

MANKIND OCCASIONAL PAPER 11

# THREE MODEST GEOGRAPHICAL PROPOSALS

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## THREE MODEST GEOGRAPHICAL PROPOSALS

Vinayak Purohit

When recently in Colombo, I was asked by Shri Rohan Masakarala whether I had made other geographical demands in *Mankind*, I had replied in the negative. However, looking back, I now realise that there were at least two more geographical proposals which I had made in the columns of *Mankind*.

I would like to bring all my three modest geographical proposals together and publish them as a separate *Mankind Occasional Paper*.

I have already outlined in *Mankind Occasional Paper* no. 10 at p.5 a schematic cone of the Human Condition that Geography of Natural and Human Resources forms for me the base for Economics and Mode of Production which, in turn, underlies all Politics and Wars. This, in turn, forms the groundwork of Society and its Culture, and finally of History as a whole.

Since my way of looking at the world was based upon this spiral of Geographical Base supporting successively Economics, Politics, Sociology and Ideological History, it was in the fitness of things that I raised several parallel Geographical demands.

I will at the outset recapitulate the outline of my Kra Canal Proposal.

### KRA CANAL : A SUMMARY

1. The Kra Canal proposed by me is an entirely feasible and practical proposition as otherwise it would not have been specially prohibited by British imperialism through a treaty imposed upon Thailand at the end of World War II in January 1946. For British Imperialism, Thailand was an "enemy country" during World War II.

Article 7 of the said treaty reported in *Keesing's Contemporary Archives*. 1946-48, Vol. VI, p.7695; particularly requires Siam/Thailand to undertake no construction of any canal linking the Indian Ocean and the Gulf of Siam of the South China Sea.

In order to sweeten the pill, British Government of India actually gave a 20 years' loan of Rs.5 crores at 3 percent interest to Siam / Thailand (*See Mankind Occasional Paper 4, p.3*)

There would have been no need to prohibit something that was

impossible or impractical !

2. Let us suppose that the cost of the canal construction is one billion dollars. The half share of the ten ASEAN nations would come to only 50 million dollars each, and the half share of the seven SAARC countries would be only about 70 million dollars each. With China, Japan, Taiwan and S Korea, it would be much less.

A 10° Channel divides the Andaman Group of islands from the Nicobar group. This Great Circle Parallel cuts across the Isthmus of Kra near Phuket which is a well-known Thai sea resort and tourist centre. The Isthmus of Kra narrows to just about 48 kms. at this point. There are water courses and streams which will further reduce construction cost at this narrow neck of the Isthmus.

The Kra Canal will link the Bay of Bengal of the Indian Ocean with the South China Sea of the Pacific Ocean. The Kra Canal will avoid the long detour down the Strait of Macassar between Sumatra and Malaysia from 10° N to Singapore 1° N; and up the South China Sea between Borneo and Malaysia, the same distance (see map on pp.6 and 7 in the *Mankind Occasional Paper 4*)

The Kra Canal will link the Bay of Bengal of the Indian Ocean with the South China Sea of the Pacific Ocean. The Kra Canal will avoid the long detour down the Malaysian Peninsula and about a week of sailing time, leading to saving of trillions of dollars of freight and turnaround time.

3. World trade was centred around the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea from times immemorial to the eleventh and twelfth centuries AD, when the Crusades from the West and the Mongol burst-out from the East, resulted in a temporary rise of the Mediterranean and the Atlantic. From the earliest days, China and India were the manufacturing centres of the world enjoying favorable balances of trade with the rest of the world for centuries and millennia. Gold and silver poured into India and China from every corner of the world till the 18th and 19th Centuries. (Please consult *Mankind Occasional Paper 2* and the charts and tables appearing at the end of the paper.)

History has completed the Westward movement via the Atlantic and the Pacific back to the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean in the 21st Century AD.

