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DIXIT'S DISCOURSE
Dayan Jayatilleka

UNION OF REGIONS
K. M. de Silva

UNIVERSITY MAN
Ian Goonetilleke

LANKA'S INTELLECTUALS
H. L. D. Mahindapala

ON CHÉ
Fidel Castro

THE IDEAS MAGAZINE

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FIDEL ON CHÉ

[Extracts from speech given by president Fidel Castro Ruz, first secretary of the central committee of the Communist Party of Cuba, at the main ceremony, marking the 30th Anniversary of the death in combat of Ché Guevara and his comrades, and the interment of their remains in the monument in the city of Santa Clara, Villa Clara province, on October 17, 1997, the 30th Anniversary year of the death in combat of Ché and his comrades.]

"Relatives of the comrades who dies in combat; invited guests; compatriots (applause);

With profound emotion, we are living through one of those moments that are not often repeated. We didn't come to bid farewell to Ché and his heroic companions, we came to receive them. I see Ché and his men as reinforcements, as a detachment of invincible men, that this time includes not only Cubans but also Latin Americans who have arrived to fight alongside us and to write new pages of history and glory. I also see Ché as a moral giant who is growing every day, whose image, whose force, whose influence has multiplied throughout the earth.

How could he fit under a headstone? How could he fit into this plaza? How could he fit solely into our beloved but small island? Only in the world of which he dreamed, for which he lived and for which he fought is there sufficient space for him.

His stature will continue to grow as injustice, exploitation, inequality, unemployment, poverty, hunger and misery become more dominant in human society. The values that he defended will be more exalted with the growth of the power of imperialism, hegemonies, domination and interventionism, to the detriment of the most sacred rights of the peoples, especially the weak, backward and poor countries that for centuries were western colonies and sources of slave labour. His profound humanist sentiments will stand out even more with the increase of abuses, selfishness and alienation; increasing discrimination against Indian populations, ethnic minorities, women and immigrants; as more and more children are subjected to sexual trafficking or are forced to labour in numbers reaching hundreds of millions; with rising ignorance, rising unhealthiness, rising insecurity, rising homelessness. His example of a pure, revolutionary and honourable man will stand out more and more as the numbers of corrupt politicians, demagogues and hypocrites increase everywhere. His personal courage and revolutionary integrity will be more and more admired as cowards, opportunists and traitors multiply on the planet; his will of steel will be more and more admired as others become weaker in fulfilling their duty; his sense of honour and dignity will be more and more admired as more persons lack the minimum amount of human self-respect; his faith in people will be more and more admired as others become more sceptical; his optimism will be more and more admired as the number of pessimists increase; his daring will be more and more admired as vacillators abound; his austerity, spirit of study and work will be more and more admired as more loafers waste the product of others' labour on luxuries and idleness.

Ché was a genuine communist and is now the examples and paradigm of revolutionaries and communists. Ché was a master and forger of others like himself. He generously gave up his life. Nothing was impossible for him, and he was capable of making the impossible possible.

His ideas on revolution in his native country and in the rest of South America were possible, in spite of enormous difficulties. If they had been attained, perhaps today's world would be different.

On many occasions, great transformers and revolutionaries of humanity have not had the privilege of seeing their dreams realised as soon as they had hoped or wished, but sooner or later they have triumphed.

A fighter may die, but not his ideas. What was a U.S. Government agent doing there when Ché was wounded and taken prisoner? Why did they believe that killing him would be the end of his existence as a fighter? Today, he's not in La Higuera, he's everywhere, wherever there is a just cause to defend. Those interested in eliminating him and making him disappear were incapable of comprehending that his indelible influence had already entered history and that his luminous, prophetic vision would make him a symbol for all the billions of poor people in the world. Young people, children, the elderly, men and women who knew of him, honest people throughout the planet all admire him, no matter what their social background.

Thank you Ché, for your history, your life and your example. Thank you for being our reinforcement in this difficult battle we are now waging to safeguard the ideas for which you fought so hard, to save the revolution, the country and the accomplishments of socialism, the part that has been realised of the great dreams you cherished. (Applause) For achieving this enormous feat, for over-throwing U.S. imperialist plans against Cuba, for resisting the blockade, for attaining victory, we can depend on you. (Applause). As you know; this land is your land, this people is your people, this revolution is your revolution, the banners of socialism are still raised with honour and pride. (Applause) Welcome, heroic comrades of the reinforcement detachment! The trenches of ideas and justice that you will be defending together with our people will never be conquered by the enemy. And together we will continue fighting for a better world! Hasta la victoria siempre! (shouts and ovation)."

GUJRAL'S DELHI - THINGS FALL APART

Mervyn de Silva

It was in Colombo that I.K. Gujral expounded what came to be known as "the Gujral Doctrine". He was not the Prime Minister of India when he addressed the Bandaranaike Centre for International Studies. Students of Indian foreign policy, particularly regional policy, were impressed by his thesis. "No more big bully or regional superpower, but good neighbour". That was the message. Loud and clear.

It was Indira Gandhi and her covert agency, the Research and Analysis wing (RAW) that decided to train Tamil youths from the north and east of Sri Lanka, all members of guerrilla outfits demanding an independent EELAM, so that the pro-American regime of President Junius Richard Jayewardene would be de-stabilised. It was no love of the Tamils which influenced policy. It was Delhi's regional strategy, a by-product of an aggressive, self-satisfying hegemonism. Thus, Delhi's unstinted support for Mrs. Bandaranaike's proposal to establish "an Indian Ocean peace zone". The Indian Ocean, strategists like K. Subramaniam would remind neighbours (and on occasion, the superpowers) was the only ocean named after a country. President Jayewardene, was a natural target for the policy-making elite in New Delhi. After all, he had been identified as 'Yankee Dicky' quite early in his parliamentary career. His pro-US foreign policy as well as his bold choice of "market economics" made him a natural target of the new Empress of India. Her reaction is not a secret anymore. Mrs. Gandhi ordered her covert agency, pompously named "the Research and Analysis Wing" (RAW), to train and arm Sri Lankan Tamil youth. The rest is History: Indian intervention on invitation, and the Indian Peace-Keeping Force.

Of course she had other interests too. Realpolitik suited her cast of mind perfectly. The Tamil rebels could launch a secessionist struggle in Sri Lanka's north-east. Never simple in her use of Kautilyan stagecraft, Mrs. Gandhi also had TAMILNADU on her mind. The Tamils were the first to launch a separatist movement in independent India. Jawaharlal Nehru panicked, and re-demarcated state borders to create Tamilnadu. A large state, its help was quite useful in Parliament when the voting bell was rung.

IN THE SHADOWS: BJP, SONIA

The Dravida Munethra Kazagham (DMK), the strongest party in the state, has 18 MP's in Parliament. What's more it has been rewarded with two posts in the Cabinet. And now, the DMK has been publicly accused of conspiring with the LTTE killers of Rajiv Gandhi. Like his mother and grandfather, Rajiv held the post of Congress President. The charge against the DMK has been levelled by none other than Congress Chief Sitaram Kesri. He was addressing the Congress parliamentary group.

"We cannot keep quiet and remain silent spectators. The question involved is emotional. We cannot take this matter so lightly". He accused the ruling United Front of conspiring to reduce the official inquiries "irrelevant". "We will NOT allow this" he warned the regime. A showdown, AFP concluded, was inevitable.

So far Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral has remained firm. He did say: "The election is round the corner". So far Mr. Gujral has made it clear that he will not bow.

But the better informed diplomats in Delhi see the vague shadow of Rajiv's widow, Sonia, fall lightly on not just on the Congress — the party of the Nehru-Gandhis — but on the whole shaky coalition. And in this, the DMK is important, so is Tamilnadu. It was at an election rally in Tamilnadu that Rajiv Gandhi was assassinated by a Sri Lankan Tamil woman who was said to have suffered at the hands of IPKF soldiers. The Congress manoeuvres do reflect the seriousness as well as the complexity of the Indian political crisis. Mr. I.K. Gujral was chosen prime minister only because the Congress refused to co-operate with Prime Minister Deve Gowda.

Long before the end of the month, the fate of the Gujral government, a shaky coalition from the start, will be known. The United States and the EU, both vital to the Indian economy, have backed the Gujral administration solidly. But United Front has been described as an alliance that includes free-marketeers, communists, regional parties, and others broadly labelled "anti-Congress wallahs". These parties share a pathological distaste for the Nehru-Gandhi

dynasty.

In the shadows, for the moment, is the conservative, Hindu-dominated BJP which thrives on anti-Islam, anti-Pakistan passions. India's much-boasted secularism and parliamentary democracy may come under siege soon.



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THE DEBATE ON THE DEVOLUTION OF POWER IN SRI LANKA, 1994-1997

K. M de Silva

*For forms of [devolution] let fools contest,
What'er is best administered is best...
(with apologies to Alexander Pope)*

1. RECENT HISTORY OF DEVOLUTION PROPOSALS

The concept of a north-eastern province figured in the diplomatic negotiations between India and Sri Lanka for the first time in 1983; it was embodied in the so-called Annexure "C" associated with the diplomatic forays of G Parathasarathy, Indira Gandhi's special envoy to Sri Lanka, in the wake of the riots of July 1983. When this document was placed before the All Party Conference of 1984 for discussion it failed to win any support there.

Only in the Alice-in-Wonderland world of Indo-Sri Lanka diplomacy do we have annexures to documents published and studied, analysed and dissected, without reference to the main document or documents to which logically they should have been attached. From the time Annexures "B" and "C" were published in 1983-4, to the present day, the debate and analysis have proceeded without reference to any principal document.

TULF politician R Sampanthan's short article, "A dear diplomat, Remembering G Parathasarathy, from Sri Lanka," published in the well-known Indian fortnightly, *Frontline*, in its issue of 22 September 1995, provides us with firm evidence on the existence of such a document, and also on its genesis:

"Based upon his own judgement and after extensive discussions with the representatives of TULF, a comprehensive document was prepared which Parathasarathy chose to call in diplomatic parlance a "non-paper." Some essential features of this were:

(1) "The Democratic Republic of Sri Lanka shall be a Union of States. The Republic may be demarcated into a number of appropriate states each of which will have a State Assembly and a Council of Ministers."

(2) "The Northern and Eastern provinces which have been recognised in the Constitution as the area in which the Tamil language shall also be a language of Administration and of the Courts shall constitute one State. In order to satisfy the aspirations of the Muslims who form a majority in the Ampara District, the Ampara District may form a separate state."

Neither Annexures 'B' nor 'C' would qualify as models of a legal draftsman's art in regard to the clarity of the terms used. They would be regarded as preliminary drafts rather than finished documents. When these two documents were first published it struck many Sri Lankans that they were very clumsily drafted. The more charitable view was that this was the result of the haste, and secrecy, in which the documents had been prepared; but others—the great majority of Sri Lankan critics—believed that the clumsy drafting and the lack of clarity in the terms and concepts used was a deliberate attempt to cause confusion, and to use that confusion to extract more concessions from the Sri Lankan government. Such was Parathasarathy's reputation for astute diplomacy and for the meticulous care with which he normally chose his words that few believed that the lack of clarity in the documents had anything to do with undue haste in drafting.

The first clause of Annexure 'B' was clear enough: a firm refusal to countenance the creation of a separate Tamil state. The second was equally clear in the abandonment of the District Development Councils (DDCs) and in paving the way - or so it seemed to imply - for Provincial Councils through the amalgamation of DDCs in a province, after the holding of a referendum to test public opinion on that amalgamation. This seems innocuous till we come up with the fact that it was only in the Tamil areas of the Northern and Eastern Provinces that there was any great pressure

[Executive Director, International Centre for Ethnic Studies, formerly Professor of Sri Lanka History at the University of Peradeniya and a member in 1980 of the Presidential Commission on Development Councils which recommended the establishment of District Development Councils and a member of the official Sri Lankan delegation which held discussions with an official Indian delegation jointly led by P Chidambaram, currently India's Finance Minister, and K Natwar Singh on 18-19 December 1986. From that 1986 experience arose the preparation and publication of his monograph "The Traditional Homelands" of the Tamils: Separatist Ideology in Sri Lanka: A Historical Appraisal, published in 1987, and in 1994 in a revised by the ICES. Subsequently he wrote Regional Powers and Small State Security: India and Sri Lanka, 1977-1990, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore Md., and the Woodrow Wilson Centre Press Washington DC., 1995; and in a cheaper South Asian edition by Vikas in Delhi. What follows are extracts from a paper presented recently at a seminar on the Government's Devolution Package held at the Hotel Taj Samudra.]

for the amalgamation of DDCs. The third clause caused more apprehension. Quite abruptly the concept of "Regions" and "Regional Councils" was introduced, with no attempt to define what a "Region" was. Those who read between the lines saw this as an attempt to link provinces into a region and once again it was only in the Northern and Eastern provinces that there was any desire for a linkage between provinces. A Regional Council therefore was seen to be something larger than a Provincial Council.

This same pattern of confusion of terms and concepts was evident in Annexure 'C' as well. Clause one of Annexure 'C' is more or less the same as clause two of Annexure 'B,' except that DDCs in a province could combine into one or more Regional Councils, if they so

agreed to by decision of the DDC and after approval by a referendum. There is no reference now to Provinces or Provincial Councils but only to Regions and Regional Councils. A significant difference between Annexure 'B' and 'C' was that in the latter (clause one) a region could be either smaller or larger than a province!

Those familiar with the debates and previous draft legislation on devolution of power in Sri Lanka remembered that the concept of a region as something both smaller and larger than a province went back to the draft legislation prepared by the Bandaranaike government in 1957 in its negotiations with the Federal Party (the precursor of the TULF). Thus critics of Annexures 'B' and 'C' interpreting the nuances of the terms used had good reason to believe that the objective of the exercise was to establish a quasi-federal structure in the island of which one unit would be a large Tamil-dominated ethno-region. Now, at last, Sampanthan's article provides the firm evidence, missing up to now, to support this contention which had been originally advanced on the basis of reading between the lines, and a shrewd grasp of the nuances of meaning in the terms used in the two annexures.

Finally, there is, so far as the current debate in Sri Lanka on the government's proposals for constitutional reform is concerned, some contemporary relevance in Parathasarathy's "non-paper." Anyone reading the first clause in the original published version of the PA's proposals would see that it has been borrowed by those who drafted the government's proposals almost in its entirety from Parathasarathy's "non-paper." If the word regions is substituted for states, we have the essence of it. Previously the TULF had appropriated the concept of Sri Lanka as a Union of States for the "draft constitution" it had attached to its well-known letter of 1 December 1985 to Rajiv Gandhi. Even a cursory glance at that "draft constitution" will see how its second clause was dependent on Parathasarathy's non-paper. Adapting the second clause of Parathasarathy's non-paper, the second clause of the TULF "draft constitution" read as follows: "the Northern and Eastern provinces, which are predominantly Tamil-speaking shall constitute one Tamil linguistic state." Thus Parathasarathy's influence on the Sri Lankan debate persists. He may have been surprised by that, but a man of his supreme self-confidence would have enjoyed it nevertheless.

In an attempt to make the provincial system acceptable to the Sri Lankan political parties the Indian government in 1986, through its then Foreign Secretary, A P Venkateswaran, persuaded the Sri Lanka government of the day to treat the Indian state system as a model in regard to the powers of the provincial system. Thus from 1986 onwards Indo-Sri

Lankan negotiations on the island's provincial system, used the Indian state system as the prototype so far as the powers of the provincial councils were concerned. In short, the form of devolution on offer was a quasi-federal one, on the lines of the Indian system, with an emphasis on a strong centre.

The Political Parties Conference of 1986-7 was engaged in two complementary tasks: of drafting legislation for provincial councils; and seeking ways and means of dealing with the grievances of the minorities. By this time the language problem had ceased to be the divisive issue it was in the 1950s and 1960s. In 1984 a formula had been evolved on the distribution of state-owned land, a formula that was reached after prolonged discussions, indeed as many as 37 meetings, between TULF leaders and the then Sri Lankan government. The essence of the formula was: that in regard to national or major irrigation schemes in any part of the island the distribution of land would be on the current ethnic proportions (74% for the Sinhalese and 26% for the minorities) with the proviso that the Tamils and Muslims could, if they so wished, concentrate their national quota in the Northern and Eastern Provinces. On minor irrigation schemes the provincial or district ethnic profile would prevail, i.e. local residents would get preference. This formula was accepted by the TULF in 1984 with some reluctance. They sought to re-open the question with the Indian government in 1985, and so in 1986 the formula was re-examined. Eventually it was endorsed by the Political Parties Conference at which the TULF was represented. There was a consensus on many other issues including the political status of that section of the Indian Tamil minority then still regarded as "stateless."

The consensus on the structure of the devolutionary process did not extend to the SLFP which did not participate in the discussions. That party opposed the creation of District Development Councils; and walked out when the bill on the establishment of these councils was discussed in Parliament in 1980. The SLFP boycotted the elections to the District Development Councils thereafter. It refused to participate in the discussions of the All Party Conference of 1984, or the Political Parties Conference of 1986 and opposed the legislation that sought to confer citizenship rights on the "stateless" Indian Tamils in 1988.

The diplomatic negotiations between Sri Lanka and India in 1986 and 1987 were focused not merely on the issue of provincial councils, but also on how to make them acceptable to the various sections of the political system in the island. The principal difficulty was the Tamil demand for a north-eastern province, through the linking of the Eastern Province with the Northern Province.

As a way out of the impasse the Indian government proposed a division of the Eastern Province into 3 units, and when this failed to gain support, it suggested the excision of the Ampara district, or even the Ampara electorate, from the Eastern Province to exclude the bulk of the Sinhalese population of that province. It was after the failure of these negotiations, that the concept of a temporary merger of the Northern and Eastern Provinces was introduced as a key feature of the Indo-Sri Lanka peace accord of 1987. The background to that accord is too well-known, especially the Indian pressure, and the opposition that the signing of the accord evoked, to merit special mention here. Suffice it to say that the accord was signed against the background of violent public protests and that the SLFP and JVP, as co-belligerents if not allies, played a central role in the agitation.

