

LANKA

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Exclusive

THE DIXIT DOCTRINE

— Mani Dixit

MUSLIMS ENTER THE FRAY

— Mervyn de Silva

J.V.P. AND THE LUMPEN PROLETARIAT

— S. Leelananda

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Briefly...

Mr. Lokubandara, the Education minister, told a meeting at the BMICH that there could be no further argument about the need for English today.

"However", the Minister said, "we must not forget our mother tongue or the place that is due to Sinhala".

The Sinhala letter representing 'Sri' has been taken out of motor vehicle number plates. All vehicles registered hereafter will have a dash in place of the character which forms the first sound of the nation's name.

Military personnel — army, navy, air force — will not arrest people or search their homes during the hours of darkness, a government communique announced. Troops may cordon an area during the night but all arrests and searches will be done during daylight hours, the announcement said.

A list of influential persons, including politicians, who are alleged to have backed the JVP's disruptive campaign last year is now before the Defence Ministry. The list contains 80 names.

India has betrayed Tamils of Indian origin in Sri Lanka, Mr. Thondaman, the CWC boss and Minister of Textiles and Rural Industrial Development, told a large gathering of mostly tea plantation workers at Bogawantalawa. The strength of the Tamils of Indian origin had been reduced by India signing an agreement with government of Sri Lanka to repatriate six lakhs of people from Sri Lanka, the minister said.

Farmers who will be hit by the withdrawal of the fertiliser subsidy will be able to take bank loans, Agriculture

Minister Athulathmudall has told the *Sun*. The loans will be recovered only after crop harvest.

All fertiliser prices have been increased 100 percent, Fertiliser Corporation sources said. In some cases the increase is more than 100 per cent.

LETTERS

L.G. in the 80's

It is no secret to many, both here and to those Foreigners keenly interested in the Sri Lanka socio political scene outside, the communal question has been an issue of much confusion. This is particularly so of those who were born after the 40's — many of whom are very much key players in Sri Lanka's current political scene. The Post-October 1987 Indian involvement has further compounded this already confused scenario. Different perceptions are presented by different interested parties in sympathy with their own personal and community prejudices.

Doubtless there are many Sri Lankans in both major communities — and also many outsiders — bent on finding out as to what caused the communal catastrophe, which has reached such destructive proportions in the past few years, where both communities have substantially lost rather than gained. The accompanying Indian 'intervention' and the reasons why India chose to risk her 'SADHU' image in international opinion

by her direct military involvement in Sri Lanka remains an equally enigmatic feature. At a time such as this, a frank talk given by the former Indian High Commissioner in Sri Lanka reportedly delivered at the Indian Defence Institute and given publicity in "L.G." of January 1 is a refreshingly welcome thing. It certainly can be argued that Mr. Dixit was only presenting his case to India's advantage. However, a careful examination of the article leaves one with the feeling that most of what is said there is in perfect harmony with contemporary historical events.

The 'L.G.' deserves the thanks of uncommitted readers for providing an insight into Sri Lanka's most controversial and complex decade of her contemporary history. Courageous and fearless journalism is, no doubt, an essential feature in a vibrant democracy and it is a happy thing that the "L.G." makes available to the discriminating reader material that the other sections of the media, many with much wider reader patronage, are either unwilling or reluctant to publish.

Please keep up the good work. It is due to institutions such as the "L.G." that the 'flickering flame of democracy' continues to shed its gentle light and is not snuffed out by partial and bigoted journalism.

A. Kandappah

Colombo 3.

(More Letters on page 22)

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Mervyn de Silva

NEWS
BACKGROUND

"So we have to re-write our own destiny" said Mr. A. H. M. Ashraff, the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress leader at the party's convention in Colombo. Apparently, he explained, the Muslims do not exist for the "chauvinist political parties" (In fact, Prime Minister D. B. Wijetunge represented the governing party, while the LSSP, NSSP, EROS, TC and DWC were also present).

There would never be a "united, multi-ethnic, pluralistic society" in Sri Lanka as long as the major parties refused to recognise and give substance to the distinctive aspirations of the minority communities. He accused successive Sri Lankan regimes — this means the UNP and SLFP — of "discrimination".

In the language of the ethnic upheaval, a global late twentieth century phenomenon "destiny" "discrimination" "distinctive aspirations" or "identity", "multi-ethnic pluralistic" are all recurrent themes. These terms are also the flags and slogans of mass political mobilisation. There is no more litanic and tedious a force in this the last quarter of the 20th century than the Islamic revival, the Iranian revolution under the mesmeric personality of the Ayatollah Khomeini representing its most intense moment of self-expression.

Just last week, there were Muslim demonstrations in Azerbaijan, one of several Muslim republics of the Soviet Union, where the marchers shouted pro-Iranian slogans, expressing solidarity

with revolutionary Iran, though the Khomeinist Revolution itself has entered a new phase.

In an increasingly close-knit world, in which the global communications system is a dominant feature, there are really 'no borders' to stop the free flow of ideas and ideologies. In such a global society, the "demonstration effect" can be quite powerful.

Yet, geography too can shape events and influence political developments within a country, including a small island like Sri Lanka. We are surrounded by Muslim countries — Pakistan and Bangladesh to the north, Malaysia and Indonesia to the east, and Iran plus the Arab states — the Gulf to Libya — on the west. In each of these societies, Islam is a major or significant political force.

Iran, Libya, Egypt and Iraq, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Malaysia and Indonesia have embassies in Colombo. So does the PLO, though it does not regard itself as an 'Islamic' organisation or Palestine a Moslem state.

Now ethnic re-assertion does not necessarily mean violence or armed struggle. However let us mark well that the SLMC is an East-based political party which has representation in Parliament and the Provincial Council. The community itself may not be large — about 8% of the 17 million. Yet, it is a third in the E.P., the Tamils 42% and the Sinhalese 25%. If the ethnic ratios make the population balance sensitive, it is the 'traditional homeland' concept of the Tamil separatists, encompassing as it does the EP, that has made this province the critical theatre

of the ethnic conflict. Since the ethnic conflict produced an armed struggle and one of the world's most ferocious insurgent movements, the 'Tigers', the East has become the most violent arena in one of world's most violent societies. The arrival of the IPKF, which supports the pro-India JPRLF, an organisation with a leader, K. Padmanabha, who has deep roots in this province, complicated the situation, unalterably politico-military. And now, the IPKF has pulled out, the curtain-raiser for a 'new' war for political dominance through arms. The Sri Lankan security forces were confined to barracks before the IPKF withdrawal. Now, the army police engage only in "routine patrols".

Brilliantly led, a tough, battle tested LTTE, has hammered the so called TNA (LPRLF-TELO-ENDFetc) compelling the LPRLF's hardcore guerrillas to run for cover, where they are lying low in the hope of a more congenial climate. The TNA's India-supplied sophisticated weaponry has not helped to match the LTTE's advantage of experience and motivation. The LPRLF (and now the Opposition Leader) accuse the SL security forces of collaborating with the LTTE or turning a benign 'blind eye' on the Tigers.

It is this which Mr. Ashraff calls 'a security vacuum'. And it is Muslim insecurity that has provoked the SLMC leader to warn the government and the Sri Lankan political establishment.

"It is the duty of the State to protect the people. If it proves incompetent to do so, the people have the right to protect themselves, we have every right to ask for arms, and if the State

NOTE

The second instalment of Frank Kerschner — Polkmann's "Germans" will appear on Feb. 1st

continues to be unhelpful, then the people have the right to defend themselves by acquiring even illegal arms". Of course, the SLMC is also ready to make a political deal — a third of the seats in the Council.

The SLMC, and perhaps the Moslems of the East, have arrived at a critical turning point.

The Sinhala public, even the more politically aware, has been surprisingly insensitive to these trends; surprising because it has already watched the process of Tamil mobilisation, and its dramatic consequences.

As early as December 1, 1986, we wrote in the *LG's* cover story **ISRAEL: THE GREAT DEBATE** (the discussion in Parliament and the contributions of Foreign Minister Hameed, Opp. Leader Anura Bandaranaike, Messrs. Lakshman Jayakody, D. E. W. Gunasekera and Haleem Ishak):

"The appeal to the Muslim community comes at a time when the situation in the eastern province and Muslim interests in that region, in the context of the government's proposal for three provincial councils and the Tamil demand for north-east linkage, are the subject of intense debate among Muslims. It is in this perspective that the advent of a new "independent" political party, the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress, should be viewed, bearing very much in mind that the SLMC leadership is obviously more representative of the Tamil-speaking Muslims of the east than of the Sinhala-speaking business-oriented Muslim political elite of the western seaboard. It is a total rejection of the traditional Muslim plea for participation in 'mainstream politics'. (See **MUSLIM CONGRESS**). The SLMC president, Mr. Ashraff has now called for a separate Muslim P.C., and for Tamil to be made an official language, and both Sinhala and Tamil to be made compulsory.

While the position of the Tamil-speaking Muslims of the east has been a special problem, the pressure of the physical situation in the province (the armed conflict) and the pressure of the all-important Government-Tamil negotiations on the future of that province, have combined to make the challenge facing this community especially urgent. But there's yet another issue which has surfaced recently to cause agitated

concern within the entire Muslim community and in fact to put the Muslim elite on a confrontation course with the government. I refer of course to the government-appointed Committee on "Personal Laws". (See **Muslims Defend Sharia**, *L.G.* Nov. 15, 1986). Although the government is not talking about it, and the press has almost ignored the issue, the Muslim community is quite disturbed".

CAMPUS RE-OPENING

Limping back to normal?

When the schools and universities re-open and function normally for at least one term, then we can be sure that Sri Lanka is on the road to recovery, socially and politically. The economy of course remains the silent enemy in what has been for some years now an important area of crisis, and a theatre of the "total war".

Peradeniya and Moratuwa began lectures on Jan. 8. For final year students. A cautious trial run by the authorities. The choice of these two campuses, and not Colombo or Ruhuna, and the "final years only" restriction proves how cautious.

In Third World uprisings in the past decade, the campuses have been the first flare and the initial battleground — South Korea was the best example. This was so in the western world of the late '60's.

