

LANKA

GUARDIAN

Vol. 21 No. 3

July 1998

Price Rs. 15.00

STOCK MARKET AS MARKET OF OPINION

— *Mervyn de Silva*

RADHIKA COOMARASWAMY on

MICHAEL ROBERTS

ANAGARIKA DHARMAPALA:

THE INDIAN YEARS

— *Sarath Amunugama*

EAST ASIAN BOOM AND BUST

what went wrong with the miracle?

— *Ganeshan Wignaraja*

THE WORLD PRESS AND THE BOOM

— *Farish Noor*

ASIAN MEDIA AS ACCOMPLICE

— *Chandra Muzaffar*

THE BANKER'S TALE

V. Karunatilake

MAHATHIR VS. SOROS

— the new cold cash war

— *Kalinga Seneviratne*

BASIL FERNANDO: PRIEST AND THE POOR

— *Anders Sjobohm*

U.N. AND THE DRUG MENACE

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
noolaham.org | aavanaham.org

— *Thalif Deen*

SUBSCRIPTIONS

The annual subscription rates of the LST Review have been revised due to rising costs of production as follows:

Local: Rs. 600/=

Overseas:

South Asia/Middle East	US\$ 30
S.E. Asia/Far East/Australia	US\$ 35
Europe/Africa	US\$ 40
America/Canada/Pacific countries	US\$ 45

Individual copies at Rs. 50/= may be obtained from the Trust at No. 3, Kynsey Terrace, Colombo 8, and BASL Bookshop, 129, Hulftsdorp Street, Colombo 12.

Spiral bound and indexed copies from Volume I - VII are also available.

Enquiries: *Librarian*
Law & Society Trust
No. 3, Kynsey Terrace
Colombo 8
Tel: 686845/691228
Fax: 94 1 686843

Queen Chandrika and the Oxbridge Knights

Mervyn de Silva

Great Disorder.....! Time to quote Chairman Mao, the Great Helmsman? No, not yet. Just disarray – not a sight that would please our neighbours who will be visiting us at the end of the month, for the SAARC summit. [Of course you know my views on SAARC, not the most respectful].

Talking to some heads of western missions the other day, I got the message..... what do we call it in SAARC company. Yes, consensus. And the consensus on S.L. was? One woman show but for two top-class hired hands, Ministers G.L. Pieris (a former Vice-chancellor) and Lakshman Kadirgamar, a former star of the Oxford Union. Prof. Pieris does the hard work (and the thinking) and the other keeps the Sri Lankan image reasonably bright. So its a triumvirate – Comrade Chandrika's mass appeal, and the high-class professionalism of the Oxbridge duo, no mass appeal but "A" grade professionalism.

But then there is an "A plus" professional in quite another field that the P.A. and the governing Sinhala elite have to combat – no high growth is possible with this large drain on national resources, the war against the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (L.T.T.E.) and its generalissimo, Velupillai Prabhakaran, a maestro in the field of guerrilla warfare and unbridled terror. And that terror is directed as much against "rivals" (in the L.T.T.E.'s eyes, traitors) like Douglas Devananda, one of the few Tamil insurgent bosses who held his territory against the L.T.T.E. in the north – and won a seat to Parliament with a few fellow

E.P.D.P. comrades to keep him company. Well, he was attacked by fellow prisoners in the tightly guarded Kalutara jail, described by some reporters as a "maximum security" prison.

STOCK MARKET

Diminishing foreign presence in local stock market, says the *SUNDAY TIMES*. Such is the radical change that has swept developing countries in the past few decades that the Stock Exchange is considered a better test of a country's state of health than the old conventional tests. GDP rather than democracy or human rights. Since Sri Lanka was the first South Asian country to follow the IBRD-IMF blessed "free market" road, and the socialist P.A., despite the presence of the L.S.S.P. and C.P., decided to pursue more or less the road opened by President Jayawardene's 1977 regime. The P.A. has to face more challenges than the JR-Premadasa UNP regimes. Apart from that South Asia may have to confront some of the tormenting problems that took many an ASEAN country in its vice-like grip, recently.

Though the U.N.P. did patronise some trade unions, it is the P.A. that is far more vulnerable to working class pressure. Prime Minister Sirima Bandaranaike's United Front did have to cope with such "internal" problems but her S.L.F.P. was in firm command and eventually drop its L.S.S.P. – C.P. partners quite cold-bloodedly. President Chandrika's personal popularity should not be confused with the P.A.'s present mass appeal, certainly not in the ranks of the organised working

class, the lower-middle class salariat and organised opinion-making groups like school-teachers.

The drain on national energies, time and attention, by the war, and the casualties which cumulatively demoralise Sinhala families, are factors which cannot be quantified. As a shaping force of public opinion – most of all middle-class opinion in the capital and main towns, it is a formidable anti-government insurgent.

LANKA

GUARDIAN

Vol. 21 No. 3 July 1998

Price Rs. 15.00

Published by
Lanka Guardian Publishing Co. Ltd.
No. 246, Union Place
Colombo 2.

Editor: Mervyn de Silva
Telephone: 447584

Printed by
Ananda Press
Colombo 13.

CONTENTS

A Montage of Diversity	2
Anagarika: The Mahabodhi Society	4
The "Miracle" of the East Asian NICs?	6
Asia Needs a Proactive Press	10
The Media – Responding to the Crisis	11
Currency Crisis, Human Rights and the Media	13
Poverty and the Priest	15
Pop Music and Drug Abuse	19
Monogamy, Bigamy, and Polygamy Revisited	20

A Montage of Diversity

Michel Roberts ed. *Collective Identities Revisited Volume II*, Marga, 1998

A Review Essay by Radhika Coomaraswamy

Like everything these days, the second volume on *Sri Lanka Collective Identities*, edited by Michael Roberts for the Marga Institute begins with a discussion on cricket. Michael Roberts challenges Qadri Ismail, who in an article published elsewhere accuses Michael Roberts of being a nationalist. Ismail is attempting to construct a space for the cricket spectator which is separate from nationalist enthusiasm. He wants to "cheer the team and not the nation". Roberts, on the other hand, proudly claims that unlike Ismail he is a nationalist and a patriot and will be happy to cheer the team and the nation. He, however, qualifies the fact that he is a "Sri Lankan" nationalist and not a Sinhala nationalist and that despite his West Indian roots, he is not a Burgher and that when the West Indian team visits Sri Lanka, he remains an unabashed patriot.

The heat generated by cricket and nationalism is only a reflection of the controversy that surround collective identities in the Sri Lankan context. For this reason Roberts has done an excellent job in not attempting to give the reader a coherent package but only diverse reflections on different aspects of the ethnic dimension in Sri Lankan social life. Roberts is also concerned that we question notions of neutrality and objectivity. In his introduction he points out the importance of the subject position of the author and how it conditions its work. His point is highlighted in a later essay by Mark Whittaker who outlines the dialogue he has with Taraki, a well known journalist. What is the role of the intellectual during times of crisis? Taraki argues that it must be knowledge put into action and he goes off to join the PLOTE while Whittaker returns to the ivory tower in the United States. Given the vicissitudes of the PLOTE,

I think I would prefer the ivory tower but Taraki does raise some important questions that find resonance in the discussions Whittaker has with ordinary people in the Eastern province.

Any book about *Collective Identities* in Sri Lanka has to deal with the question of nationalism. The unique feature in this volume is that Roberts, in his article on "Nationalism in Economic and Social Thought", discusses the concept of "economic nationalism" as it applies to Sri Lanka - a subject greatly neglected in nationalist literature. He shows the growth of economic nationalism among the native capitalist elites who made money as arrack renters, graphite mine owners and timber merchants. He argues that economic nationalism against the British took the form of demands for the expansion of the openings for Ceylonese in higher ranks of the public service and protest against the wasteland policy which affected the Sinhala peasantry especially in the Kandyan areas. Since then economic nationalism expressed itself in demands for self-sufficiency in paddy so that Sri Lanka could become the "granary of the east" again. Among the other issues raised by economic nationalists was the demand for income tax, especially against "foreign" traders and establishments, protectionist tariffs to protect local producers, and a control of Indian immigrant labour which was perceived as not having any "permanent interest" in this country and also perceived as being the hidden hand of Indian influence. The economic nationalists also called for control and nationalisation of the credit system and the establishment of state owned industries to compete with "foreign" interests, including "Indian" interests.

As Roberts maps out Sri Lankan economic nationalism, it appears neo-

mercantalist in structure, inimical to the growth of capital and investment. In addition the "Asokan" ideal of social policy which was adopted by economic nationalists concentrated on an extensive social welfare system providing free services to the people especially in the field of education and health. According to Roberts this economic nationalism was and is an integral part of post-colonial ideology. However, this structure is now under attack. Policies of liberalisation and privatisation have made inroads into these perceptions. Roberts does not answer the questions of the future. What are the constructs of economic nationalism in an era of liberalisation? Has nationalism changed its emphasis or are these old values latent, waiting to explode in a situation of economic crisis? How has liberalisation and privatisation cracked open the beliefs of economic nationalism?

The first volume of *Sri Lanka Collective Identities Revisited* deals extensively with the contours of Sinhala Buddhist nationalism. This volume adds further depth to this research, especially in the piece by Jonathan Walters. In "Pushing Poson :- the Politics of a Buddhist Pilgrimage in a Post Colonial Sri Lanka", Walters describes the construction of the modern images of Poson and the Arahant Mahinda. He shows the transformation of the Mahinda symbol over the centuries but focuses on the developments in the twentieth century when Mahinda is created into a modern day "Prometheus", epitomising the Sinhala language, the Buddhist religion and Sinhala culture. The "Sinhalisation" of Arahant Mahinda is conterminous with the growth of Poson as a major event in the Buddhist calendar. Walters points out how newspapers in the 1940s do not carry anything special on Poson but since 1957 there has been an explosion

of media interest. With the lakehouse financing of the Aloka puja since 1963, the electrification and illumination of the mountain in honour of D.R. Wijewardene, Poson becomes a media event.

What is most fascinating about Walters account is the politicisation of Poson at Mihintale. He shows the keen UNP interest in Mihintale with Presidents Jayawardene and Premadasa engaging in all sorts of activities such as the displaying of the Kapilavast relics, the instalment of a crystal pinnacle, the building of Mihintale the New Town, the setting up of the Aloka trust, the mass sil campaigns, the Poson perehara, and the desire to hold the 1993 Gam Udawa at Mihintale. These were all examples of State intervention in helping to create and perpetuate the spectacle of Poson. Given the UNP patronage, Walters shows how leaders of the SLEP, Mrs. Banadaranaika and Mrs. Kumaratunge do not fetishise Mihintale. They have their own political religious spaces. Walters piece is therefore an example that illustrates how aspects of religious identity are created and reinvented through the years, denying any essential, static notion of religious experience. This creation and recreation are integrally linked to power, politics and media in the modern world. His analysis of Poson is an example of this type of process.

