we have had no occasion to question the loyalty of those Muslims who have stayed in India. Therefore, I think it is totally wrong on the part of anybody to hold the present generation of Muslims in India responsible for Partition.

Here, I would like to add that if we are to treat all Indians, whatever their religion, as equal before the law, we must introduce a common civil law code. I do not believe the Muslim minority in India has in any way been appeased by the governments that have been in power. But if everyone is to be of equal standing, and there are to be no second-class citizens in India, then I do not see why women who belong to the Islamic faith should be denied the rights and the privileges which Hindu women enjoy. One great bastion of secularism is a common civil law code, and the sooner we introduce it the better.

How do you assess the current state of the Muslim psyche, in relation to the post-Partition situation? All through the 1980s we have had a series of communal riots — and Muslims have been the disproportionate sufferers. And now we have this ultimate atrocity — the pulling down of the Babri Masjid. Do you think the circumstances are in any way better than they were in the 1950s for the introduction of a common civil code?

Well, I think various factors have developed since 1948. The growth of the urban middle-class, the influence of the non-resident Indians, the growth of communal consciousness... Therefore, even



though the third party—that is, the British—have left the scene, we have not really been able to establish a secular atmosphere. And here again, one of the weaknesses is that we have not had the development of universal primary education. If we have an educated electorate in a democratic polity, and we have a government which establishes a common civil law, then I think the forces of secularism would be strengthened.

We have had some laws passed, we have had the idea of secularism put into the Constitution, but we have not really created the atmosphere for the

development of secularism. That is why we have had communal rioting in various parts of India. There are economic, sociological and historical reasons for it, and we have not taken sufficient counter-measures.

Now this of course, this last horror—the destruction of the mosque—is obviously going to have a profound impact on Muslim attitudes and thinking. I think they will feel that however they may behave, they have not and will not be accepted as equal citizens. And that I would say is a dreadful thought.

THE WORLD BANK AND THE NEW POLITICS OF AID

[Part Two]

Peter Gibbon

The World Bank and Poverty Since 1985²

The issue of poverty in LDCs—which more or less disappeared from donor agendas in the early 1980s—was received in 1983-5 by the like-minded countries and by UN agencies with poverty-related mandates [UNICEF, ILO etc.] in the form of criticism of the impact of stabilization and adjustment 'policy reforms' on socially vulnerable groups [see *Svendson, 1987; Meinecke, 1989*]. This issue was potentially an extremely damaging one for the unity and coherence of the still fragile regime and for the World Bank in particular as the principal architect of its economic policies. Arguably, a hard-hitting critique of the effects of adjustment, coupled with a serious exposition of an alternative redistributivist development model could have rallied broad international support and have led to at least a thorough review of the principles of economic liberalization. If nothing else, this would have had the effect of obliging adjustment and its authors to concede greater transparency and accountability on their own part.

For reasons which are unclear, this approach was not adapted. Instead, the line of argument opened up by the poverty critics within the UN system was that adjustment in principle was desirable, or at any rate irreversible, but that its effects on the vulnerable required mitigation. The latter should be via a reduction in levels of demand

compression and domestic disabsorption and the introduction of a series of measures to raise the incomes of the poor and/or safeguard the provision of services to them. These were in terms conceptualized in terms 'targeted' transfers, subsidies and supports [*Gonia, Jully and Stewart: 1987*]. The content of this 'alternative' was almost directly borrowed from the World Bank's own treatment of poverty issues immediate before its conversion to an entirely 'hardnosed' neo-liberal agenda in 1981 [cf. *World Bank:1980*].

The World Bank began responding to the line of critique around 1986, initially through setting up and partly funding an adjustment-mitigation exercise in Ghana—the Programme of Action to Mitigate the Social Costs of Adjustment or PAMSCAD. The latter consisted of a set of projects put up by the Ghana government, with supposed poverty mitigation implications, and with a total of USD 86 m. In fact many of the projects, including some quite expensive ones, had no relation to assisting what are normally considered poor groups and were instead focused on providing compensation for retrenched civil servants or support of various kinds to the national secondary school system [cf. list of projects in *Jully 1988*]. The choice of Ghana is of interest, as it had been certainly the most cooperative adjusting country in Anglophone Africa since 1983. As such, it should have maximized trickle-down benefits and hence have been in least need of poverty mitigation. Its choice was presumably there-