The ground is still uncertain, slippery and dangerous. From the State's point of view or more specifically from the perspective of the 'security apparatus', the politics of the campus overshadows academic considerations. That much was plain when the authorities placed "ten conditions", and the most active of the student unions (the IUSE) protested at these measures, followed quickly

by the University Teachers Union.

At the regular Cabinet news briefing, the Minister of State for Defence, Mr. Ranjan Wijeratne (Foreign Minister) was asked whether every campus would have a security post. "What's wrong with that?" he asked. When a reporter suggested that it may 'create problems' the Minister replied "If the students don't like it, they can stay at home". Supposing the university officials object? "They can stay at home too..." he said, adding "we cannot dance to their tune... they must do what we say".

The U. T. F., the Teachers front, meanwhile called for amendments to three of the ten conditions in a letter to the Mr. A. C. S. Hameed the Higher Education Minister. The U T F told the press that these included (i) the suspension of political activities (ii) ban on campus rallies (iii) the restrictions on visitors. At this writing, the re-opening of Kelaniya, Jayawardene and Colombo has been fixed for Jan. 11-15.

There are over 1,200 final year students at Peradeniya. Once the lectures are over, they'll be granted study leave till the exams are scheduled.

No-confidence move

Four opposition parties in parliament moved a no-confidence motion against the Government. The SLFP, MEP, USA and TULF accuse the Government of, among other things: defying the fundamental rights of the people and the rule of law; deliberately permitting and/or encouraging illegal para-military organisations to kidnap, abduct, torture and murder citizens of Sri Lanka; deliberately permitting or causing inflation and allowing the cost of living to spiral to unprecedented heights; and increasing poverty by removing subsidies on essential food; and failing to stem corruption, and discriminating against political opponents.

The motion said that the Government has failed to discharge its primary duty of giving the country peace, order and good government.

Another opposition party in parliament, the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC) did not vote for the no-confidence motion. The motion was defeated.

Sinhala race will vanish: Mrs. B tells Mahanayake

Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike, the Opposition Leader, met the Mahanayake of Asgiriya, the Venerable Palipane Sri Chandananda and appealed to him to initiate joint action by the Mahanayakes of all three nikayas to urge the government to end violence in the country and the killing of youths.

The victims of the ever-rising waves of violence were mainly the Sinhala-Buddhists, Mrs. Bandaranaike said.

At the meeting the Mahanayake and the Opposition Leader

expressed alarm at the pace of violence and said that the Sinhala race would become extinct if all groups involved did not give up arms now.

Mahanayake writes to President

The Venerable Palipane Sri Chandananda, Mahanayake Thero of Asgiriya, has written to President Premadasa conveying serious concern about the on-going killings, including the killing of Buddhist monks. The Mahanayake has said that there was a question in the minds of people whether the government had given security forces personnel the power to kill people on suspicion without allowing those people a chance to defend themselves at a fair trial.

The Mahanayake has said: "Whether it is a layman or a Buddhist monk, he should be given a chance to defend himself according to the law of the land. Even a person accused of murder is entitled to a fair trial and appeal up to the Supreme Court. With such logical laws why should the security forces or any other group take the law into their own hands and subject people to torture and murder?"

Welfare curtailed

A World Bank report has revealed that the government has decided to contain expenditure on the Janasaviya program, the food stamps scheme and the school mid-day meal to no more than 3.5 per cent of Sri Lanka's GDP.

The report assesses Janasaviya as "not an effective anti-poverty program because it was poorly targeted; it did not address the long term cause of poverty, and finally it was too costly". The World Bank has suggested that it would probably be desirable to continue with the food stamp program, but with improved targeting.

Jobs on ethnic ratio

A firm decision has been taken by the Government to grant employment on an ethnic proportion basis. President Premadasa announced.

The President addressing the Government Parliamentary Group meeting said that employment at the National level should be on the national ethnic proportion, employment at the Provincial level on the provincial ethnic proportion and at the District level on the district proportion. However, all employment would strictly be on qualifications and merit as stipulated for the particular job and not on political considerations, he said.

The composition of the ethnic ratio has been worked out on the basis that Sinhalese comprised 74 per cent, Tamils 12.1 per cent, Tamils of Indian origin 5.5 per cent and Muslims 8 per cent. The composition of one per cent of others has been recommended to be added on to the Sinhalese ratio, a press release from the Presidential Secretariat said.

"On this basis three fourths of employment would be to Sinhalese and the balance one fourth to Tamils and Muslims," the release said.

The release added:

He said that this was the policy stipulated in the election manifesto on which the United National party received two mandates — at the Presidential election as well as at the General Election. The Government was therefore committed to follow this policy.

The President said that a Cabinet Sub-Committee which looked into the matter has recommended the procedure to be followed. Instructions on these lines will be issued shortly by

(Continued on page 7)

The emergence of new social forces

S. Leelananda*

Though there are similarities among the "orphans of 1956" who supported the JVP in the seventies and those who joined in the late eighties, there are many dissimilarities too. Victor Ivon, in a recent essay characterises these differences in the following way: "The youth revolt organized by Wijeweera in 1971 will enter history as a romantic and naive revolution while the struggle of the 1987-89 period will be recognized as a destructive and cruel one. The first revolt was of rural educated youth and the innocence and simplicity of that social force was reflected in the struggle. In the second effort Wijeweera employed, in addition to rural educated youth, the lumpen-proletariat which Marx has described as a social formation prone to violence" (Ravaya, vol. 4, No. 4)

Let us examine some of the manifest differences between the JVP of 1971 and 1987-89.

- (a) The 1987-89 struggle was much more widespread and better organized than in 1971. Though the 1971 revolt came as a shock to the United Front government, it never had much chance of success. After the first week (April 4-11) the back of the insurrection was broken and a large number of insurgents either surrendered or were captured (Approximately 11,000). Once the armed services were provided adequate arms and ammunition (from the 1971 budget by Dr. N. M. Perera) the issue was never in doubt. There was only a few major areas of insurrectionary activity — Kegalle, Galle, Gampaha, Elpitiya etc. Even in those places the public quickly came over to side of the government. For example in the Hiniduma - Morawaka areas

villagers captured rebels retreating to the Sinharaja Forest and handed them over to the Army.

The 87-89 struggle was wider and more effective both in terms of geographical spread and youth participation. The JVP also received more public sympathy. In 1971 they were challenging a recently elected popular government. In 1987 they were confronting the "natural enemy" of the left — the UNP, which had lost its grip on the economy and was confronting a highly emotional issue which had fragmented the party leadership.

- (b) In 1971 the JVP adopted the "foco" strategy used successfully by Fidel Castro. Here a small group of revolutionaries directly attack police stations and army encampments, seize weapons and overturn the numerically small governing elite. This strategy proved to be a failure in Sri Lanka as both the army and the population at large did not sympathize with the JVP.

Wijeweera fashioned an even more daring strategy in the eighties. (It may be remarked in passing that Wijeweera always emphasized daring and surprise. In many of his speeches he quoted approvingly Danton's famous phrase "Audacity, Audacity and once more Audacity").

His strategy was based on the use of terror and assassinations as a means of paralyzing the state apparatus. This needs further examination. Sociologists have come to recognize the progressive escalation of violence in Sri Lankan society. We can identify the following features;

- (1) From about the fifties several social scientists have

remarked on the undercurrent of violence which prevails in Sinhala-Buddhist society. While writers like Martin Wickremasighe and contemporary Buddhist ideologues have presented an image of the peaceful and idyllic Sinhala village society, social Scientists such as Ryan, Leach, Obeyesekere, Seneviratne and Tambiah have demonstrated the existence of a sub-stratum of violence and hostility, reflected particularly in Sinhala sorcery, Ritual, folk play and folk lore. Much of the village level violence has not been reported. A recent paper by Sarath Amunugama and Eric Meyer, (Etudes Rurales, Paris 1985) provides many examples of such village violence during the colonial period.

- (2) With expansion of the franchise to rural areas there was an increase in political violence, particular violence directed at depressed castes. Such violence referred to in political lore as "polpithi elections," was highlighted in JVP propaganda as a means of creating discontent among the castes which were so humiliated. Victor Ivan has described the JVP as a party which exploited caste fissures at village level to advance its objectives.
- (3) Violence that was directed at the ethnic minorities. In the period immediately following the SLFP victory of 1956, Tamils were subjected to violence with the tacit support of Sinhala party leaders and their supporters. Protesting Tamil Leaders were humiliated in public and with the communal riots of 1958 Tamils began to lose their sense of physical secu-

The writer is a well known Sri Lankan Sociologist.

rity in Sinhala areas. Later, with the take over of estates by the United Front Government, Tamil workers were subjected to unprecedented violence. Demographic data of this period shows a rise in infant and child mortality and the death rates of older workers many of whom were driven out of estates and left to die of starvation.

(4) The JVP insurrection of 1971 and its suppression.

(5) The UNP regime of 1971-1988 was marked by its deliberate use of State terror. This escalating use of political violence has been illustrated by Gunanath Obeyesekere in his essay "Political Violence and the future of Democracy in Sri Lanka" (1984). The violence directed at Trade Unionists, monks, dissident intellectuals, University students and political opponents reached its climax in the communal holocaust of 1983 which was organized by a group within the government and blamed on the NLSSP, CP and JVP.

(6) The violence in the North which began in the pre-1977 period, of which the killing of students during the Tamil conference was a major step, escalated, finally into a bloody civil war in the North and East during the 1983-1988 period.

(7) The widespread use of thuggery and violence by top politicians and their supporters, particularly in Southern Sri Lanka. The violence directed at the UNP by the United Front during 1970-77 period compelled them to look for "Toughs" as party candidates in several electorates. In the sweep of 1977, many of these organisers were returned. They became virtual "war-lords" in their electorates and the Police were often unable to act against them and their

supporters. While escalation of political violence has to be recognized and the use of force by government on the anti-second demonstrators was no doubt an immediate provocation, the JVP converted use of violence and terror to a much higher level as a means of capturing state power itself. "Pol pithi" made way to "Pol Pot".