The other aspect of Sinhala nationalism that is worth noting the emerges in the book is contained in the piece by Godfrey Gunatilleka. In his article entitled "The Ideologies and Realities of the Ethnic Conflict - a postface", Gunatilleke argues that in recent times there have been some decisive changes in the context of Sinhala nationalism due to the prolonged ethnic conflict. He argues that the defeat of chauvinist parties in the 1994 elections indicates that the Sinhalese have moved beyond a chauvinistic understanding of their history. He also highlights the consensus of the Moonesinghe Committee of parliament between the UNP and the SLFP which accepts the concept of devolution

and the sharing of power as a means of resolving the ethnic conflict. He feels these are decisive shifts in ideology and that Sinhala nationalism is not as "unitary" as it once was.

The second volume of *Sri Lanka Collective Identities Revisited* has detailed accounts of Tamil nationalism and this is perhaps one of its most important contributions. The various debates about Tamil nationalism come out in the different articles that attempt to discuss the issue. Arasaratnam and Gunatilleke highlight the "reactive" nature of Tamil nationalism. Chronicling constitutional history, they show the growth of Tamil grievances that resulted from successive acts by the colonial and post-colonial state. They both point to the 1923 Legislative council as the turning point when the Tamils could not secure representation in the Western province due to the opposition of their Sinhala counterparts. For those who question whether the Tamils have a grievance, Arasaratnam and Gunatilleke answer the question by listing the alleged grievances from language, colonisation, employment and educational opportunities. Though for Gunatilleke, the Sinhala only act of 1956 was the decisive moment, for Arasaratnam the focus is on the destruction of Tamil political power. He argues that Ponnambalam's 50-50 was a last ditch effort by the Tamil political leadership to share power in a unitary state. He goes on to show how by 1947 Sinhalese were already 67% of Parliament thus able to drive any policy through with a two thirds majority. In 1949 after the disenfranchisement of the Indian plantation Tamils, Sinhalese in parliament became 73% and by the 1970s they were 80%. All minorities were at their legislative mercy. This raises the question that Gunatilleke poses as the end of his article - What is equality? To Tamils and Sinhalese they meant very different things. To Tamils it meant the equality between and among collective identities - hence the 50-50 demand. For the Sinhalese equality meant proportionality - due weightage depending

on the numerical proportion. According to Gunatilleke, these competing notions of equality would in subsequent years move to tear the country apart.

The volume also discusses the issue of Tamil homelands as part of the discourse on Tamil nationalism. Arasaratnam sets out the Tamil argument. He argues that Tamil nationalist discourse always underlined a territorial homeland with "attributes of nationality and distinctiveness from and non-assimilability by, the Sinhalese." He argues that learning from Malaysia, Tamils felt that in Sri Lanka they could take a firm stand against "Bhumiputra" policies only because of their territorial base. He also points to the fact that after educational and employment opportunities were closed to Tamils in the 1970s they were part of a "back to the land" movement that created mystical ties between land in the North and East and Tamil nationalist identity. Gunatilleke also surmises that the violence of 1958 and 1983 made the North and East into secure havens where Tamils felt they could live and work.

Tamil notions of homeland came into immediate conflict with Sinhala perceptions of land and territory. Firstly there was land hunger in Southern densely populated areas and a national agricultural policy would naturally look to less inhabited areas for colonisation. This was a practical problem. But in addition, Sinhala politicians, like their Tamil counterparts, politicised the issue and made colonisation into an ethnic weapon meant to destroy the political power and territorial aspirations of the Tamils. As Gunatilleke points out much of the problem was a practical economic one and given good will a solution could have easily been negotiated. However, the ideological constructs, the mystical notions of land and people and the power of nationalist ideology have made this into the most intractable issue of Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict.

NEXT: Tamilnadu

Anagarika: The Mahabodhi Society

Sarath Amunugama

From Calcutta Dharmapala went to Burma. He returned to Sri Lanka a month later and established the Mahabodhi Society (MBS). The objectives of the society were described as "to revive Buddhism in India, to disseminate Pali Buddhist literature, to publish Buddhist tracts in the Indian vernaculars, to educate the illiterate millions of Indian people in scientific industrialism, to maintain teachers and *Bhikkus* at Buddhagaya, Benares, Kusinara, Savatthi, Madras and Calcutta etc., to build schools, *Dharmasalas* [almshalls] at these places, and to send Buddhist missionaries abroad" (*Mahabodhi Society Journal*, 1907 Vol. 15). Hikkaduwe Sumangala was appointed President of the MBS. At this time Dharmapala was very much a supporter of the TS and the membership of the new society was drawn largely from Theosophists in Ceylon and abroad. The Mahabodians were really Theosophists in another guise. Dharmapala was appointed General Secretary of the Society, while a special post of Director and General Advisor was created for Olcott.

At the inaugural meeting of the MBS an appeal for financial support was launched. Dharmapala managed to persuade four Ramanna Nikaya monks, led by Matale Sumangala, to travel to India and take up residence at the Burmese resthouse in Buddhagaya. He wrote triumphantly, "after 700 years we have raised the banner of Buddhism in India".

Calcutta: the heyday of the "Bhadralok"

Dharmapala joined the four Sinhala monks in Buddhagaya. At first they received the co-operation of the Mahant or Hindu custodian of the site. However, this Mahant died in December 1891 and

his successor, Krishna Dayal Giri, a dedicated Shaivaite, decided to oppose the Buddhist initiative. The Buddhists were evicted and the shrine was repossessed for Hindu worship exclusively. Dharmapala entered into litigation but was compelled to abandon his plan of locating the MBS headquarters in Buddhagaya. He decided to carry on the work of the society from Calcutta. He moved to Neel Comul Mukerjee's home. Some time later he managed to locate his MBS office at 2 Creek Row, the Bengal TS headquarters.

Dharmapala's close association with Bengal from 1891 to 1933 coincides, as it were, with a crucial phase of Indian history when Bengal occupied centre stage. This period marks the rise, the zenith and eventual decline of Bhadrak influence (Broomfield, 1968). It sees the emergence of powerful political associations in Calcutta, the partitioning of Bengal, the anti-partition agitation, the reunification of Bengal, the non-cooperation movement and finally the moving away of the national political focus from Bengal to the national level of the Indian National Congress led by Mahatma Gandhi.

The Presidency of Bengal in the opening years of the 1890s was "an administrative convenience" which included, in addition to Bengal proper, Bihar, Chota Nagpur and Orissa; but:

..... it was in Bengal proper that the wealth of the Presidency was concentrated. Here the British presence had bitten deepest, transforming its land tenures, galvanizing its education and furnishing it with the largest city in Asia. It was from here that Bengali civilization, which for centuries had

diverged from the pattern of Hinduism, was concentrated. It was from here that the Bengali, as trader, government servant or professional man, had moved up the country with the British advance (Seal, 1968: 36-7).

Many members of the high castes of Bengal had made use of the opportunities created by the British occupation to evolve a culture of their own: "The social dominance showed by Brahmins, Kayasths, and Baidyas was based as much upon landownership, literacy skills, administrative talents and a culture of their own as upon ritual status" (Seal, 1968: 45).

This dominant elite group were "Bhadralok" or "the respectable people", defined by Broomfield (1968: 5-6) as "distinguished by many aspects of their behavior - their deportment, their speech, their dress, their style of housing, their eating habits, their occupations and their associations - and quite as fundamentally by their cultural values and their sense of social propriety". They were essentially an urban elite and Calcutta was their city:

The metropolis of Calcutta was the most conspicuous center of their civilization and the city was at once the educational and cultural headquarters of the Presidency. It was the capital of British India as well as the administrative center of Bengal. The University of Calcutta directed higher education throughout Bengal and upper India. Its high court possessed the most extensive jurisdiction and dealt with the largest amount of litigation of all the courts of India. It is a striking fact that more than a quarter of the city's Hindu population belonged to the Bhadrak (Seal, 1968: 49).

It was in this city, and with the Bhadrakok, that Dharmapala, still well wrapped in the cloak of Theosophy, began to propagate his ideas of a Buddhist revival in the land of its birth.

The religious and cultural revival in Bengal

The Bhadrakok were instrumental in creating a religious and cultural revival in Bengal. Lajpat Rai, the nationalist leader, in his book, *Young India*, identifies five reasons for the emergence of "forces resisting denationalization" in the nineteenth century (1968: 114):

1. English education imparted in schools established by the British and Christian missions which introduced Western concepts of freedom and nationalism.
2. Some of the teachers of these schools who, consciously and unconsciously, inspired their pupils with these ideas.
3. The overzealousness of missionaries in their attacks upon Indian religions which suggested to Indians the need for a deeper study of their religion.
4. The awakening of Europeans to the thought of the East. The work of European *savants* and their appreciation of Eastern thought gave confidence to educated Indians.
5. "The writings of Ram Mohan Roy, Debendra Nath Tagore, Rajendra Lalmitra in Bengal, those of Ranade, Vishnu Pandit and others in Maharashtra, Swami Dayanand and Sir Syed Ahamed Khan in upper India, of Madame Blavatsky and the other Theosophists in Madras, brought about an awakening which received an even stronger impetus later from the writings and speeches of Annie Besant and Swami Vivekananda".

Both in India and Ceylon the nationalist movement had its origins in a religious revival. Deeply influenced by Christian thought and practice Ram Mohan Roy, the first nation-builder in India, and his associates of the highest Bhadrakok families, established the *Brahmo Samaj*. The Brahmos created a monotheistic Hinduism shorn of all its "excrescences". Christianity was their model. They advocated social reforms such as widow remarriage, discarding of the Brahminical thread, intermarriage among castes, and prohibition of child marriages. They also undertook missionary activity and attempted to create a "textual" religion. Strongly influenced by the missionaries, they adopted many rituals and forms of worship attractive to the elite. Anil Seal calls it "a creed by its nature attractive only to the new intelligentsia,.... mainly a Calcutta Affair, although for some years it had been entering some of the larger district towns in a hesitant way" (1968: 206).