After the Provincial Council system was introduced in 1987, the SLFP once again boycotted the elections to these councils; the elections were held in 1988. Sections of the present People's Alliance participated in the elections: the Lanka Sama Samaja Party (LSSP), the Communist party (Moscow Wing) and the Sri Lanka Mahajana Pakshaya (SLMP) led by Vijaya Kumaratunga—the husband of Chandrika Kumaratunge. Indeed she was a prominent member of this break-away faction of the SLFP. Unlike the SLFP these parties also supported the Indo-Sri Lanka peace accord.

In early 1989 after R Premadasa's victory at the presidential election of December 1988, there was an attempt at reviewing and revising the whole scheme of devolution of power introduced in 1987, and the linkage between the Northern and Eastern Provinces. An opportunity was provided by the Premadasa government for a reappraisal of all these issues, and the LTTE seized it to begin a 14 month long series of discussions, the first direct negotiations between the two sides, all part of a peace process that was expected to culminate in a new devolution package, and the entry of the LTTE to the country's democratic political system. Almost simultaneously another set of broad negotiations began with the various political groups in the country to reach agreement on a comprehensive set of reforms to resolve differences between the various ethnic groups in the island, and to deal with their demands. One could call these the third set of negotiations following on those held in 1984 and 1986.

Once the negotiations between the government and the LTTE collapsed, and with the LTTE's unilateral abrogation of the cessation of hostilities that had commenced in April-May 1989, there was a return once more to armed conflict. While engaged in these

hostilities, the Premadasa government began yet another set of discussions and negotiations, this time, with parties represented in parliament, with the active participation of several Tamil political groups. The LTTE was not represented in Parliament. These discussions took the form of a parliamentary select committee under the chairmanship of Mangala Moonesinghe then a SLFP MP, and presently Sri Lanka's High Commissioner in New Delhi.

That committee's proceedings lasted through much of 1991-93, and its discussions once again revealed a sharp division of opinion on some of the crucial issues in the devolution debate, in particular on the linkage between the Northern and Eastern Provinces. There was general agreement on the need to strengthen the powers of the provincial councils, even to the extent of doing away with the concurrent powers in the 1987 structure and transferring these to the provincial councils. The significance of this consensus should be underlined: to the extent that the concurrent powers are removed, the provincial councils in the Sri Lanka system would have a greater degree of autonomy than the states of the Indian Union. There was no consensus possible on the demands of the Tamil parties for a permanent linkage between the Northern and Eastern Provinces. Neither of the two main Sinhalese parties, the UNP and SLFP, would agree to this.

The victory of the People's Alliance (PA) at the parliamentary and presidential elections of 1994 raised expectations of new initiatives and new policies in the resolution of Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict. The PA campaigned on a platform of bringing peace to the country and the PA's leader was hailed as the peace candidate. While the LTTE was not represented in Parliament, it immediately seized the opportunity to proclaim its own support for a negotiated peace. During the election campaigns of 1994 the TULF enthusiastically supported the PA, the first time they had actively campaigned on behalf of a national party; the other Tamil parties represented in Parliament backed the PA but only after the PA candidate had won an overwhelming victory at the Presidential election of November 1994. In the aftermath of the PA's victory the second set of direct negotiations between the LTTE—the first had been with the Premadasa government in 1989-90—and a Sri Lanka government began. They collapsed, as is well known on or just after 19 April 1995. Although the life-span of the negotiations was much shorter on this occasion than in 1989-90, yet while they lasted they created an atmosphere in which expectations of a resolution of the conflict were raised to euphoric levels of unreality.

It is against this background that the demands for a federal structure for Sri Lanka were made.

The principal argument used, sometimes quite explicitly, sometimes implicitly, was that a federal structure in which most of the powers were with the provinces, combined with a linkage between the Northern and Eastern Provinces, were the irreducible minimum which the LTTE, and the other Tamil political parties would accept as an alternative to a separate state. The TULF has been among the principal exponents of this line of thinking.

This is not surprising in view of the fact that this is exactly what that party has been advocating since the establishment of its predecessor, the Federal Party. As we have seen earlier in this paper a memorandum was submitted by the TULF to Rajiv Gandhi in December 1985, i.e. over 10 years ago. That memorandum contained the framework of a federal structure for Sri Lanka, described in that document as a Union of States. A weak—very weak—central government, and powerful provincial units were the essential features of that proposal. Needless to say, the merger of the Northern and Eastern Provinces was an integral part of the scheme. The proposals of the PA government began as a modified version of this same scheme, one that had been rejected in 1986 by the Indian government no less than the then Sri Lankan government. The PA's proposals have been modified subsequently but the influence of the TULF's proposals remains.

2. LESSONS FROM THE PHILIPPINES

This brief survey of the history of negotiations over devolution in Sri Lanka provides a stark contrast to the cognate process in the Philippines, negotiations have continued between the government of the Republic of the Philippines and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) where over the last 25 years or so. The current exercise in Sri Lanka has been proclaimed by the PA as a deliberate attempt to start afresh in the devolution programme, with little or no attempt to maintain a continuity with the structures established in 1987-88, or even the negotiations conducted in the select committee chaired by Mr Mangala Moonesinghe. In contrast, the agreement between the Philippines government and the MNLF under Professor Nur Misauri in 1996 is directly linked to a previous one signed by the two parties twenty years earlier, on 23 December 1976 to be precise, in Tripoli—as a reading of clause 153 of the 1996 agreement, the "Totality clause" as it is called, makes very clear.

That clause reads as follows:

"153. This Peace Agreement, which is the full implementation of the 1976 Tripoli Agreement, embodies and constitutes the totality of all the agreements, covenants

and undertakings between the GRP [Government of the Republic of the Philippines] and the MNLF respecting all the subject matters embodied herein. This Agreement supersedes and modifies all agreements, consensus [sic] covenants, documents and communications not referred to or embodied in this Agreement or whose terms and conditions are otherwise inconsistent herewith. Any conflict in the interpretation of this Agreement shall be resolved in the light of the Philippine Constitution and existing laws."

This current agreement between the Philippines government and the MNLF, negotiated over the period 1992 to 1995, should be compulsorily reading for Sri Lankan legislators presently engaged in the negotiations over devolution of power. They would see that the agreement is scheduled to be implemented over a three year period which could, if necessary, be extended to five years. The second point is equally important: what strikes the Sri Lankan reader of this Philippines agreement is how modest the demands of the MNLF have been in contrast to the demands of the TULF and other Tamil parties and how limited the powers delegated to the Moro rebels, in contrast to those conceded to Sri Lanka's provincial councils in 1987. Besides, the MNLF limits its claim to the Muslim areas of Southern Mindanao only; they have shown no interest in a radical reconstruction of the Philippines polity just to accommodate the wishes of their own people - Muslims of Mindanao.

One needs to remember that no ex-colonial people in any part of the colonial world have a record of anti-colonial resistance as long, consistent or courageous as the Moros, a five hundred year record of struggle against the Spaniards, the Americans, and after 1946, the Philippines government.¹ Despite this, they have been far more pragmatic in their demands than their counterparts among the Tamil parties in Sri Lanka, who unlike the Moros can make no claims to any strong anti-colonial resistance.

(Table II)

3. THE FEDERAL OPTION: DOES IT WORK?

Ever since the salient features of the government's proposals on constitutional reform were published in 1994-95, Sri Lankan newspapers—especially the government dominated press—have been full of articles advocating the adoption of a federal system as a means of managing the country's current ethnic conflict better, or at any rate for minimising the tensions and violence of the current conflict. With one or two exceptions, especially of those published in the

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AFTERTHOUGHTS OF A UNIVERSITY LIBRARIAN

H.A.I. Goonetilleke

[Bibliophile and librarian, Ian Goonetilleke has acquired an international reputation for the style and content of his bibliographical research. He was awarded fellowship of the Library Association of Great Britain and Ireland in 1966. He is best known for his multi-volume *A Bibliography of Ceylon (Sri Lanka)*. An earlier collection of travel tales was published under the title *Images of Sri Lanka through American eyes* in 1976, and has been reprinted twice. He also compiled the important *Bibliography of the 1971 Insurrection*. Attached to the University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka for twenty seven years, he retired as its Librarian in 1979, having served in that post since 1971. He has written extensively within and outside his professional interests, and believes in the adage that he travels furthest who travels alone. This is the text of a speech made at the unveiling of the writer's portrait in Peradeniya on his 75th birthday this year.]

Dear Vice-Chancellor, distinguished academics, colleagues, senior and junior, known and unknown, and friends. I believe it was Winston Churchill who once remarked that there were only two things more difficult than making a speech on an emotion-laden occasion such as this - climbing a wall which is leaning towards you and kissing a girl who is leaning away. I have attempted neither, and public speaking has never been an accomplishment of mine, the written and spoken word being my chosen preference. It has also been said that librarians, like children, are better seen than heard. Hauled out of the deepening shadows of an ascetic existence in a Walden of my own choosing to address an audience in my old happy hunting grounds was not a scene I could have conjured up in my most far-fetched fantasies. Given the choice I would have preferred a siesta on a somnolent Sunday afternoon. But life does have its surprises, and so, despite physical infirmities, I decided to face the music however dying its fall. Five years and two weeks ago when I was first surprised and touched by the conferment of an honorary Doctorate of Letters at the Golden Jubilee Convocation, I was unable to be present because, as I explained, the long drawn out and strenuous nature of that ritual would have imposed impossible strains. It, therefore, gives me great pleasure to have been able to come up the Kandy Road in order to be with you on so felicitous a day, and I thank the Vice Chancellor and all concerned for this gesture which warms more than the cockles of my frail heart. I need to pay a

special tribute to the Organising Committee of the Library and the Librarian for literally and metaphorically turning tables in a normally silent Reading Room to transform it for this gathering.

WORDS AND STEPS

I had been mulling over in my mind back home what I should say to you. I have never been rendered entirely speechless as far as I can remember, because as my friends have always said, I am seldom or never at a loss for words. Words have been a source of joy and sorrow, strength and consolation, learning and knowledge; "Words are sheer pleasure, a cure for anguish" as Osip Mandelstam, the Russian poet summed it up. They have also got me into trouble and out of trouble as well - the situations have more or less equalled out, but I have nothing, I think, to lose on this occasion but my audience, and they may as well concentrate their attention, if bored, on the exceedingly flattering and immaculately conceived (or rather transfigured) portrait of the speaker created by my *kalyana mitra* friend of 44 years, first met as a student in Peradeniya, an association bonded by more than a common love of art. In that perennial children's classic *Alice in Wonderland* the White Rabbit adjusts his spectacles and asks: "Where shall I begin, please your Majesty?" "Begin at the beginning" the King said gravely, "and go on till you come to the end: then stop." I have stitched this talk together as the mood seized me and you will, I hope, bear with me if it resembles a patchwork quilt rather than a B plus

tutorial. I have been described recently by one of the more brilliant and unconventional intellectuals in our land as being both "proper and unorthodox". Thank heavens he did not say improper and orthodox! I shall contrive to be both today.

Jean-Paul Sartre titled the reminiscences of his lonely childhood *Words*, and it had just two parts - Reading and Writing. Give or take a little cricket, soccer and other fun and games, it would not be plagiarism if I chose to call my own long afternoons the same. He ends his tale with a thought: "My one concern was to save myself - nothing in my hands, nothing in my pockets - through work and faith." Looking fore and aft, the recipe has worked for me too. So, words on the printed page began it all for me. As an only child, orphaned of both parents at an early age, I grew up with books as my mute, though surprisingly eloquent, companions. Away from the classroom and playing field I devoured books, magazines and newspapers as soon as I learned to read - the greatest boon to a budding librarian. The appetite grew with what it fed on, and I had the good fortune to receive both primary and secondary education in a school which possessed a splendid library and in a separate building at that, plus a principal and teachers who encouraged the reading habit. My father's small library was a treasure island, and when I was eight my mother gave me a copy of what was then only the second edition of the *Concise Oxford Dictionary* of 1929. I still have it. So to twist Webster, the 17th century dramatist not the Yankee

lexicographer, it was a case of: Words, words, words, and all things else dead coals. A week's pocket money in my last years at school was sufficient to buy a Penguin or Pelican..

So when I became an undergraduate, I was already fully primed, and entering the portals of "Villa Venezia" (to which the library had been moved from a room at College House 15 years earlier) was to become the cardinal moment of inspiration. No more the schoolboy visions of being an engine driver, a quill driver, or at best a member of the Fourth Estate, but the serendipitous calling of a book man in a library. There may have been some lurking inheritance in my genes too. My paternal grandfather practised in the Supreme Court, Kandy, and my father was Secretary: District Court Kandy when he died in 1926. Two grand-uncles who lived and had their offices in Trincomalee Street in the last century were lawyers. One, William Goonetilleke founded and edited the **Orientalist** and possessed a fine personal library. The other, William Alfred Goonetilleke, whose first job had been Record Keeper in the Chief Secretary's Office (the progenitor of the Ceylon Government Archives) went off to Siam to seek his fortunes in his early thirties. His motto, no doubt, may have been "No daring is fatal". He ended up as Attorney General to King Chulalongkorn. He became a Buddhist, adopted a Siamese cognomen as well, and took unto himself three wives in succession, the last young enough to be his daughter. He also researched the Thai-Sri Lankan Buddhist links in the Royal Library, and translated them. That he was awarded the Order of the White Elephant by the King should come as no surprise. One of his daughters married the last Prime Minister of Siam before the military coup of Marshall Pibul Songkram in 1945. A grand old lady by then with the title 'Kunying Lekha' she took me to dinner in March 1973 on the revolving top floor of a 5-star hotel in Bangkok, when I was there for a Seminar. His grand-nephew has managed to steer clear of white elephants so far!

Come to think of it I am only one year younger than university education in this country, and almost as old as this library which only took off in late-1921 with the first donation of the valuable and extensive library of history, literature and oriental studies of the late Arunachalam Padmanabha, by his father Sir

Ponnambalam Arunachalam. Those books from the inaugural accession number 1 (given to Vol. 1 of the 11th edition of **Encyclopaedia Britannica**) sit on shelves in this Library. There is a gynaecological link too, if you do not mind my letting you into a dark secret. I was delivered out of my mother's womb by Dr. S.C. Paul, one of the principal founders of this University, who died in the year of its birth, after nearly thirty years of gestation of the original concept. The second donation, curiously enough, was from Leonard Woolf's sister Bella Sidney Woolf, the widow of Robert Heath Lock, Assistant Director of the Peradeniya Botanical Gardens whom she married in Kandy in 1910, the year before her brother left Ceylon. Lock died 5 years later, and she married a colleague of her brother's in the Ceylon Civil Service, Wilfred Southorn in 1921. She wrote three books on Ceylon before she left, and died in 1960, the year her brother re-visited the scenes of his service in the island. Fifty two years later, I was privileged to successfully negotiate the donation of the holograph manuscript of **The Village in the Jungle** to this Library. The precincts of that ornate Italian-style mansion (a perfect stage set for **Romeo and Juliet**), the magic casements of its book stacks, reading rooms and its compelling aura were to prove decisive. There was a Librarian, a Library Assistant, and two peons, and about 25,000 books on two floors. The annual vote was Rs.17,000/- (it was only Rs.750/- in 1921), and in the year I left had risen to Rs.20,000/-, the stock to about 42,000. There was as yet the single Librarian, three Library Assistants, and three peons. Fifty-five years later annual vote, book stock, and staff statistics are mind-boggling by comparison! In the year I retired, the annual vote for acquisitions was nearly one million rupees; today it is probably ten times more, and equally probably worth ten times less!!

The first Librarian, Reginald Stephen Enright, an early graduate of Ceylon University College was appointed in March 1925, and at the same time Solomon Cecil Blok, a fellow graduate of the same class was appointed the first Librarian of the Colombo Public Library. What is little known is that Robert Marrs tried to induce Louis Edmund Blaze, educationist, man of letters, and founder-Principal of Kingswood to accept the office of Librarian after Blaze retired in early 1923 at the age of 63. The latter

had already agreed to become Editor, **Ceylon Independent**, and declined with some regret. Both received their post-graduate professional education at the School of Librarianship and Archives, University College, London, the premier such institution at the time in the United Kingdom. Enright was a martinet with a forbidding exterior, and discipline in the Library was, to say the least, strict. One quiet afternoon I summoned up courage to tell him of my desire to become a librarian, and wondered whether he could let me have some basic texts to read. He gave me a few books on aspects of the discipline he had used as a student in London, and these provided early insights. **A Students Manual of Bibliography** by Arundell Esdaile left an indelible mark. Esdaile was then Keeper of Printed Books at the British Museum and Reader at University College, London, and became my Examiner in 1956. I have spent the major part of my life trying to escape his devastating dictum: "there is no more terrible a fate to be written down as one of the bad bibliographers". Finding me burrowing in the stacks more often than usual for a normal adolescent, Enright once remarked: "A librarian who reads is lost, but a librarian who does not read is also lost". There was a glint in his eye, and I decided to get lost for good and all!

A month's pocket money then sufficed to buy ten Penguins or Pelicans at -/40 cts. each. Andre Maurois's **Ariel**, a life of Shelley, was the first Penguin, and Bernard Shaw's **the Intelligent Woman's Guide to Socialism and Communism** the First Pelican. I have them still. And my personal library became then and later an act of self-sacrifice in Milton's words - the poet, not the man who gave his name to the stain remover. But as Lionel Robbins said in those far off days, the central problem in economics is the choice between unlimited ends and scarce means. So depletion of a personal library occurred in at least one of two ways. One in Milton's words again: "my friends are poor mathematicians but good book-keepers", the other was the allure of the gallows seats at the Regal, Majestic and Empire, and many early bird books changed hands at -/25 cts. each after a single reading. Today a full grown English Penguin is almost four figures high in rupees, an Indian almost in the early three figure range! In 1968 when the entire library of the late Muhandiram D.P.E.Hettiarachchi, antiquarian, numismatist and book-collector was

OUR INTELLECTUALS

H.L.D. Mahindapala

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The role played by the intellectuals in the Lankan North-South crisis cannot be underestimated. They have been instrumental in identifying issues as they saw it; in defining the historical antecedents leading to the crisis; in introducing theories to comprehend the vast mass of complex details; in campaigning within their realms — i.e. seminars, books, debates, media etc. — to advance their particular points of view; in participating in the actual process of peace-making; in working out strategies to manage the crisis and, in some instances, steering, through behind-the-scene manoeuvres, programmes that would fit into a pre-designed political agenda. They have also been the key agents of raising and propagandising issues to favour one side or the other. Perhaps it could be said that the number of books, pamphlets, pictures, media articles etc. thrown at each other come very near to the number of bullets fired from either side of fence.