This use of violence can be criticised from an ethical as well as strategic point of view. The terror which finally devoured UNP, SLP, PC, Leftist and ex-JVP alike lost its rationale as an attack on the state. It united all those who were overtly opposed to the JVP and gave strength and legitimacy to activities of the ultimate saviour of the State—the armed services, which were now, thanks to the Northern war, better equipped and more battle-hardened than in 1971. Finally the Sri Lankan State, unlike the Latin American and South Vietnamese regimes to which it was compared by the JVP, still affords considerable "democratic space". State Power could be contested for in the open. Many concessions have been gained through the democratic process. In fairness to the JVP, in the 1983 period it had accepted this position and had entered the open political arena. They contested DDC elections in spite of the Opposition boycott. Wijeweera himself contested the 1982 Presidential Election. But their very success disturbed the Jayawardena regime and the JVP was hanned and driven underground in 1983. President Premadasa was willing to reopen this dialogue but the JVP did not grasp this opportunity.

(c) Unlike in 1971, the JVP in 87-89 tried to follow a 'Patriotic Front' strategy. Here we must distinguish this approach

from a parliamentary united front of the opposition which the JVP rejected, given its ambivalence towards the SLFP. It however called for an alliance of workers, peasants, radicals, monks, etc irrespective of whether they were members of the JVP or not. All JVP literature emphasised this need for national solidarity in the face of the threat of Indian expansionism.

(To be Continued)

Jobs on. . .

(Continued from page 5)

the Ministry of Public Administration, Provincial Councils and Home Affairs. Until such time the circular is issued the Ministers should instruct their Secretaries on the decisions.

He said it would be difficult to give promotions on an ethnic ratio basis on a grade to grade basis. It could be possible on a Post to Post basis.

Mr. A. C. S. Hameed, Minister of Higher Education, Science and Technology and Chairman of the Cabinet Sub-Committee on Employment and Mr. Lalith Athulathmudali, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Co-operatives explained the decisions taken by the Cabinet Sub-Committee.

Mr. Hameed said that the Cabinet Sub-Committee has recommended that a circular on the decisions taken be sent by the Ministry of Public Administration. The circular is now being drafted.

Among the members who represented matters on this subject were Mr. Ranjan Wijeratne, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. A. H. M. Azwer, Dr. Wimal Wickremasinghe, Minister of State for Policy Planning and Implementation, Mr. M. H. Amith, Mr. Gamini Fonseka, Deputy Speaker, Mr. Lal Gamage, Minister of State for Buddha Sasana and Minister of State for Information A. J. Ranasinghe.

A Demonstration of Indian Power-Projection

J. N. Dixit

In the third section of my presentation about the IPKF, I begin by saying that one undercurrent, which I noticed among my colleagues in the Armed Forces, especially in the middle and younger levels there was no question of loyalty to the task assigned and the discipline and efficacy with which they have functioned and on which they are functioning. But in moments of introspection, they were always wondering. This is not China, this not Pakistan, why are we in Sri Lanka? We were originally supposed to come and protect the Tamils. Why is it that the situation has arisen, when they are shooting at some of the Tamils? Legitimate questions! And I would like to tackle them frontally.

I have partially answered why we are in Sri Lanka. There can be a debate about it. But I have stated what I perceived as a valid approach at that time. Certainly, it is not a perceived, tangible and quantitatively or qualitatively challenging enemy, a potential enemy like China and Pakistan which are part of our post-independence psyche and security perceptions. But let us not forget that, since 1498, the external intrusions into India, the disruptions of the Indian power structure have not been through the Khyber Pass as much as through the southern coasts of India. This is something which we must not forget. With the rise of sea power, with the rise of Air power, with the increase in capacity for communications, free of limitations of land, our strategic thinking has to take into account, potential dangers which a country can face. It need not necessarily be a direct military invasion, it can be a creation of circumstances in neighbouring countries generating political, social trends

in those countries which can have a ripple effect on our polity and disintegrate India. That is why I think, the IPKF is in Sri Lanka.

The second question is little more difficult to answer. We were supposed to protect the Tamil interests in Sri Lanka. Why are we in a situation, where we are shooting at the Tamils? The answer simply lies in the fact, that when we interacted with the Tamils, we believed that the LTTE was an organization which had a sense of honour, and a sense or commitment to peace and welfare of the Tamil people. I must emphasize, that in my view, the IPKF is not fighting the Tamils at all. IPKF is fighting only a small group of perhaps intensely motivated, perhaps trained and disciplined, but a group of insurgents, who are finding it difficult to make the transition from a guerrilla force to a political force. The IPKF has got involved in this kind of an operation against a Tamil group, because IPKF is trying to sustain the momentum of institutional democracy and the right of voting of the Tamil people of Sri Lanka. The IPKF is trying to ensure the stability of Tamil society in Sri Lanka while fulfilling their articulated aspirations, as articulated to us over the last six years. The people whom we are fighting are the people who are not concerned with those aspirations.

Portrait of Prabhakaran

In my judgment, as one of the few Indian citizens who have interacted directly with Prabhakaran, for over three years, I am firmly of the view that he is a very self-centred fascist leader; any man who tells me across the table that I believe in one party and in one leader, that is in me; any man who tells me that I want to live even if no other

Tamil is alive, does not have Tamil welfare at his heart. It is essentially a case of megalomania. I am being very harsh in my judgment. But that is my judgment. You are dealing with such a man with your hands tied behind your back. You are dealing with such a man and his group which, you must objectively acknowledge, has emotional roots in the Jaffna population. And I am deliberately saying, only the Jaffna population, not the population of Trincomalee, Batticaloa or Amparai or the Tamil population of Central part of Sri Lanka. So, conceptually, saying that we are supposed to protect the Tamils but we are fighting the Tamils



J. N. Dixit

is wrong. We are fighting only with a group of somewhat obstinate Tamil youngmen who had the advantage of local knowledge of terrain and who had the advantage of not having any constraints in terms of political and social value-systems. If it was not so I don't think the IPKF would have

been successful, and so brilliantly successful in organizing not one, but three elections in Sri Lanka: the Provincial Council elections in the Eastern portion of the north-eastern Province, the Parliamentary elections and the Presidential elections. In the latter two elections, the IPKF not only ensured the safety and electoral freedom of Tamil candidates but also Sinhalese candidates, in a very volatile situation. And that the common people of the areas where the IPKF was deployed for this electoral purpose did not thwart the exercise; this to my mind proves that whatever people may say in terms of comment or criticism, the basic undercurrent is that you are not fighting the Tamils, you are fighting only a group which has its own point of view.

Then, again, I don't know, how many of us are conscious of the type of role which the IPKF is playing in Sri Lanka. Our armed forces in our history of post independence India have been abroad several times. We have been to Congo and we have been to Gaza; we have been to Lebanon; we have been to Cyprus; we have been to Korea; we have been to Bangladesh. But what the IPKF is involved in Sri Lanka is much more multi-dimensional and complex. Our previous external projections of our armed forces were either a straight forward military projection in a military situation or we were invited to project ourselves in classic terms of reference of a peacekeeping force. But this the first time, that I think the IPKF is several things in Sri Lanka. It is an affirmation of our commitment to the unity and territorial integrity of a small neighbouring country. It is an external projection of our influence to tell our neighbours that if, because of your compulsions of your aberrations, you pose a threat to us, we are capable of, or we have a political will to project ourselves within your territorial jurisdiction

for the limited purpose of bringing you back. Sounds slightly arrogant! It is not arrogant. It is real-politik and it brings you back to the path of detachment and non-alignment where you don't endanger our security.

The IPKF has been a catalyst for reviving democratic institutions in Sri Lanka after a gap of eleven years. Very few people remember that the last series of general elections were held in Sri Lanka in 1977. And what triggered off Elections, which were held between November 88 and January 89 was the successful management of the elections in the Eastern Province by the IPKF. The credit entirely goes to our armed forces.

We have projected our Armed forces, therefore, not only in a peacekeeping role, but in a political role. Secondly, we are undoubtedly a factor against insurgency and mayhem in Sri Lanka. The worst critic of the IPKF in Jaffna, if asked, shall we withdraw immediately, says no, for God's sake, don't. Please don't. And what is interesting now that view is shared by the Foreign Minister and the new President of Sri Lanka, which gives us perhaps the capacity to negotiate from the position of strength and detachment because, I know that Indian public opinion and our own good sense, impels us to say that you must not be in a foreign country for a very long time.⁴ We must move out, and, I think that is because it is a good approach and that is my view too. But the fact that despite performing a highly complex and at times unpalatable role, IPKF is being considered a necessity in a foreign country where there are so many complexes against India is a symptom of two things. First, that you are a factor of stability. Second, that whatever tasks have been assigned to us, we have done them with a sense of fair play and detachment regardless of minor criticisms here or there.

Having enumerated these roles of the IPKF, let me add that

they are doing more. The IPKF has been the principal conduit for providing relief and reconstruction work. All the three branches of our armed forces, have played a very vital role in reviving life in the north and the east. You have to remember that is being done in a wild ravaged territory which suffered, which yielded under discriminatory violence by the Sinhalese forces continuously for five years; which came to a climax between the period December, '87 which led to our first military projection into Sri Lanka short of actual violence. It is interesting that our first military projection was air-dropping of relief supplies; the Indian Navy escorting relief supplies to the ports of Sri Lanka, including northern-eastern Province. The IPKF is not only distributing food, but they have been building schools and repairing temples and churches, and offering medical assistance.

I also must mention that, I was profoundly proud when six months ago, I went to Trincomalee, and from Divisional Headquarters, I flew north west and landed in a small hamlet. I saw a Second Lieutenant a woman of the Indian Army Medical Corps. She was the only person in uniform. She was attending to about eight villages alone. She was professionally a surgeon, but was doubling up as a physician. The impact of that one person in these villages was something which you had to see to believe. This is how one has to assess what we are doing.

Apart from relief, rehabilitation, reconstruction, the IPKF has created the necessary political environment for the Tamils to get their act together, if they choose to. The IPKF is not a political honest-broker.

