

the British government's indication that an appropriate procedure for advancing towards these objectives would be for them to call a constitutional conference to which all the parties would be invited; and, consequently, accepted that it must be a major objective to bring about a cessation of hostilities and an end to sanctions as part of the process of implementation of a lasting settlement".

The communique is naturally silent on some important points. Though the proposed constitutional conference is now expected to be called next month in London, it is not clear who specifically among "all parties" involved in the conflict is to be invited; the communique mentions no names. Clearly, such a conference has to have, apart from representatives of the Smith-Muzorewa regime and those of the Patriotic Front, also representatives of the frontline states — two of whom are not members of the Commonwealth — and probably those of South Africa as well, since it is recognised that there is urgent need to bring peace to the people of Zimbabwe "and their neighbours". The point on which the earlier Anglo-American proposals for a settlement in Rhodesia floundered — the role of the Rhodesian armed forces, and the insistence on the part of the nationalist groups that any talk of a settlement has to be preceded by a disbanding of the Rhodesian army, and its replacement by a neutral force — also does not find a specific mention in the communique, though the reference to the holding of elections "under British government authority and with commonwealth observers" might be stretched to mean that a disbandment of Rhodesian troops under their present command is part of the understanding.

One can only speculate as to what caused the shift in British policy. It might be that the British prime minister saw further evidence, if that was necessary, of the utter lack of credibility of the black facade that the minority regime had erected in Salisbury. International pressures too perhaps contributed to second thoughts; equally crucial in influencing the shift in British policy would have been the determined action taken by Nigeria ("No other country in black Africa

can hurt British interests as much") against British Petroleum and the possibility of further similar actions. The deciding factor contributing to the shift should have been the recognition that the war in Rhodesia had al-

ready been lost by the rebel regime. It is to be seen whether the nationalist forces which have won the war on the battlefield will also win the more tricky political battle in the ensuing constitutional conference.

LETTERS TO EDITOR

Murder of Punjab Student Leader

WE, the undersigned, condemn in unequivocal terms the brutal and cowardly murder of the popular student leader Prithipal Singh Randhawa at the hands of anti-social elements having strong 'political' backing. [See EPW, July 21, p 1174 — Ed.]

Prithipal was one of the finest young men of Punjab, who dedicated his life to the cause of advancement of the democratic movement in the country. His murder is cause for grief as well as anger for every democratic person of our society.

For almost a decade Prithipal as General Secretary of the Punjab Students Union (PSU) was at the forefront of every democratic movement launched in Punjab. He led the movement against killing of students in Moga in 1972 and supported the railwaymen's strike in 1974. He fought against authoritarian Indira Gandhi rule and for the whole period of Emergency was detained under MISA. After the ascent of Janata government to power, the PSU under his leadership actively supported the unemployed teachers' movement, built up opposition to Akali tyranny against minority communities and rendered unflinching support to the recent low-paid police employees' struggle.

Prithipal had a brilliant academic career and was as described by the editor of *The Tribune* as "a serious, humble and nice person". In him we could find a rare blend of moral, intellectual and practical qualities.

All the newspaper reports suggest the involvement of some political leaders in the murder and point to the complacency of police authorities in protecting the life of this beloved leader of Punjab students and people.

We express our deep concern at the growing danger of fascist forces striking at the democratic movement and demand from the Central government an inquiry into the incident and punishment to the culprits.

Signed by more than 500 teachers, students and employees of Jawaharlal Nehru University and Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi.

Issued by CHAMAN LAL PRABHAKAR
Delhi
July 31

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THE Organisation for Protection of Democratic Rights (OPDR) organised a procession and public meeting on July 28 in Hyderabad to condemn the brutal murder of Prithipal Singh Randhawa by goondas supported by anti-people political forces. The procession culminated in a public meeting. The following resolution was unanimously adopted by the meeting:

"It is with profound grief that we note the brutal murder of Shri Prithipal Singh Randhawa, leader of Punjab Students Union (PSU) and in the forefront of Democratic Rights Movement, by political goondas supported by anti-people political forces. He was kidnapped and brutally tortured before being shot dead.

"This incident goes to show that less the democratic forces unite in time to fight the anti-people forces, these forces are prepared to wipe out democratic institutions and individuals, representing the interests of the people by resorting to political gangsterism, organising mafia gangs.

"We urge the people to strengthen the democratic movement and stand up against the anti-people political forces.

"We strongly condemn this brutal political murder and demand that the murderers be punished immediately. We convey our condolences to the PSU and the family of late Shri Prithipal Singh Randhawa."

R V K SATYANARAYANA
Secretary
OPDR (Twin Cities)
Secunderabad
July 28