4. The sea lanes of the 18th and 19th Centuries were adapted to the needs of British and Euro-American imperialisms. The British

imperialists established garrisons at Gibraltar, Malta, Port Said - Suez, Aden, Colombo, Singapore, Perth and Sydney. (Australia ) and Wellington (New Zealand ) in order to exercise sea power. The Kra Canal will develop the entire hinterland of the East Coast of India, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Thailand and Malaysia.

Tuticorin (8°50'N) had already become the tenth busiest port of India in 1970s. Colombo and Hambantota are important port centres to be developed in Sri Lanka.

Tanker traffic, which has already become almost half of world sea-borne trade, will receive a tremendous boost through the Kra Canal. So also will major benefits accrue to bulk - carrier traffic (phosphates, iron ore, natural gas ) and container movement, which together compose the remaining half of sea-borne trade.

The Kra Canal should, right from start, handle two - way traffic. In other words, it should be 500 m. wide and 50 m. deep to accommodate all future contingencies.

5. The Kra Canal has tremendous employment potential for the entire region, since thousands of ships will use it every day, and the floating personnel will need constant catering, bunkering , repairing, dry - docking, and a hundred other services. Special Economic Zones will develop in South China, Taiwan, Japan, the 10 ASEAN nations, the 7 SAARC nations, as well as in the Middle Eastern, oil-producing OPEC countries .
6. The Kra Canal will all serve the densest part of the inhabited globe. Billions of human beings will be benefited.
7. Not only will all the oil-producing nations on the Red Sea, the Gulf of Oman and the Persian Gulf benefit from the shorter and quicker transit through the Kra Canal, but the countries of East African coast will also benefit, from Sudan and Somalia through Kenya and Tanzania to Mozambique and South Africa.

Also the new discoveries of oil being made in the sea between Philippines, Vietnam and Hainan Island in South China will find an immediate world market through the Kra Canal.

8. The Kra Canal will improve trade ties between South and South tier of countries, as also between Africa and Asia.
9. In short, the Kra Canal is of great benefit to the Afro-Asian region. China should initiate diplomatic and economic efforts to realise the Kra Canal Project on an urgent footing.

## INDIA AND SAARC SHOULD CLAIM THEIR SHARE OF ANTARCTICA

The world celebrated the International Geophysical Year in 1958-59. Out of the activities co-ordinated by the United Nations in that year, an Antarctic Treaty was signed by 12 governments (Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Chile, France, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, South Africa, U.K., USA and USSR.)

“Article I of the treaty provides for the peaceful use of Antarctica; Article II for international cooperation and freedom of scientific investigation.; Article III for free exchange of plans, scientific results, and personnel; Article IV for the non-renunciation of prior claims and the citation of any activity during the treaty terms as a basis for past or future claims; Article V for prohibition of nuclear explosions or waste disposal; Article VI for application of the treaty to all areas south of latitude 60°S, **excluding the high seas**, which come under international law; Article VII for open inspection of any nation’s Antarctic operations by any other nation; Article XI for reference of disputes to the International Court of Justice if they cannot be settled by peaceful negotiations and arbitration by involved parties; and Article XII for a review of the treaty after it has been in force for 30 years.” (*Encyclopaedia Britannica, Macro*, 1983, Vol. 10, pp 964-5)

My demand relating to Antarctica was originally raised in a letter to Z. A. Qasim, Secretary, Ministry of Ocean Development, Govt. of India, whilst I was a Visiting Scientist working (1981-83) at NISTADS (National Institute for Science, Technology and Development Studies) a constituent of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR). I met Dr. Qasim at that time and urged him to register India’s claim to Antarctica with the UN Agency in cooperation with the claims of other SAARC nations.