Though the Brahmos were dominating the religious scene at this juncture they created a sense of unease among the middle and lower ranks of the Bengali Hindus. A more acceptable type of reformism was just emerging, particularly through the work of another Bengali, Swami Vivekananda. He, while asserting the supremacy of the Vedas and supporting social reform, did not overtly adopt the idiom of Christian religiosity.

Political changes

Politically too Bengal was entering a new phase. Viceroy Ripon's regime (1880-5) had been a popular one, helping to strengthen the "self-respect" of the Bhadrakok. True, the Ilbert Bill, which aimed at giving a higher status to Indian magistrates and sessions judges, as well as Ripon's successor Dufferin's (1885-8) attempt to allow Indians to volunteer for service in the Army were both withdrawn amidst recriminations. But these controversies had

drawn the Bhadrakok into the fray, held up to them possibilities of constitutional change and shown the urgent need for political action.

There were two political organizations in Bengal both dominated by the Bhadrakok. Of these the British India Association was a mouthpiece of conservative groups – "the only political body in the whole of India respected by the government. It defended the interests of the big landlords and was controlled by oligarchs, the Debs, the Tagores and the Laws. [They] had lost any radicalism they ever had under the weight of honors and titles" (Seal, 1968:209).

The younger and more dynamic organization was the Indian Association, which was formed in opposition to the British India Association. The Indian Association was the true creature of the Calcutta Bhadrakok. Its executive committee comprised ex-civil servants, newspaper editors, lawyers and educationalists. Their policies so reflected the needs of the educated Bengalis to find employment in the city that, through it, "students shouted their way into the politics of Bengal.... Surendranath [Banerjea], professor at the largest school in Calcutta, became the uncrowned king of the students..... They held protest meetings, threw stones at Europeans and generally followed Surendranath's injunction that they should agitate if he were sent to prison" (Seal, 1968:217).

Like the Bengal-based India Association, associations of educated Indians had also emerged in the other two presidencies in British India, Bombay and Madras. These provincial associations now decided to come together and, using the Theosophical Society's annual convention as a model, met in Bombay in 1885. Thus Dharmapala's introduction to Calcutta almost coincides with the first manifestation of all-India politics, the Indian National Congress.

The "Miracle" of the East Asian NICs?

Ganeshan Wignaraja*

The Development Miracle

The success of South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore and Hong Kong, popularly known as the "East Asian Newly Industrializing Countries" (NICs), with rapid economic growth and development over the last two decades is widely known. Table 1 highlights key aspects of this performance. During the period 1965-85 GNP per capita in all four countries grew at over 6 percent per annum. An impressive record in the light of the twin oil shocks of the 1970s and 1980s and the continuing global recession of the 1980s. The growth rates of the East Asian NICs far exceed those achieved by the world's most developed countries over the same period. Among the most developed countries, Japan grew the fastest at 4.1 percent per annum and is followed by West Germany (2.4 percent), France (2.1 percent), the United Kingdom (2.1 percent) and the United States (1.8 percent)¹. The outcome of twenty years of consistently rapid growth has been the attainment of high levels of per capita income by the East Asian NICs. Measured by levels of per capita income, Singapore and Hong Kong appear to be more developed than South Korea and Taiwan. But, the former are in effect city states with very small populations, while the latter are medium sized countries with large populations. Clearly, per capita income alone is insufficient for making comparisons of the levels of economic development achieved by different countries.

Table 1 points to the rapid expansion of the manufacturing sector as being responsible for the impressive growth record of the East Asian NICs. Between 1963 and 1973 the manufacturing sectors of South Korea, Taiwan and Singapore grew at over 16 percent per annum with Hong Kong trailing behind at a respectable 8.5 percent per annum.

* Research Economist at Oxford University and Visiting Research Fellow at the Marga Institute.

TABLE 1

ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

	GNP per capita 1985 (US\$)	GNP per capita Growth Rate 1965-85 (constant 1980 prices, US\$)	Growth in Manufacturing Value Added (constant 1980 Prices) [1963-73]		Manufacturing % GDP 1983	Manufactured Exports as % of Manufacturing Value Added 1985
SOUTH KOREA	2,150	6.6	20.0	11.0	36.1	103.8
TAIWAN	2,970	6.8	16.4	12.9	42.4	97.4
SINGAPORE	7,420	7.6	17.0	7.0	23.2	345.5
HONG KONG	6,230	6.1	8.5	8.0	32.0	308.9

Source: Database of the OECD Development Centre, Paris, 1988.

In the post-1973 period the rate of manufacturing growth fell in all the countries - Singapore experienced a dramatic 10 percent per annum decrease, South Korea declined by 9 percent per annum, Taiwan by 3.5 percent per annum and Hong Kong by 0.5 percent per annum.

The expansion of manufacturing may have fallen in the 1973-85 period relative to the 1963-73 period. But, rates of manufacturing growth of between 7 to 12.9 percent per annum for these countries are still very high when compared with those achieved by all the developing countries; and most of the developed countries during the same period². Rapid rates of manufacturing growth were accompanied by a large role being played by this sector in the economies of the NICs and a greater emphasis on manufactured exports (particularly on a diversified export structure consisting not only of basic consumer durables but also intermediate and capital goods). By the early 1980s, South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore and Hong Kong emerged as the *most industrialized* of the developing countries characterised by their manufacturing sectors accounting for a significant proportion of Gross Domestic Product and manufactured exports amounting to an overwhelming proportion of Manufacturing Value Added. In this

context Taiwan and South Korea are the more industrialized of the NICs, but Singapore and Hong Kong are the more export-oriented. The larger internal markets of South Korea and Taiwan permit the production of a wide range of consumer, intermediate and capital goods while the smaller internal markets of Hong Kong and Singapore have forced them to rely on external markets for economic expansion.

Free Market or State Sponsored Outward-Looking Strategy?

Most analysts would agree with the impressive development record of the East Asian NICs. They would also generally attribute the industrial success of these countries to the adoption of an outward-looking trade regime. The consensus view can be briefly summarized: Many developing countries influenced by the export pessimism of the 1950s and 1960s and by the supposed merits of Import Substituting Industrialization (ISI) adopted inward-looking trade strategies aimed at developing a modern industrial sector through protectionism, government planning and other direct incentives whose combined effect was a strong anti-export bias. But, the easy phase of ISI (namely the production of consumer goods) ended in the 1960s, and many countries faced serious pro-

blems, including inefficient industries, foreign exchange shortages and a bias against agriculture. A few countries – notably South Korea, Taiwan and Singapore – “wisely switched” to outward-looking strategies, while others stubbornly and unwisely struck to inward-looking ISI. The former group have shown themselves to be markedly more successful in terms of growth, industrialization, balance of payments, income distribution and employment.

There is considerable disagreement over the role of the state in the outward-looking strategies pursued by the East Asian NICs. Two extreme positions may be distinguished in the literature³. One, termed the Crude Free Market View, identifies outward orientation with *Laissez faire* in the classical economics tradition of Adam Smith. According to this view, three elements were important in the export success of these countries: strong outward orientation, resource allocation by the free market and a minimal role for the State. Strong outward orientation refers to a trade regime where trade controls are either non-existent or very low in the sense that any disincentive to export resulting from import barriers are more or less counterbalanced by export incentives. There is little or no use of direct controls or licensing and the exchange rate is maintained so that the effective exchange rates for importables and exportables are roughly equal. In addition, the state is allocated a minimal role in the strategy of providing infrastructure such as free trade zones, roads, telephones, airports, ports, power etc. The engines of growth, in this view, are free trade and the rapid response of the private sector (both local and foreign) to the generous incentives provided. This view is well known and has been influential in Policy Formulation for other developing countries.

The alternative position, termed the Statist view, stresses moderate outward orientation and a strong role for the state beyond the provision of infrastructure as

the key elements behind the industrial success of the East Asian NICs. Moderate outward orientation refers to the overall incentive structure being biased towards production for the domestic rather than export markets. But the average rate of effective protection for the home market is relatively low and the range of effective protection rates relatively narrow. The use of direct controls and licensing arrangements is limited and although some direct incentives to export may be provided, these do not offset protection against imports. The effective exchange rate is higher for imports than for exports but only slightly.

In addition to moderate outward orientation, the statist view argues that the “Korean or Taiwanese Miracle” is more the result of a close interaction between the state and private enterprise than of the working of the free market. The culture and history of these two countries were responsible for providing a substantial class of entrepreneurs, and it was via the actions of the state that this entrepreneurial creativity was exploited. The state directly participated in the process of industrialization by ownership of public enterprise, and, more importantly played an invaluable role by stimulating, guiding and controlling private firms.

The Acquisition of Technological Capability

With the benefit of hindsight, it appears that neither the Crude Free Market nor the Statist view completely explains the role of the State in the success of the East Asian NICs. Both views contain elements that were necessary for their industrial take-off such as the switch to outward looking strategies and the classic roles played by the state and the private sector in this process. But much more was done by the East Asian States than simply adopting an outward-looking trade regime and leaving it all to the market. These countries placed a major emphasis on the acquisition of technological capability – broadly

defined to refer to the entire complex of human skills (entrepreneurial, management and technological) needed to set up and operate industries over time⁴.

The mastery of technological change is even more important to developing countries than it is to industrialized countries. At an early stage of industrialization the East Asian NICs expended considerable effort to master technologies that were relatively standard in the developed world and to cope with advances in each of the technologies that they were implementing. In other words, these countries learnt difficult new skills and absorbed new knowledge before having consolidated a base of industrial competence in mature or traditional industries. As with all industrial skills, the acquisition of the technological capabilities by the East Asian NICs required a long process of learning by manufacturing firms. Recent studies show that this learning was based partly on the experience of production (known as “learning by doing”), partly on importing ready made knowledge from developed countries (in the form of capital goods and consultants) and partly on a conscious process of investing in the creation of knowledge (such as experimentation, training and Research and Development)⁵. Moreover, that the learning process can be speeded up or retarded by various factors, but *Ceteris Paribus* there are inherent differences in the pace of technological development depending on the nature of the technology, the industries concerned and the specific functions involved. Since learning involves organizing knowledge and activities in particular sequences, training and education, search and experimentation, it can itself be learnt. Thus, “learning to learn” is an inherent part of the technological development process at the firm level in the East Asian NICs.

Recent research on the East Asian NICs also suggests that there are several important influences on technological capability which are more general, obtai-

ning at the national level⁶. These are determined by 'national endowments' of technological capabilities, the ability to learn new capabilities and government policies which affect the generation of new capabilities by firms and the exploitation of existing capabilities in production and trade.