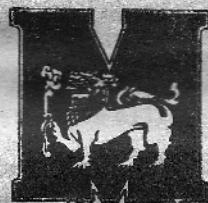
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States and Internal Conflicts

The relationship between states and internal conflicts in South Asia suggested that South Asian societies are inter-meshed with each other. Although India plays a larger role in the area, all the intervening systems necessitate two-way interactions. Movements and developments in one country generate a range and variety of responses in neighbouring countries. This happens not only in the case of India vis-a-vis developments elsewhere but also conversely, e.g. Nepal's involvement in the Indian Gurkha issue and Pakistan's involvement in the Sikh problem and South India's involvement in Sri Lanka's Tamil problem.

The intensity of the impact of overlapping concerns and involvements in each other's affairs differs from state to state. The Indian response, be it at the level of state, people or media, to events in a neighbouring country can have a profound impact there because of India's size. Conversely, its size enables India to absorb a great deal of peripheral turmoil and interference in its affairs. However, size alone is not a determinant of the nature of the impact. A significant factor is the distance between society and state in South Asia (though this varies from state to state). Its impact also intensifies when internal forces are in conflict with the state and are supported by an outside state.

The spill over in each other's affairs has a certain inevitability about it. Neighbouring states understand this and compete to get India on their side against the internal forces contesting them. But it is precisely here that the dilemma of Indian response arises. Shifting dynamics of the conditions of internal conflict often leads to shifts in Indian policy. Indian behaviour has not been consistent

in conflict situations; it has supported both the state and rebels in a given situation. A critical variable in state response is the lack of rapport between the regimes of the region which affects the attitudes and views of governments.

For Bangladesh, India has been a destabilizing factor in politics and economy. Over the years, the notion has developed of India being a hegemonic or an expansionist state, deliberately encroaching upon Bangladesh's due rights. Examples given: Indian occupation of the Talpatti island; denial of the Bangladesh's rights on the Tin Bigha corridor; failure to resolve the problem of sharing Ganges water and the Farraka dam in West Bengal; support to the Calcutta-based Bangbhum movement demanding creation of a new state within Bangladesh; promotion/instigation of the tribal insurgency in Chittagong Hill Tracts, etc. Instead of working for consensus, India had used sheer physical and military strength in such crises.

Another view, however, of the strategic stance of India in the region has been that which may be described as the "doctrine of denial." India's main concern is not necessarily to obtain a foothold in strategic facilities but to prevent world powers from consolidating themselves in any of the neighbouring states.

In order to understand and demystify the external factor ("supranational" phenomenon), Sri Lanka's case was taken up. Two issues were pointed out:

- (a) the ethnic issue is essentially internal, and
- (b) its externalization is a subsequent development.

The internal process of development has brought out the interaction of economic/material categories in Sri Lanka. The land/agrarian question has been a burning issue the bourgeois state has both unable and un-

willing to address. While the genesis of the conflict has been economic, it found expression in ethnic terms. The contemporary reality of Sri Lanka is that of the collapse of the welfare state.

The alienation of the Tamil people through a historical process has grown into a contradiction with important externalisations. The genesis of externalisation, however, is more complex than that of mere Indian involvement. In fact, a number of external involvements pre-date that of India or at least overlapped or was parallel to it. Thus, US, South African and Israeli and British involvements go back to the early 1980s and even to 1970s. Foreign interference was first invited by Sri Lanka into the domestic situation in order to solve an essentially internal problem and ultimately led to the IPKF (Indian Peace Keeping Forces) and the Indo Sri Lanka Accord.

Two questions were also raised in the session.

1. There were strong differences of opinion regarding the credibility of setting up a multinational force (e.g. SAARC) in place of IPKF for conflict-management in Sri Lanka. One view was that involvement of SAARC in internal conflicts may turn it into a "gang operation," thus creating more problems.
2. Was the IPKF's presence the central factor in driving the JVP and Sinhala chauvinism to a frenzy and would the removal of the IPKF significantly diffuse this? There was no consensus about JVP's essential anti-Tamilism and its desire for power. It was felt that perhaps these would continue to drive it towards conflict even if the IPKF was withdrawn.

Identities: Sub-nationalist and inter-religious Assertions

A provocative presentation of the issue of identities and ethnicity set the pace for the discussion. It was posited that the use of the concept of ethnicity to characterize conflicts in South Asia is faulty since it is an imaginary concept which describes rather than explains reality. The lack of any positive definition of ethnicity — only negative ones — was also raised. To demonstrate this, the different bases (elements) of ethnicity were presented, as in below.

- (a) The racial basis. This creeps into the discourse on ethnicity but has dangerous implications, for instance, neo-fascism as expressed in Aryan/pure race definitions.
- (b) Tribe as a unifying concept: there can be multiplicity of identities of tribes.
- (c) Castes. These cut across religions and therefore are not adequate determinants of identity. Besides, conflicts have occurred within various caste groups.
- (d) Linguistic. Identity around language is possible but problematic because linguistic groups exist across geographic boundaries. Moreover, languages have been lost, rediscovered and transformed.
- (e) Religion. While religion may be a symbol of galvanizing certain groupings, it is not the sole basis of identity. People belonging to the same religion feel and act differently depending on their social and geographic location.
- (f) Regional. This is perhaps the most valid basis of identity from all elements.

Caution however was advised on the use of the above conceptual elements in defining ethnicity; these categories overlap among groups of people, over space and time. Inter-mingling of race, language and

culture has been an ongoing process in history. At different junctures, groups of people have used one or more of these elements to express their protest against others, and conflicts have occurred within homogenous groups.

In the final analysis, it was suggested that class is perhaps the only mode of identity. Class is how one defines oneself socially and politically, i.e. the consciousness of a particular historical process of which one is a subject and an object. Locating classes in the framework of mode of production provides analytical tools to help explain reality. However, while the differences in this basic consciousness of class do occur in the form of caste, linguistic or religious groups or in terms of nationalism, such differences should be viewed as deviations. Ethnic assertions are no more than the adoption by a group of an identity attributed to it by others ("ethnographers").

This view was hotly contested in the discussion. It was felt that while the concept of class to define identity was valid, it defied understanding of contemporary conflicts in South Asia. Nowhere in South Asia have class movements been evident. Ethnicity was alternatively defined as a political category representing relations of production. One reason suggested for the rising phenomenon of ethnicity was the incomplete bourgeois revolution in the Third World. Politicised ethnicity was seen as an expression of identity in relation to the state. Further study is needed regarding this contradiction between the state and ethnic groups.

In rejecting class as an adequate concept to explain conflicts it was argued that:

1. to reduce conflicts in South Asia to a concept of class is essentialist in its philosophical disposition and suffers from reductionism, and
2. class fits into an objective categorization but the pro-

blem of subjective definition of identity of groups remained and it is here that class analysis of Marxism is found deficient.

The question of national identity as opposed to ethnic identity was also raised but no conclusive formulation was reached.

Violent States and Violent Society

In the discussion on the use of violence at the level of the state it was suggested that the state has a dual character.

a) The state engages in violence at a given conjuncture of forces which corresponds to the transition from a pre-capitalist mode of production to the capitalist mode. The breaking down of the old system and superimposition of the capitalist mode create conflicts.

b) Violence assumes an institutionalized form in conflict resolution. Instruments of the state are used for coercive purposes, thus inviting violent reactions from political and other forces in society. This, in turn, contributes to the development of a culture of violence and results in the spiralling of violence. Moreover, while the extent of violence is determined by the state of development of the modes of production, the cultural expression of conflicts in ethnic terms reflects the failure of the deprived groups to organize on the basis of class.

The above propositions assume a particularly acute form in the case of South Asia. In eradicating the obstacles to the development of the productive forces, collaboration between the bourgeoisie and the state occurs. In the case of India, however, the bourgeois state, owing to the higher state of development of the productive forces, has not seen the need to use centralized violence (by the state).

In the case of Sri Lanka, it was felt that the "accelerated capitalist development" launched by the United National Party (UNP) in 1977 was initiated without the necessary basis. Violence, therefore, constituted the only instrument that the state could use to effect transition. The bourgeoisie being weak also pushed the state into using violence as a means of furthering its economic interests. Further, the increasing bankruptcies of firms engaged in petty commodity production, owing to the "open economy" policy, led to increased pressure on the state to intervene. The intervention took the form of organized violence against shops and business establishments owned by the Tamils as a means of cleaning the market of competitors. The above constituted the class nature of ethnic violence.

Furthermore, the absence of organized forms of class struggle amongst the Sinhalese masses led to the articulation of discontent and grievances through other modes—in particular, cultural identity. However, as with the Tamil national movement, it assumed distinct social and political forms whilst cultural expressions became less dominant.

In Bangladesh, the nature of the liberation war and independence gave society an extremely violent character. During the liberation war, weapons and arms were spread throughout the society which the new government did not withdraw. Over the years, arms markets have proliferated. One main form of violence directly related to the state is its class politics and the paradoxical policies of the government. While the government talked about democracy, it suppressed opposition through violence and rampant killing.

The opposition, especially the left parties, also created conditions for armed struggle. The net result is that violence has become the order of the day. The struggle for power at the

inception of the state had been between the new and the pre-independence bourgeoisie, thereby creating conflicts and violence.

SECOND PHASE

The second phase of violence came with the de-radicalization of the marxist movement and radicals after the coup of 1975. De-radicalization occurred with the availability of jobs in the Middle-East, political asylum in Europe and the growth of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) which employed radicals. In this period, the source of instability and conflict was the army. The army was divided on the issue of the freedom-fighter-army and the repatriate-army (from Pakistan who were not part of liberation war). The inter-ethnic conflict in the army witnessed many killings, e.g. General Zia killed war hero Colonel Taber while Major General Manzoor killed General Zia. The Zia regime (1975-81) had survived more than 17 coups attempts.

The third phase of violence is directly related to national and local elections. The present regime has attempted to put administrative control at the grass roots level through the device of the *Upa-rilla* (local government). Instead of facilitating control however, this approach has escalated violence besides destroying the electoral system. The local leaders to win elections no longer rely on people's vote but on weapons, connections with administration, money and the use of private armies of Gundas and Mustangs.