The raging debate — guided mainly by the NGOs — has, at times, thrown more sound and fury rather than light. A glance at the history of the north-south crisis reveals that the role played by the intellectuals at their level, in general, has been as devastating as the explosive emotions, the attitudes and the opinions that have driven the nation at the grass-root level. Some of the intellectuals have merely elevated the prejudices, the myths and the ingrained attitudes of both sides to a more sophisticated level in their recurring discourses. The other disturbing aspect is the discernible tilt of NGO intellectuals who had veered to accept uncritically that the source of all political evil could be traced to one or the other single cause. No serious student of history or politics would reduce complex issues on any subject to a pet theory. In evaluating contemporary Sri Lankan history, a monocausal approach would fail to take into consideration the range of complex factors that released the brakes of the historical juggernaut and sent it rolling down the slippery political slope crushing everybody in its path. This failure of the intellectuals to take a broader and a more comprehensive view of the forces at play has been as much a contributory factor to the deterioration of the crisis as the other factors underlying the north-south crisis. If the intention of the intellectuals was to make an informed in-put into the analyses and draw appropriate conclusions which could guide the thinking of the decision-makers, then they failed because they lacked the required balance to create a political climate of accommodation for both sides to act with restraint. If they managed to prepare the political grounds guided by balanced perspectives, the key political actors would not have had a rationale, or the political climate to go down the path they have taken so far. Thus we could have avoided the

unnecessary blood bath. Because the arguments, the justifications and the morale of the combatants in the political arena have been sustained by the rationalisations of the one-eyed intellectuals, the latter stand accused of misdirecting the nation.

How did the intellectuals go so wrong in the first place? Let me illustrate it with a personal note. On the morning of the march led by J. R. Jayewardene protesting against the Bandaranaike-Chelvanayagam Pact I wrote a news item of a few lines which was placed somewhere in the middle of the proof page of THE OBSERVER, more or less as a record of the event and not as an issue that was about to explode and shape the future of the nation. Tarzie Vittachi walked out with the proof page into the news room and asked the chief sub-editor to blow it up as the headline of the day's news. In hindsight, Tarzie was right in recognising the potential of the story. But the doubts that linger in my mind even today is whether it was blown up purely as an anti-Bandaranaike story which was the political stance of Tarzie. Though he was a product of Ananda College he was (unlike Denzil Peiris who identified himself uncompromisingly with the grass-roots) a very pro-Western, pro-establishment and anti-Bandaranaikeist whose writings appealed and titillated the westernised, brown sahibs of the day. Of course, he too lampooned the brown sahibs but they were not seen by him as a threat to the nation as the national-dress clad Sinhala-Buddhists of the Mettananda-Malasekara mould. Like most of the intellectuals who straddled the pre-colonial and post-colonial periods, with one leg in both periods, there was a duality in his thinking. When it came to the crunch he sided with the westernised-wing of his mind. The intellectuals in the media played a critical role — based sometimes on their personal biases, sometimes on camp politics, sometimes on commercial interests, and sometimes on purely racist considerations — in hastening the process that deteriorated into violence.

The great divide that separated the intellectuals was not class but culture. The westernised elite who took up key positions in the commanding heights of the socio-political structures, adopted a superior stance of knowing the answers to the problems of the natives. This was a common malaise of the generations that entered the professional class and occupied the strategic positions in the private and public bureaucracies. The lawyers, the doctors, the administrators, the journalists, the academics, and other decision-makers and opinion-makers came up through the education system that was cast in the mould of imported ideologies of the West. The Right-wingers and the Left-wingers too viewed the moving scene through the coloured spectacles imported from

the west. Some imports — like the democratic institutions — began to sprout, with roots going deeper into the tolerant native culture. Some, like Marxism, became a passing fad and soon petered out. In the Cold War period the intellectuals leaned heavily towards one camp or the other. The more active intellectuals became agents of the Western or Eastern blocs. As the financial backing to cultivate and patronise the Third World intellectuals into the Marxist camp faded with the decline of the USSR, the field was left open for the Western bloc to conquer the hearts and minds. There was no alternative model to compete in the global market selling political ideas.

Of course, the history of intellectuals is a continuous story of being dependent on patrons. Leaving aside the rare independent thinkers, the vast majority of intellectuals are camp-followers. Intellectuals have always acted as willing agents of the state, churches, lords and ladies of feudal times and corporations or other assorted philanthropists in recent times. Karl Mannheim has written convincingly on the subservient role of intellectuals selling their pens to the highest bidder. Take the case of the ENCOUNTER, edited by Melvin J. Lasky and Stephen Spender. At the height of the Cold War, this monthly became an outstanding intellectual haven that collected the best writings targeting communism. However, its cover was blown when it was revealed that it was financed by the CIA. Poet Spender resigned in protest. But the ENCOUNTER argued that it did not compromise its intellectual integrity and objectivity. Though the ENCOUNTER continued to function, its high moral authority was eroded after the exposé. This raised a few unanswered questions: Would the CIA have financed it without expecting a favour in return? Or would it have financed it if it was a pro-Communist magazine?

THE NGO ERA

With the unrivalled rise of pro-market forces came the rise of the NGOs as the new missionaries, spreading the gospel of human rights, civil liberties, and democratic institutions. They were financed by western donors. The NGOs became the most lucrative source for intellectuals who flocked to in droves. Some of them took to it like ducks to water. Messrs. Godfrey Gunatilleke and Charlie Abeysekera are two intellectuals who, having left the Civil Service, headed the MARGA INSTITUTE and MIRJE respectively. The NGOs have been the biggest growth industries with about 3,000 NGOs operating at the last count. Each one of these is dependent on western sources for funding, either partially or fully. This places the NGOs in a state of dependency on

the donors. Each one of these dependent NGOs is committed to pursue or implement a programme approved by the western donors. Funding depends on the ideological content of the local programme. For instance, just as much as the Communist bloc would not fund the ENCOUNTER, the Western bloc would not fund the ATHHA paper! The research centres and publications are financed as ideological or political fronts of each donor group. The NGO intellectuals thus became the new missionaries of the West. In the heyday of raj the Christian missionaries invaded the colonies to civilise the native barbarians. In the post-colonial period local intellectuals were hired to do the proselytising for the western agenda.

It is somewhat difficult to decide whether the dependence on funds or the dependence on imported ideas plays a more dominant role in undermining the integrity of the intellectuals in the developing nations. Some independent and concerned intellectuals and scholars of the Third World felt the need to question the validity of western assumptions in interpreting non-western societies. The relevance of western studies cast in the mould of alien concepts were seen as theoretical exercises that boosted the ego — and sometimes the careers — of academics in ivory towers. The suitability and the applicability of various fanciful formulae to local conditions were not a very high priority. THE THIRD WORLD FORUM, for instance, argued that the non-industrialised scholars should divorce themselves from “academic imperialism” and “academic chauvinism” of the West. These scholars felt that the overwhelming influence of the Western academic schools distorted the perspectives of the Third World scholars. This wholesale dependence on conceptual frameworks, social scientists’ tools of analysis and funding to carry out donor-approved projects, combined to cast serious doubts about the independence and integrity of NGO-dependent scholars and intellectuals. Dr. Susantha Goonatilleke, one of the few perceptive intellectuals, raised this issue earlier and Mr. Godfrey Gunatilleke responded (MARGA Vol.2. No.4, 1976) defending the role of intellectuals within western-funded NGOs.

Without going into this debate, it is necessary to point out that since 1976 MARGA has changed its role radically from the stated position of Mr. Godfrey Gunatilleke and has chosen to become an active player in the political process. Since Mr. Godfrey Gunatilleke wrote that defence, the political climate too has changed and the NGOs have stepped out brazenly as surrogate politicians supporting for instance, the “G.L.Peiris package” as the panacea for peace. As stated by Prof. Peiris, his package is designed to meet the “aspirations of the Tamils”. Meeting “the aspirations of the Tamils” without the same right being granted to the aspirations of all the other communities has become the “orthodoxy” of practically all the foreign-funded NGOs and they have pursued this particular political role with missionary zeal. Mr. Gunatilleke, in particular, went on what might be constructed as a personal mission abroad visiting pockets of expatriate communities hoping to convert the non-believers of the “G.L.Peiris package”. Like him most other intellectuals in the NGO circuit have been driven by the identical ideology which has been designed by their fellow-intellectuals as the ultimate answer to the crisis.

There are, of course, no foreign funds available for activists to canvas the opposite point of view. The lucrative sources of funding are available to promote only a particular ideology adopted by the local agents whose activities, in turn, are approved and monitored by the Western donors. The conformity to Western models as a solution is commensurate with the NGOs uniformity to a common local agenda. The flow of foreign funding to the NGO-endorsed orthodoxy attracts local intellectuals like moths to a flame. The lure of funding, accompanied by scholarships, invitations to seminars, trips abroad, bringing out publications which otherwise would have had no funding to see the light of day, and even advancement of careers in academia as long as they conform to the NGO-approved models, generated a whole generation of intellectuals who fell in line with this orthodoxy. This certainly helped the self-interest of the intellectuals and the political agenda they were promoting. But it failed to reconcile the forces on either side of the fence because the misguided orthodoxy failed to grasp the realities.

PEACE OR APPEASE ?

Consider, for instance, how some of the intellectuals failed to play the role that would have helped the process of reconciliation and peace. Consider the case of Rt. Rev. Kenneth Fernando, who is more than the Bishop of one of the most powerful international organisations, the Anglican Church. He is a left-leaning intellectual with the appropriate academic credentials. His voice, echoing in the vaults of the Anglican Church and through it in the British establishment, carry some weight internationally and at home in shaping opinion to promote peace. It is important, therefore, to consider how he went about performing his duties in this crisis. After his meeting with Mr. Velupillai Prabhakaran in Jaffna he returned home and announced to the multitudes, in almost emotional terms, that “Prabhakaran is humane”. As it came from the head of the Anglican Church — and he has not resiled from this political position since he made this statement — it could be read as the official doctrine of the Anglican Church. This statement indicates amply that he has aligned himself totally with Mr. Prabhakaran. In other words, he is saying Mr. Prabhakaran’s pursuit of the “aspirations of the Tamils (of Jaffna)” through ruthless violence is justifiable. The current British High Commissioner, Mr. D. E. Tatham, who shared the platform of the Church of Ceylon Diocesan Council too joined the Bishop’s political bandwagon when he said : “There is no greater objective for British policy towards Sri Lanka than to see the war ended on just terms”. The sentiments are noble and commendable provided he defines “the just terms”. “Just terms” for whom ? Is it only for one community or all the communities ?

No intellectual in the NGO circuit, so far as I know, has dared to analyse the meaning and the impact of the Bishop’s statement that “Prabhakaran is humane”. It means that Bishop Fernando not only white-washes all the atrocities committed by Mr. Prabhakaran but encourages him to pursue his “humane” tactics which has led to ethnic cleansing, the killing of even innocent babies, small children and sleeping mothers and the oppression and massacre of his own Tamil people. With such an approval from the highest pedestal of the Christian Church why should Mr. Prabhakaran enter the peace

process or desist from violence? Of course, this is not the first time that the hierarchy of the Christian Churches had blessed their armies going into war against the enemies of the Church. However, what would have been the response of the British establishment if the Archbishop of Canterbury publicly declared that Hitler was a humane person? The usual protests from the intellectuals who never fail to sign public petitions against leaders of the south were not forthcoming in this instance. It is, therefore, fair to conclude that their silence can be read as an act of endorsement of the Bishop’s statement. For instance, Mr. Charlie Abeyesekera, who never fails to report regularly the natives’ behaviour which does not please his donors, and Dr. Jayadeva Uyangoda, a pro-PA academic of the Colombo University, (both of whom went on a similar futile mission to Jaffna as the Bishop) have never, as far as I know, voiced their opposition to this statement. The silent endorsement of this politically motivated statement, with a nudge-nudge and a wink-wink from the intellectuals, makes it apparent that the camaraderie among the (Anglican) Church, NGO and academics (CNA) is a sacred bond that must be maintained on a broad front to promote their political agenda.

In contrast, consider the attitude of the NGO intellectuals to those on the other side of the fence. The intellectuals have never come out so boldly like the Bishop to argue that Sinhala-Buddhism has been humane. Time and again they have been propagating relentlessly the political line of Sinhala-Buddhism as a violent and an intransigent obstacle to peace and justice. Their willingness to exonerate Mr. Prabhakaran, or to support “packages” based on the myths of a Tamil homeland, stand in sharp contrast to their readiness to condemn Sinhala-Buddhism as an evil force. This became the orthodoxy of the intellectuals who explored practically every facet of Sinhala-Buddhism without even taking a peep at other forces that were dragging the nation deeper and deeper into the turbulent seas of blood. When it came to Sinhala-Buddhism the intellectuals turned instantly into a rhinocerosian herd, *a la* Ionesco. Their ideological line of blaming Sinhala-Buddhism is driven by many considerations. But what is alarming is the uncritical willingness of the intellectuals and academics to follow a single line of thought which has no basis in historical or political reasoning.

Their eagerness to nail everything on Sinhala-Buddhism and to exonerate Mr. Prabhakaran in the same breath, expose their double standards - which would have been hilarious if not for the tragic consequences. This double standard is a strategy adopted to boost and strengthen the demands of the North by weakening the South. But can such political endorsements add to the credit of the intellectuals or contribute in anyway to the peace process ? Would not a more balanced approach which would break down the myths of both sides be more conducive to arrive at a “just” solution for all communities ? Was Sinhala-Buddhism the organised force that tore up national unity, or were there other unexplored divisive factors that were exploited by the north and the south in a communal power struggle that would lead the nation inevitably into a quagmire?

The NGO intellectuals are doggedly committed to their blinkered ideology which claims that an

organised political force of Sinhala-Buddhists did burst out sporadically against the Tamils in the post-1956 phase and prevented the implementation of formulae that could have reconciled the north and south. How far is this argument sustainable under critical scrutiny? Was Sinhala-Buddhism an organised and institutionalised force that stood in the way of peace? Or was it a mindless mob that went berserk from time to time, goaded, no doubt, by primitive instincts roused by sections of Sinhala-Buddhists? Even if Sinhala-Buddhism is to be accepted as a violent force for the sake of argument, it is necessary to follow it up with the question: **Which has been the more destructive force? Sinhala-Buddhism or Tamil-Hindu aggression that has been an integral part of the northern culture?**

There are several instances where the majority Sinhala-Buddhists have clashed, from time to time, with the minority Christians, Muslims and Tamils. Without meaning to excuse violence of any sort, it is important to emphasise that the majority Sinhala-Buddhists have been reacting on most occasions to provocations rather than acting as a single-minded body with a vengeance to carry out pogroms based on an official doctrine or fundamentalist fanaticism of race or religion. This left the intellectuals in a total vacuum because they could not find a tangible, or a valid reason to explain the sporadic violence which had no roots in the political culture. They failed tragically to isolate the new phenomenon of political violence (JVP / LTTE) that erupted in the post-70's. There also failed to grasp the meaning and the implications of this force which dragged the nation into a conflagration of devastating proportions. And when they did identify the causes, they did it on racist/religious basis. They did not acknowledge that the post-70s' violence of the north and the south had a seamless connection on far more serious causes. But when the northern violence manifested itself on racist lines in the post-83 phase the instant punditry of the intellectuals led them to categorise it exclusively as an ethnic issue between Sinhala-Buddhists and Tamil Hindus, with Sinhala-Buddhism as the culprit.

Even earlier, when the intellectuals looked around to identify the causes of violence, they could not rave and rant against an immoral apartheid system, or institutionalised discriminatory system that oppressed a community (e.g. Afro-Americans in USA). Nor did they take into consideration the more obvious example of the Christian Churches that have been officially preaching racist and religious hatred against the Jews which culminated in pogroms in various parts of the Christian world and finally in Hitler. Hitler is the ultimate expression of perverted and bitter Christianity. Sinhala-Buddhism never adopted a doctrine based on political hatred against any community or religion. Its history records its basic attitude of tolerance. For instance, though the Portuguese brought Catholicism to Sri Lanka it was the Sinhala-Buddhists who protected it when it was persecuted by the Protestant Dutch in the coastland. The Muslims too were given protection by the Sinhala-Buddhists when they were persecuted by the Christian invaders. The reality is that Sinhala-Buddhism has been an open, inclusive and a tolerant culture which even adopted passing fancies like Trotskyism. This has led Tamil intellectuals, like Prof. A. J. Wilson to commend the Sinhala-Buddhist ethos as the stabiliser of parliamentary democracy.

Nevertheless, he too subscribes to the notion that Sinhala-Buddhist chauvinism and not his father-in-law's manufactured myth of a Tamil homeland, is the root of the crisis.

TARGETING THE SOUTH

Blaming the south alone without focusing on the forces that came sweeping down from the North, has been the common strategy used by intellectuals to extract more and more concessions in the name of peace and justice. The other aspect is the haste and the unreasonableness with which the intellectuals rush to blame the south. They needed a something — never mind what — that would explain to themselves and to the world the causes for the violence and they rushed to latch on to the most convenient of excuses: Sinhala-Buddhism. It is not a satisfactory answer that would explain the violent phenomenon that raged in the South (JVP) and the North. Though violence first broke out in the south on the cries of economic discrimination by the Sinhala youth against the English-educated establishment, it was the cries of discrimination raised by a racial minority that grabbed the minds of the intellectuals and reverberated loudly round the world. The Tamil youth and the Sinhala youth both cried discrimination but the intellectuals sided with the racist twist given to it by the North. Every failure of the government was seen as a racist attack on the north, even though the Northern cry of discrimination was never accepted by the Tamil-speaking minorities of the East and the central hills as their political reality. It was a perception confined to the North and not the rest of the Tamil-speaking peoples. The dismal record of the intellectuals has been their failure to identify the essential characteristics of the Northern cry of discrimination which made it an exclusively regional issue that did incorporate the other Tamil-speaking peoples.