After I revived *Mankind* in 1995, I reiterated my proposal to register India’s claim in the columns of the journal (e.g. August 1998, Vol.3, No.11, p.4)

Antarctica is the smallest continent with an area of about 5.5 million square miles (14.2 million sq.kms.). It contains approximately 7 million/ cubic miles of ice representing about 90 per cent of world’s ice. and 70 percent of its fresh waters. The average thickness is about 6500 ft (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 1983ed. Macro, vol.1, pp. 947-966)

Calculations suggest that should this ice covering melt, sea levels

would rise worldwide by about 60 metres (200ft.). Antarctica has abundant wild life including whales, seals and penguins (*The Macmillan Encyclopaedia*, 1994 ed., p. 56)

The Trans-Antarctic Mountains divide Antarctica into two. The smaller or lesser Antarctica is wholly in West longitudes, and is generally called West Antarctica. It is actually an archipelago covered with ice sheets, and is a continuation of the Andes mountain chain of South America.

The greater part of Antarctica is known as East Antarctica which is a high plateau.

The resources of the Antarctica may be grouped as follows:

- (a) weather forecasting, satellite tracking and similar scientific observations; stations making such studies.
- (b) The extremely rich waters surrounding the continent hold immense planktonic marine life and support huge flocks of whales and other fishes, sea birds and other creatures.
- (c) It is known that the Antarctica possesses large mineral resources, particularly gas and oil.

A protocol was added to the treaty in 1991 prohibiting for 50 years any exploration of the continent for oil and minerals, i.e., upto 2041.

Already the White, imperialist nations of Euro-America have appropriated for themselves the oil and gas and other natural resources of the lands and seas surrounding the Arctic, like the Alaskan oil and gas, Canadian oil and gas, North Sea oil and gas (see below), and Siberian oil and gas.

**As a matter of fact, in all fairness, the resources of Antarctica should be reserved for the poor and developing countries of Latin America, Africa and Asia.**

India and SAARC should claim a slice from the Antarctic pie from approximately 60° E Longitude where there is a tri-junction of Historic India, Afghanistan and Iran to about 90°E Longitude where the Brahmaputra turns to enter the Indian plains. As for the internal divisions amongst SAARC nations, we can consider the lines to be drawn as per the proportions which obtain between their populations.

At present the claims made by the various nations on Antarctica stand as follows :

## TERRITORIAL CLAIMS IN ANTARCTICA

Country	Sector	Date of Claim
Norway (Queen Maud Land)	20°W-45°E	January 14, 1939, by Norwegian Order in Council (also claimed Bouvet Island on January 23, 1928, and Peter I Island on May 1, 1931)
Australia (Australian Antarctic Territory)	45°E-136°E 142°E-160°E	February 7, 1933, by British Order in Council; and June 13, 1933, by Australian Antarctic Territory Acceptance Act.
France (Adelie Land)	136°E-142°E	April 1, 1938, by official decree (placed under Governor of Madagascar in 1942)
New Zealand (Ross Dependency)	160°E-150°W	July 30, 1923, by British Order in Council
Chile (Antarctic Peninsula)	90°W-53°W	November 6, 1940, by official decree
Great Britain (British Antarctic Territory)	80°W-20°W	July 21, 1908
Argentina (Antarctic Peninsula)	74°W-25°W	1942

Source : *Encyclopaedia Britannica, Macropaedia, 1983, Vol.1, p.962.*



The SAARC claim overlaps with that of Australia. Australia should be asked to limit its claim between  $140^{\circ}$  and  $150^{\circ}$  E Longitude, or if New Zealand claim is added to that of Australia, to  $180^{\circ}$  E Longitude

The Afro-Asian nations should confine their claims to East Antarctica. Africa should claim from  $20^{\circ}$  W Longitude to  $35^{\circ}$  E Longitude.  $35^{\circ}$  to  $60^{\circ}$  E Longitude could be claimed by Arabs and Iran. SAARC should claim from  $60^{\circ}$  to  $90^{\circ}$  E Longitude. From  $90^{\circ}$  to  $140^{\circ}$  E Longitude should be reserved for ASEAN, China, Japan, and Korea.  $140^{\circ}$  to  $180^{\circ}$  E Longitude may be left to Australia and New Zealand.

A map showing the sea lanes around Kra Canal and two maps of Antarctica are given at the end of this booklet. A map of North Sea is on p.15.