One of the most important indications of national technological capability is clearly the level and rate of increase of human capital, not only in the broad sense of literate or trained manpower, but also in the narrow sense of technically skilled engineers, technicians and operatives. Needless to say, the quality and relevance of training is as important as the quality and the specialities which are chosen (under the broad 'technical' category) and have to match the emerging needs of industry. An important difference between firms and national level technological capabilities emerges here: a capable firm need only keep up with the changes in the technology of its product specialisation, while a capable country has to produce skills to keep up with entirely new activities and technologies. A capable country's human capital must be judged partly by its formal schooling, vocational/technical education and university systems. They must also be judged by investments made by firms in in-plant or in-house training, the mobility of trained personnel and the transferability of skills which partly depends on the certification systems for skills).

Empirical evidence on the development of technological capability at the firm level is difficult to present consciously because it is normally presented in a detailed case study format rather than as summary statistics. On the other hand, quantitative data on national technological capability is readily available. The next section examines the available evidence on the efforts undertaken by the East Asian States to create the supply of technical manpower necessary to assimilate technological development.

Countries differ widely in their capabilities to deploy given technologies efficiently. They differ even more in their capabilities to cope with major technological change, both with radical improvements in existing technologies and with the emergence of completely new technologies. These differences in technological capabilities (as a whole) directly affect, among other things, a country's relative success with industrial development, its growth in productivity over time, its flexibility with its economic structure and its competitive position in international trade. In a world of rapid technological progress, capabilities to cope with change assume even greater significance: technological mastery necessarily entails the effective deployment of a constant stream of new technologies.

Evidence on Human Capital and Technology

This section reviews some of the available evidence on human capital and

technological effort in the East Asian NICs in recent years. The review will proceed through three stages: (a) general and vocational educational attainments; (b) scientific and technical manpower attainments; and (c) expenditure on Research and Development (R+D):

The significance of formal education to labour skills and national technological capability can hardly be overstated. Many debates continue about which level or orientation of education is the most conducive to national technological capability, but it is probably accepted that all forms of education, broadly defined, feed into the formation of a skilled, flexible and efficient work force. Table 2, sets out the basic data on secondary educational attainment for the East Asian NICs and a group of "second tier newly industrialized countries". There are great differences between the two groups of countries. The four East Asian NICs have a genuine claim to have 70% or more coverage by 1984, while the others lag far behind. What is important for present

TABLE 2

HUMAN CAPITAL AND TECHNOLOGY

	Nos, enrolled in secondary education (as % of age group (1965) (1985)		Pupils enrolled in vocational education (as % of population) 1984	Proportion of students in higher education in Science and Technology 1980s	Scientists and Engineers in R+D (per million inhabitants) 1984	Gross R+D expenditure (as a % of GNP) Mid 1980s
SOUTH KOREA	35	91	2.04	42	802.9	1.1
TAIWAN	38	91	2.20	n.a	1,285.3	0.9
SINGAPORE	45	71	0.36	60	960.4	0.5
HONG KONG	29	69	0.59	46	n.a	n.a
MALAYSIA	28	53	0.13	33	182.0	n.a
THAILAND	14	30	0.75	21	150.0	0.5
KENYA	4	19	0.05	34	26.0	n.a

Notes: n.a = not available

Source: Database of UNESCO, Paris, 1987.

purposes is that the East Asian NICs had ensured secondary education for over a third of their population by 1965, providing the broad base for skill development needed for export success.

Vocational education, *i.e.* secondary education aimed at preparing pupils directly for a trade or occupation (other than teaching), is generally considered of great significance for national technology development. Again, the East Asian NICs lead the second-tier NICS. Within the East Asian NICs, the relative lead of South Korea and Taiwan (*i.e.* relative to the total population) appears overwhelming.

The general education figures may be quite misleading as measures of technological capabilities of a country, if the proportion of trainees in technical subjects and the quality of their training differ widely. There is no objective measure at hand for assessing quality, but UNESCO does provide figures on the proportion of students in science and technology and numbers of engineers employed in R+D in the sample countries. The technical orientation of higher education is exceptional in Singapore and is high in South Korea and Hong Kong. Taiwan's figure is not available but may be presumed to be similar to South Korea. Malaysia and Kenya do invest fairly heavily in technical education lagging approximately 10 percentage points behind Korea and Hong Kong. We now consider the numbers of scientists and engineers in R+D in the sample countries. Note that R+D includes non-manufacturing, so that for many countries a large proportion may be accounted for by agriculture, defense, energy and so on. Moreover, even industrial R+D may be conducted in government laboratories unrelated to production, so that their impact on actual technology use is minimal. The evidence shows that the three East Asian NICs in which data is available have the highest density of R+D scientists in their populations. Taiwan is in a distinct class

of its own, with a density approaching France and the United Kingdom. (The Nos. of Scientists and Engineers in R+D per million inhabitants are 1,545 and 1,364 for the United Kingdom and France respectively).

Formal R+D expenditure is probably a good way of comparing total technological effort in industrialized countries, with roughly similar levels of basic technological competence and similar pace of 'minor' technical progress. In developing countries at radically different levels of industrialization, it is impossible to make this sort of assumption. The bulk of technological effort is devoted to mastering technologies in place and to all sorts of minor improvements and adaptations. The starting points of different countries are also vastly different. Thus, simple comparisons of formal R+D spending may tell us little about relative technological competence or effort, particularly when the orientation, location and financing of R+D also differs. Bearing these caveats in mind, let's look at the evidence presented. Korea and Taiwan again stand out by virtue of their technological effort and compare quite well to France and the US and Japan which spend 1.8 and 2.6 percent of GDP respectively. We were unable to obtain data on Hong Kong, Malaysia and Kenya.

Conclusion

This paper has provided a brief sketch into a rich and fascinating area of empirical economic research that requires further study. The tentative conclusions from the research suggest the switch from an inward to an outward looking trade strategy was a necessary element in the industrial take-off of the East Asian NICs. But, by no means was it sufficient. These countries also placed considerable emphasis on **the acquisition of technological capability** - both at the national and firm levels - by investing heavily in the creation of technical human capital and by providing

an environment conducive to technological learning by enterprises. In a similar way, if other developing countries are to achieve rapid industrialization they too must pay particular attention to the development of technological capability. Otherwise, they will be left far behind and the technological gaps between the East Asian NICs and other developing countries will soon become unbridgeable.

Notes

1. These rates are for the period 1965-1986 and taken from: UNICEF, *The State of the World's Children 1989*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1989, Table 6.
2. See World Bank, *World Development Report 1987*. New York, Oxford University Press, 1987.
3. See Wignaraja, Ganeshan "The Free Trade Policy Prescription for Economic Development: A Survey", *Upnathi*, (Journal of the Sri Lanka Association of Economists) Vol. 2, No. 2, July 1987.
4. *Entrepreneurial*: To conceive a new project, organize the resources needed, carry through the concept to completion and set up the institutional base for its continuation.

Managerial: To organize all the organizational, financial, operational (non-technical), marketing, personnel and related functions needed for the firm to achieve and retain commercial success.

Technological: To execute all the technical functions entailed in setting up, operating, improving, expanding and modernizing the firm's productive facilities.

5. Consult, for example, Teitel, Simon "Technology Creation in Semi-Industrial Economies", *Journal of Development Economics*, Vol. 16, 1984.
6. See Lall, Sanjaya and Wignaraja, Ganeshan *National Capabilities to Master Technological Change*, Paris, Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, (forthcoming) 1989.

Asia Needs a Proactive Press

Farish A Noor*

The global financial crisis that has sent shock waves throughout Asia has demonstrated, among other things, the devastating potential of international media. For it cannot be denied that one major factor that has contributed to the massive flight of capital from East Asia and Southeast Asia has been the paranoia generated amongst Western investors by the global media which has added fuel to the fire. Headlines like 'Asian Tiger economies set to collapse' and 'Asian miracle on the brink of disaster' can only add to the atmosphere of doom and gloom, and it would be naive for us to think that such titles were chosen for the sake of objectivity.

What does come as a surprise to many is the fact that the nations of the South have proven incapable of meeting this head on challenge. While the airwaves over our heads are filled with signals bearing more negative publicity designed to fuel our insecurities even more, our own response has proven to be feeble at best. Like a country being bombed by a vastly superior airforce with no aerial defence of its own, we sit idly by, like sitting ducks.

The analogy of the air raid is rather appropriate considering our present circumstances. In the past, warfare was a skill as well as a science, and each side would be racing towards the elusive tactical edge that would give it a head start over its opponent. During the era of the great wars on land, cavalry and all forms of mobile transport offered that edge: It allowed one's army to outflank the opponent and attack them from the side or the rear. But the advent of the aeroplane changed the terrain of warfare for good. Henceforth, the tactical edge would be given to the side that won the battle in the air. This was the case

when Britain won the 'Battle of Britain' against the German airforce, and it was just as true when the Western forces managed to pulverise the army of Saddam Hussein from the air during the recent Gulf War. In both cases, the side that won control of the air was the one that could use it as a bridgehead to launch further attacks into enemy territory.

It could be argued that the situation in the present is hardly different from that of the past. In contemporary international discourse, the term 'diplomatic relations' is nothing more than a polite euphemism for a state of undeclared conflict. The principles of *realpolitik*, the guiding paradigm which still governs the conduct between nation-states till today, ensure that in times of peace nation-states will engage in other forms of confrontation: cultural, political and economic. The media is just another arm of the nation's arsenal that is utilised in this form of 'soft' diplomatic conflict. (It is therefore hardly surprising that nations with aggressive foreign policies also have aggressive and active media services).

In the midst of the global financial crisis we are witnessing today, the role of the international media has been crucial from the very beginning. (By 'international media' we are, of course, referring to none other than the global media services based primarily in the Western hemisphere).

It was the international media that began the campaign to praise the 'economic miracle' of Asia to the heavens in the late-1980s. Despite the fact that this 'miracle' was achieved by the hard work and labour of millions of ordinary Asians, a 'miraculous' quality was attributed to it. This generated the intense curiosity, envy and contempt of many in the developed world. Thousands flocked to invest their capital in the East.

Many others sought the ways and means to burst the bubble of the 'miracle economies'.

When the bubble did seem to burst, it was the same Western-dominated international media that spearheaded the campaign of shock and horror tactics. Rumours about the immanent collapse of Asian economies and governments began to appear like mushrooms after the rain. Worse still were the incessant rounds of speculation about the rise and fall of political figures, the collapse of governments and the death of leaders. In some cases, the international media's rumours turned into a self-fulfilling prophecy, with a number of Asian nations being forced to undergo changes in their leadership (although the long awaited recovery never came). In other cases, pressure generated by the media has forced governments of some Asian countries to turn abroad for help, by opening their doors to the IMF and World Bank.