The peculiar historical circumstances which gave rise to a privileged high-caste Tamils in the north who originated and led the conflict — the other two Tamil-speaking groups have refused to join in — make it exclusively a clash between the northern region and the South. Though ethnicity and language are an element of the conflict, the failure of the privileged class of the North to rope in the other two Tamil-speaking communities makes it essentially a regional conflict of the North and the South rather than an ethnic issue on a national scale. This reality is unacceptable to the CNA intellectuals. Limiting it to the confines of the North would vitiate and weaken the cause of the CNA intellectuals who prefer to paint it as an issue much broader than what it is in reality. This reveals either a basic reluctance or an inability to accurately comprehend, analyse and examine the ground reality level — and this has led the intellectuals into a blind alley in which they are stuck now. However any such admission would undermine their political platform and even their funding. Because their self-interest takes precedence over fidelity to the hard reality they sacrifice the latter to the former. This makes their betrayal of intellectual honesty a direct factor that worsened the inter-ethnic relations.

One of the most successful operations of the leading Tamil intellectuals, who were aided and abetted by the NGO-funded intellectuals of the south, was to divert attention from the inner contradictions of Jaffna society to their cry of discrimination and

persecution by the Sinhala-Buddhists. Of course, the emotional pressures that coloured the thinking of the Tamil intellectuals and the repugnance felt by the Sinhala intellectual towards the more violence are two factors that played a significant role in consolidating the anti-Sinhala-Buddhist attitudes. Tamil separatist politicians were quick to exploit the one ounce of emotion which tons of reasoning earlier could not advance. Consider two emotional reactions of the Tamils: Dr. (Mrs) Radhika Coomaraswamy, one of the more balance Tamil intellectuals, wrote in the aftermath of the July '83 explosion, a poem in the LANKA GUARDIAN, crying her heart out about the Tamil victims. Second, is academic Dr. Stanley Tambiah's BUDDHISM BETRAYED which became the standard theme of intellectuals blaming Sinhala-Buddhism as the root cause of all evil in Sri Lanka. As an anthropologist he explains his personal experiences of the 1958 riots, when he had taken his university students on a field study to Gal Oya. One can certainly empathise and sympathise with his fears of being surrounded by a Sinhala-Buddhist mob hunting Tamils. No human being should be put under such life-threatening situations. But he also acknowledges that it was his students — presumably Sinhala-Buddhists — who gave him protection and saved his life. Dr. Tambiah's experience is not unique. It has been the experience of tens of thousands of Tamils who were protected by the Sinhala-Buddhists

His experience encapsulates the ambivalent attitude towards Sinhala-Buddhist culture. One miniscule but minatory mob goes berserk and a larger section gives compassion and protection. **Which side do you choose as being the dominant force in the Sinhala-Buddhist culture? The destructive mob or the compassionate protectors?** Anthropologists are divided on this issue. Politically, however, it is disadvantageous to admit the tolerant and the compassionate side of Sinhala-Buddhists. In the end, like all other Tamils who were saved, Dr. Tambiah chose to paint the Sinhala-Buddhist community with the barbaric mob mentality and denied the benign role of his Sinhala-Buddhist protectors' compassion. Most intellectuals wrote and propagated the myth of the parting of ways of the two communities based on this narrow view. **The security of the Tamils — though no Tamil found it in the temporary Eelam of Mr. Prabahakaran — was touted as a critical issue in the inter-ethnic relations. The more they blackened this story at home the more advantages there were abroad, politically and economically. It paved the way for greener pastures in economic havens abroad. Which in turn helped to expand the pro-Tamil lobbies in Western capitals. Which in turn became centres for gathering funds for separatist violence. Thus anti-Sinhala-Buddhism became the great vehicle through which Tamils advanced their fortunes politically and economically.** There was a great need to perpetuate the myth at all levels and the intellectuals subscribed to it generously.

The need to broadbase the debate and internationalise it was realised very early by those who were pushing a political agenda that was dependent on global support. Such a debate had to be controlled and kept within the parameters of a political agenda that would win the sympathy and the support of the international community. This technique was master-minded by Tamil separatists who mobilised initially three key agencies for the separatist platform: 1) the Christian Churches; 2)

the burgeoning Tamil diaspora and 3) the intellectuals and academics. Even as early as the sixties when Mrs. Bandaranaike visited England the expatriate Tamil community demonstrated against her in London. They were quick to get off the mark and get ahead in the race to mobilise international support. But their emotions had to be translated into sophisticated arguments that would appeal to the decision-makers of the West. There had to be a scapegoat (reason?). Denigrating the Sinhala-Buddhists as the evil force that refuses to accommodate the Tamil Hindus was elevated at the highest academic level to give respectability to the Tamils seeking greater political and economic opportunities abroad. One Tamil propagandist came on Melbourne Radio and compared the Sri Lankan situation to the apartheid system. The division into black and white terms made the whole issue simple. It was easily digestible. And it was easily marketable to a Christian audience who would have in any case perceived Buddhist monks, with their shaven heads and yellow robes, as some mischief-making weirdos from an alien planet.

It was different with a Christian priest even if his face was black. The common language of Christianity and its readily recognisable and instantly valid symbols make it easy for Christian audiences in the west to relate to a Bishop than to a mullah or to Mahanayake. For instance, when the Vicar General of Jaffna, Fr. Emmanuel, goes to Australia and says "Let my people go" he is invoking the political slogan of the Old Testament — not a religious tenet preached by Christ in the New Testament — to tap easily into the minds of his Western audiences to push his political line of separatism. Their clear mission was to exploit the institutional prestige and power of the Churches, NGOs and academia (CNA) to put maximum pressure on the political processes both at home and abroad. Predictably, this pressure has been only a one-way process. The CNA trio have applied pressure only to the south and not to the North. **The South which the CNA targets as the prime cause for the conflict is an open society with democratic institutions in place, making it extremely vulnerable for their manipulations and exploitations of the trio. They, however, failed to influence the North — let alone step into it and make their presence felt — because it has been a closed society with extremely casteist, racist and authoritarian tendencies. While the CNA agencies have the free run of the South they were able to move in the North only as pre-selected political pilgrims bringing offerings to the "messiah". Besides, the North does not have to woo CNA organisations assiduously because the northerners are well entrenched in these three centres. The Northerners have employed the CNA agencies, using their foreign network and resources, to divert attention away from the north and focus critically only on the south.**

ICES: A TALE OF TWO CITIES

A key player in this role is the International Centre for Ethnic Studies (ICES) with its headquarters at Kynsey Road. It is a critical centre for the CNA agencies which has, by far, the 'best' and the most number of intellectuals on its pay roll. Mr. Regi Siriwardena, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, Dr. Sarath Amunugama, are some of the prominent ICES intellectuals who ride in the boat steered by the captain. And the captain is Dr. Neelan Tiruchelvam,

a Tamil politician master-minding the tactics of the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF). He is a product of the Harvard University with contacts in the key places of the international CNA circuit. The ICES has considerable resources at its disposal and has bought the prime land at the top of Kynsey Road which is worth multi-millions.

There are two wings to the ICES : the politicised Kynsey Road-wing and the academic Kandy-wing. These two wings approach the national issues with two distinct perspectives. The Kynsey Road-wing consists mainly of pro-Tamil intellectuals who actively work as a tendentious lobby for the North. While the Kandy-wing headed by Prof. Kingsley de Silva works scrupulously within the parameters of objective scholarship, the Kynsey Road-wing of Dr. Tiruchelvam is primarily concerned with strengthening and promoting the demands of the North. **It is not necessary to labour the point that Dr. Tiruchelvam, the politician, will not act against his political interests when he sits in his chair as head of the Colombo ICES. His political instincts will tell him that he who pays the piper will call the tune. In other words, the inter-locking interests make it patently clear that the Colombo ICES has been and will continue to be a political instrument of the Tamil lobby headed by Dr. Tiruchelvam. What is most disturbing is the funding by foreign agencies of a lobby headed by a Tamil politician. No politician of another community is funded directly by Western agencies to run a centre on the same scale as Dr. Tiruchelvam.**

Why are Western foreign agencies funding only Tamil MPs pursuing divisive politics? Of course, Dr. Tiruchelvam could turn round and point to a politician like Dr. Sarath Amunugama who is on his pay roll. Having a couple of Sinhala-Buddhists on the pay roll is a plausible facade to claim that it is a centre for other ethnic groups as well. It is, of course, a common ploy of all NGO to hire a cross-section of ethnic intellectuals and parade them before foreign donors to make their organisations look like mini-multicultural centres. But the reality is that some of these Kynsey Road Sinhala-Buddhists represent essentially their own financial, political or personal interests. Undoubtedly, having Messrs. Siriwardena and Amunugama on his pay roll is a feather in Dr. Tiruchelvam's cap. But how does this reflect on Messrs. Siriwardena and Amunugama?

The publications of the two wings too indicate their diverging positions on the national question. The Kandy-wing produces quality publications of scholarship analysing the major themes that dominate the debate. **It has become an alternative outlet for the Peradeniya school of thinking which has always maintained a high standard of scholarship with unimpeachable intellectual integrity.** For instance, Prof. K. M. De Silva's SEPARATIST IDEOLOGY IN SRI LANKA : A HISTORICAL APPRAISAL is the most illuminating contribution that goes straight into the heart of the biggest myth that is perpetuating the North-South violence. The outstanding publications of Prof. K. N. O. Dharmadasa and Prof. G. H. Peiris too have thrown new light which explodes the myths of divisive politics of the Kynsey Road-wing.

However, it is possible for the Kynsey Road-wing to argue that the two separate wings of the ICES, with

two separate ideologies, stand as proof of the independence and objectivity of its research work, or in addressing national priorities. But is this the reality? Or is there a hidden agenda which is pursued aggressively in determining national priorities? If the Kynsey Road-wing was genuinely concerned about the restoration of peace and civil society, should not the primary requirement be to address the biggest and most destructive myth - that of Tamil homelands? It is visible to all but the politically blind that it is not the myths of the Sinhala-Buddhist past that is prolonging the violence. It is the obtuse intransigence of those who adhere to the new-fangled myths of the Tamil homelands that is fuelling the fires of mindless violence. Removal of that myth would clear the way for a reasonable settlement that would fulfil the genuine aspirations of the all communities. But the intellectuals on the ICES Colombo pay roll have not shown any signs of challenging the analytical critique of the Tamil homeland myth presented so convincingly by Prof. Kingsley de Silva; nor have they acknowledged the Tamil homeland myth as the prime cause of the continuation of the violence and preventing any reasonable constitutional or political settlement.

The entire Tamil movement — including its intellectual, military and propagandistic strategies — is sustained and driven by this myth of Tamil homeland. Rejection and removal of this myth at all levels is a prime requirement for those genuinely seeking a path to peace. But the Tamils and their hired intellectuals divert attention to the myths of the South to escape the moral and political responsibilities arising from the corrosive, divisive and destructive myths of the North. The horrendous lack of integrity on this issue is shown by Prof. A. Jeyaratnam Wilson who continues to repeat this myth (see SUNDAY ISLAND of October 12, 1997) knowing full well that it has no validity in the historical records. In his preface to his book Prof. Kingsley de Silva wrote : "Professor A. J. Wilson, the Sri Lankan political scientist, now domiciled in Canada, wrote in 1972 that the term "the traditional homelands of the Tamil-speaking peoples", was "introduced into local political parlance by the Tamil Federal party." He identified the Tamil-speaking areas (as) the Northern and Eastern provinces of (Sri Lanka) where the overwhelming majority of inhabitants are Tamils and Tamil-speaking Muslims". Significantly he admitted that "whether there are any 'traditional homelands of the Tamil-speaking peoples' is a matter for argument". How much credibility or integrity is there in Prof. Wilson when he repeats the myth of Tamil homeland which he confesses is not based on historical certainties. Besides, this myth is very well known to the intellectuals of the Kynsey Road-wing. But they will not touch it and or explore this myth in their political debates or in-house seminars.

- TO BE CONTINUED -

NEXT: THE TAMIL INTELLECTUAL
HOMELAND

DIXIT'S TESTAMENT: A CRITICAL REVIEW

Dayan Jayatilaka

*'This late in the game
This far down the line ...'*

(The Robert Cray Band - 'Laugh out loud')

A spectre is haunting India. The spectre of India's Lanka policy.

I wonder how many of us Sri Lankans are actually grasping the significance of what's going on. Consider the following: In India's globally publicised and celebrated Golden Jubilee of Independence year, the internationally well-known and respected (thanks also to its handling of Mother Teresa's funeral) Gujral regime is facing a crisis of survival on an issue which centres on Sri Lanka. India's Lankan policy of the '80 & '90s, the LTTE, the IPKF, the Padmanabha killing which preceded Rajiv's - all these issues are foregrounded in India's current crisis of governance. If this crisis brings Congress I or the BJP into office, the ghost of India's Lankan involvement would have determined - or at least influenced - the destinies of South Asia, the world's most populous region and a nuclearising one. The assessment of India's Lankan policy and the Lankan crisis itself are precisely the stuff of Mr. Dixit's valuable, provocative and fascinating book which I hope will be discussed and reviewed outside the subcontinent, by South Asia specialists, international relationists and conflict studies experts. It is a case study that warrants serious interest among scholars in Washington, Moscow and most capital cities.

Having read it though, I could not recall having encountered the name Rohana Wijeweera!

Surely, surely, this must be some sort of memory lapse on my part, I thought, and proceeded to check the index. There I discovered that Ponna Wignarajah and Seema Guha had an entry each to their names in this volume covering those years of Sri Lanka's history that earned it the

title 'the bloodiest place in earth' on the pages of The Economist, London. So do Clint Eastwood, Bismark and the Quackers Peace Movement (sic). 'Peter Kennerman' (sic) gets two. But not so, poor Mr. Wijeweera. In case it is argued that the JVP is mentioned several times, I would reply that many organisations have been listed *and also* their leaders (such as the CWC *and* Mr. Thondaman, the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress *and* Mr. Ashraff etc.). Mr. Wijeweera is the exception. And this looming absence, of which Mr. Dixit seems quite oblivious, shows up not only the main weakness of his book, but also of his line and analysis, as well as of Delhi's handling of the Lankan crisis. One large blind spot (on the JVP) a singularly jaundiced eye (towards Premadasa) and a ramrodding will of steel in matters of Indian policy - are aspects displayed in Dixit's book.

More seriously I would say that Dixit's *Leben-und-Weltanschauung* is of a Nietzschean-Nehruvism, which finds its limits and is defeated, not only by Prabhakaran's *Nietzschean-Dravidianism* (which he manifests in what Anthony Burgess' antihero Alex, in A Clockwork Orange, used to call "the old ultra-violence") but by the most powerful force in the Lankan space, the Hydra-headed crisis itself. Dixit's book then is the tale of the limits and failure of conventional *realism* - a union of pure will and military force - in state policy, engulfed by the Lankan crisis which is the synthesis of the *surreal* and the *hyperreal*.

At a more concrete level, this timely and relevant volume book reveals the following:

1. A clear Indian tilt towards the Tamils - understandable because of the Tamil Nadu factor - combined with a prejudice

against the Sinhalese. 'Tilts' are a standard feature of foreign policy but they are usually on the basis of perceived State-interest and rarely accompanied by actual prejudice against the side not favoured by the tilt.

An example of the anti-Sinhala prejudice is the continued commitment in Mr. Dixit's discourse, to the permanent merger of the Northern and Eastern provinces as they are currently constituted and opposition to any form of re-demarcation. This is despite the amply documented (by Peradeniya's masterly Prof. G.H. Pieris) and hitherto uncontroverted demographic and cartographic evidence submitted to the Government of India in late-'86 by their Lankan counterpart, that (a) the Trincomalee district never had a Tamil majority and (b) that State aided colonisation in no way involved a loss of lands traditionally owned by/ containing a majority of the Tamils and entailed hardly any displacement of Tamils from their population concentrations.

2. While the Sri Lankan government side put up a stone wall at Thimpu, a considerable degree of flexibility had set in as the year 1986 wore on. This was due partly to education by circumstances, partly to Indian input and partly to the interaction with the Lankan Left, led by Vijaya Kumaratunga, in the Political Parties Conference (PPC) of mid-'86. Indeed, after the PPC, there was a definite shift in the Sri Lanka Government (SLG) position and the real possibility of a settlement of the issue. This was vitiated from two quarters, (a) the decisively timed military actions - usually aimed at unarmed Sinhala civilians - of the LTTE, which generated, understandably, a Lankan military response, and (b) the escalating pressures emanating from New Delhi.

Indeed in '86-'87 the SLG stance was increasingly reasonable, the landmarks being the November SAARC Summit in Bangalore, the Dec 19th ('86) Chidambaram - Natwar Singh Mission and the Feb 17th '87 position. But it was as if Delhi's responses were propelled by a determination to escalate demands, escalate pressures, deny the SLG space and drive it repeatedly to the wall, until it was literally ready to sign on the dotted line ... of the Indo-Lanka Accord, as it turned out.

3. In early '87, (pre-Accord) all three prominent players on the SLG side, J.R.Jayewardene, Lalith Athulathmudali and R. Premadasa, made suggestions for multilateral mediation in the Lankan conflict, by the UN and the Commonwealth. This was rejected by Delhi, doubtless because it violated India's version of the Monroe Doctrine. It must be recalled that at this time, the USSR was a powerful player in the UN Security Council and therefore, India's rejection of a UN role could not have been due to fears of Western imperialist/neo-colonialist intervention!

To strike a personal note, many of the senior Indian officials mentioned in this book rejected the proposal for a multilateral peace keeping force with Indian participation, as a substitute for the IPKF, canvassed by me in late '88-early '89 as the sole Sinhala Minister in the North Eastern Provincial Council, even though it could have been a viable fallback measure and compromise formula as the crisis hotted up. Delhi's line was 'all or nothing'; its mindset remained one of a zero-sum game. (This proposal was later publicised in my letter of resignation from the Council in early '89 and received wide press coverage).

4. Mr. Dixit's line that the IPKF could have finished and indeed was finishing the job, when Premadasa peremptorily got it to leave - a view shared by many ignorant Sri Lankan commentators and public personalities - is given the lie by the factors listed in Chapters 13, 14 and 19 of his own book! Some relevant extracts follow:

"These intense pressures resulted in Rajiv Gandhi following a two-track policy-continuing military operations, while trying to remain in touch with the LTTE through our intelligence agencies" (p.229).