## NORTH SEA OIL SHOULD BESHARED BY HUMANITY

North Sea oil was discovered on the high seas between the British Isles and the European continental mass, between Scotland and Norway in around 1970. The area is divided into British, German, Norwegian, Danish and Dutch sectors. Over 55 percent is allocated to United Kingdom. There are more than 500 platforms extracting oil in the North Sea oil zone. (Norway's share is determined at 13%, Denmark's at 12% and Germany's Netherlands at about 10% each)

North Sea is a shallow north-eastern arm of the Atlantic Ocean located between the British Isles and the mainland of North-Western Europe and covers an area of 229,000 sq. Miles (570,000 sq. kms.). It is bordered by the United Kingdom and the Orkney Islands to the West; the Shetland Islands to the North, Norway and Denmark to the East; and Germany, Netherlands, Belgium and France to the South. It is connected to the Atlantic by the Strait of Dover and the English Channel, and opens directly on to the Atlantic Ocean between the Orkney and the Shetland Islands and between the Shetland Islands and Norway.

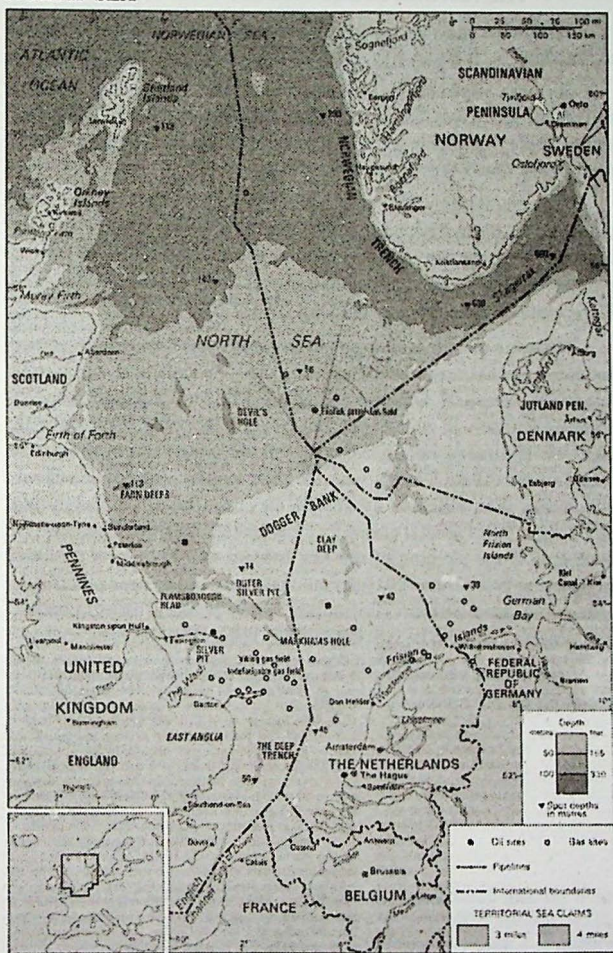
After the discovery of oil and gas, a peak output of 127.6 million tonnes was reached in 1985. It fell to 91.6 million tonnes in 1990. (*Macmillan Encyclopaedia*, 1994, p. 882) UK's balance of trade which was always in deficit, became surplus in the last three decades since 1980.

The imperialist countries of UK, Norway, Denmark, Germany and Netherlands, have reached an agreement amongst themselves to share th North Sea oil and gas resources. But an agreement amongst highway robbers to share the swag does not mean that the loot belongs to them.

The resources of the high seas belong to all of humanity and must be shared by the members of the United Nations in proportion to their respective populations.

We demand that the exploitation of the oil and natural gas reserves of the North Sea be either taken over by the United Nations or credit slips be given to the members of the United Nations out of the output in proportion to their populations.

## NORTH SEA



Submarine relief and gas and oil resources of the North Sea.

## THE NATURE OF MY MODEST PROPOSALS

I had deliberately termed my three geographically oriented proposals as "modest," as the adjective 'modest' has a historic, literary reference.