The embarrassing question remains, however. Why have we not managed to stem this tide of negative publicity and rumour-mongering? What are the factors that have disabled our defences?

At a cursory glance, it would appear that ours is a story similar to that of the confrontation between David and Goliath. The media of many Asian countries are hopelessly handicapped in relation to their Western counterparts for a number of social, political and economic reasons.

Firstly, it must now be admitted that some aspects of the political and social environment of Asian societies have stood in the way of the development of an independent and proactive media. In some Asian countries, television channels and news media are effectively in the hands of political parties and individual leaders. Such direct control over

* Secretary-General, International Movement for a Just World

the media invariably has an effect on the development of an independent media that is capable of standing up on its own and meeting competition from abroad. The demands of politics also, ensures that news invariably degenerates into propaganda and 'soft' entertainment, which are hardly a match for the hard-nosed approach of the Western media. Songs and poems praising the image of politicians are no match for foreign exposes designed to rip apart the soft underbelly of a nation's economy.

The economic factor is also partly to blame as the media in the South has often been left to run on inadequate resources, or worse still, made to function as a captive of the free market system. In the case of the former, shoddy productions of poor quality and low standards are the result. In the latter cheap 'infotainment' and a plebeian pop culture is the end product. In either case, what has not been allowed to develop is an independent media that can produce results and earn credibility in the eyes of the public.

This is the central problem faced by the media and governments of Asia today: Their media seemingly lacks the

credibility and persuasiveness of the Western-owned news agencies like CNN, BBC and others. (Which is not that difficult a task to accomplish, considering how blatantly biased the Western media has been in recent years). While CNN and other agencies were buying up the airspace above our heads, we were busy building projects on land. The fundamental rule of modern tactical warfare was forgotten, and we allowed ourselves to be outflanked from above. (We should have seen this problem sooner, for while we were busy rebuilding the economic and political terrain of Asia, the sociocultural terrain inhabited by our youth was already being redrawn according to the tastes and norms of MTV and Michael Jackson).

Now that the crisis has peaked, it would be wrong to blame the people who work in the Asian media for not being able to meet this problem. They have been doing that from the very beginning, with precious little support and encouragement. While the Asian public and foreign investors have been running amuck, transferring their capital abroad and worrying about a doomsday that doesn't seem any closer, the media of Asia have been trying to calm their fears.

But what the Asian media has not been able to do is win the battle for the airwaves in other parts of the world. The investors from abroad who have pulled out their capital after being told by CNN and the rest that the Asian economies are about to sink into the Pacific Ocean have not heard of any TV channel from Asia, and are not about to as well. As long as this condition is not rectified, Asia's economies will always be left open to the combined assault of international media and capital.

It was our neglect of this crucial sphere of discourse, the international media arena, that has left us vulnerable to speculation and the manoeuvrings of competitors. Our entry into the global market system meant that we were exposed to one crucial variable that can never be controlled or predicted: international public opinion. If we are to make any headway in this direction, Asian states and governments must come to realise the need for an independent, proactive media service that can work independently and with credibility. The need for a proactive media in Asia is greater than ever now.

The Media – Responding to the Crisis

Chandra Muzaffar

It is heartening that members of the public are coming forward with good ideas on how the nation can overcome the present financial crisis. Some of these ideas have been expressed through the print media; others have been expressed through the electronic media.

What is perhaps needed now is an organised, coordinated effort at the national level to translate some of the more workable ideas into reality. The Malaysian media may be in a position to play such a role. For the mass media has a mass audience. Since the media is in constant touch with its clientele, it would be able to ensure that its

message reaches its target. If certain attitudes and habits have to change in the wake of the crisis or if we have to develop certain new ways of thinking and acting, there is no better avenue to promote and to sustain a mass campaign than the media.

If all the major dailies and private television and radio stations (one envisages this as a citizens' rather than a government initiative) came together and worked on certain concrete goals aimed at overcoming the financial crisis, it would undoubtedly have a significant impact upon the nation. The collective strength of the Malaysian mass media could do wonders for instance for a people's

campaign directed towards the following five goals:-

Persuading Malaysians to keep their money in the ringgit with local banks.

Encouraging Malaysians to buy shares in the stock market in order to strengthen Malaysian companies.

Urging Malaysians wherever possible to buy Malaysian goods.

Coaxing Malaysians to spend their holidays in the country.

Advising Malaysians to pursue tertiary education within the country.

Since there may be legitimate doubts about the feasibility of some of these ideas, the media will have to do more than transmit the speeches of government leaders on the above themes. In fact such an approach will undermine the 5 point campaign that we envisage. It will be dismissed as mere government propaganda.

As a case in point, in persuading Malaysians to demonstrate their fidelity to the ringgit, the media will have to marshal facts and figures to show that the ringgit is intrinsically strong – stronger than many other currencies used in international exchange. Similarly, in urging Malaysians to 'buy Malaysian' the media should provide as much information as possible about alternative Malaysian products that are available. They should get quality control institutes to vouch for the quality of Malaysian products. To encourage Malaysians 'to visit Malaysia' there should be programmes on television and write-ups in the newspapers on a regular basis over a period of time on the attractive tourist sites and scenic spots in the country. These places should of course be made more affordable for the average Malaysian wage earner. Here again the media can, by highlighting exorbitant room rates, force hoteliers to lower their charges in the interest of the Malaysian tourist and the Malaysian economy.

The Malaysian media working together can also launch a national campaign to get every Malaysian earning more than say a 1000 ringgit a month to donate 10 ringgit a month to a 'Malaysian Peoples' solidarity Fund' as a way of demonstrating their love and commitment to the nation at a time of crisis. This is an idea that was first mooted by a television viewer more than a month ago and has since gained some support. In the past an individual newspaper or television station would conduct its own fund raising campaign on behalf of a particular cause. Wouldn't it be better if on this occasion when the nation is facing a major challenge the entire media joins hands in a common campaign for a common cause?

Finally, the different linguistic streams within the Malaysian mass media establishing a common bond through a

common cause would in itself be an act of immense significance in the context of multi-ethnic Malaysia. It would be a vivid demonstration of multiethnic unity. More than that, if there is close cooperation among the different linguistic streams within the media they could publish articles or broadcast programmes that would foster better understanding of how the different communities are coping with problems generated by the financial crisis. As the economy slows down in the coming months it

will be even more important to strengthen inter-ethnic communication and solidarity. It is sad but true that latent ethnic prejudices often acquire new vigour when times are bad. The media more than perhaps any other institution can help to curb negative ethnic attitudes from gaining ground.

This is perhaps the most compelling reason why the Malaysian media should forge a solidarity link – a padulink – at a time like this.

THE BANKERS' TALE (Gov'nors ALL)

They didn't come to usury like their peers
Biting the silver spoons of Imperial sires
Victorian heirlooms didn't crowd their halls
Nor trophies of Tea-doms rise and Coffees fall.
This really would have been a Clerk's dull tale
Had not these Clerks just managed not to fail
Their degrees between sundry campuses
And bet their shirts on chosen caucuses
Old Colonial Steeds in Swabhasha blinkers
And Trotskytes in their rosy tinted clinkers
Took them through the Independence stakes
To the rooms right at the top of the topmost cakes
But they weren't cheered at all in spite of this
The gold they handled simply wasn't gliss
The social theories were all right to talk
About at Cocktails, but restless still they sought
The dreams of merchant princes, global capers,
Dollar pay-offs to drown the dollar's wheezes
Of what to do with hard currency crises
On devaluation expound their midnight theses
And watch the Empire grow like water hyacinth
Sleek over stagnation and epidemic
These Friedmans may not claim their Nobel prize
But the Free World we are told has need
for just such guys.

U. Karunatilake

Currency Crisis, Human Rights and the Media

Kalinga Seneviratne

In this article, Kalinga Seneviratne looks at how the Western media's reporting of the Southeast Asian currency crisis raises important human rights issues with regards to communications.

After the Malaysian Prime Minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad called for curbs on international currency speculation at the International Monetary Fund (IMF) – World Bank meeting in Hong Kong in September, the Malaysian ringgit went into a rapid spiral and dragged down the region's already battered currencies - Indonesia's rupiah and Thailand's baht.

A few days later when he repeated these calls at a Pacific Economic Cooperation Council conference in Santiago, Chile, it sparked off the same jitters. The ringgit fell by 4 percent within two hours to an all-time low against the US dollar.

Mahathir said in his Santiago speech that currency speculators are "rich people from rich countries" who "have no compunction about impoverishing the poor in order to enrich themselves". He went on to describe them as "shadowy figures whose trading is far from open" with no published record of the transactions, the volume, the funds and the individuals involved.

Thus the Malaysian leader suggested that currencies should be linked to the economic indices of the countries concerned. His suggestion reflected concerns expressed some years ago by the Nobel Laureate economist James Tobin. He proposed a small international levy on

short-term cross-border capital flows to curb the destabilising effect of such activities on national economics.

Tobin's views have been treated with near contempt by the neo-liberal mainstream economists and the Western media. It was blatantly clear that these same forces were now ganging up to shut up Mahathir - the strongest international critic of the West's double standards.

If you need any evidence of these double standards, you don't need to go any further than the 'Time' magazine's cover story of September 22nd under the heading "George Soros: He's spending millions to save the world - and getting blamed for wrecking Asia's currencies".

Many other Western media outlets have also sprung to the defence of the American financier who has been singled out by Mahathir as the cause of the Asian currency turmoil. In their passion to defend Soros, there has been no serious attempt to investigate and analyse the activities of these hedge fund managers who command billions of dollars and seem to operate with impunity, playing havoc on economies of developing countries and the livelihood of their people.

The 'Time' article paid tribute to "philanthropist" Soros for spending millions of dollars of "his" money in funding the Open Society Foundations around the world, which support democracy by financing education, freedom of speech and human rights projects.

Ironically, no Western media organisation has bothered to ask the question whether Soros's (and other fund managers) attempt to gag public debate of their activities by using his huge financial clout to bring down the value of the ringgit each time Mahathir speaks out

on the issue, is a contradiction of the very human rights and "open society" Soros is supposed to be promoting around the world.

No military dictator in history has been able to muster such financial resources and political clout to effectively gag the international media.

This issue comes to the very core of the international human rights debate. One is entitled to ask, as Mahathir and many other Asian leaders have done in recent years, about whether the human rights agenda is set up by the West and promoted by its media to protect the West's own selfish economic interests.