Exploring the phenomenon of violence further, the following was elaborated.

a. Violence is inherent in any social formation and social change; it is an engine of transformation. What is therefore important is the nature of violence—how it is transforming or changing, the sophistry that is employed, whether it is reactive or built-in and what are the available alternatives.

b. Violence is not the only instrument used by the state. There are many others which are used consistently—ideology, co-optation, information, generating conflict, among many others.

c. Monopoly of the state over violence or dispute mediation is neither universal nor permanent. There have been instances in and outside the region where this monopoly has been broken down and the legitimacy of the state undermined.

d. The increasing inability (overloading) of the state to deal with dispute mediation leads to the use of para-military/military forces, cropping up of private armies, growth of bandit group and the emergence of mafias.

e. The notion of "overdetermination" to explain ethnic violence is replacing class-based struggles. Ethnicity as the basis of defining identity stigmatises others (individuals/groups) thus providing legitimacy for violence and blood letting.

f. Appropriation and accumulation are the bases of conflicts, particularly in relation to the land question.

g. There is a link between structural and direct violence. Non-visible dimensions of violence provide sensory stimuli which threaten the individual and create violence, e.g. the displacement of people via development programmes—50,000 people displaced in India due to development projects, 20,000 died of pesticide poisoning; violence within a community—women in the Muslim community in India who are prevented from agitating for rights on the excuse of being members of a besieged community; violence within family—silent suffering rooted in patriarchal structures; creation of terror both by state and non-governmental groups in civil society.

In view of the examples of South Asian states, it is important to seek different methods of arbitration and methods that are less conflictive and that exclude the use of state violence. Non-state actors need to play a larger role in capitalist development and in the arbitration of conflicts.

There are three theoretical conclusions which can be abstracted from the above discussion.

1. States engage in violence at the conjunctural moment when pre-capitalist mode of production gives way to the capitalist.
2. The degree of violence bears an inverse relationship to the degree of the development of the productive forces.
3. The reason why violence takes the form of ethnicity or sub-nationalism is that it has not taken the traditional form of class struggle.

Finally, the following broad generalizations can be applied to concrete situations in Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

- Inadequate or false consciousness.
- Overdetermination
- Collapse of mediation process (eg) at the level of the state.
- Interaction of internal processes and external intervention
- Psychology of violence
- Perception of non-violence as the instrument of the weak.

Strategies for Conflict Resolution

It was decided that the Indo Sri Lankan Accord and the role of the IPKF should be examined in light of the Peace Keeping Force being a potential peace keeper within the Sri Lankan conflict. There were some general observations which were mentioned. In the

research that the International Peace Research Institute (Prio) had conducted and reflected in its special issue on Military withdrawals and Peace Keeping several observations were made.

1. The Military Interventions in another country is normally due to the inability of a country to resolve its own internal conflicts.
2. Military intervention ostensibly for peace-keeping is ill planned and the decision to send troops to another country is done by small groups within the political order.
3. Often when foreign armies are sent they confront multi-ethnic societies which serve to exacerbate primordial emotions and ethnicity and nationalism. They tend to aggravate existing conflicts.
4. The interventionist army resorts to forms of military behaviour, which not only involve gross human rights violations, show little regard to the laws governing soldiers in combat and involve damage and misery to civilians. This also tends to escalate the conflict by using methods such as landmines intended to invite reprisals against the civilian population.

It is important to examine the role of the IPKF within this context. The Indo-Sri Lanka Accord was handled with considerable secrecy and the two governments were unable to secure consensus amongst all the actors, particularly the dominant Tamil political force, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). Mediation could have been better served if India continued to provide its good offices as a third party, in securing substantial agreement with the Sri Lankan Government and the Tamil political movements. The absence of which created a situation where India became deeply embroiled in the internal conflict of Sri Lanka. India

also underestimated the LTTE and felt that it could control the Tamil movement and influence its direction. It was certainly not prepared to engage in a long and protracted war, firstly in an urban setting and then in the country side. With the increase in the size of the Indian Army (70,000) there were strong reactions from the North and the South. The composition of the Indian multi national army also needs to be examined. The presence of the Indian presence led to the development of the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna who mobilized the Sinhalese population by calling for a war to defend the motherland from Indian hegemony. The campaign of the JVP has led to the development of new forms of political terror and counter terror by the state with assassinations, and mass killings from both sides. The victory of President Premadasa however illegitimate was seen as attempt to resolve the conflict by unilaterally asking for the withdrawal of the Indian Peace Keeping Forces and an invitation to the LTTE and JVP to join the democratic process. The unilateral declaration of asking the Indian army to withdraw has created a dangerous situation which could lead to further escalation of violence.

There are several possible scenarios. Maybe that President Premadasa is trying to co-opt the slogans of the JVP and regain the Sinhalese constituency. Further that his unilateral demand for the withdrawal of the IPKF may lead to gaining the support of the LTTE and obtaining their involvement in the democratic process. However this gamble may also lead to another scenario. There is a danger that there would be a partition where the North and East would declare a unilateral declaration of independence (UDI) and that anti state forces led by the JVP may actually capture state power.

In the eventuality of the withdrawal of the IPKF what

(Continued on page 23)

The Next Decade and Beyond

Sumanasiri Liyanage

The two variables discussed in the previous sections together will determine the direction of the international economy in the coming years. I do not attempt to extrapolate future growth rates in output, world exports or demand for new technologies. This is probably the task of people who are specialised in econometric modelling. Rather, my intention is to make broad guesses about future trends.

The recent experiences in major capitalistic countries make one thing clear. The decline of rate of profit, stagnation in productivity growth and low level of net investment are confined to the old line industries and agriculture. The old line industries in many OECD countries have still been organized within the old system of production and not yet undergone necessary restructuring processes. As *Business Week* (1-6-81) pointed out, in the US, both profit decline and stagnation were confined to manufacturing, transportation and other old line industries and agriculture. But, energy, services and high technology industries have recorded good or adequate profit rate growth. There are two main reasons for this. First, it is an expensive operation since it involves re-equipment and rearrangement of the existing factories. Second, big corporations are inherently conservative in their outlook. It was not IBM, but Apple Macintosh which revolutionized the micro-processor technology. As Luxemburg once remarked, the small capitalists play the role of pioneers in economic development.

They possess that role in a double sense. They initiate new methods of production in well established branches of industry; they are instrumental in the creation of new branches of production not yet exploited by the big capitalist. (1970:47)

Let us look at the performances of the high technology industries. As Kimbel (1987) notes, the information technology industry looms large in OECD economies and is set to grow faster than almost any other sector in the coming years. It is estimated that the total world production of information technology systems will treble in 1995 (see Table 1). Moreover, the sector will experience a higher rate of growth in production when compared with the future estimated growth rates in other sectors.

Expenditure on all IT products is increasing faster than on any other class of goods and will continue to do so. In the United States, it is forecast that outlays on computers and other data processing (DP) equipments will rise by an annual average of 21 per cent up to 1995, and those on telephone and telegraph systems by 20 per cent. Annual spending growth for the third fastest-rising industrial group, drugs, is projected at no more than 7.4 per cent. (Kimbel 1987:18)

The US capital investment figures have recorded a similar trend in the importance of IT product group. The total investment in the computer industry in 1995 will be 62.4 billion dollars (at 1977 prices) which is far ahead of the second leading industrial investor, automobile manufacturing industry.

the total investment of which will be 41.8 billion dollars.

There is no doubt that the growth performances of the IT sector in itself has been remarkable, but more importantly, economic growth has been effected as a result of the deployment of new information technology by the other leading sectors of the economy. This has an enormous impact on output, employment, cost structure and rate of profit. This is what is called the 'ripple effect' of new technologies. Today, established industrial sectors, such as automobile, aerospace, electronic components, metals and chemicals, have been in the process of 'systemation'. Ouellette et al note;

(T)he automobile industry has long been a leader in the use of hard automation—special tools built to perform one function repetitively. Today, the automotive industry is also beginning to take lead in adopting computerized production technologies, using robots for welding and spray painting. CAD (computer-aided designing) for automobile bodies and numerical methods for other manufacturing functions. (1983:30)

Most of the new investments of the automobile sector are spent on computer-aided technologies. The example cited by Ouellette et al may be of interest.

Table 1
World Production of Information Technology Systems
Growth Estimates 1986-1995 (in \$ billions)

	1986	1990	1995	average annual growth rate %
Hardware	224	353	621	12
Software	84	174	433	20
Telecommunications and Computing Services	85	107	143	6
Total	393	634	1197	13
Source: OECD (quoted in Kimbel 1987:18)				

The automobile industry invested \$30 billion in production technology to reduce weight by 800 lbs (364kgs) between 1973 and 1978. Another \$30 billion will be required to finance production facilities for the next round of weight reduction improvement by 1985, and a large sum will be spent on computer-aided technology. (1983:30)

These changes will definitely generate a worldwide increase in demand for high-tech products both for industrial investment and personal consumption. Therefore, high technology will act as a catalyst in generating a new boom in the world economy.

One more question should be addressed prior to the conclusion of this essay. Most radicals argue that the development of new technologies in production will create a heavy incidence of unemployment and as a result decline in aggregate demand. Certainly, most of the new technologies are labour-saving. So were the early technologies. In fact, workers opposed them when they had been introduced. But, the level of employment is a function of capital accumulation, the increasing accumulation

absorbs labour in the production process. Taking Californian state economy which he thinks is 'the best precursor or model for the coming information society' as the case, Miller points out;

During each year from 1973-1980 California added nearly 500,000 new jobs, net, to its work force. . . . Of the half million new jobs that were added, net, in California, something like 60% were created directly or indirectly by new technologies.. (1985)

Thus it appears likely that the new technologies and their extensive applications can create new jobs. Therefore it is not accurate to argue in an abstract way that new technologies are job-destroying.

Certainly, this process of capital restructuring may involve drastic changes in the existing international economic order. There might be massive devaluation of capital in certain sectors, and some production firms may go bankrupt. In a capitalistic context, this is quite normal. That was how capital restructuring occurred on previous occasions. Engels once pre-

dicted that the capitalist centre would shift from the two banks of the North Atlantic to the two sides of the North Pacific. His prediction seemed wrong at the time. However, the current process of capital restructuring appears to be proving Engel's prediction to be correct.