"After initially eulogising the Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement, the Indian media was now turning critical of the agreement and IPKF operations against the LTTE. The relevance of Indian mediation, the wisdom of India being directly involved in the affairs of a neighbouring country, etc. came up for questioning. Simultaneously, Tamil Nadu politicians started questioning the justification of the IPKF fighting the Sri Lankan Tamils instead of pressuring the Sri Lankan Government to respond to the LTTE's demands. India's Sri Lanka policy was now subject to the major disadvantage of Indian public opinion not supporting it" (p.237).

"However, it was at the lower levels of command that I discerned certain confusion and concern about the IPKF's presence and its getting enmeshed in a military conflict with the LTTE. Officers at the level of Brigadier and Battalion Commanders whom I met told me while they had detailed operational briefings and instructions, they were not clear or convinced about the political motivations and policy objectives of the Government of India" (p.249).

"The agreement failed because there was no cohesion in operational aspects of Indian policies and harmonious coordination between different agencies of the Government of India dealing with the Sri Lankan crisis. In fact, there were periods when the Indian defence establishment, the intelligence agencies and the Ministry of External Affairs were working at cross-purposes. The Sri Lankan operation is in glaring negative contrast to the harmony, cohesiveness and coordination which characterised Indian policies related to the Bangladesh crisis in 1970-71.

Rajiv Gandhi could be partially blamed for the contradiction which characterised Indian policies. Though he had to instruct the armed forces to confront the LTTE, once they reverted to terrorism, there was perhaps an emotional and psychological inhibition on his part to take drastic action against the LTTE. He had an innate sympathy for the legitimate rights and aspirations of Tamils. It is perhaps because of this mind-set that he permitted representatives of our

intelligence agencies to continue negotiations with the LTTE even as the Indian forces were engaged in military operations against them" (p.339).

How can anyone believe that the IPKF could have done the job had it been kept on for a few months (Mr. Dixit mentions six) more by Premadasa, when all the above mentioned factors were still very much in operation? Premadasa's conundrum was that while the IPKF was manifestly not solving the problem in the Northeast, its continued presence was, even more manifestly, exacerbating the problem (i.e. the JVP insurrection) in the South, including Colombo, threatening State power itself!

5. The vulgar view of Premadasa as a reckless anti-Indian is contradicted by even the most cursory reading of the first letter sent by him to Rajiv Gandhi in 1989 (Ibid. p 373-375). It is serious, respectful, fair and frank. One is immediately struck by the high handedness of Rajiv's response. Thus *it is Rajiv's reply* that resulted in the Open Polemic between the two leaders, a deterioration of relations which culminated in the violent death of both correspondents. Of course Rajiv's reply was well in keeping with the responses he had sent the Jayewardene administration, to similarly moderate messages! However, in Premadasa, he received a decisive rebuff. Let us not forget the relatively more precarious position Premadasa was in when he made his stand, in contrast to the political and economic assets of the Jayewardene Presidency when it was in zig-zagging retreat vis-à-vis Indian pressure in '86-'87. At the time it had a 5/6ths majority in Parliament and the JVP insurgency was still in the first stage of killing its rivals on the Left. Premadasa, placed in a weaker politico-military and economic (following the massive havoc wreaked by the anti-Accord riots and the JVP campaign) situation, adopted a far more resolute stance vis-à-vis Delhi which already had 70,000 troops on Lankan soil plus an allied Provincial Administration in place. All of this goes to show that Premadasa's patriotism and cherishment of national sovereignty were of a very different order from that of the Jayewardene administration - and finally that Premadasa's was the far stronger character and personality.

Irked and even infuriated as we may be at reading this chronicle of coercion by India, it must be admitted that one reason the Jayewardene Government was unable to face down India's relentless pressure was that it suffered from a *crisis of legitimacy* following the referendum of Dec '82. Therefore it was unable to mobilise the broad nationalist masses around it in a manner that is usually quite possible for regimes under external siege. Indian and Eelamist guerrilla pressure on the UNP government, willy-nilly prised open some democratic space in the context framed by (a) the regime's greedy authoritarianism as evidenced by the dismissal of tens of thousands of striking workers, the blatantly coercive and fraudulent Referendum of '82, the arrogant and imbecilic proscription of the JVP, the banning of student councils, and the shooting of unarmed student demonstrators in '84 (b) the reactionary New Cold War alliances in foreign policy and defence strategy, tilting away from a sagacious nonalignment and (c) the tolerance of violent Sinhala chauvinism - Cyril Mathewism and the ethnic riots of '83, the non-punishment of the perpetrators of the two Welikada massacres and of the arsonists of the Jaffna Public Library.

In this context and conjuncture, it is unsurprising that Indian and Tamil-insurgent pressure on the JR-Lalith regime was seen as objectively progressive and welcomed by the rational Left, ranging from Vijaya Kumaratunga to sundry non-JVP revolutionary groupings. Following the massacre of TELO and EPRLF by the Tigers in '86 and the JVP's murder of Daya Pathirana in Dec '86, the Sinhala and Tamil rational left, caught in a pincer, were the first to endorse the Indo-Lanka Accord (with its vital amnesty provisions).

While the book is a fast paced and decidedly indispensable read, my most fundamental criticism of Dixit's view and analysis - and this is also my most basic criticism of Indian policy - is the incomprehension of the Southern crisis. I do not mean incomprehension of Sinhala nationalism or the famous 'Sinhala mindset', I mean of the dimensions and dynamics of the Southern crisis which had assumed clearly revolutionary, system-capsizing proportions. That crisis was the matrix in which the Tamil issue - including the embryonic Northeastern Council - was embedded. But this was not understood. Instead of a holistic view, matters were rigidly viewed through the narrower prisms of India's existing policy, of 'making the

Accord work' and of the perceived interests of India's allies i.e. the Jayewardene-Dissanaike faction of the UNP and the Northeastern Provincial Council (NEPC). Incidentally in an interesting political Freudian slip, Mr. Dixit continues to refer in this book, to a 'Provincial **Government**'! This is something that Premadasa and Ranjan Wijeratne took grave exception to, emphasising that 'there are many provincial councils but **only one government** in the country!'

All of India's policy from the late '70's through the airdrop, the decision to militarily engage the LTTE and the setting up of the NEPC can be understood; all the errors comprehended and perhaps unavoidable. The general line right up to the NEPC election and Dixit's high octane diplomacy itself may even be designated as more right than wrong, or more progressive than reactionary, more helpful than unhelpful - if only when set against the regime's arrogant and myopic authoritarianism *and seen as a countervailing factor to it*. But certainly not so the last phase, not after the JVP really got going, the NEPC set up and Premadasa elected. **Mr. Dixit's last four months in Sri Lanka; India's management of the bilateral relationships with Premadasa and with the NEPC as well as total trilateral one between Colombo, Trincomalee (NEPC/IPKF) and Delhi - all these were unmitigated disasters.**

Dixit's (and Gen. Kalkat's) line, namely that Premadasa and V.P. Singh/Gujral should have 'stayed with the programme', gone the distance, reminds me a bit of Westmoreland's line on Vietnam in his memoirs. More to the point: Kerensky and the Entente Powers did tough it out, and stayed with the programme of Russian's engagement in WWI, which the Bolsheviks were feeding on. The result was of course, the October Revolution. The fact that the JVP not only didn't attack the IPKF but had secret truck with certain Indian elements is as irrelevant as the fact that Lenin got a sealed train from the Germans! **Premadasa managed to do what Kerensky could not, precisely because he didn't stay the course! And he saved the system.** The argument that Wijeweera was killed before the IPKF left is also irrelevant. What was important at the time was that Premadasa wrap himself up in the flag; be seen to take his distance from and indeed take on India. His Chittavivékāshramaya speech and brinkmanship with India took place in **July '89, the time that distinguished scholars such as Prof. K.M. de Silva identify in their writings as the very zenith**

(June-July-August '89) of the JVP insurrection and the moment the insurgents were extremely close to seizing State power. I quote from Prof. de Silva's Sri Lanka Country paper submitted to the International Conference on Conflict and Conflict Resolution in South Asia - Colombo, 20/21st July '1997:

"Sensing a favourable opportunity to strike at a regime weakened by ethnic strife and foreign intervention, the JVP launched a bloody campaign of extra-parliamentary agitation that reached a peak in June and July 1989. In this campaign which began in July 1987 in opposition to the Indian intervention, over 2,500 cadres of the UNP were killed by the JVP, including senior politicians of the party. (In July 1987 an attempt by a JVP activist to assassinate the Executive President and members of his cabinet at a meeting of the government parliamentary party within the precincts of parliament narrowly failed). A state of emergency was declared in July 1989 and for a time it seemed as though the JVP might succeed in toppling the elected government and establishing a Marxist dictatorship. While the JVP threat was successfully repulsed by early 1990, the political system would bear the scars of this deadly, close-fought duel for some time to come.

A significant point that needs to be remembered is that the death toll in the two JVP insurrections was higher than the number of those killed in all of Sri Lanka's ethnic riots and in the course of the separatist conflict in the north and east of the island. In 1971 although not a single politician was even slightly injured and the casualties among police and security personnel - injured and killed - were very small, the number of deaths that followed in the suppression of the insurrection has been variously estimated at between 5,000 and 15,000. In 1987-1990 the number of those killed in the course of suppressing the much more formidable JVP insurrection, was between 10,000 and 20,000" (p.10-11).

"From the time it went underground, the JVP was intent on a violent assault on the government whenever an opportunity presented itself. That opportunity came in 1987-88 with the signing of the Indo-Sri Lanka peace

accord in late July 1987 and especially with the entry of the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) to the island in August 1987. The JVP spearheaded the campaign against the peace accord in association with the SLFP and other nationalist groups. Although they never actually attacked the IPKF, they exploited, the intrusion and potential consolidation of Indian influence in Sri Lanka, to sustain their own anti-government campaign, using terrorist tactics for this purpose. JVP terrorism became a prominent factor in the political life of the country, beginning in the Southern Province (and the Hambantota district in particular) and expanding to other parts of the country in the years 1987 to 1989.

... *Indeed no political party in any democratic country, in recent times, has had so many of its supporters killed in cold blood by a rival political group as has the UNP. If these figures are chilling enough on their own, consider what the JVP nearly succeeded in doing. On 18 August 1987 they came very close to assassinating the President and Prime Minister of the country, and a large number of cabinet ministers and MPs as well at a meeting of the government parliamentary party held in a room in Parliament. They could in fact have killed the bulk of the government in one fell swoop.* As it is they only succeeded in killing one MP on that occasion, a District Minister. A few weeks earlier (31 July) they had killed a UNP MP. Later in the year they killed another District Minister and one cabinet minister. Several other MPs and Ministers had escaped assassination, some of them very narrowly. They also killed the Chairman of the UNP and later on the Secretary of the party.

None of the well-known European terrorist groups - not even the Italian Red Brigades - had had a "hit list" of this size and significance of their "credit". *Turning to South Asia, not even the Naxalites can claim a death toll of this magnitude.* To get a comparable figure we have to turn to pre-partition East Bengal (now Bangladesh), in the final stages of their struggle against Pakistan. That, however, was a long-drawn out civil war, not a terrorist campaign. In Myanmar, the Karen separatists would

have a "hit list" of this size, over a forty year period. *In Malaysia, the Chinese Communists had a much more modest "hit list" including British and Malayan servicemen during the Malayan insurgency,* but they had to their credit the killing of the British High Commissioner, Sir Henry Gurney in October 1951.

It is no easy task to deal with terrorism as a political force, and the failure of Sri Lankan governments to evolve a coherent policy in this regard is not a matter for surprise. All democratic governments have had great difficulty in evolving such a policy even when, as in Italy in the 1960s and 1970s, and - to a much greater extent - Sri Lanka in the period 1987 - 89, terrorist groups held the country to ransom, and reduced political life and public activity to a pitiful parody of its once vibrant past. *In Sri Lanka the government itself was very nearly toppled in July-August 1989, by the JVP*" (My emphases - D.J.)

'So it goes.'

(Kurt Vonnegut Jr. *Slaughterhouse Five*)

Premadasa died not as the consequence of sending off the IPKF - in fact **Wijeweera** was eliminated and the insurrection crushed less than four months after he went to the brink with India, shattering the 'patriotic' platform of the JVP. Premadasa died as a result of another factor i.e. he failed to consistently grasp the fascist nature of the Tigers. But then again, so obviously did RAW Chief Verma and Rajiv himself, even after the IPKF's bitter experience! And in the similar case of the Sikh extremists, Indira.

It must be noted that already in May '86 when the LTTE under Kittu slaughtered the TELO, it launched an agit-prop campaign accusing the latter of being an agent of India. An evaluation of this propaganda alone would have revealed to Delhi what the Tigers actual attitude to it was, as well as how the LTTE perceived itself. Delhi not only allowed the elimination of one of its main assets, the TELO and its leader Sri Sabaratnam, to go on unsanctioned - and this despite the Tigers explicit promise to Delhi not to kill him - it also ignored the evidence concerning the LTTE's project. It is specious to claim as Delhi does and did, that it had no way of knowing or predicting Prabhakaran's non adherence to the Accord. The writing was almost literally

on the wall a year earlier! Therefore the criminal folly of Rajiv, RAW's Verma and the Indian power elite towards the Tigers, was of a qualitatively different order from the strategic errors and misceptions of Ranasinghe Premadasa.

I tried for 3 ½ years to get Mr. Premadasa to be a Fujimori towards the LTTE, but failed. What Ché Guevara laconically said of Rosa Luxemburg could be said with slight modification, of Premadasa. In his interview given to Maurice Zeitlin, Ché defined Luxemburg as "a great revolutionary who made mistakes and died as a consequence of them". Substitute 'leader' for 'revolutionary' and you have an accurate verdict on Premadasa.

Now three questions arise: (a) was the JVP phenomenon of such importance and the Southern crisis of such magnitude that it should have been the overriding strategic priority? (b) was it foreseeable or was it perceived at the time of its unfolding? (c) did India have the personnel who could have helped out - the human resources?

I would say 'yes' to all three questions. This is not 'Monday morning quarterbacking'. Evidence: any decent, serious international journal *of that period* featured cover stories on the tottering nature of State power itself in Sri Lanka. INDIA TODAY alone had several, especially in 1989. And all of these spoke to the issue of the IPKF presence being by far and away the main slogan and propellant of the JVP uprising. Shekhar Gupta, Mohan Ram, NEWSWEEK'S Ron Moreau and Tony Clifton, Rodney Tasker and James Clad (now Research Prof. at Georgetown University) of the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, were all writing very perceptive analytical commentaries at the time. (William MacGowan's full-length book on Sri Lanka 'Only Man Is Vile', which was highly praised by the legendary Polish journalist Ryzard Kapucinski, captured the moment fairly well).

How did these writers get it right, while it was still on the wing, while Indian policy makers did not? Apart from the obvious qualifications of distance and non-involvement, I believe that they were helped by their own vast journalistic experience in other violence stricken, guerrilla-rich environments outside of South Asia, which gave them a vital comparative perspective on what was happening. They knew a revolutionary organisation (albeit debased and malignantly distorted) just about to seize

power, when they saw one.

Were there persons on whom Delhi could have drawn - was there *anyone* - to give it a different interpretation, and more vitally, help it better manage the relations with Premadasa? Was Premadasa accessible to Indians? Certainly: the visit by Professors Bhabani Sen Gupta, Partha Gosh and S.D. Muni (which Susil Sirivardana and I arranged and they later wrote up in leading Indian papers) at a time when Premadasa was still eye-balling it with Delhi, is proof of that. But the person I really have in mind is Prof. Urmila Phadnis who not only understood Lankan politics and society; she had studied the JVP *and* had a good equation with Premadasa. But, apart from the odd talk at South Bloc and the occasional dinner at India House, she was kept out of the hard policy loop. If it is argued that this is because she was an outsider to the system, then what of the ubiquitous N.Ram? Urmila could've played a similar role (but far more constructive, sober and mature) vis-à-vis Premadasa, that Ram played vis-à-vis JRJ. And in case some feminist hack argues that Prof. Phadnis was marginalised because she was a woman, the crucial role played by Ms. Meera Shankar of Delhi's PMO (Prime Ministers Office), mentioned in this book, negates the argument.

All that's water - and blood - under the bridge, now.

Let me also bring in Shri Haksar, though not as poignantly as Mr. Dixit has. He told me in '87-'88 and then again last year, that he had argued with Mrs. Gandhi for a Sri Lanka policy that was limited to intense global diplomatic pressure. Almost totally blind now, but possessing tremendous inner vision and wisdom, he holds that history has proved him right.

* * * * *

A muscular young activist of the revolutionary foco I belonged to in the '80s, the Vikalpa Kandayama, unforgettably posed me a question while in clandestinity: "So what's so great about Gramsci, *machan*?" Which I thought got very much to the nub of things. In similar vein, one may ask, since Ranasinghe Premadasa got the LTTE wrong and died for it, what indeed is so great about him? Why bother? Why not consign him to a moderately larger or smaller place in the pantheon and get on with politics - and life - as usual?

Because the Premadasa political experiment touches on two or three of the

most fundamental problems of political strategy and philosophy, certainly in the Third World and arguably the whole world system today. What are these? The first is 'how to combine *transformation* and *crisis management*?' Conventionally these two are seen as two entirely separate entities. Crisis managers are usually status-quoists. 'Manage the crisis in order to preserve the things as they are'. The best example would probably be Peru's Alberto Fujimori. Premadasa's handling with all its excesses, of the JVP, is a success story which has not been understood. We talk of the triumph of Fujimori in turning back Sendero Luminoso; such achievements are trumpeted throughout the world. But Premadasa's success in managing the compound crisis that Sri Lanka faced in the late '80's and '90's is certainly worth writing a text book about - *not least because he effected pro-poor reforms while doing so*. Premadasa seems to be one of the few examples of people who managed an utterly complex, high intensity crisis while at the same time furthering the project of transition.