Thus the Soros-Mahathir clash and the Western media's response to it, is the latest example of how the Western media's power to set the international human rights agenda may be a violation of these very human rights principles they pretend to safeguard.

The Western economic writers have consistently blamed financial mismanagement by South-East Asian governments for the currency woes. One of the major issues they have raised is the lack of transparency in the financial sector, which they claim has led to foreign investors losing confidence in their economies and taking their money away. But, when it is pointed out that the hedge funds which have triggered the crisis are run by "shadowy" figures with no transparency at all, the same media comes to their defence, trying to project the criticism as "attempts to blame foreigners" for Asia's economic woes.

Another contradiction between the Western media's defence of hedge fund managers and their self-proclaimed role of promoting democracy around the world is the reporting of Thailand's

Kalinga Seneviratne is a Sri Lankan born journalist, broadcaster and media analyst. He has lived and worked in Australia for 18 years where he was an award-winning radio broadcaster and lecturer in international communications and development journalism. Kalinga was the Australian and South Pacific correspondent of Inter press Service news agency from 1991 until August 1997

economic crisis. Political instability in Thailand is blamed for its currency woes, but this is as a result of a thriving democracy in the country. No one is asking the question whether the hedge fund managers want you to establish military dictatorships before they invest in your country.

There are very serious flaws in the definition of words such as "democracy", "globalisation" and "free market" by the Western media. It is very often based on Eurocentric selectivity and double standards.

It seems a "free market" exists only when there are no barriers for Western products and services to enter developing country markets, not the other way around. For example at last year's World Trade Organisation (WTO) Ministerial Conference in Singapore, the West conveniently ignored developing countries' demands for a review of the implementation of Uruguay Round agreements on market access for their textile, footwear and other products to developed country markets. Instead they pushed for and obtained a new agreement on market access for information technology products - which almost exclusively benefit developed countries.

Similarly, "globalisation" it seems is a process where Western music, films, food and other cultural products are able to enter other countries at will and influence their people, especially the youth. Peoples' right to protect themselves and their traditions from unwanted Western cultural invasions does not exist.

Coming to "democracy" what we have seen in many developing countries in recent years is that the mere casting of the vote has not helped the people to improve their standard of living. In many instances, it has had the opposite effect and has even introduced a Mafia style of governance - not necessarily by the members of government but by others who have been made free.

Russia and some of the former Soviet bloc countries of Eastern Europe are good examples. The largest democracy in the world, India, is showing disturbing signs of heading in this direction.

The Western media hail these developments as market liberalisation and creating "free choice" - never mind if the country's political parties are run by crooks, as long as they don't create barriers for the expansion of Western transnational business empires.

Today, the main threats to democracy and freedom of speech come not necessarily from governments but from these corrupt Mafia-style business and organised crime networks. They use the gun to shoot you dead, not the law courts to lock you up.

If the activities of the international hedge funds, which are playing havoc in Asia, are not made transparent and their operators remain shadowy figures, what is the guarantee that these funds are not using proceeds from such organised crime syndicates?

The Western media's inability to take seriously views of non-Western leaders - who are pointing out these double standards - may well contribute to indirectly encouraging organised crime and violation of human rights around the world. We need to realise that it is a different world out there to 1948 when the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted.

Today, some of the biggest threats to human rights of the world's people, especially in developing countries, are not coming from their own government or the generals, but from international financial institutions and even from the international media's projection of themselves and their countries.

It is time we took a good long rethink on human rights, taking into account the power of the international media and financial institutions to mould peoples' opinions and control their lifestyles.

The clash between Mahathir and Soros provide the Asian media with a real challenge. But have they taken it up?

There has been no serious attempt by regional financial analysts to discuss and debate the need to set up an Asian Monetary Fund to cushion countries in

the region from future attacks on its currencies. When IMF opposed the original Japanese initiative, the Asian media should have investigated the need to establish such a fund and also questioned IMF's political reasons for opposing such a fund.

When Western reporters choose to ignore the point of view of Asian leaders (or quote it only as an after thought) and instead give preference to quotes from Western financial analysts and the IMF, they set the agenda from a Western point of view. If you are going to look at the issue from an Asian perspective, one also needs to look back on the timing of this crisis. It began after ASEAN nations took a series of political decisions which ignored the West's (especially the United States') objections. One of it was of course the entry of Burma to ASEAN. Spurred on by the "Asian Economic Miracle" Asia was slowly showing signs of making its impact on the international political scene.

If they succeed, it will greatly undermine the West's (particularly the US') power to set the international agenda in organisations like the WTO, IMF, the United Nations and so forth. In Asian eyes this should herald in a new era of international egalitarianism but for the West it would seem as if the end of a golden era of Western "liberalism" had begun.

The West has not yet got used to the idea of treating Asians as equal partners in international political wheeling and dealing. The Western media reporting of the Asian currency crisis has been clearly focused on denting this newfound self-confidence of Asia. It seems for the moment the Western media is succeeding in this task.

As consumers of Western media, one cannot but begin to believe that Asia is fully dependent on Western capital and on the goodwill of Western hedge fund managers. But there is no serious discussion about how much the Western economies are dependent on Asian markets and the prosperity of Asian consumers. How much are Western designer labels, fast food giants and entertainment industry dependent on Asian markets for their future growth?

If one is to analyse the Asian currency crisis from an Asian perspective, this is a fact of life, which needs more serious discussion. Additionally, we get the feeling that only the Westerners have the wealth to invest around the World. What about Asian wealth which have been invested around the world, including in the West? Where are these funds moving? Did they move some of these

funds back to Asia, triggering the Wall Street crash?

After the Western media - which called for Mahathir's resignation - had egg thrown in their faces when the Wall Street and European stock exchanges were shaken and Soros after loosing US 2 billion from it agreed on a BBC radio interview with Mahathir's viewpoint on regulating currency trading, we must

seriously start to question their ability to objectively analyse the political and social aspects of globalisation. Unfortunately, for the moment, most of Asia's own economic analysts seem to be taking the cue from the Western media. Many of them seem to be talking the language of the West rather than attempting to reflect their own peoples' interests and viewpoints.

Poverty and the Priest

A Note on Basil Fernando

Anders Sjobohm

On the west coast of Sri Lanka, just north of the capital Colombo, there is a small village where the majority of the inhabitants are poor people belonging to the fisher and the washer castes. The name of the village, Palliyawatte, indicates that it is Christian, for in Sinhala *palliya* means "church" and *watta* means "property". It became Christian, Catholic, after the Portuguese conquest of the coastal provinces of Sri Lanka in the early 16th century.

Even today the west coast as a whole makes up a Catholic core area in the otherwise Buddhist Sri Lanka, Catholicism having struck deeper roots than might be explained by the violence of the conquerors. It even stood the test when Catholics themselves were persecuted, after the Portuguese (after one hundred years of rule) were chased out by the Reform Dutch. When *their* time had come to its end, and when after another 150 years, the more tolerant English took over, the Catholic church again emerged as the strongest of Sri Lankan Christian churches - while the Reformed Church collapsed like a house of cards.

But back to Palliyawatte. In this village, 50 years ago, the writer Basil Fernando was born. In those days the village certainly lived up to its name: the village church was a natural centre, the priest

the foremost authority, bishops more well known than politicians. People went to church regularly, on Good Friday the women were dressed in black. Especially in the drama of the Passion Week, the villagers lived through their own exposed position and agony, their poverty and the threat of illness and death.

The church statues of Christ on the cross were especially easy for the fishermen and washers to identify with: a suffering and lonesome human being, clothed in a simple loincloth like themselves. But also a Christ who, according to Fernando, radiated helplessness and - submissiveness. Submissiveness was exactly what the church, a child of foreign conquerors, preached. Neither did it ever seriously try to resist the caste system; it even stirred up bad blood when a new priest, a Frenchman, allowed low caste boys to participate in the altar-service.

The priest never let the villagers get to know him intimately, and he considered himself their benefactor - not their liberator. "He helped the poor. / But disliked / A tailor's son becoming a doctor", to quote *Evelyn My First Friend and Other Poems* (1985). When Basil Fernando was a child, however, poverty in Palliyawatte was not as deep as it is today. Perhaps this contributed to making it easier for the church to play

the role of the benefactor. People could dress better and had more to eat than both before and later; there was even meat to eat all days of the week-except Friday when Catholics traditionally do not eat meat.

Poverty, humiliation and the agony of self-contempt, however, were always present, the screams of those who where beaten up in the police station... They also have remained present in the writings of Basil Fernando. Even his first published short story, from 1968 and in Sinhala, deals with the sense of relief of a low caste boy - the monsoon rain forces him to stay at home: he does not have to go outside into a world where his value is always questioned. And in another short story, from the collection of 1990, the writer lets a disillusioned revolutionary, a former priest, observe: "Poverty is no abstraction. It is something which eats into you, into your nerves, eyes, ears, anything that may be called the soul and body."

Moreover, times grew worse. With the fifties came rising prices and massive protests, a Buddhist renaissance with nationalist overtones, ever more severe antagonism between Sinhalese and the Tamil minority. The Catholic Church, too, was gradually reached by new signals. The second Vatican Council (1962-65) emphasized the responsibility of all

Christians "towards the poor and all the suffering," the Catholic Church opened to non-Catholics as well as non-Christians. It demanded an end to impoverishment and oppression. The Archbishop of Colombo could, for the very first time, put on a red Cardinal's hat, but a theology with a stress on the liberation of the poor and oppressed was not welcomed by the leaders of the Church. That is, at least, how Basil Fernando understood it. "Bishops of Asia, we appeal to you... Dispossess yourselves of your wealth and possessions", was the demand formulated in the late sixties at a bishops' meeting in the Philippines - among others by Basil Fernando - but it was not received with sympathy.

Basil Fernando lived his life - figuratively speaking - close to the church, in that he went to schools controlled by it. Eventually, he felt he had lost his Christian faith, "I saw too much blood and hypocrisy". But it has come back, strengthened - although not accompanied by any confidence in the established church. There are several poems from the collections of the eighties alluding to the suffering and death of Christ, and they all deal with a Christ who belongs to the poor and tormented.

In one of them, the poet dreams of a mob - whatever he tries to object-persisting in roaring "We have no king but Caesar", voting to condemn Jesus to death. In another poem, a soldier hears his prisoner whisper "I thirst" and has a feeling of the crucified behind him; he, however, silences the prisoner as well as his own inner voice by shooting - and by crossing himself afterwards. A third deals with Pontius Pilate, the shrewd lawyer who throws his own responsibility on the masses.