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Villager's Participation in Rural Organizations

Jayantha Perera

In each study-village, there were several rural organisations and associations. Among them are Rural Development Societies, Funeral Aid Societies, Religious (Buddhist) Societies, Credit Societies, political organizations, Women's Clubs, Sports Clubs and Volunteer Social Service organizations. In each village, at least four of these organizations were functioning at the time of the survey (1987-8).

In the wet zone, Rural Development Societies and Funeral Aid Societies are the most common village organizations. Their membership and leadership are open to all households. The educated youth who are well connected with government departments and other agencies usually lead these organizations. In all four wet zone study-villages, the leadership of Rural Development Societies was with the land poor members. However, although the formal leadership vested with the land poor, in actual operations of the organizations, the landed members tend to become patrons or advisers to the leadership. This is to be expected as the landless youth or at least, their households depend on those landed patrons to obtain land on share-cropping basis or to obtain casual work. On the other hand, landed households often have close connections with politicians and influentials in the Government sector. Therefore, it is in the advantage of the formal leaders and the members of these organizations to recognize patrons role in organizations.

In the dry zone, Credit and Thrift societies (CTS) and Funeral Aid Societies are popular and almost all village households are members of these organizations. Villagers get together to obtain credit from these CTSs and from Government agencies such as banks and cooperatives. The politically inspired Gramodaya Mandalays have also played an important role in villagers' welfare in recent times by organizing training programmes on health, sanitation and nutrition with the help of NGOs. Political organizations mainly focus on state land distribution and settler selection for settlement schemes. Villagers continuously agitate against bringing outsiders to the large-scale settlement schemes like the Mahaweli Settlements on the ground that they should have first priority in occupying developed land. When the state advertised and selected recipients of state land under the Village Expansion Schemes, several village political associations in the dry zone petitioned against the selection procedures and stopped the land distribution. The Government Agent of the district was as a result, compelled to recall applications from villagers for the allotments.

Party political associations at the village level become active only during general elections. Since in elections, numerical dominance is more important than land dominance, the associations tend to attract more land poor households as their members. However, the

leadership still tends to come from the landed households because of their ability to spend money on association matters such as printing posters and pamphlets and to 'buy' votes for their high-level patrons.

Villagers had mixed feelings about the role that rural organizations could play to ameliorate their socio-economic status.

In all study-villages, people felt that rural organizations cannot help them in finding employment, negotiating increased wages or obtaining State resources. However, they reported the Funeral Aid Societies and CTSs have played a useful role in village community as people irrespective of their socio-economic status could obtain help in an emergency.

There are no exclusive associations or organizations of the land poor or land poor households in the study-villages. Both in the dry zone and the wet zone, the formal organizations that are functioning in the villages do not attempt to influence the economic relations between the landlords and their employees.

There are no formal organizations in villages or in settlement schemes for the purpose of effective wage bargaining. Even informal organizations for this purpose were not known, other than those groups organized by migrant workers, contract workers and traditional co-operative forms of labour such as *uttam*. Work is mutually arranged individually on the basis of mutually agreed terms and conditions prevailing in the area. Often individual qualities such as honesty and efficiency and patron-client relations matter when such arrangements are made between a worker and the employer. Thus

Table 6

Villager's Participation in Village Organizations:
Percentage Distribution

Type of Households	Dry Zone	Wet Zone	Both Zones
Land poor	81	73	77
Landed	86	86	86

Table 7

**Advantages of Being Members of Rural Organisations
Villagers' Perceptions — Percentage Distribution of Households**

<i>Received help in:</i>	<i>Land Poor</i>	<i>Landed</i>
1. Security Employment	02	05
2. Increasing Wage Rates	00	00
3. Obtaining Credit	25	08
4. Social Activities	36	29

wage bargaining on an organized basis is almost absent and group participation in agricultural activities for contract work was not organized for wage determination. There were, however, a few occasions when wage workers acted together to bargain their wage rates and provision of food for the workers. In a dry zone village, for example, when a group of wage workers demanded an increase of Rs 50/- (from Rs 250/-) per acre for harvesting a paddy crop during the 1986/87 Maha season, employers informally decided among themselves not pay higher rates. But later they negotiated with the workers to increase the rate up to Rs 275/- per acre. According to workers this concession was given because it was difficult for the landlords to find workers as it was the peak demand time for wage labour.

Political party organizations in villages do not intervene in labour disputes or in landlord-tenant disagreements. Thus wages or other working terms are not influenced by these organizations. Such issues are generally referred to the Agricultural Services Committees which are divisional government organizations. Each Committee covers 100 villages. The Farmer Representatives of villages in the Agricultural Service Committees are usually members of the landed households. Farmer Representatives tend to represent the interests of the landed group than that of the land poor tenants or labourers.

The ineffective role of village organizations in the sphere of

village economy is due to several reasons. Chief among them is that village organizations are not class-based; but mainly organized around lingering primordial sentiments, kinship relations and patron-client relations. This avoids serious confrontation between land poor tenants and workers, and their employers. Another reason is that operational fields of various government programmes, for example, agricultural extension, credit distribution and rural welfare activities are regionally and divisionally based; not village based. As a result, the leaders of such organizations pose as leaders who cater for such wider requirements than for village needs.

Such changes of leadership did not challenge the traditional land-based village leaders at the beginning. However (a) the political appointment of office-bearers of rural organizations, (b) the nomination of such organizations as channels for distributing scarce resources such as fertilizer, agro-chemicals and (c) the use of political loyalty as a criterion for allocating benefits through these organizations have increased the importance of such organizations as new power basis in rural Sri Lanka. However, villagers do not consider organizations such as Agricultural service centres, cooperatives and rural banks as rural organizations but as government agencies. This indicates the degree of alienation of people from rural organizations.

One of the outcomes of the politicisation of rural leader-

ship is the emergence of local leaders from various previously under-privileged economic and social groups. They come from landowner as well as from land poor households and from high castes as well as from low castes. Their base of power and authority mainly depends on their ability to mobilize votes for the MP or their links with the outside influentials such as Government officials or both.

The appointment of office-bearers of rural organizations on party lines, especially after 1971, has changed the character of rural leadership in Sri Lanka in several ways:

- (a) The intensification of political conflict and the increasing role of youth organizations have thrown up a new stratum of leaders, whose power and ability to gain nomination to office by outside political forces rest, more on powers of intimidation than on the factors which made traditional leaders popular and accepted.
- (b) Their areas of authority are often divisional and this gives them wider reference groups and makes it easy for them to find excuses for not doing specific services for their own villages or specific favours for their friends and supporters — they have to look after a whole area, not a village.
- (c) Until 1982, in each general election the ruling party was defeated by the opposition and therefore, the maximum length of tenure of office of such leaders was limited to the tenure of their ruling party. The instability of the base of power and authority often encourages these leaders to gain the maximum benefits from the organizations they control for themselves during the short period they are powerful. The change of political patterns at the national level, as a result of the contribution of UNP

as the ruling party since 1977, one might have expected that the fate of rural leaders would not change. But intrigue and political conspiracies and cut-throat competition among power aspirants do not allow a rural leader survive more than a few months. On the other hand, the MPs too wish to change local agents as often as possible such changes allow MPs to distribute opportunities of power, prestige and wealth among a wider group of supporters.

Conclusions

One important characteristic of patterns of social change in rural Sri Lanka has been its accelerating pace. This has been the result of increased state intervention into the rural areas that began in the 1930s, and of a concomitant process by which village affairs and rural development have been politicized.

State intervention can be seen in a very marked manner in the sphere of agricultural development. Thus increased production is mainly the result of government policy as the state provides both technical and institutional support to promote agricultural development. The refurbishment of old reservoirs and the construction of new irrigation cum-settlement schemes, improved communication and transport networks and the introduction of new packages of modernized agricultural practices such as high yielding rice varieties are some of important technical facilities provided by the state. Land tenure reforms and land reforms, credit and extension facilities and various agricultural subsidies programmes have set the institutional framework for agricultural development.

Technical and institutional facilities provided by the state have accelerated agricultural development and brought about several changes in the agrarian system. Chief among them are the increased interaction between the government officials

and farmers, and between political leaders and farmers. These interactions effectively arrested the domination of villagers by the government officials. Further more, these changes radically revised the village social structure bringing villagers into direct contact with the outside world. New occupations have made villages more heterogeneous and economic differentiation has made them less egalitarian.

The population pressure on land, increased demand in urban markets and the imposition of import controls brought in massive shift towards cash crop production in the 1960s. Cash crop cultivation oriented rural subsistence farmers towards national and international markets and capital. At the same time one can observe the internal differentiation of the peasantry into small group of rich land owners and a group of rural workers and small peasants.

Hidden tenancies in the Maha well areas and the increased use of hired labour in agriculture in place of traditional communal practices such as *umun* and *kajja*, have created some impersonal relations of production. This process is not discussed in national census reports or official research reports. Instead, they emphasize tenancy problems and the desire of the land poor to become tenants or small holders. Such an emphasis ignores the presence of a growing class of cultivators who either do not possess enough finances to cultivate the land they possess. This polarization is far from complete, but is sufficiently advanced to jeopardize the traditional holder production relations. This process has been accelerating during the last 40 years, despite the government's attempt at creating and preserving a small peasant proprietor system in rural Sri Lanka.

Recent literature on agrarian relations, rural class formation and agrarian change have shown the emergence of classes

in the agriculture sector: the capitalist class, the wage earners and independent producers, that is, small holders and settler farmers. As discussed earlier, there are several factors which influence the relations among these classes and their relative positions vis-à-vis each other. The overlap of roles among them poses a question of identifying classes in the rural sector. A farmer who hires wage labourers one week and who hires himself out the next week does not exhibit the required homogeneity of role. At the same time, if a landlord hires wage workers only during the cultivation peaks then it is difficult to call him a capitalist farmer. To become a capitalist farmer he, among other things, should hire wage workers on a regular basis to carry out his agricultural activities. On the other hand, hiring out of labour by a land poor villager is still an irregular activity. Often it provides only a side income, the subsistence needs still being taken care of through domestic production.