The second most important thing politically that emanates from the Premadasa experiment is that in the strategy for transformation, he transcended the established divisions in political philosophy and ideology, i.e. the Left - Right, Communist - Capitalist divide, and even the East-West divide. Premadasa's commitment to protecting democracy, to having elections, to the multi party pluralist system, is quite alien to the East Asian model from which he learnt a lot and respected considerably. In terms of political culture, his commitment to having elections on schedule, to eagerly going back to the electorate for legitimacy - all this is close to the Western commitment to multiparty pluralism. But there was also an East Asian emphasis on consensus, on leadership, on discipline, on a strong state. This second important breakthrough, one of transcendence and synthesis, is very necessary throughout the world. Unless political leaders and thinkers are able to do what Premadasa did and really rummage through what both capitalism and socialism have had to offer in terms of ideas and programmes, they'll never be able to come up with the correct synthesis through which the global crisis can be handled. Premadasa was able to do this because he cut across those traditional divisions. Whether it was Mao or Lee Kwan Yew, he wanted to know about them, he wanted to learn from them and

adapt their experience to the Sri Lankan situation. An examination of both paradigms are necessary in order to come up with a synthesis. Premadasa was doing that. His project was not fashionably *post*-ideological, it was *transideological*; eclectic and syncretic in the best sense of the words. With the end of the Cold War this approach is both a possibility and a challenge. It's a possibility because the old struggles have been superseded; it's a challenge because there's a view that there's nothing to learn from socialism; that the only reality is the free market model and its victory.

The third fundamental political achievement of Premadasa and the lesson we can derive is, how one retrieves and extends national sovereignty in an economically integrated, interdependent world. It is being said that national independence and national sovereignty are now increasingly meaningless and are on the way out; that they either have to be subsumed in regional alliances such as the EU or the state has to be politically deconstructed with sovereignty moving down to the grassroots/periphery. Or both. The thesis of the neo-liberals is that national sovereignty should be replaced with globalisation; that if you place a high premium on national sovereignty you cannot really have a free market economy/open economy; that you will have to have a self sufficient closed economy. This thinking is shared, indeed mirrored, in Sri Lanka by extreme Sinhala nationalists who say, "away with the open economy, we must have national self sufficiency, a national economy and national sovereignty". Premadasa was able to chart a course through that - he got the best from the outside world as far as economic development policy went; the economy became increasingly integrated, even more than it was during the Jayawardene Period, with new investors, high growth and the stock market getting off the ground. *But he did this while not surrendering an inch on issues of political sovereignty*. This was a very difficult task - to separate out the political from the economic - because it seemed to follow that if you wanted to have excellent relations with the West, particularly now that there is intense competition among the third world countries for foreign capital, you have to trade off old notions of national sovereignty. Which Premadasa did not do. It looks like he

managed to have the cake and eat it. That is something many third world countries and even the ex-Soviet Union and Eastern Europe would do well to study - because nationalism is going to remain a very, very powerful force. *Unless democratic leaders wield the banner of national sovereignty it will be seized by fundamentalist forces who will question both the market economy and democracy.* President Premadasa's great achievement was that while fighting successfully to safeguard political independence and political sovereignty, he also promoted economic integration. And he did it in a convalescing democracy where one war had ended and another was unfolding: it was not stable, prosperous, secure Singapore, Malaysia or South Korea! But he still pulled it off.

These are the three major political achievements and lessons which are relevant to Sri Lanka and to the rest of the world today: (a) combining transformation and crisis management, (b) transcending the right/left divide in terms of political philosophy, ideas and the development model, and (c) how to maintain national sovereignty while reconciling with global economic integration. Premadasa's perspective on transformation and crisis management was not the pessimistic counter revolutionary one of a Metternich or Henry Kissinger. Transformation is usually seen as something from outside the system to change the system, something that exacerbates social criticism and cannot and will not resort to crisis management because it is not interested in managing, still less resolving, a crisis. But in today's world we have a situation in which crisis management is really impossible without some element of transformation! The global crisis we face today is a crisis of alternatives. With the collapse of the socialist system one is left with the capitalist system, which in turn has shown tremendous strains and many violent disruptions. Sri Lanka is a very good case in point: what we had here in '87-'90 was not a crisis of socialism but precisely a crisis of capitalism! On the other hand the socialist alternative has collapsed. So what does one do?

Obviously if you keep the system as it is, you will have tremendously violent dislocations. At a time when socialism is on the retreat, violent movements are bound to take increasingly irrational

fundamentalist forms, forms which lead to absolute anarchy and *which cannot even be negotiated with* - unlike earlier forms of Marxist forces when there was some common rational philosophical core which democrats could touch base with finally.

In that situation the challenges are to stretch the system so as to manage the crises that are unfolding i.e. to be able

to handle and even transmute many of the social disequilibria. This is particularly relevant in the former Soviet Union and Central and Eastern Europe which is making the transformation from socialism to capitalism; but is possibly of future use even in the US where the Republican backlash in the Congress - the budget slashing - is threatening the social programmes that help hold that place together.

The World According to Kumari

In her article 'Vivienne Goonawardene - La Pasionaria of Sri Lanka', published in the Sunday Observer of Oct 5th, Dr. Visakha Kumari Jayawardane makes a fascinating statement: "George Mosse in his study on Nationalism and Sexuality comments on '**the disdain which established society reserved for male revolutionaries**' but adds that '**surpassing the disdain**' was the '**deep hatred for women as revolutionary figures**'. (Italics in the original).

So according to George Mosse and Dr. V.K.J. established societies merely **disdain** male revolutionaries but **deeply hate** female revolutionaries. And the disdain '**surpasses**' the hatred. This must doubtless be a sample of Feminist logic.

Let's see how this works, shall we?

Autocracy merely disdained Lenin but it deeply hated Krupskaya (ditto Kollontai). The Kuomintang had disdain for Mao Tse Tung, Chu Teh and Chou en Lai, but deeply hated Mao's successive wives. The US aggressor and its puppet South Vietnamese regime merely disdained Ho Chi Minh and General Giap while it deeply hated Madame Nguyen Thi Binh. Batista had only disdain for Fidel Castro and Camilo Cienfuegos while his deep hatred was reserved for Celia Sanchez and Haydee Santamaria. The Bolivian junta had nothing but disdain for Ché while it deeply hated Tania. The Somoza regime just disdained Carlos Fonseca but it deeply hated Dora Maria Tellez. And of course, the established society in Sri Lanka disdained Vijaya Kumaratunga but it deeply hated Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga!

Right, Kumari?

Anuruddha Tilakasiri

Contd from page 4

independent newspapers, the articles on federalism have little to say on the shortcomings of federal systems, and nothing at all on the failure of federal systems in other parts of the world to resolve the sort of problems for which federalism is recommended as essential for Sri Lanka.

A look at a standard world map will show that most federal states are large countries, some of them of sub-continental proportions. Indeed of the eight largest countries in the world as many as seven are federal states. These are, in alphabetical order: Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, India, Russia and the United States. The exception is China - which is not referred to as a federation in official United Nations documents. China has four "autonomous" regions in the periphery of the country: Inner Mongolia, Tibet, Sinkiang and Kwangsi Chuang. Other federal states include Austria, Germany, Malaysia, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, Switzerland and Venezuela. Of these states only two, or three if one includes Belgium, have a territorial spread of less than 50,000 square miles: Austria (32,377 square miles) and Switzerland (15,943 square miles).

Generally federal systems are the product of long process of historical evolution. All of them represent, in essence, a compromise between the need for retaining some element of a regional unit's distinct identity, and the political compulsions for the establishment of a cohesive and larger entity consisting of these units. The very successful Swiss federation evolved over several centuries - the process being accelerated after the 19th century - the US and Canadian systems developed over two centuries, and the Australian federation over the last century.

The current debates about the status of Quebec, the core of the old French Canada, within the Canadian union have a somewhat archaic ring, if by archaic of one means the 18th and 19th centuries. One thinks of the Quebec Act (1774) and the Constitutional Act (1791) and of that pathbreaking 19th century document on how to handle the principal ethnic divide in Canada—English versus French—the Durham Report, as well as the public policies that followed the adoption of its principal recommendations from the 1850s and through the 19th and early 20th centuries. Yet none of these measures has succeeded in giving the Canadian federation the stability of its US counterpart. As regards the current debate over Quebec's position within Canada it is no more than a re-cycling of arguments used in the late 18th century and 19th on the same theme. Indeed the Canadian federation serves as an excellent example of the failure of federalism to cope with ethnic tensions.

In many former colonial systems, a federal structure often grew as part of an attempt to preserve distinct territorial units conquered or

absorbed by the colonial power at various stages, and the ethnic, religious and regional identities associated with them. The examples that spring to mind are India, Pakistan and Malaya (now Malaysia) all of which gained independence as federations. Some federations were post-independence creations, through the intentional combination of separate political entities: Nigeria, Tanzania and Cameroon among them.

Nigeria is a special case. When it gained independence in 1960, it had for all practical purposes, a unitary system, and it was only in 1963 that a "quasi-federal" governmental structure was instituted. Beginning with 3 states the Nigerian federation now has 31, and there is pressure for the creation of more states, from 38 to as many as 80. The Nigerian record of the proliferation of states, as seen in the following maps, is something that those who are intent on the redrawing of the boundaries of the Eastern Province would ignore at their peril.

One feature of the development of federal systems needs special emphasis: very seldom have federal structures been adopted in formerly unitary states. One of these examples often cited is Spain, where traditional regional identities have been very strong and where there has been a long history of dissension between the regions. The current constitution of Spain² has certain very special features. The country is divided into Provinces (on

'traditional' lines). The constitution permits a group of contiguous Provinces (with common historical, cultural and economic characteristics) to seek the status of an 'Autonomous Community.' Autonomous status could be sought only when a minimum of two-thirds of the 'Municipalities' (local government bodies) within the provinces concerned supported such an initiative. Such status is granted following negotiations between the central government and the group of provinces seeking such status. (see clauses 137 to 158 of the Spanish constitution of 1978)

The most significant feature is that the constitution allows for variations within the 'Autonomous Communities' (i.e. among the respective provinces of an autonomous community) as well as among the autonomous communities, in respect of the extent of autonomy granted. Thus the Spanish constitution enables the central government to regulate the amount of autonomy granted to each Autonomous Community and to each constituent Province within an Autonomous Community.

From the time of promulgation of the new constitution (1978) up to 1984, 17 Autonomous Communities, with varying degrees of autonomy, had been created. There is no across-the-board, i.e. uniform, devolution in the Spanish system. Some of the 'Autonomous Communities' of Spain are less

Table II
GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES (GRP) AND MORO NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT (MNLF)

1992	Exploratory Peace Talks: Tripoli, 1992 GRP-MNLF joint Declaration signed at the Hague, September 1992
1993	Second round of Exploratory Peace Talks: Cipanas, West Java, 1993 First GRP-MNLF Formal Peace Talks, hosted by Indonesian Government held at Jakarta, Indonesia, 25 October and 7 November 1993 These were based on mutually agreed agenda settled during exploratory talks held in Cipanas, April 1993. The Jakarta talks resulted in the signing of the following documents: An Interim cease-fire agreement, and a Memorandum of Agreement.
1994	Second Round of Formal Peace Talks held in Jakarta, September 1-5, 1994, signing of Interim Agreement
1995	Meeting between GRP and MNLF in Nieuwegein, The Netherlands, 24 February on Safety and Immunity guarantees. Third Round of Formal Peace Talks, Jakarta, 27 November - 1 December 1995.
1996	Interim Agreement signed at Fourth Round of Formal Peace Talks, Jakarta, 29 August 1996, and in the nine (9) meetings of the Mixed Committee held in various places, and on various dates in the Philippines and Indonesia. Signing of Peace Agreement, 2 September 1996.

autonomous than, say, Scotland in the UK. More important, despite the use of the term 'Autonomous Community' the constitution vests a large amount of reserve powers on the Central government. Spain is almost entirely homogenous in respect of religion if not of language as well.

An example of a small unitary state that has evolved into a federation is Belgium. Belgium survived as a unitary state till 1970, when prolonged tensions compelled a resort to 'an exercise in constitutional reform, a significant modification of the unitary system. After a virtual breakdown in the system in the late 1970s there followed more vigorous attempts at constitutional revision which took the form of regionalisation and, when this too seemed inadequate, a federal system was introduced in 1988-89. An authoritative study of this latter process by a recent scholar, L Hooghe, has a very telling title - *A Leap in the Dark - The Belgian Federal Reform*.³ Belgium has (following the post-1970 reforms) two sets of sub-national arrangements. The national authorities share power with: (a) the executive and legislative bodies representing the 3 major politically defined 'regions' (Flanders, Wallonia and Brussels); and (b) the more numerous language 'communities' (that are incorporated within the regions). Belgium continues to have a strong central government because under the terms of its constitution, national executive power is vested in the king and his ministers, and legislative power is shared by the king, the chamber of representatives (lower house), and the Senate.

In Belgium the majority linguistic group - Dutch speakers - accounts for only 55% of the population, while the main minority group - French speaking - accounts for as much as 44%. The ethnic and religious identities that divided the people of Belgium have deep historical roots, and the two principal groups have long traditions of conflicting political aspirations.

If Sri Lanka were to join this band, it would be one of a very small group of unitary states to convert itself into a federation. But the difference between Belgium and Spain - both officially classified as constitutional monarchies - on the one hand and Sri Lanka on the other lies in the fact that Sri Lanka's present provinces have been created by the British and have always been merely administrative units. They did not embody a political identity, despite the political motive behind their creation during British rule. They evolved over the period 1832 to 1889. Certainly they were not and have never been "regions" in any acceptable sense of the word.

The principal argument advanced in favour of a federal structure for Sri Lanka is that it would be a more effective means of accommodating ethnic diversity than the current unitary

system. However, the crucially important fact is that the demand for it is restricted to a section of the Tamil minority who regard it as a means of reinforcing a distinct regional identity based on the north and east of the island. They are guided by a belief in the right to regional autonomy. It is also argued that introduction of a federal structure would undermine the case for an independent state in the north and parts of the east of the country.

Several other arguments are advanced in favour of a federal option for Sri Lanka, but these are all subsidiary to those referred to in the previous paragraph. In identifying these other arguments we do not endorse them: on the contrary we believe that many of the presumed advantages of a federal system set out below could just as easily be derived from a unitary system with a network of local government bodies. The arguments in favour of federalism include the contention that it would increase opportunities for individuals and groups to participate in government by creating more levels of government and a larger variety of government institutions; it is also contended that federal arrangements provide a variety of opportunities for articulation of group sentiments, generally not available in unitary systems - minority groups are more likely to win substantial influence in a regional unit than in a central legislature⁴. A corollary of this argument is that regional governments under a federal system are better able to articulate the concerns, demands and needs of minority groups than the administrative units of a unitary state.

It is also argued that federalism provides a wider arena for conflict resolution than a purely unitary system: if regional governments represent minority opinions, conflicts can be resolved through negotiations between the regional and central government or between various regional governments. In addition, where minority groups are territorially identified, the regional government can act to protect the interests and identity of the minority. Also federal political structures are considered inherently more democratic because they allow the public more points of access to the government, and thus bring the government closer to the people. Finally it is argued that in a well balanced federal system various groups feel that they have an equal opportunity and fair share of power and privilege, even if they are not able to control the central government.

We need to examine these claims in relation to the reality of practical experience in federal states, in brief, to ask the question whether federal structures have actually helped to reduce tensions in other parts of the world and to sustain the cohesion of troubled political entities, struggling to cope with ethnic tensions. The fact is that ethnic and other

conflicts persist in many federations. Indeed the political history of the world in recent times provides many examples of failed federations. The level of failure ranges from the peaceful separation of the Czech and Slovak units of the former Czechoslovakia, in very recent times, of Malaysia and Singapore in 1965-66 and the collapse of federations in the British Caribbean colonies and states, to the violence that accompanied the failure of federal structures to maintain the former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia intact. Then there is the record of failure of the Nigerian federation to prevent civil war, or to maintain a democratic system or reduce ethnic tensions in that large nation after the civil war⁵. As we have seen Nigeria which had only 3 units in 1960 now has over 30. In British India the diarchical federal system introduced after the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms, and the system of provincial autonomy introduced under the Government of India Act of 1935 did little to keep Hindus and Muslims together. Eventually tensions between the two groups led to the bloody partition of the raj. Nor has the post-colonial federal structure succeeded in providing an effective means of managing ethnic and religious strife in India as events in the last two decades and the period since the early 1980s in particular demonstrate.

The central government in India has often altered regional boundaries to appease particularly disgruntled and vocal minority groups whether they be linguistic or religious, a process that has gone on from the mid-1950s to the present day, and shows no signs of coming to an end as regionalism and ethnic identity make their own pressures felt. The best example is the fate of the north-east of India: between 1947 and the present day altered provincial boundaries have created seven states where there was one large state, Assam, and a few princely states. The new states are called the Seven Sisters of India's troubled north-east.

Despite this creation of state after state, each of these seven states contain dissident groups seeking an autonomous status within them, or demanding the creation of a new state, a process that will lead to more states than the seven already in existence in the north-east. While the Indian union has remained intact for almost 50 years since independence, this survival owes much more to the country's macro-economy with its expanding inter-regional linkages and its bureaucracy and the military might of the central government than it does to its federal structure of government.

To the list of federal systems that have failed to contain ethnic and religious tensions within and between regions or provinces must be added Belgium. There, in 1988-89, in yet another phase of the process of establishing a federal structure, the powers of the regions or provinces were increased further and

substantially. The assumption was that this would help maintain the system as a viable political entity and prevent its eventual dissolution. On the contrary, greater power to the units has whetted their appetites for still more power and the pursuit of separatist aspirations at the expense of the already weakened central government. Knowledgeable political analysts fear that the Belgian federation is heading for dissolution, fortunately, almost certainly a peaceful one on the Czech and Slovak model.

As in India demands for boundary changes within federal structures are put forward in many countries by minority groups who wish to concentrate their power. In particular newly salient ethnic, religious or merely regional groups, seek recognition as distinct or separate units, as for example, in Russia since the dissolution of the Soviet Union where the pressures for change have resulted in violence as in Chechniya, or the prospect of violence in other parts of the Russian Federation. In Spain the success of Catalonia, the Basque region, and Galacia in gaining special regional status has inspired other regions of the country to demand recognition and to gain similar regional status.