In a fourth we meet Peter, the disciple, warming himself by the fire in the courtyard of the high priest. Three times he denies all knowledge of Jesus, but in Basil Fernando's poem this does not happen "out of shame" but "out of

necessity". Facing manipulated opinion, a poor man must protect himself with lies and accept being slandered by later Popes and theologians. Above all, he must bide his time, "with patience of a fisherman / taught by the sea".

The Christian element is strongest in the latest collection, *Death and Rebirth* (1993). It opens with a sequence of poems, in the form of prayer to God. These are poems dealing with evil and violence, with bureaucrats and poverty, but also expressing a certainty that God is greater than his churches and that God has patience, love and - a sense of humour.

Basil Fernando was born in a time when the older generation was still in possession of the heritage of traditional poetry, a common phenomenon in the homes of poor Sinhalese people. Modern poetry, too, flourished: "the Colombo poets" with their rhymed patriotic poems were read (and sung) by many, free verse was gaining ground, all newspapers carried a poetry column. Basil Fernando was not the only child who dreamed of becoming a poet: so did most of his schoolmates.

Basil Fernando, a boy from the washers' caste, also had the opportunity to continue his studies. It was his mother's wish - she herself had wanted to become a teacher but was (according to custom) forced to marry the husband of her deceased sister, to a life of poverty. She defied prejudice, worked her will and inspired other villagers to do the same. In a long poem from the collection *Sharing betel*, Basil Fernando pays homage to his mother for all she meant to him: "And I who carried / The cloth bundles with you / Am carrying your spirit within me / Your pride / And the determination / Never to bow down". In fact, English schools offered low caste children new opportunities. Here Basil Fernando was to conquer a new language, a language that was to help him break with poetic forms and their power

over thought and to express experience that traditional Sinhalese self-understanding could not hold.

In 1972, the year after the suppression of the armed insurrection of JVP, Basil Fernando passed his examination at the faculty of law. In the seventies he was a University teacher in English and intensely engaged in the work of revolutionary socialist groups. He had begun to write, and in 1973 his first book appeared: *A new era to emerge*, a collection of poetry. Three years later a collection in Sinhala, *Koluwa Maleya* (The Young Man Died), followed. In 1982 he became a lawyer, in a situation where law and order was increasingly threatened by collapse. In 1984, he began to work with violations of human rights and he published two further collections of poetry and a collection of short stories. The persecution of Tamils became more and more violent, and the Tamil Tiger guerilla emerged. Police and military became increasingly powerful. People began to disappear and were found murdered, among them priests with undesirable opinions - like Father Michael Rodrigo, well-known for his work among the poor in the Buddhist countryside. One lawyer was arrested by the police and died in hospital from his wounds and from maltreatment. The lawyer's association took a unique decision: not to represent the police in any legal instance.

In 1989, in a short period of time, four of Basil Fernando's colleagues were murdered and he was warned by a police officer, kindly disposed towards him, that his safety could no longer be guaranteed. The same year - in connection with a legal conference abroad - Basil Fernando left Sri Lanka. In one of his prayer poems in *Death and Rebirth* he thanks God "For helping me to see danger / To flee in time / And for the strangers I met on the way / Who turned out to be / Such good friends / Theirs and your company". Since then he has represented (among others) Vietnamese

refugees in Hongkong, as well as monitoring elections in Cambodia.

He is a member of the editorial board of an Asian journal of creative writing, *Asia - culture links* (Hongkong). He has continued to publish: in addition to poems and short stories, two books on refugee issues and human rights and one book on Sri Lanka. In the latter, he emphasizes the fatal legacy of colonial times, which has contributed to the fact that police and military have developed into a state within the state, the trade unions and minorities have been persecuted and that human rights have constantly been violated.

Even in his first collection of poems there are scenes from Basil Fernando's adolescence. This has become a permanent feature. In fact, Palliyawatte, the village of his childhood, comes out as the life-giving centre of Basil Fernando's writings. "I am left / To tell the stories". His recollections have grown to almost symbolic dimension. The fortunes of Palliyawatte people and the questions of poverty, pride and faith are still waiting for an answer.

Basil Fernando's style is unobtrusive and restrained. His strong feelings are disciplined by a terse, austere and sometimes ironic matter-of-factness. His abruptness may sometimes go too far - his poems may look more like drafts than finished poetry - but his sense of rhythm seldom fails. His verse is almost always free, here and there a few sudden, singing rhymewords may be inserted. He comes straight to the point, his choice of words is simple, and strikingly often he uses direct form of address to the person he is writing about.

A lot of that which he writes revolve around *friendship*, one of the finest words he seems to know - along with words like "sharing". The titles of both his collections of poems from the eighties are significant: *Evelyn My First Friend* and *Sharing Betel*. The long memorial

poem dedicated to his mother (mentioned and quoted above) speaks of the relationship between mother and child as a form of friendship. His parents' involuntary marriage meant "a permanent state of suffering and shock" but nevertheless - "what friends, you two later became". A city may be a friend, the shade under the trees, Catholic priests develop strong friendship ties, and the writer wishes to think of God not as his Lord but as his friend. Perhaps we find the most moving expression of friendship in the title poem of *Evelyn, My First Friend*, a memorial poem to his little sister, who died at the age of six in wrongly treated pneumonia:

They brought you back,
Dressed like a little angel.

I did understand
The meaning,
That day is more
Vivid to me
Than any other,
Before or after.

You were my first friend
And the best.
Even decades after
You are so much about the place.
That'll be so
Till into silence
I too would go.

The struggle to ease the sense of loneliness and anonymity, to defeat the distance in time and space, is constant. The process of memory itself is a decisive sign of life, a sign of solidarity with the world to which the writer once naturally belonged. Fragments of memory and faces in his dreams stand out as revelations, and, as if it were an invocation, he repeats his refusal to forget them. Even a poem seemingly registering everyday impressions, sounds from the neighbouring apartments, seems - in a concentrated way - to deal with that which is too easily lost. In several of Basil Fernando's best texts it is as if human destiny itself

receives an aura of anonymity. An ambiguous anonymity, in certain respects universal but at the same time also a result of poverty and of enforced modesty. One of the nameless dead by the roadside, perhaps fallen in the insurrection of 1971, arouses feelings of guilt. The unknown young man of whom the poet catches a glimpse during the curfew also affects him. "Stop, and tell me at least tomorrow". His agony and despair are also great in a poem dedicated to the memory of his murdered neighbour, a poem where the dead man visits the poet and laughs at him:

Every night, I feel
I should pass away too
And be reborn, again and again
Till I prove capable
Of winning your friendship
Once more.

As compared with longing for friendship and solidarity, there is a "savage indifference" leaving its mark on life in Sri Lanka today. "I'm deeply interested in the destructive role the Sri Lankan middle class has played and still is playing against the best interests of the mass of people here", Basil Fernando stated in an interview. Calculation and greed stand out as virtues acquired by long practice in his society, together with envy and submission. Violence is smouldering, from time to time it reaches the surface.

Basil Fernando's first collection of short stories, *Four Short Stories of Sri Lanka* (1986), deals with the gangster system in politics, with swindle and corruption. Politicians and police officers, ultimately responsible for murdering and plundering, are constantly trying to throw their own guilt on ordinary people. In one of his most powerful protest poems, written after the massacre of Tamils in July 1983, the writer refuses to take this guilt on himself. In the prize-winning poem "Just Society" in *Evelyn My First Friend* he speaks in the name of all Sinhalese people:

You burned the buildings
 And put me in prison
 You threw their infants into fire
 And called me inhuman
 You murdered in open daylight
 And blamed me for wanting blood
 You turned my neighbour into a refugee
 And said I am responsible
 You looted his hard-earned property
 And called me a thief
 You imprisoned him and killed him
 And named me a brute.
 You befriended thugs and I the victims
 But you made me the accused.

In other poems, he - sometimes in a deceptively good-humoured tone of voice - gives us almost unbearable pictures of the ravagings of the murderous mob in Colombo. However Basil Fernando also seems to feel a need to give oppression new proportions, literally to bring it down to earth. In a kind of playful fables the career politician is degraded to a conceited little ant, the government to a pig (ready for slaughter) hanging on a spit or to a fish on the hook... There is a clear connection between animal and imagination - in one poem the writer depicts himself as bursting out of his isolation and being transformed to a bird!

In the above-mentioned "Just society" Basil Fernando also writes "Wounds of defeat / Will live with me long / And the memory / Of this insult". In another poem he compares his country fellows to cattle with the brand of submission burned in them early, by the European conquerors, or possibly even earlier. Already in his first collection of poetry he speaks of "ages of suffering" connecting the lives of the anonymous poor with the past. The individual memory is fused into a collective one. To remember is to expose yourself to something difficult and painful, but memories also pave the way to pride and resistance. A fight against a ruthless local landowner, a short story tells us, lived on in legend. In an interview he quotes Father Michael Rodrigo who once found

that the memory of the rebellion of 1818 still survives in the memory of people in a distant part of Sri Lanka!

In his latest and best collection of short stories, *Six Short Stories of Sri Lanka*, the long-term perspective stands out clearly. In some of his stories Basil Fernando depicts proud men of his native village causing bitter envy: it required persecution and violence to break them. His prose has changed. In spite of the sparing and foreshadowing style and in spite of the anonymous contours of the human lot, these short stories are more full-length portraits his earlier, more satirical collection. The climax comes in a note worthy, concentrated story of an old man who seems to have a great deal in common with Basil Fernando's own father. Throughout his life, this man has lived in the very same village. Every day, after work, he walks down to the canal for a short rest. Half of his eighty-year-old life he has lived under British rule, the other half under independence. He never speaks about colonial times. He has buried them somewhere along with his deepest pain and sense of humiliation, deep in the subconsciousness that is part of the collective subconscious. He is like a tortoise, pulling his head into his shell, he sees nothing but cannot help registering impressions.

It is in this unconscious way, over unimaginable distances of time, that the experiences and outlook of generations are passed on. The independence of 1948 meant no change, the police and the military continued to protect the powerful and the rich. In the short story, dead bodies suddenly start floating along the canal, increasingly numerous. Bodies of murdered people no one dares to bury, victims of unknown massacres in unknown places. Eventually, the old man is no longer capable of walking down to the canal. He starts to have nightmares. He sees himself and his son lying dead in the water on either side of the big Church statue of Christ, like the two

thieves of the Gospels. All the people he has ever known and loved appear in his dreams, dead in the water. He is frightened and retires into himself. In a final dream, he reaches the very core of memory - a core of shock and shame: men of foreign race with swords and guns running amok in his village.