A careful study of Sri Lankan villages however, also shows that there is a small category of rural entrepreneurs depending entirely on hired labour for market-oriented production. These are mostly people with other occupations — traders, government officials and professionals. Here the owners of the means of production do not participate in the labour process of commodity production. Then there is a growing class of seasonal hired labours who have ceased to be owner cultivators or *ande* tenants due to a complete loss of access to land. These two groups signify the arrival of capitalist production.

Recent attempts by the state to distribute large tracts of land among corporations and individuals for large-scale farming and agribusiness indicate the state's role in forming

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A New Image of Socialism

Anatoli Butenko

Revolutionary perestroika, which is under way in this country, is not aimed at dismantling socialism. According to the Communist Party, which is its initiator and organizer, its goal is the renewal of socialism by giving it "the second wind" and the building of new model of society based on a modern image of socialism. What is this image?

For Marx and Engels, socialism was a post-capitalist system brewed naturally against the background of capitalism's contradictions and laws. The new image of socialism is not a utopia based on a combination of some new socialist features taken out of thin air. It is the projection of the objective trends in social progress.

The founders of Marxism warned that if not confirmed by future developments and reality, their conclusions won't have any meaning. Our views on the features which distinguish the future non-capitalist society from the present society are the conclusions based on historical facts and processes of development and have neither theoretical facts nor practical value beyond the connection with these facts and processes. Engels wrote Edward Pease on January 27, 1886. (Marx and Engels. Collected Works, vol. 36, p. 364. Russian Edition.)

The most important thing is to find the basis for the understanding of the new image of socialism in the conditions when the previous Marxist arguments longer work in full measure due to altogether new historic realities. That is why no appropriate concept of the essence of the present epoch and the future of humankind is available.

A Professor at Moscow State University the writer is a leading lecturer at the Moscow-based Institute of Economics of the World Socialist Movement.

The cardinal question of the new image is a modern understanding of socialism. It may be more or less firmly asserted that like any social system, socialism includes an array of relations, economic, technical and scientific, socio-political, moral and ideological, which pre-determine new conditions for the working people and each member of modern society. The main criterion of whether one or another society is a Socialist one is society's attitude to the working people and their interests and needs, rather than some abstract people and "the priority of man, his interests and needs" as some say. Socialism is a social system which frees working people from exploitation and oppression, turning them into the goal of social life and its master and creating conditions so as the free development of each should become a condition for the free development of all.

Mark defined the essence of the working class's social revolution as "the emancipation of labour." Having failed to understand this formula, Stalin and his followers reduced this mission on socialism to the elimination of exploitation of man by man, saying practically nothing about freedom from oppression of man by man. Is it just a coincidence that such a simplification was made by Stalinism and bureaucracy in general?

Exploitation and oppression are different things. Exploitation means expropriation of the surplus products created by others, while oppression is an attempt on the will and freedom of others. The diminution of the formula has a big meaning behind itself. It is designed to justify the "barrack socialism" asserted by Stalin, which is a secret but definite ideal of bureaucracy which guarantees its undivided rule.

Bureaucracy is quite capable of freeing the working people from the previous forms of exploitation without sacrificing its interests. But due to its social nature, it is incapable of granting them freedom from oppression and the new forms of alienation and exploitation connected with this, which blossom under "barrack socialism" with its etatization of the means of production.

Another important component of the new image of socialism is the creation of a civilized society as an integral community of economically independent citizens. That means that its economic foundation rests not on two recognized forms of socialist property, which, as it was assumed in the USSR until recently, merge together, but on various types of socialist property subjugated to the interests and needs of the working man and his ever more effective development as a personality.

Unlike the idea of Marx and Engels who forecast socialism as a commodity-free, classless and state-free society in which, as Marx said, the people's direct non-political rule replaces state authority and contrary to Stalin's declarations about the preservation of the state (and, consequently, bureaucracy) well into the communist stage of development, the new image of socialism proceeds from the following. Socialist society remains a commodity and class—and, consequently, political—society. But Marxists have no intention to perpetuate the state and bureaucracy and the alienation of the working people from power, which results from this. It is necessary to assert a genuine political rule of the people "the power of the people through the people", acting as socialist political self-government of the people and gradually developing into state-free, public self-government.

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The Rebirth of Socialism

Michael Prowse

The overthrow of communist power in eastern Europe is widely interpreted as a ringing endorsement of western capitalist values. Some commentators have claimed that the battle of ideas is over: in their eyes, market-based individualism of the kind which finds its fullest expression in the US has proven its superiority to all other forms of social and economic organisation. The tearing down of the Iron Curtain, in short, proves we are all Thatcherites now.

Such a neo-conservative reading of events is implausible — as well as sickeningly complacent. Some individuals in communist countries undoubtedly support extreme liberation policies of the sort advocated by Robert Nozick in *Anarchy, State and Utopia*: a nightwatchman state and any amount of inequality provided it results from "free" trades in the market place. But the great majority of east Europeans are surely doing no more than reject tyrannical government. They want freedom. But free-market capitalism is not the only environment in which freedom can flourish. There is also such a thing as democratic socialism.

My guess is that if the residents of East Germany, Czechoslovakia and Hungary were asked to rank the socio-economic systems of western countries, they would put Sweden and Austria far ahead of the US and the UK. They want greatly to improve the efficiency of industry and commerce, but they do not want rampant crime, poor schools, squalid public transport bag ladies, a growing underclass and soaring social and economic inequality of the kind promoted in Britain and the US. It is thus absurd to interpret their rejection of left-wing extremism as a vote in favour of right-wing extremism; Jacques Delors's philosophy is far more likely to win their

allegiance than that of Nigel Lawson.

This is not to deny, however, that the meaning of socialism is changing. The Soviet Union, China and eastern Europe have demonstrated beyond all doubt that state planning is economically inefficient. In the West, nationalization and public ownership have also had an unhappy history. State-run bureaucracies are often poor at meeting the needs of individuals. But they were only ever advocated as a means to the important ends of greater efficiency in production and greater equity in distribution. Socialists should not blush at the need to discard institutional arrangements which did not deliver the goods; capitalists, after all, are constantly scrapping out-of-date machinery as they search for ever faster ways to make a buck.

But if everybody accepts the case for decentralisation and increased reliance on the market, what now distinguishes the political left and right? The answer is to be found in very different conceptions of social justice. The right-wing view, which dates at least from David Hume, is that a distribution of goods and services is just, provided it results from uncoerced market exchanges which respect existing property rights — assuming these were arrived at fairly. The point about this "entitlement" theory, which has been popularised by Nozick, is that the relative proportion of income and wealth in the hands of the rich is irrelevant: 1 per cent of the population could justly own 99 per cent of everything.

The left-wing view is that social justice requires a fair distribution of goods, services and other social privileges. Those who are unusually productive (or lucky) must there-

fore surrender a large portion of their spoils. One version of this theory has been popularised by John Rawls, the US philosopher. He argues that social and economic inequalities are justified only if they can be shown to improve the absolute living standards of the worst-off groups in society.

If you believe the distributive theory of justice makes sense, you should count yourself as potentially left-of-centre, regardless of your admiration for markets. The intensity of your socialist conviction is best gauged by the amount of distributive injustice you are prepared to tolerate. My guess is that the east Europeans will remain better socialists than most of us in the west for many decades to come. (P. T.)

A New Image...

(Continued from page 20)

This development is intrinsically connected with new features of democracy and glasnost, the growing expansion of the rights and liberties of citizens and people's control over the performance of the authorities. Up to now the people who due to their position decided the destinies of others bore no responsibility before these others and answered for all their acts, one only to their superiors — which not infrequently resulted in law breaches. This pyramid should be placed upside down: it is necessary to put officials under the control of the masses and create a mechanism of people's power so as the working people should control the situation and be able to leave or remove any official at any time.

Such are the main features of socialism we need in this country.

Wijeweera and Marxism

I would like to draw the attention of your readers to the article "The Rise of the JVP—a sociological perspective" by S. Leelananda in the "Lanka Guardian" of December 1, vol. 12, no. 15. Leelananda says:—"In fact reading the disclosures now coming out of Gorbachev's USSR one has to credit Wijeweera with considerable maturity in relating his own life experience in the USSR to the growing crisis of Soviet Communism. His deep seated hatred and contempt for the leaders of the old left seems to have stemmed for their inability, or unwillingness to make a proper assessment of the Soviet position".

This is far from the truth. When the LSSP formally became the Ceylon Section of the Bolshevik Leninist Party of India, in 1941 it subscribed to the Trotskyist ideology of the Fourth International. Inter alia, it held, "So long as the Soviet bureaucracy has not been removed by the proletariat a task which will eventually be accomplished, it (the bureaucracy) — fulfills a necessary function in the defence of the Workers State". Besides this, between 1941 and 1942, Colvin R de Silva, who when in Bogambara jail wrote under the non de plume 'C. R. Govindan', a withering exposure of the bureaucratic degeneration of the Soviet State, titled "whither the Soviet Union"? One has only to read the past issues of "Samasamajist", "Samasamaja", "Poratam" and the "Fight" to see that the LSSP consistently exposed the Soviet bureaucracy unlike the psychopants in the Stalinist C. P.

The deep seated hatred Wijeweera had towards the traditional left was because Wijeweera had to relentlessly debunk the Marxian method which he evidently knew very

little. He had instead to change course to the short-cut of "putchism". From there, it was no far cry to individual and mass terrorism.

Wijeweera really had no quarrel with bureaucratism. As Trotsky said:—"Individual terrorism is in its very essence bureaucratism turned inside out. For Marxists this law was not discovered yesterday. Bureaucratism has no confidence in the masses, endeavors to substitute itself for masses. Terrorism works in the same manner; it seeks to make the masses happy without asking for their participation. The Stalinist bureaucracy has created a vile leader-cult, attributing to leaders divine qualities. "Hero" worship is also the religion of terrorism, only with a minus sign.

The terrorists imagine that all that is necessary is to remove a few leaders by means of a revolver for history to take another course. Communist terrorists, as an ideological grouping, are of the same flesh and blood as the Stalinist bureaucracy." (The Kirov. assassination by Leon Trotsky 1934. Pioneer Publishers) All this applied to Wijeweera perfectly.