Indeed, the capacity of devolution of power to regional units, be they districts or provinces, or something larger than provinces, in a unitary system no less than in a federation, to reduce ethnic conflict is more limited than enthusiastic advocates of it are willing to concede. The fact is that experience suggests that federal systems often aggravate rather than curb separatist sentiment in peripheral units. As the well-known US political scientist, Milton Esman wrote in an article written nearly 25 years ago.

*"...the conflict regulation potential of territorial autonomy [is limited] when territorial units... make extravagant and even incompatible demands... which the polity cannot accommodate, thus escalating rather than regulating conflict."*⁶

This is the story in India whether one looks at the Punjab, Kashmir, or Assam; it is the story in Belgium; in Canada; and in Nigeria. The evidence we have would justify the prediction that it would be the story in Sri Lanka if a federal structure is introduced. The crucial point would be the fate of the multi-ethnic and multi-religious Eastern Province. In Sri Lanka the introduction of a federal system would be controversial enough on its own; it becomes even more so because it is linked with the question of the creation of a distinctively Tamil region or a Tamil dominated region in the Northern and Eastern Provinces - the controversial claim for a Traditional Homeland or Homelands for the Tamils of Sri Lanka.

In Sri Lanka federalism is regarded, by the present regime, as a political prophylactic against separatism. They would do well to take heed of Milton Esman's warning in his recent study of Ethnic Politics, that: "For statecraft the principal risk associated with federalism is that territorial devolution may be the prelude to demands for complete separation."⁷ Nothing in Sri Lanka's recent politics, especially the passionate commitment of the LTTE to separatism, and the reluctance of the other Tamil parties to stand up to the LTTE or to commit themselves publicly to a repudiation of separatism, warrants any great optimism on that score.

For the new federal units of Belgium, no less than those of Spain, or Quebec in Canada, the failure of a federal structure to contain the pressures for separatism has at least the consolation of a large safety net to cushion the collapse of such a system: the European Community in the case of the first two, and the North American Free Trade Association in the case of Quebec. There will be no such safety net for the Sri Lankan federation which the People's Alliance plans to introduce.

If the People's Alliance proposals on devolution are accepted by Parliament and the electorate, Sri Lanka would join Belgium as an unusual example of a small unitary state which converted itself into a federation. Indeed, as an Indian scholar has recently reminded us if the federal units in India were as small in size as the provinces in Sri Lanka, India would have 426 states! More to the point, Sri Lanka would be a unique example of a former colonial entity adopting the administrative boundaries originally introduced by the colonial power as the boundaries of the units of a new federation. Unlike in other colonial societies the British in Sri Lanka did not preserve the traditional districts as colonial administrative divisions. Instead, in an attempt to destroy the national feeling in the Kandyan kingdom they deliberately ignored traditional boundaries. That is the genesis of Sri Lanka's nine provinces, which are now treated as "regions" in the PA proposals.

Characteristic of the restless experimentation which has been this island's record in constitution making and breaking, the People's Alliance proposals on devolution are the third to be introduced for public discussion in less than 15 years from the time the District Development Councils were established in 1980-1. That system was abandoned in the mid-1980s after the TULF (with Indian support) refused to be committed to it any longer. The second scheme, the provincial councils system was introduced against the background of massive demonstrations against them, not to mention much bloodshed, in 1986-87. Now, less than a decade after it was introduced an attempt is being made to abandon them in favour of a federal system;

with a weak centre. Viewed in historical perspective the present proposals envisage the most purposeful reconstruction of the Sri Lankan polity since the Colebrooke-Cameron proposals of 1833. The objective in 1833 was to strengthen the centre; in 1994-97 the objective is the reverse of that, to weaken the centre.

The system now introduced for public discussion is a very complex one, much too complex for a country which has shown no great relish for the existing Provincial Councils. The fact of the matter is that the country's politicians have very little experience in the running of a second tier of government and no set of conventions or traditions in political behaviour essential to sustain such a system has developed. Generally it takes several decades for such conventions and traditions to evolve. To introduce a federal system now is almost certain to subject Sri Lanka's crisis-ridden political system to yet another set of stresses.

There are many other flaws in the present proposals and its critics have identified these for comment. I would focus on four in this paper. The first, is of course, the whole principle of federalism. The structure now envisaged is a much weaker federation than even that devised for Belgium in 1988. Those seeking to amend these proposals would do well to restore some of the powers of the centre which these proposals seek to eliminate. Of these, one is the centre's control of the distribution of public land. One of the most regrettable shortcomings of the present proposals - and here the PA government is more to blame than the TULF - is its failure to examine the official records on what had gone on in regard to discussions and negotiations on the distribution of state-owned land in the 1980s. Had the PA done that, it would have known that a formula on the distribution of land had been reached by consensus in 1984 and 1986. For the convenience of the reader of this paper we repeat what has been pointed earlier in this paper, on the essence of that consensus: that in regard to national or major irrigation schemes in any part of the island, the distribution would be on the current national ethnic proportions (74% for the Sinhalese and 26 for the minorities) with the proviso that the Tamils and Muslims could, if they wish, concentrate their national quota in the Northern and the Eastern Provinces. On minor irrigation schemes, the district or provincial ethnic profile would prevail, i.e. local residents would get preference. As we have seen consensus was reached on this in 1984; the TULF re-opened this issue in December 1985 in their new oft-quoted letter of 1 December 1985 to Rajiv Gandhi. The Political Parties Conference re-affirmed this same formula in 1986. Part of this process of re-affirmation was an intervention by two Indian politicians on this issue, P Chidhambaram

(currently India's Finance Minister) and Natwar Singh: they too accepted it. The principal figures in the discussions on this are both dead: Gamini Dissanayake and A Amirthalingam and incidentally both killed by the LTTE. Surprisingly, this formula has been ignored by the PA government, despite the fact that many of the smaller political parties represented in it were involved in the negotiations on that occasion, and played a role in creating a consensus on the principles on land distribution on that occasion.

Second, there is the question of police services. The history of negotiations on this issue begins in early 1985 just at the time Rajiv Gandhi took over as Prime Minister after the general election that followed upon his mother's assassination. Lalith Athulathmudali was sent to India for discussions with Rajiv Gandhi in February 1985. He reported that Rajiv Gandhi himself believed that law and order should not, in any way, be conceded to the districts: The Indian Prime Minister had told the Sri Lankan Minister for National Security, that this was the mistake India had made with regard to the Punjab. Despite this initial reluctance to recommend the Indian system to Sri Lanka, it was introduced as part of the 1986-87 package, under pressure from Tamil politicians in Sri Lanka, and Indian officials sympathetic to their views. We confront two issues here: the existence of a tradition of local police forces in many countries, federal and unitary; secondly, the need for greater minority representation in the Sri Lankan police force. Whether the remedy for this is the creation of 9 regional police forces on the Indian model is another question altogether. The proposals on regional police forces introduced in 1986-7 (and never implemented) and retained in the present proposals need to be re-examined in the context of the present security situation and concerns, and against the background of the current reality - reflecting a colonial inheritance - of a single national police service and its use, quite often, for partisan political purposes by the governments in power, whether the UNP or the Peoples Alliance.

Third, the present proposals for borrowing rights for provincial or regional assemblies in the international market are a recipe for disaster. Apart from anything else they would guarantee the perpetuation of the prevailing system of uneven economic development. Attempts by the centre to monitor such borrowings will be a potent cause of dissatisfaction.

An even more potent cause of contention both in relations between the centre and the provinces, and between the provinces

themselves, will be disputes over water. The absence of any reference to this critically important issue in these proposals is its fourth point of weakness, especially because the principal sources of water are in the Sinhalese areas of the country, and the principal demand for water for irrigation purposes comes from the dry zone, some part of which lies in the regions of the country with large Tamil and or Muslim population concentrations.

4. DEVOLUTION: THE SEARCH FOR A CONSENSUS

One of the unfortunate consequences of concentrating attention on district and provincial units, and on supra-provincial units has been a neglect of one of the less controversial and more viable forms of decentralisation—local government institutions at the municipal and urban council levels and village council levels. **Sri Lanka is a unique case where discussions and negotiations on devolution of power have been conducted since the 1950's without any reference to the reform and strengthening of local government institutions.**

The last comprehensive examination of local government institutions and their problems took place as long ago as 1954-5—the Choksy Commission, headed by the father of Mr K N Choksy presently UNP MP and former Minister for Constitutional Affairs in the Premadasa and Wijetunga governments. Thereafter the focus of attention has been almost exclusively on the second tier of government. Over the last thirty years or more very little has been done to strengthen the financial bases of these local government institutions or their powers to initiate local development projects. On the contrary there was till the late 1970s an ever-increasing control over them by the central government, in the name, generally of efficiency and co-ordination of services and economic development, but in fact in the pursuit of political objectives designed to benefit the party in power. That tendency reached its peak in the period 1970-7 when the operations of a large number of local government bodies ranging from municipalities (including the Colombo Municipality) to village councils were suspended. The result was that an important range of institutions which could have contributed to a genuine devolution of power through participatory democracy and local initiatives lost a great deal of their vitality. The decision of the Presidential Commission on Development Councils of 1980 to abolish village councils and to transfer the functions of these bodies to local level units of the District Development

Councils, and to informal (i.e. theoretically non-political) village organisations did not yield any of the benefits anticipated on that occasion. That decision was based on a mixture of political considerations and a misplaced idealism. The TULF who argued in favour of the abolition of village councils hoped thereby to strengthen the district councils, and in any case to bring all other local government institutions under the purview and supervision of the district councils; others argued that the administrative costs of running these village councils had kept increasing to the point where very little money was left for development programmes and that, in any event, such programmes were of a distinctly ad hoc nature. In addition there was the belief that these informal but popular village bodies could cut across party alignments and bring the people of the village together for common development projects, that in fact they would be means of de-politicising the village in the periods between national and district council elections. It soon became clear that the mechanisms and informal institutions substituted for village councils did not provide either the administrative efficiency or the responsiveness to local needs anticipated when they were instituted. Village councils were re-established in 1988-9 and the first elections to them were held in 1991.

After 1977 local government elections have been held at regular intervals at a national level and generally - like parliamentary elections - on a single day. Again in stark contrast to the situation between 1970 and 1977 government controls over such councils were relaxed, and certainly no council was brought under central control. Nevertheless there has been no systematic attempt to examine the financial viability of village and urban councils, or the power, functions and resources of municipalities. While Sri Lanka has avoided the worst features of South Asian urbanisation so far, its continued ability to do so will depend very much on the effective functioning of its local government institutions, especially its municipalities.

The present debate on devolution of power would be a much more realistic one if local government institutions were treated as an essential feature of devolution, instead of being ignored totally as they have been in the PA's proposals. Innovative local government institutions are likely to be a more appropriate means of recognising ethnic and religious diversity in areas like the Eastern Province with its mixed population and making provision for that diversity than boundary changes designed to establish ethnic enclaves whether they

be called districts or provinces.

One final point. There would be a much stronger prospect of achieving a consensus between the two national parties, if not in the country at large, if the Philippines example of establishing an organic link between the current proposals, and the decisions taken in the last 15 years on devolution in Sri Lanka. This would include the 13th amendment of the 1978 constitution, and the recommendations of the Mangala Moonesinghe Committee. There was a consensus reached between the two national parties in the Mangala Moonesinghe Committee's report. And one must not forget that President Chandrika Kumaratunge personally and her party the Sri Lanka Mahajana Pakshaya (SLMP) actively supported the 13th amendment and the SLMP participated in the elections to the Provincial Councils in 1988.

Endnotes

1. For a definitive study of Moro resistance see, C A Majul, Muslims in the Philippines, 2nd ed., University of the Philippines Press, Quezon City, 1973.
2. An English translation of the text of the Spanish Constitution of 1978 was published in Keesing's Contemporary Archives, 5 October 1979, pp 29855-29866.
3. L Hooghe, A Leap in the Dark - The Belgian Federal Reform, Ithaca, N.Y., Cornell University Occasional Papers on Western Societies Program, No. 27, 1991.
4. On Federalism, the standard works include, I D Duchacet, Comparative Federalism: The Territorial Dimensions of Politics, London, 1987; Carl Friedrich, Trends of Federalism in Theory and Practice, London, 1968; T M Frank (ed.), Why Federations Fail: An Inquiry into the Requisites for Successful Federation, London, 1968; C U Hicks, Federalism: Success and Failure, London, 1978; Preston King, Federalism and Federation, London, 1982; G Sawyer, Modern Federalism, 2nd ed., London, 1976; K C Wheare, Federal Government, (first published, London, 1946; this book has gone into several editions);
5. Nigerian Federalism is reviewed in A B Akinyemi, P D Cole and W Ofonagoro (eds), Readings on Federalism, Lagos, Nigerian Institute of International Affairs, 1979; J I Elaigwu, P C Logams and H S Galadima (eds), Federalism and Nation Building in Nigeria, Ajuba, 1994; J E Elaigwu, "The Challenge of Unity in a Heterogenous Society: The Case of Nigeria," Development Studies Review, 2(2), 1987, pp 78-93, and the same author's "Nigerian Federalism under Civilian and Military Rule," Publius, The Journal of Federalism, 18(1), Winter 1988, pp 173-188.
6. Milton Esman "The Management of Communal Conflict" in Public Policy XXI, Winter, 1972, p 64.
7. Milton Esman, Ethnic Politics, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY, 1994, p 43.

Table I

LANDMARKS OF DEVOLUTION OF POLITICAL POWER: SRI LANKA, 1928 - 1997 AND ATTEMPTS AT NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT, 1956 - 1997

I Pre-Independence

Donoughmore Commission (1928) recommended the establishment of a system of 'Provincial Councils' as an intermediate tier of government between the centre and the local government authorities.

Executive Committee of Local Government of the national legislature, the State Council, (July 1940) recommended the establishment of Provincial Councils "in respect of revenue districts," with Municipal Councils functioning independently of such Provincial Councils.

S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike, Minister of Local Administration in the second State Council, 1936 - 1947, supported this recommendation, stressing in his address to the State Council in July 1940, that each Revenue District will have such a 'Provincial Council', thus introducing a confusion between district and provinces which persisted till the 1960s.

The State Council unanimously adopted this 'Provincial Councils' motion but the required legislation was never introduced by Bandaranaike.

II Post-Independence, 1947 - 1956

SRI LANKA GOVERNMENT	TAMIL POLITICAL PARTIES/ GROUPS
<p><u>UNP-led Government</u> No initiative towards devolution within a District or Provincial framework.</p>	<p>Formation of the Federal Party (FP) with a demand for "own autonomous state guaranteeing self-government and self-determination for the Tamil nation in the country"</p> <p>The FP introduces the concept of a Traditional Tamil Homeland in Sri Lanka</p>

III 1956 - 1965

<p><u>SLFP-led Coalition Government (1956-1960)</u> Preparation of a draft bill to establish 'Regional Councils', May 1957. In the draft bill it was stated that a regional council shall consist of ".....the whole or any part of an Administrative District or the area consisting of the whole or part of two or more administrative districts"</p>	
<p>S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike-S.J.V. Chelvanayakam Pact (B-C pact-26th July 1957) Northern Province to form one Regional Council area, Eastern Province to be divided into two or more Regional Council areas, with provisions for two or more Regional Council areas to be amalgamated)</p>	
<p>Government abrogates the B-C pact (April 1958)</p>	
<p><u>UNP Government (March 1960 - July 1960)</u> No government initiative on devolution</p>	<p>Some bargaining by Federal Party with the SLFP and the UNP on the issue of devolution (March - July, 1960)</p>

SRI LANKA GOVERNMENT	TAMIL POLITICAL PARTIES GROUPS
SLFP Government (July 1960 - April 1965) Government prepares a draft bill on District Councils	Federal Party negotiations with the government on the draft District Councils bill
Failure of SLFP - FP negotiations and the abandonment of the District Councils Bill	
	'Tamil only' campaign and the 'Direct Action' campaign launched by the FP.

III 1965 - 1970

	S.J.V. Chelvanayakam reaches agreement with the leader of the opposition, Dudley Senanayake, in March 1965 regarding a UNP commitment to setup District Councils if returned to office at the forth-coming elections.
UNP-led coalition Government (May 1965 - May 1970) Policy statement of the government (1966) announces that ".....earnest considerations will be given to the establishment of District Councils"	Tamil Political Parties FP joins the ranks of government. FP accepts the principle of devolution through a District Councils system
Dudley Senanayake - Chelvanayakam pact(March 1965)	
June 1968 - draft bill on District Councils published in the form of a white paper	The Tamil Congress (TC) functions as a pressure group within the government (intense rivalry between the FP and the TC) FP minister resigns from the cabinet, but the FP continues to support the government
Mid-1969 - Government abandons the District Councils proposal	

IV 1970 - 1977

SLFP led coalition (United Front) Government(July 1970 to July 1977) Adoption of a new constitution making Sri Lanka a "Free, Sovereign and Independent Republic (and) a Unitary State. "No initiatives towards devolution.	Tamil Political Parties FP withdraws from the Constituent Assembly in June 1971 when its demands on Federalism and language were rejected. In May 1972 FP and TC joined to form the Tamil United Front (TUF)
Establishment of District Political Authorities (1973)	May 1976 Formation of the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) and the passing of the 'Vaddukodai Resolution' advocating the establishment of a separate Tamil state - Eelam
March 1977 Discussion between the government and the TULF on devolution. (Abandonment of the discussion following on the death of S.J.V. Chelvanayakam)	

V 1977 - 1987

SRI LANKA GOVERNMENT	TAMIL POLITICAL PARTIES/ GROUPS
UNP Government, 1977 - 1982 Appointment of a Presidential Commission to formulate a plan for the establishment of District Development Councils (DDCs)	TULF representation is accommodated in the DDC commission

DDC commission report published as Sessional Paper V of 1980. (Report contained certain 'dissenting proposals' by Tamil members. The Government accepted these dissenting proposals)

DDCs established in 1981	TULF continues campaign for greater autonomy for the North-East
UNP Government, 1983 - 1987 The government resists the Provincial Councils demand, but summons an All Party Conference in 1984 to reach a compromise on devolution demands	Emergence of several militant groups proclaiming commitment to the idea of a separate Tamil state Tamil Parties / Groups TULF (with Indian Government backing) abandons its support for District Development Councils, in the aftermath of the anti-Tamil riots of July 1983 and presents a demand for a Provincial Councils system, with the North-East constituting a single Provincial Council

Timpu (Bhutan) Talks between Sri Lanka Government and Representatives of Tamil Parties / Groups (1985) with Government of India mediating. No tangible outcome

Under Indian pressure, the Sri Lankan government accepts the concept of Provincial Councils but refuses a permanent merger of the Northern and Eastern Provinces. Government of Sri Lanka initiated the 'Delhi Accord' in August 1985	LTTE becomes the dominant political force among the Tamils. It acquires the undisputed leadership of the secessionist movement mainly through a process of annihilating other Tamil parties / groups
Political Parties Conference - 1986	
July 1987 - Signing of the Indo-Sri Lanka peace accord which, among other things, facilitated a temporary merger of the Northern and Eastern Provinces.	
Induction of the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) to the North-East of Sri Lanka.	Formation of a North-East Provincial Government headed by the EPRLF - 1988(propped up by the IPKF)
1988 - Establishment of Provincial Councils based on the 'Thirteenth Amendment' to the constitution.	Collapse of the NE Provincial Council Government

VI 1989 - 1994

SRI LANKA GOVERNMENT	TAMIL POLITICAL PARTIES/ GROUPS
UNP Government 1989 - 1994 Government demands the de-induction of the IPKF. The withdrawal of the IPKF from Sri Lanka took place from December 1990 to April 1991	The "First Eelam War" (fierce clashes between the LTTE and the security forces) May 1991, assassination of Rajiv Gandhi in Tamilnadu by LTTE
Negotiations between the Government and the LTTE - April 1989 - June 1990 failure of the LTTE - Govt. negotiations (June 1990)	
Parliamentary Select Committee submits report recommending the strengthening of Provincial Councils by abolishing the "Concurrent List" of powers. No consensus on the merger of the Northern and Eastern Provinces.	LTTE resumption of hostilities against the security forces. LTTE attacks on civilian targets in Sinhalese areas

Contd from page 6

acquired for this Library, his son, then a Lecture in Physiology in the Peradeniya Faculty of Medicine, gave me a token of that transaction. It was a piece of board which had hung in his father's library and carried the message: "The owner of this library seldom borrows another's books, and never lends his own". The warning came too late for me!