This short story may also be compared with another text, expressly dealing with Basil Fernando's own father. In a poem from *Sharing Betel*, the long-term perspective of the father stands out as a foothold the son feels he is lacking:

You, Father, are eternity
 And I am impermanence
 You are quietness, the strength
 Of silence. I am only noise
 The weakness of urgency.
 You tend the garden, look after
 little ones, reflecting backward
 To eight decades or so.
 I, just stare blank into nothingness.

In many texts, it is precisely the absence of foothold - a state of emptiness, apathy and discouragement - that stands out as the great threat, as the death of spirit. In a poem in *Death and Rebirth* the writer asks God if it is He who has left people in a void or if the people have left God... It is probably no coincidence that, in the poem above, we see the picture of the father, with the eternity of eight decades, meeting with the picture of God.

Books by Basil Fernando: *A New Era to Emerge* (1973); *Koluwa Maleya* (1976); *Evelyn My First Friend and Other Poems* (1985); *Four Short Stories of Sri Lanka* (1986); *Sharing Betel* (1987); *Six Short Stories of Sri Lanka* (1990); *Sri Lanka - Modernization Vs Militarization: Ethnic Conflict and Labour* (1991); *Asian Refugees - a Search for Solutions* (1991); *The Inability to Prosecute - Courts and Human rights in Cambodia and Sri Lanka* (1993); *Death and Rebirth* (1993); *The Cynics and the Owls* (1994).

Pop Music and Drug Abuse

Thalif Deen

The United Nations is alarmed over the way the Western pop music industry is making drug abuse seem acceptable and even glamorous.

United Nations: The multi-billion-dollar Western pop music industry is under fire. It is being blamed by the United Nations for the dramatic rise in drug abuse worldwide.

'The most worrisome development is a culture of drug-friendliness that seems to be gaining prominence,' said the UN's 13-member International Narcotics Control Board in a report released in late February 1998.

The 74-page study says that pop music, as a global industry, is by far the most influential trend-setter for young people of most cultures.

'Some lyrics advocate the smoking of marijuana or taking other drugs, and certain pop stars make statements and set examples as if the use of drugs for non-medicinal purposes were a normal and acceptable part of a person's lifestyle,' the study says.

Surprisingly, says the Board, the effect of drug-friendly pop music seems to survive even the occasional shock of death by overdose. 'Such incidents tend to be seen as an occasion to mourn the loss of an idol, and not an opportunity to confront the lethal effect of "recreational" drug use,' it notes.

Since the 1970s, several internationally renowned singers and movie stars - including Elvis Presley, Janice Joplin, John Belushi, Jimi Hendrix, Sid Vicious, River Phoenix, Jonathan Melvin and Andy Gibbs - have died of either drug abuse or drug-related illnesses.

With the globalisation of popular music, messages tolerating or promoting drug abuse are now reaching beyond their countries of origin. 'In most coun-

tries, the names of certain pop stars have become familiar to the members of every household,' the study says.

The US fashion industry - another heavy drug user - in 1997 coined the term *heroin chic* - adding an aura of sophistication to the growing habit of drug addiction among the jet set. In late 1997, US President Bill Clinton accused some of the fashion magazines and fashion photographers of glorifying drug use by playing up pictures of heavily sedated male and female models.

The UN study also blames the media for its portrayal of certain drug issues - especially the use of marijuana and the issues of liberalisation and legalisation - which encouraged, rather than prevented, drug abuse.

The Board says its concern was not so much coverage but the dissemination of knowledge on how to grow cannabis indoors, or how to make a range of 'designer drugs,' or which common plants contain hallucinogenic properties. 'Over the last years, we have witnessed how drug abuse is increasingly regarded as being acceptable or even glamorous,' says Hamid Ghodse, president of the Board. 'Powerful pressure groups run political campaigns aimed at legalising controlled drugs,' he says. Ghodse also points out that all these developments have created an environment which is tolerant or even favourable to drug abuse and undermines international drug prevention efforts currently underway.

The present study, he says, focuses on the issue of demand reduction and prevention within an environment that has become tolerant of drug abuse. The Board calls on governments to abide by their legal and moral obligations, and to counteract the pro-drug messages of the youth culture to which young people

increasingly are being exposed.

The study also blames the global information superhighway - the Internet - for providing information on drugs and drug cultivation. 'More information on drugs has been made available to more people than ever before through the Internet,' it says.

There are many different pages on the World Wide Web devoted to the production and manufacture of illicit drugs and there are news groups for exchanging information not only on making drugs, but also on how to avoid detection, for sharing experiences and for providing support to persons arrested for illegal possession of controlled drugs.

Addressing the UN Commission for Social Development, the Executive Director of the UN Office for Drug Control, Pino Arlacchi, said that since the 1995 Social Summit in Copenhagen, the UN had vigorously applied its strategy for reducing demand for illicit drugs. That strategy was based on balanced efforts to reduce demand, counter trafficking and reduce supply.

The Social Summit, he said, had called for the adoption of strategies to reduce cultivation of narcotics crops and for national and international development programmes to create viable economic alternatives. Arlacchi singled out the governments of Bolivia, Colombia and Peru for their 'ambitious alternative development programmes to eradicate illicit crops'.

The Drug Control Programme was preparing an international strategy to eliminate illicit crop cultivation over the next 10 years, which would rely on bilateral and multilateral donors to support forms of alternative development.

— Third World Network Features/IPS.

The writer, a former Lake House journalist, works in New York, specialising in UN affairs.

Monogamy, Bigamy, and Polygamy Revisited

The Supreme Court ruling*

"In a country such as Ceylon, where there are many races and creeds and a number of Marriage Ordinances and Acts, the inhabitants domiciled here have an inherent right to change their religion and personal law and so to contract a valid polygamous marriage. If such inherent right is to be abrogated it must be done by statute" - the Privy Council of the United Kingdom ruling in *Attorney-General v. Reid* (67 NLR 25).

In this case the Respondent contracted a marriage under the Marriage Registration Ordinance, according to Christian rites. Subsequently he and a divorced woman converted to the Muslim faith. A month later they were duly married under the provisions of the Muslim Marriage and Divorce Act, notwithstanding that the earlier marriage was subsisting and had not been dissolved under Section 19 of the Marriage Registration Ordinance. The respondent was at all material times domiciled and resident in Ceylon. Admittedly the conversion of the respondent to the Muslim faith was regarded as sincere and genuine. It was held that the Muslim Marriage and Divorce Act makes full provision for a male Muslim inhabitant of Ceylon to contract more than one marriage. Accordingly, the respondent was not guilty of the offence of bigamy, because the second marriage was not void within the meaning of Section 362B of the Penal Code.

This Landmark judgment was overruled recently by the Supreme Court of Sri Lanka in the case of *N.M.A. Abeysondere v. N.M.C. Abeysondere and The Attorney-General* (1997).

The facts of this case are as follows: Neville Mark Christopher Abeysondere, an engineer by profession, married Natalie Manel Antoinette on 27th September 1958 at the All Saints Church, Borella. In December 1979 he developed

* Synopsis of a discussion held at the Law & Society Trust on 3rd January 1998. The notes were compiled by I.K. Zanofer, Intern, Law & Society Trust.

a relationship with Miss Kanthika Chitral Swarnalatha Edirisinghe at his work place. In 1980 the respondent instituted divorce proceedings against his first wife in the District Court of Colombo. The action, however, was dismissed on 4th September 1985.

On 6th October 1985, the Respondent married Miss K.C.S. Edirisinghe, under the Muslim Marriage and Divorce Act despite the fact that the first marriage had not legally been dissolved. Proceedings were instituted in the Magistrate's Court of Galle and he was convicted of the offence of bigamy under Section 362B of the Penal Code. The charge was that he contracted a second marriage whilst his lawful wife was alive. He appealed against the decision to the Provincial High Court of Galle. His appeal was successful and he was acquitted. In appeal, the Supreme Court set aside the judgment of the High Court, and affirmed the conviction and the sentence imposed by the learned Magistrate.

This case formed the basis of the discussion entitled *Monogamy, Bigamy, Polygamy Revisited* organised by the Law & Society Trust on 3rd January 1998. The panel included Professor Lakshman Marasinghe (Moderator), Mrs. Radhika Coomaraswamy of ICES, and Mr. Ranjit Abeysonderiya, PC (Counsel for the aggrieved party-Appellant).

Professor Marasinghe, in his presentation briefly set out the facts of the case and opened it to the audience, which comprised eminent legal personalities, educationists, and media personnel to comment on the decision or to elicit any new issues.

One participant expressed the view that the entire decision of the Supreme Court was based on the interpretation given to Sections 18, 35(1) and (2) and the definition of "marriage" contained in Section 64 of the Marriage Registration Ordinance.

Professor Marasinghe raised the issue whether a Divisional Bench of the

Supreme Court which comprises five judges [Article 132(3) of the Constitution], had the power to overrule a Privy Council decision. In response, Mr. Abeysonderiya said that an order had been made directing that this appeal be heard before a Bench comprising five judges, because he, as the counsel for the appellant, had challenged the correctness of the decision of Privy Council in *AG v. Reid*. Mr. Abeysonderiya further stated that this was not the first time that the Supreme Court had overruled Privy Council decisions. He, therefore, contended that the Court was undoubtedly competent to overrule any decisions since it was the country's final superior court.

Professor Marasinghe also raised the question whether the recent judgment of the Supreme Court of India, in the case of *Mudgal v. Union of India* (1) had any impact on this issue. In response, Mr. Abeysonderiya stated that the Supreme Court had not followed that judgment, but had based its judgment on the interpretation given to Section 18 of the Marriage Registration Ordinance.

Ms Radhika Coomaraswamy spoke of the freedom of religion, with particular reference to Article 14 of our Constitution (2), and also raised the question with regard to the legitimacy of children and the succession rights in cases where second marriages are nullified in this manner.

Professor Marasinghe raised the issue whether this judgment nullified Islamic Law Principles. Ms. Jezima Ismail urged that Amendments are needed to the Marriage Registration Ordinance.

References

1. AIR 1995 SC 1531.
2. According to Article 14(e) every citizen is entitled on the freedom, either by himself or in association with others, and either in public or in private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching.

Bata

Greetings

From

BATA SHOE COMPANY OF CEYLON LTD.

Bata

Greetings

From

BATA SHOE COMPANY OF CEYLON LTD.