Amaradasa Fernando

A Comment on "The Crisis" by Susil Siriwardena

Reading Susil Siriwardena on "The Crisis" (LG 15.12.89), you may have thought that he had nothing to say on the subject and was trying not to say it. I hope you didn't make that mistake, though I'll allow that he uses heavy type the way we used to underline words when we were cramming for our 'A' Levels. After all, that was the prescribed way for memorising words and phrases that were important whether we knew what they meant or not. Aids-to-study gave the guidelines and everybody who used them was guaranteed a pass. Credits were

CORRESPONDENCE

for a higher kind of parroting. Distinctions were reserved for mala-girawas.

But Don't be fooled. Mr. Siriwardena is not all vacuity and bombast: he does have something to say. Some of it might sound stale after a decade of Reagan-speak and Thatcher-squeak, but there's no helping that.

He says that our Democratic System has been subverted and elections aborted or something like that. The media know nothing about that, so the people must remain *unagath hudi janaya* in the matter.

He also says things that are palpably false. For example, that "we have failed to mobilise the energy and creativity of a highly aware, literate and ingenious populace (?)", — when, in fact, this has been one of our absolutely numbing successes. A free flow of ideas continue to emanate west, south and south-westwards from *China Bay*, and say hello to a spray of people's thoughts radiating from elsewhere. They are further illuminated by sparklers cascading from the hills. What more does Mr. Siriwardena expect of the ingenuity of the populace? Haven't they given proof enough of their maturity through two elections? The test of the matter, surely, must be that the percentage of those who are yet to mature has grown less?

If Mr. Siriwardena has got it into his head that "the elite" are against "the masses", may be he should read (or re-read) Marx. Who, may I ask, gave leadership to the Russian revolution? Was it the peasantry or the lumpen proletariat? or the intelligentsia? Who harnessed the collective energies of the people? Mr. S. S. wants our intelligentsia to forge organic links with the lives of ordinary people. What about with their deaths? S. S. should be encouraged to go to the ordinary people, shorn of official para-

phernalia and T.V. cameramen, to render his paper to them in a language which he and they can understand. There may then be forged for him some organic links of a somewhat adolescent and painful kind.

Let him be as bold and daring in putting his paper to the test of fire, of which there's plenty around. It might help him make up his mind to know that fire doesn't only burn, it also licks.

T.S.P. Soysa

Colombo - 4

T.V. news and anti-colonialism

The event is the solemn opening of the Malwatta Vihara Library in Kandy by His Excellency the President. In its New Year eve news telecast in Sinhala, the Rupavahini referring to this event announced that the library which originally stood there was totally destroyed by the early British. This reference has completely disappeared from the English news bulletin which followed it an hour and a half later.

Whom are the SLRC intends to fool and cajole? One thing is, the Sinhala listener knowing the truth is marginally richer. Why was this truth hidden from the English listener? Has, suddenly somebody's conscience pricked by the memories of the Jaffna library? Or did someone wish to prove that the acts of anti-imperialism and anti-colonialism is only a 'dirty-work' of the populace. Or is it an attempt to white-wash the sinister face of British imperialism.

Anyway, the last decade of the twentieth century has just dawned with the people moving more into multi-lingualism. Therefore, the use of language to misinform and disinform will hardly bear fruit.

E. M. G. Edirisinghe
Wellipenna.

Villager's...

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capitalist agriculture in the dry zone Sri Lanka. This process is slow and is limited by some techno-economic and political reasons. To circumvent these limitations such corporations have adopted the existing forms of petty production by changing the crop and giving the necessary production and market orientation to the cultivators (Shanmugaratnam, 1987).

In this context, it is difficult to identify clearly demarcated classes or a full-fledged capitalist agriculture in rural Sri Lanka.

(Concluded)

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States and...

(Continued from page 14)

would be the mechanisms during the transition period. Would

the withdrawal of the IPKF lead to an escalation of armed conflict between the LTTE and the EPRDF who are currently in the provincial government of the North and the East. Was there a possibility for a UN peace keeping Force? or for a SAARC peace Keeping Force? However it was noted that the IPKF role in Sri Lanka was a study in failure in conflict resolution. Given the potency for sub nationalist assertions there was a need for institutional mechanisms for the mediation of conflict. SAARC is merely at present only a club of heads of States, and more work needs to be done for more co-operation between the peoples within the region.

NATIONAL TREE

The flowers of the ironwood
Last for a day.

Opening at sunrise

They fall when the
sun goes down.

Their little white flags
With yellow hearts
Flutter in a state
Of carnival and terror.

Yesterday's petals
Lie beheaded on the ground.
There are buds in hiding;
Tomorrow these will explode.

Above the low scrub jungle
Seething in hot air
The young leaves turn
Transparently blood-red.

A king cobra demon
Stays hoodwinking on top.
The ironwood grows high
Exuding festivity.

Richard Murphy

Written in Kandy after a visit to Sam
Papana's arborium near Dambulla
in January 1989

The man who put the Chutzpah into poetry

Geoffrey Moore

TAMBIMUTTU: BRIDGE
BETWEEN TWO
WORLDS
Edited by Jane Williams

"Bliss was in that dawn to be alive/But to be young was very heaven." It might seem on the face of it hyperbole to apply Wordsworth's ecstatic outburst to delight at the appearance of a mere poetry magazine. But that is how we felt about *Poetry London* in the early days of the Second World War—those of us, that is, who were teenage novices and bursting to break into print.

It was the end of a decade of poetic squabbling: the New Apocalypse rising to confront the grey eminence of the Pylon Poets, Julian Symons' *Twentieth Century Verse* standing aloof and Geoffrey Grigson's *New Verse* pouring acid on the whole boiling. Into this petty world there sailed a vision, a dream called Tambimuttu who had the chutzpah to proclaim that "every man has poetry within him."

We all went quietly mad and sent our poems to Tambi by the cartload. Sometimes there was actually an acknowledgement, saying that our hero had liked what he had seen. What better excuse, then, to visit him in the tiny crowded office that his publishers Nicolson and Watson had given him at Craven House in Kingsway, London.

By now a year, perhaps two, had gone by. We were different—on leave from the Forces. But Tambi had not changed. Beautiful, shy yet friendly, he made it seem as if you were the sole object of his attention. The heart sank, perhaps, at what

seemed like hundreds of other people's manuscripts piled in disorder around him, but a quick trip round the corner to The Princess Louise and the sinking a quite remarkable number of pints brought eternal friendship and the promise of publication.

Who was Tambi? What was he, that all his friends commend him? He was a Jaffna Tamil, born in 1915 in Ceylon who came to England in 1938 and almost immediately made himself a leading figure in the London literary scene. His family was Catholic and prominent, an uncle having been distinguished Jesuit lexicographer. But Meary James, as he was christened, preferred to think of himself as a Hindu, and took to calling himself "Thurai Rajah."

In London, Tambi made Fitzrovia. He was always so gentle and enthusiastic that one felt one would do anything for him, but there was another side to his nature which is touched on by one of the contributors to Tambimuttu, a collection of poems and pieces about him edited by Jane Williams. Grover Amen quotes himself as telling Tambi that he was a "crazy, drunken conartist... a lost, soul a misfit."

True, of course. He drank himself silly and produced nothing of his own that was memorable. The long poem called "Gita Sarasvati," which appears at the end of William's book and which she calls "certainly my favourite of all his writings," is a prosy attempt to expound Hindu philosophy, clumsily derivative from *The Four Quartets*.

As an editor, however, Tambimuttu was superb. He produced the most inspiring and attractive magazine of verse that Britain had seen since *Georgian poetry*. T. S. Eliot smiled on the project and

everyone appeared in its pages, from Dylan Thomas, Stephen Spender and Kathleen Raine to the least unknown who had produced a poem which caught Tambi's eye.

That was the secret of his success. Although he was an incorrigible name-dropper, he was also a true democrat. His "nose", as he called it, led him to publish, among the 62 books of Editions Poetry London, Nabokov's *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight*, Henry Moore's *Shelter Sketch Book*, and Henry Miller's *The Cosmological Eye*.

Fifty years after his initial impact on London literary life and six years after his death it is good to be reminded of what he did—although not all of the 70 pieces printed in Williams' collection are worthy to have seen the light of day. Apart from friends in the early days such as Patricia Ledwood, Nicholas Moore and well-known names like Iris Murdoch and Mulk Raj Anand, it is irritating not to know who all these people are. At the price, also, an index would not have been out of order.

The editor is described as "a close friend" of Tambimuttu for the last 10 years of his life. But the 60-year-old Tambi that she knew was not the free spirit who delighted us in the 1940s. His time in the US was not a success and when he returned to England it was clear that the rot had set in.

Man does not live by charm alone, and all the king's horses and all the king's men could not put Tambi together again. Williams, who has a keen eye for a colourful character, has done her best—and perhaps this is no more than could have been done. Gossip keeps Tambi's memory alive; judgment would have been harsher.

 ENRICHING RURAL LIFESTYLE

Why there's sound of laughter in this rustic tobacco barn....

There is laughter and light banter amongst these rural denizens who are busy sorting out tobacco leaf in a barn. It is one of the hundreds of such barns spread out in the mid and upcountry intermediate zone where the arable land remains fallow during the off season.

Here, with careful nurturing, tobacco grows as a lucrative cash crop and the green leaves turn to gold... to the value of over Rs. 250 million or more annually, for perhaps 140,000 rural folk.

Tobacco is the industry that brings employment to the second highest number of people. And these people are the tobacco barn owners, the tobacco growers and those who work for them, on the land and in the barns.

For them, the tobacco leaf means meaningful work, a comfortable life and a secure future. A good enough reason for laughter.

 **Ceylon Tobacco Co. Ltd.**

*Sharing and caring
for our land and her people.*



*Over a quarter
Century ago
We chartered a course
To inculcate the banking
Habit among our
Rural masses
Our efforts have paid dividends
Since today we account
For the highest Savings
Deposits among those of
All commercial banks in
Sri Lanka put together*



People's Bank

Banker to the Millions

Service is Our First Objective