Jor.athan Swift (1667-1745) wrote his *Modest Proposal* in 1729. The full title of which was *A Modest Proposal for Preventing the Children of Poor People from Being a Burthen to their Parents, or the Country and for Making Them Beneficial to the Public.*

The central idea was to ameliorate poverty in Ireland by butchering the children of the Irish poor and selling them to the wealthy English landlords. Its title has come to symbolise any proposition to solve a problem with an effective but outrageous cure. (*Merriam Webster's Encyclopaedia of Literature*, 1995, pp.1083, 771)

Whatever may be said about our proposals with regard to Antarctica and North Sea Oil, the proposal regarding the 10°N Kra Canal is eminently feasible and practical. Otherwise, England would not have prohibited its construction through an International Treaty at the end of World War-II, 1939-45. The treaty was signed by the colonial Government of India on behalf of the Allied Powers with the then 'enemy country' Thailand, which was then allied to Japan. To elevate a negative prohibitory proposition into a special clause 7 of the Peace Treaty, would have been done only if the piercing of the Kra Isthmus at 10°N was a practical engineering proposition. No international treaty can or need prohibit an unfeasible proposition. The matter is too serious for a specific, meaningless clause to be specially inserted in an International Treaty.

Thus I have chosen to call all my three proposals with immediate geographical references as 'Modest.'

We propose to serialise our Work-in-Progress on History of Capitalism  
 ERA OF DARKNESS : 1098 - 2005  
 FROM CRUSADES, COLUMBUS AND COLONIALISM  
 TO HOLOCAUST, HIROSHIMA AND OZONE-HOLE  
 As also our Autobiography :  
 A LIFE OF SURFEIT & OVERFLOW : 1927 - 2005  
 in this series of Occasional Papers.

#### MANKIND

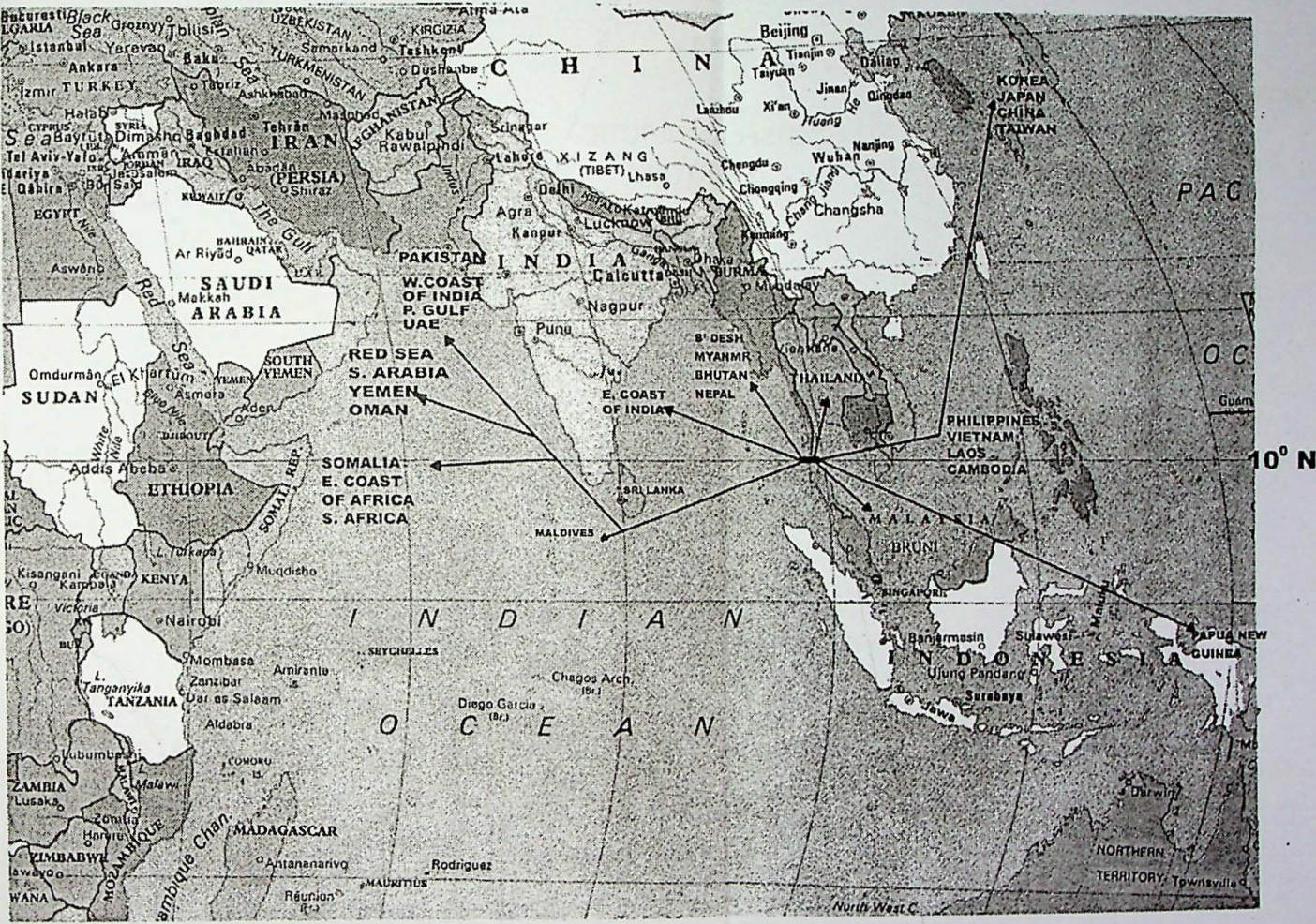
was founded by Rammanohar Lohia  
 in 1956 from Hyderabad  
 and edited by him from there.  
 A shift to Delhi occurred in 1963 on his  
 election to the Lok Sabha,  
 and the journal continued till his death in 1967.