Earning a living in the public sector and learning the facts of life that lay beyond the margins of books in a series of rooms between the seedier edges of Bambalawatte and the headier beginning of Kollupitiya, I kept an eye open for the rare library opening. The first was as Assistant Librarian in the Colombo Public Library but a senior in my time was preferred. It was only in 1947 that the Cambridge Scholar and Communist Party stalwart, P. Kandiah, walked into the first post of Assistant Librarian in the University of Ceylon. In 1949 the second vacancy was for a graduate in Sinhala, and K.D. Somadasa, my predecessor as Librarian, got the job. For the third in early 1952, feminine elegance was preferred to masculine subtlety, and Violet de Souza, who had minded Doric's home and hearth for a dozen years by then, was appointed. She was the first ever woman to join the university library service (feminists please note), and went on in 1968 to become the first Librarian of the new University of Colombo. She is 80 this year, and I wish she were here. There are many others too - my teachers, examiners, and supervisors in Colombo, Madras, and London, with one nonagenarian exception, are all dead. Some teachers were colleagues in Peradeniya, and Ludowyk, Passe and La Brooy became close friends till their death. Sundry defeats at my hands at table-tennis in the Faculty Club too often soured my relations with Doric! Of fellow students who later became colleagues and friends in Peradeniya, only a few survive. They would all be happy, if not a little astonished, to find that a somewhat bohemian and wayward student had scaled his own Everest because it happened to be there. Perhaps not, who knows?

In the meantime, I had gone through at least four demanding interviews, the last with John Exter, the governor, and been offered the post of first Librarian of the Central Bank of Ceylon. I was never to receive the letter of appointment and someone else got the job. The more things change, the more they remain the

same perhaps? Forty-four years later, in April last year, the present Governor invited me to advise him on the restoration and rehabilitation of the second holocaust of an important library in Sri Lanka - a lucrative consultancy which I graciously turned down for health and other reasons. Fourteen years earlier, comparatively more hale and willing, I made the long train journey to the North to and for, and was happy to advise the Jaffna Municipal Council, at its invitation, on how best to restore the burnt-out shell and contents that notable Public Library. The project was tragically thwarted when the war broke out in earnest in 1984. The disappointment in 1952 was a turning point, and I threw caution to the winds, with a cavalier disregard for the future. Already married and settled for four years, I sold all I had (except my books) including a battered Morris 8, but not before I had transported Bernard Soysa's and Vivienne Goonewardena's voters to polling booths in Colombo South and Kelaniya respectively on two different days in May 1952. For the statistically minded the former polled 5738 votes and came second to the late Col. T.F. Jayawardene and the latter who died on 03 October last year, 4957, coming third to the late first Executive President, who died a month later. I arranged for my wife to stay with a friend's family, enrolled in the Post-Graduate School of Library Science in the University of Madras, and flew from Ratmalana in an Air Ceylon Avro for Rs. 85/-. A month's expenses for lodging food et al (not excluding books) cost R. 150/-, and I was soon absorbed in the intricacies of the professional disciplines I had long yearned to study. The school had been founded by the internationally renowned librarian Dr. S. R. Ranganathan (incidentally a good mathematician turned better librarian) who later became my mentor, guide, friend and referee till his death. I still treasure the memory of the three days he spent with me in the Upper Hantane chummary in 1954, the talk in the Arts Theatre chaired by Prof. Malalasekera, and the last meeting in his Bangalore home a few months before his death in 1973. He was an early riser and remarked that if he had lived and worked in so beautiful a setting as Peradeniya, he would have written twice as many books!

Dramatic events were unfolding in late 1952 back home however. The University had begun to move to

Peradeniya, the strains of the transfer had accounted for the death of Enright in September, and Kandiah decided to throw in the towel over some differences that developed between him and Sir Ivor. Blok, the only qualified librarian in the country, who had abandoned the post of Public Librarian to become an Assistant Registrar was made the second Librarian of the University overnight, and Kandiah's vacancy advertised. I received a cutting across the Palk Strait and applied. I was informed soon after that the post was virtually a walk over for the incumbent Public Librarian - the same man who pipped me in 1946 for the post of Assistant Librarian there. The cable summoning me for interview came on a day in early December, and in two minds until the last day, I flew to Ratmalana in the early afternoon with three hours to spare. I took a taxi to Nugegoda where my wife was staying - she was out. I kept the taxi waiting, found a tie, a fresh shirt and white coat and was at College House by 4.30 p.m. At the top of the stairs the man who was supposed to have the job all sewn up seemed surprised to see me and virtually said that my journey may not have been really necessary! There were about four others short-listed, two fetching young women among them. Alphabetically the favourite was the first to be called, and all we could hear was his monologue for well over ten minutes. I was next, and since I had already decided it was better to be hung for a sheep than a lamb, or to adopt a Cocteau maxim that the essential fact in daring is to know to what extent one can go too far, I was relaxed when I entered the room. Every member of that Selection Board is dead - Sir Ivor, the Deans - Attygalle, Mailvaganam, Malalasekera and Rodrigo - Blok, H.V. Perera, N.E. Weerasooria, Justice Keuneman and Hugh Balmond, the Registrar. Sir Ivor put me at ease by asking me whether I had come over specially for the interview, and I said I had arrived a few hours ago. He then asked me whether I had not taken a tremendous risk in throwing up everything and putting all my eggs in one dicey basket, when vacancies of this kind were so few and far between. I said books had been a ruling passion from childhood, and that I was obsessed by the desire to become a librarian. He thereupon said it was a "rather peculiar obsession" to have. I countered by replying, "If you will forgive my saying so, it is perhaps no more and no less an obsession, peculiar or not, than some

others with constitutional law". He smiled and the interview went well after that with my acquainting Messrs. Perera and Weerasooria in particular with the mysteries of the science of librarianship. I had kept the taxi waiting and I went back to a bewildered wife and her questioning. I flew back the next day to continue my studies - the whole excursion having cost around the price of a gallon of ordinary grade petrol today. O Tempora: O (I leave you to fill that blank !). My cup was full when I received the letter of appointment over Sir Ivor's signature early in March 1953, giving me time to assume duties after I finished the examination in April. I asked Balmond later how the hot favourite had lost. He replied: "He talked himself out of the job", leaving me to presume that I had talked myself into it. I have spent a good deal of my free time in the past year editing and preparing for posthumous publication Sir Ivor's autobiography left unfinished at the time of his death in 1965, and discovered that my come back in 1952 was neither too irrelevant nor too impertinent. And so I became the fourth Assistant Librarian of the University of Ceylon, and 18 years later the fourth Librarian of the University of Ceylon, later the first Librarian of the Peradeniya Campus of the rationalised single University of Sri Lanka, and, still later, the first Librarian of the University of Peradeniya - a treble I would never have fancied putting my money on thirty years earlier!

BOOKS AND UNIVERSITIES

For the next 27 years, Peradeniya became the inspirational centre of my professional career, and I count them as the most rewarding, fruitful and enlightening period of my life. Rewarding because of the challenges faced and met in reorganising the Library in 1953 and building it up over a quarter of a century of rapid development as the central organ of a truly great research-oriented university, while preserving its excellence and its integrity. Fruitful because it enabled me to advance my own professional abilities and talents in pursuit of the above goals, as well as to embark on an individual enterprise of research, inspired by the enriching community of intellectual scholarship that Peradeniya in my time represented, and will, I hope, always represent. The enduring stimulus of so blessed an academic and professional environment of learning has become a guiding

principle in the theory and practice of whatever intellectual and research skills I possess and continue to use. Peradeniya also provided the opportunities of travel and study in the great centres of scholarship and using the boundless resources of their libraries. Perhaps the basic lesson I have learned is that work is a sacrament, and its only reward, and librarianship, in its highest forms, an act of social service to the mind of one's fellow man. And enlightening because in the three decades in which I served, the University quickly outgrew its confining colonial mould and became an ever-burgeoning centre of higher education, gaining from the boons of free education and the introduction of the national languages as media of instruction. I was particularly happy to have been a participant in university affairs when the winds of change were blowing, and altering the forms, styles and essence of university education for the greater good of the larger community. There were stresses and strains of course, but a compelling attachment prevented me from leaving in 1958, 1961 and 1965 when I was offered positions in Ghana, Malaysia and Nigeria. On the last occasion two great friends (whom I had known as students and colleagues and who are here today) presented me with a copy of Colin Turnbull's *The Lonely African*, with the inscription "Ivan - to prevent him from going to Africa!" on my birthday 32 years ago. That my official career was cruelly cut short by eight years is now a part of history, however painful, and I no longer look back in anger or with bitterness, but I cannot resist quoting a small part of what a friend, no stranger to this library, who is present today wrote to the Press at the time: "For a university man to live by ideals in a university setting, there must be university autonomy, and this autonomy is needed at two levels. The first protects it against external designs to stunt and warp it. The second insulates it from internal influences that would curb and inhibit the exercise both of responsible academic freedom and the professional competence and integrity of each university man. Autonomy at both levels, allowed generously and used responsibly, is the bedrock of university excellence in a democracy. When it is under siege good and capable men are forced to the door". The caveat is clear: the danger arises when academics become administrators and seek to be practising politicians. They then forget that their

and think it is their job to govern them.

I cannot let this opportunity pass, too, without expressing in public for the first time my appreciation of the efforts made by the large majority of members of my staff (including my successor) to retain my services, those members of the Faculty of Arts whose motion to rescue me failed in the Senate, and a member of the Council now dead who delayed the acceptance of my retirement letter until some compromise could be reached. Three close and concerned friends, two of whom are dead - Ralph Pieris, Bishop Lakshman Wickremesinghe, and A.J. Wilson - interceded with the powers to no avail. The principle I had stood for and took early retirement upon was eventually vindicated *in toto* by the UGC, but the die had been cast. For the most part, however, there was silence in the Senior Common room, the University Teacher's Association lost its voice, and the academic community at large was struck dumb. I declined the usual unctuous farewells, and left the campus with my tail high if not exactly wagging, 17 years ago. Perhaps it was in the fitness of things that only the Protestant University Chaplain and his wife (who lived at Lower Hantane) and a grandson of the Mahatma, Gopal Gandhi and his wife Tara from Kandy, stood in my garden to wish us farewell.

Five years ago, I was invited to deliver the Convocation Address, but declined the honour for the same reasons that I could not attend it. In the remaining minutes of my talk today I would like to touch briefly on a few ideas I may have exploited more fully on December 21, 1991. What are universities for anyway? Universities exist to promote the life of the mind. They have two main roles. They should create and discover new knowledge. This they do through reflection and research, and research is certainly the central function of a university. Research, especially scientific research, is expensive - no breakthroughs come unless you beaver away for years. There has to be a lot of crowing before an egghead lays a golden egg. An atmosphere of research is also essential to teaching, and good university teaching should make the student question his own assumptions, and jerk himself out of giving comfortable, conventional, package-deal, party-line clichés as answers. A university teaches the difficult art of making distinctions. Scholarship isn't wisdom and universities

cannot save souls or advance the cause of nirvana. But scholarship is a way of acquiring knowledge which leads to discipline - the motto of *this* university anyway. A university is one of the last refuges for the contemplative life, but contemplation must not be confused with idleness. Without contemplation, self-discipline and concentration you cannot get really penetrating criticism of society. Universities are critics of society, and exist to question the manner of its functioning. Intellectuals in groves of academe are not expected to become irresponsible and aloof mixtures of the ostrich, the mule, and the lotus-eater. It is not enough merely to get to know the truth, they must also advocate it and make it known. The way of life of a university is based on reason, imagination, flair, sagacity, shrewdness, courage, conviction and certainly passion, but born out of dispassionate study. Universities should hold up for esteem the intellectual life; the most precious gift they have to offer is to live and work among books or in laboratories. A university is dead or dying if it cannot communicate to students the struggle - the disappointments as well as the triumphs - to produce out of the chaos of human experience a few grains of order won by the intellect.

And what are libraries for? They have a signal role to fulfil in educating people away from dependence on invalid precept and outdated belief, and preventing them ending up as docile and compliant robots of a political system which dissuades freedom of opinion, and discourage the liberation of the mind from outworn creeds and traditions. The desertification of culture is induced by the contemporary simoom of hasty modernisation and vulgar populism; and libraries are shining and accessible oases of discrimination and balance, especially in times when the glut of specious propaganda and seductive publicity masquerading as information, flood the eye and swamp the mind. A library in the highest sense must serve as a bulwark against the strident swell of an imbecile and vacant materialism, and a librarian must learnt to equip himself for this exacting mission. The personal style and temperament of the librarian takes precedence over a mere command of techniques. Traditional modes of service and approaches need to be re-examined so that dwindling resources may be utilised to their fullest measure. All this depends on how librarians view and

conduct themselves. They need to observe a true professional autonomy which involves, on the one hand, an unswerving adherence to the highest ideals of their vocation to spread the truth wherever it may lead, and on the other to be ever loyal to the interests of their clientele, and act with a special sense of social responsibility towards this primary electorate. He must decide to become a dependable pivot in the cultural process which draws nourishment from an introspective and reflective speculation, and, at the same time, an active participant and eager catalyst at the core of the process which converts knowledge and information into meaningful communication. Especially when the clever "information specialist", reckless of results and ethical considerations alike, threatens to usurp the librarian's role the latter needs to re-assert the basic rationality of his calling - the organisation and diffusion of the highest reaches of man's wisdom and imagination, and to defend this function against all comings and goings in the contemporary rat race.

In such confused climes, the inescapable obligation of a librarian to maintain a true picture of order, sanity, sensibility and civilised thought within the confines of a library was never so pressing as it is now. The drear regression in T.S. Eliot's oft quoted: "Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge? Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?" needs to be kept in mind. And may I add a corollary - there is no absolute knowledge, and all information is imperfect. Freedom *from* information may in time to come be preferred to Freedom *of* information! I may be an old-fashioned librarian born and bred in the face to face prescription of qualitative research. But the explosion of new technologies, the sweeping tide of the superhighway, and the appearance of cyberstations of codified, digitised knowledge are alarming. Information is everywhere, but very few people have access and thus become powerful. Last year the Benchmark Research Company of Britain issued a report, *Dying for Information* commissioned by Reuter. I quote a small bit: "The glut of electronic information, which vomits into peoples lives is not a deity, but a pestilence sweeping the planet, carrying illness, stress and foolish decision. The bacillus is called Information Fatigue Syndrome". I need hardly emphasise that the skills of the traditional librarian are essential

as never before, if the obsession with the terminal is not to become a substitute for true library service. A civilisation declares itself by its books, not by the latest craze in electronic communication.

I remain a seeker after knowledge, because knowledge is power, and a little learning is ever and always a dangerous thing. But to quote Eliot from the second of his Four Quarters: "The only wisdom we can hope to acquire/Is the wisdom of humility: humility is endless.../ And what you do not know is the only thing you know/and what you own is what you do not own/ And where you are is where you are not/... Old men ought to be explorers/ Here and there does not matter/ We must be still and still moving..." I fear I have meandered down memory lane in all kinds of directions, but perhaps an old man has some license to ramble, especially on his 75th birthday in all too familiar and congenial surroundings. Someone has said the past is another country - it has come alive for me in glowing fashion today, and provided an abiding memory in the years left to me and my wife, the woman I met 50 years ago and married a year later, who has been with me through thick and thin. Ordinary words cannot convey the immense debt of gratitude I owe to her for her cheerful acceptance of the position that marrying a passionate bibliographer has little to do with living happily ever after! It is difficult to foresee what lies beyond the bend of an uncertain road, but, I hope, most ardently, that the University which honours me today will be able to sustain the momentum of its past, preserve the riches of its present, and safeguard its true identity against every undeserving and ignoble pressure of the future. The only footnote I need to add is that this little dissertation was flawlessly typed from an ungainly manuscript by a favourite niece who also happens to be my father's grand-niece. She hadn't realised till recent years that her uncle had shown his wild oats not wisely but too widespread as well. Purely words, I mean, of course! Thank you for coming today and hearing me out.