It was revived by  
 Dr. Vinayak Purohit and  
 Dr. Sharayu Mhatre-Purohit  
 as Executive Editors  
 from Pune  
 in 1995 and published by them  
 till 2000

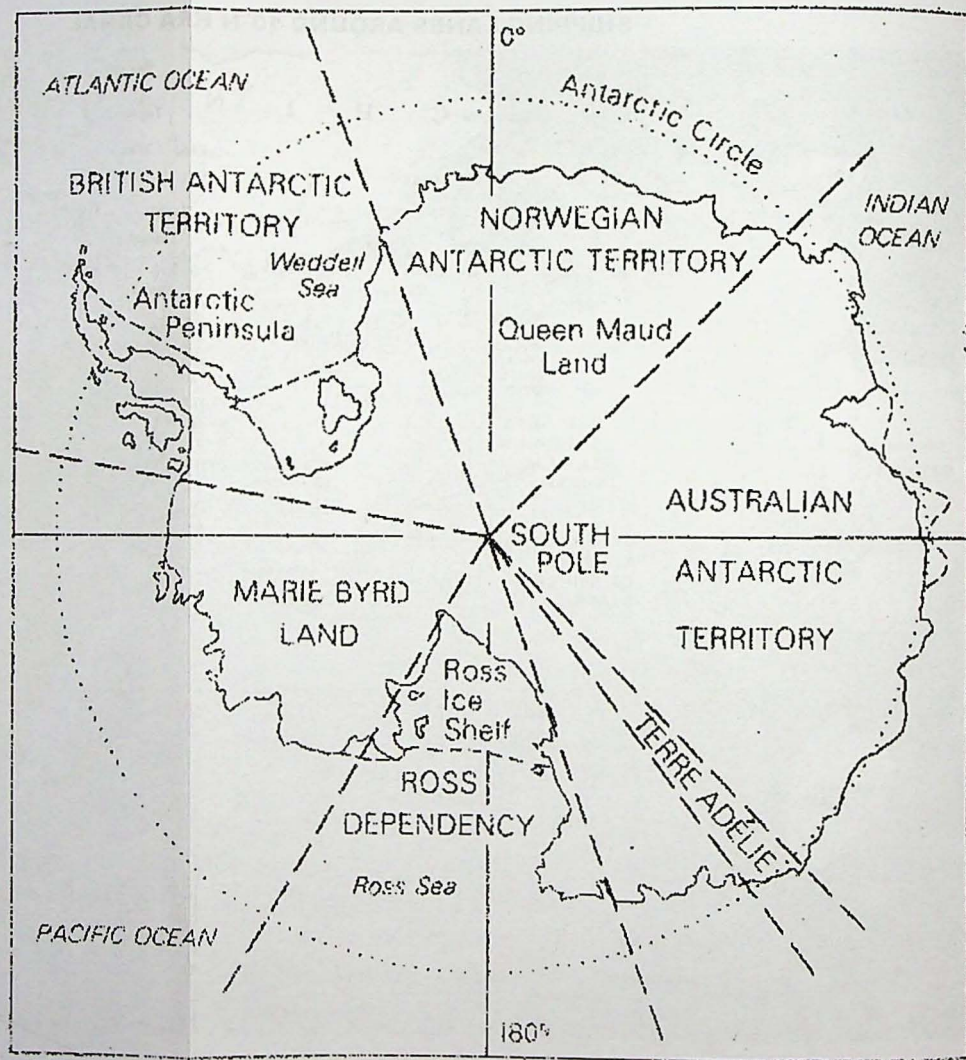
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In the revival of *MANKIND*, the Purohiths were associated with Dr. V. V. Gopalakrishna, George Gomez, Devlal Patidar, MPR Reddy, U. K. Sengottaian, late Julia Zimmerman, Vinod Payyade, Late T. Pattabhi Rama Reddy, Late Dr. Vidya Pitre, Dr. Anant Marathe, Dr. N. H. Antia, Dr. Peter Manuel, M. P. Prakash, Devraj Chauhan and late Kishen Pattnayak (Former Editor of *MANKIND* for a few issues after Lohia's death.)

# SHIPPING LANES AROUND 10° N KRA CANAL

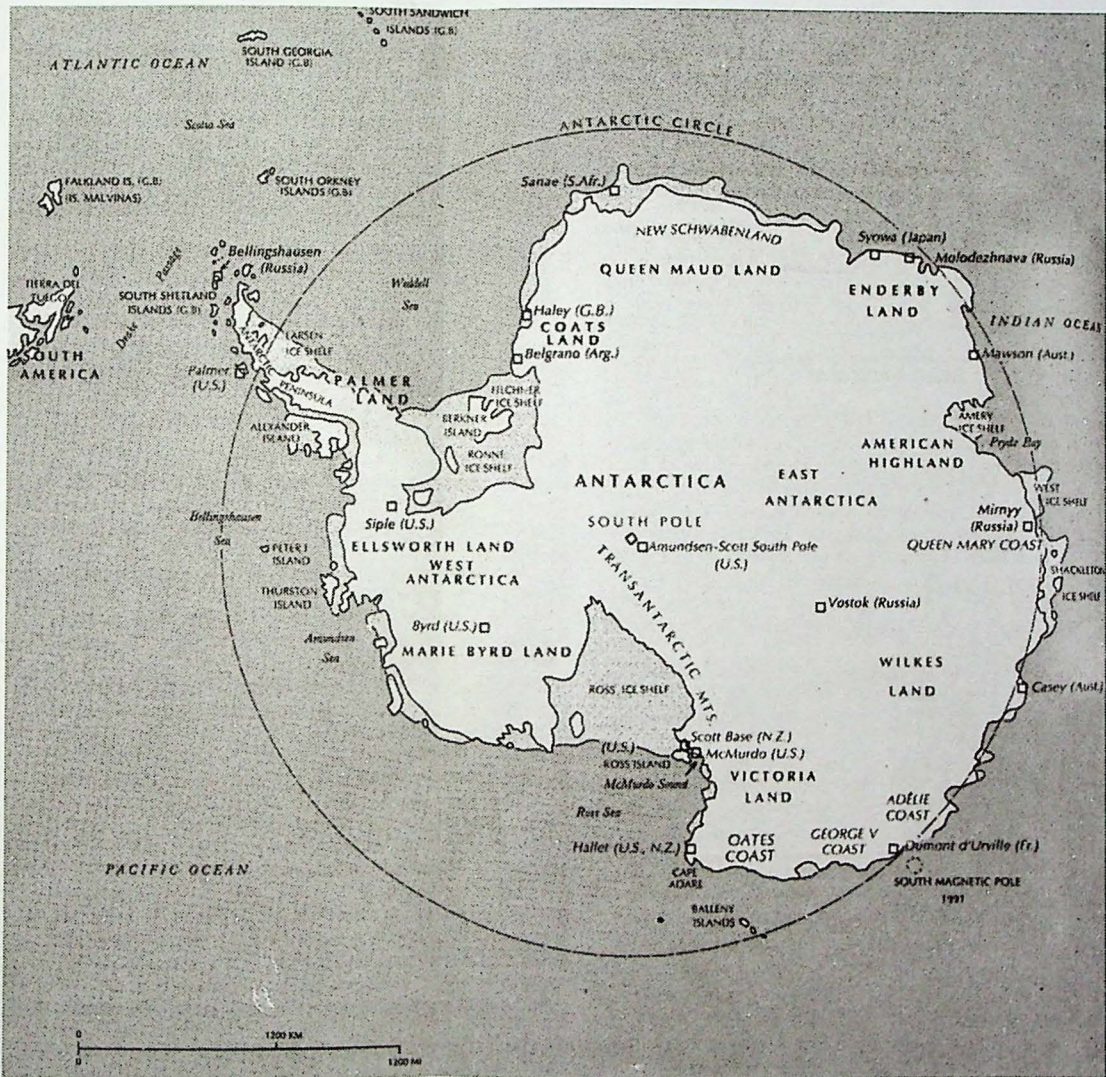


**ANTARCTIC CIRCLE**



Source : Concise Columbia  
Encyclopaedia, 1994, p.34

# ANTARCTICA



Source : *The Macmillan Encyclopaedia*, 1993, p.56



## Vinayak Purohit

\* b. 1927, Kolkata

\*Freedom fighter, 1942 August Movement; compound fracture of the skull due to police lathi, 9.9.42 at Shivaji Park, Mumbai; thrice arrested : once on charge of attempting to burn a policeman alive; again for production, distribution and possession of illegal literature; third time detention without trial, Worli Jail, Mumbai. Trade unionist, 1948-52, as General Secretary, Bombay Press Employees' Union; rejoined Socialist Party, 1956, as Lohia founded the party in Jan. 1956.

\*Graduation in B.A. (Hons.) with History, Economics and Politics, Mumbai University, 1948; Ph.D for *Arts of Transitional India, 20th Century* , published by Popular Prakashan, in 2 Vols, 1986-88; Senior Fellow, ICSSR and UGC 1976-80; Visiting Professor, Film and Television Institute of India, Pune, 1976-85; Visiting Professor, Punjab University, Chandigarh, 1980-82; Visitor, Arts Council of Great Britain, 1981-82; Visiting Professor, Chalmers Institute, Gottenberg, and Royal Technical Institute, Stockholm, 1982; Visiting Scientist, CSIR, 1980-82; Consultant, ILO Project, Maharashtra, 1983-85.

\*Art, Architectural, Music, Dance, Drama, Film and Literary critic from mid-fifties for *Sanskriti, Design, Times of India, Free Press Journal, Hindustan Standard, Dharmayug, Samakaleen, etc.*

\*Designed monumental *Gitai Mandir*, Wardha, 1965-75

\*Revived Lohia's *Mankind*, 1995-2000

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