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A STAR IS BORN

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post-May Day scene

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— Kumari Jayawardena

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— Immanuel Wallerstein

George Keyt — A note

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M. R. D. IN THE MAKING?

A three-point appeal to the government by an impressive cross-section of Sri Lankan opinion-makers shows a gradual confluence of thinking among all non-UNP groups. The three main demands are:

*** Lift the Ban on the JVP and NSSP

*** Withdraw the Emergency

*** A free and fair general election

Also interesting is their demand for a "just political settlement of the Tamil problem".

The signatories include ten ranking Buddhist monks, the president and secretary of the S.L.M.P. (Mr. Ilangaratne and Mr. Kumaratunge), Mr. Dinesh Gunawardena M. P., seven professors (Sarachandra, Carlo Fonseka etc) trade unionists (including the SLFP's Alavi Moulana) writers, composers, singers (Khemadasa, Nanda Malini etc) peasants organisations, lawyers and other professionals.

REGIONAL PATTERN

Although Sri Lanka has had no Martial law or military ruler, a common Opposition demand places current Sri Lankan politics in a larger South Asian pattern. And a subjective factor fortifies this general impression of similar trends.

Pakistan's General Zia has had to face an insistent demand for general elections ever since the formation of the Movement for the Restoration of Democracy (M. R. D.). This multi-party alliance was spearheaded by the Pakistan Peoples Party, former premier Zulfikar Al Bhutto's party whose leadership went from ailing widow to his brave young daughter, now in exile. The slippery Zia is even now trying to find a way of perpetuating in power while pretending to respond to the popular demand.

The same call has been made by the Opposition alliance in Bangladesh. The leading party

in that ad hoc formation is the party of the late Mubibur Rahman, founding father of BD. The party is now led by his daughter, Waheda.

On May Day and in public speeches later, Mrs. Bandaranaike has made the demand for parliamentary elections her principal slogan. The S.L.M.P. the main force in the newly formed four-party alliance, has also called for elections. Will Sri Lanka produce its own M. R. D.?

DEBT TRAP

The 'open economy' is also the open road to the Debt trap. In the bland language of the Central Bank, Sri Lanka has experienced a 'significant deterioration of the debt profile'.

In simple arithmetic this means 22% of what we earned from exports last year was devoured by debt-servicing. To make the profile even more unpleasing is the Central Bank's admission that much of the government's borrowings abroad were loans from commercial banks which carried high interest and were of short-term maturity. In 1983, these loans added up to a third of our external debt. Of course these loans kept the supermarkets well-stocked and TV. ads of all the goodies available to Sri Lanka's super-rich, more exciting.

TRENDS
+
LETTERS

Inventing the wheel

Of course the Longbottom joke in the Touchstone column to which Arden refers wasn't original. It's an old chestnut: I came across it in the 'fifties in Robert Graves's delightful little book *Lars Porsena, or the Future of Swearing*. However I don't think Graves claimed to have originated it either: it sounds to me the kind of joke that might have been invented and circulated in a British university world. I was borrowing it from memory, and therefore can't swear to the 'Edward' or the '25', but the crux of the matter — Longbottom, the early death, the Latin line — were there. And in prose, of course.

I never read the particular column of Arden to which he refers: If I had, I would have imagined that he had read the joke too, in Graves or elsewhere, and turned into verse. A perfectly legitimate proceeding. But I now gather from his letter that he claims originality for the idea. Well, I suppose people do invent the wheel now and again.

Touchstone

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SUSANTHA GOONATILAKE

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A MAY DAY WITHOUT RACISM

NEWS
BACKGROUND

Dayan Jayatilleka

Comparisons, as Dr. Colvin R. de Silva is fond of reminding us, even as he makes them, are odious. But they are often inevitable. Instant comparisons were made between the SLMP led ULF demo and rally this May Day, and several other mammoth rallies in the past. The 1963 Galle Face Green gathering marking the formation of the United Left Front, the last ULF rally before the 1970 General Elections, and Wijeweera's first post-prison meeting at the Town Hall are the comparable spectacles that come to mind. While some describe the new ULF demonstration as the biggest May Day demo ever in this country, others go so far as to describe the Campbell Park rally which they say numbered 1—1 1/2 lakhs, as the biggest political meeting in independent Sri Lanka's history. Most analysts however, conclude that both quantitatively and qualitatively, the 1963 meeting was the more impressive.

Second Force

While the fact of population increase does explain in part, the size of the crowd, it should not detract from the political significance of the new ULF's achievement. The SLMP is no longer the Third Force, but rather, the Second Force. And this too, in just a few months. It must be remembered however, that had the JVP not been banned and its top leader driven underground, the SLMP may not have been able to achieve this position. The demonstration itself took about four and a half hours and its tail had not yet made it into the park even when the 9 p. m. English language news went on the air. The MEP, the smallest of the four parties whose segment of the procession lasted about 20 minutes, took the lead. Much cultural paraphenalia straight out of a Fine Arts Museum or the PATA Conference cluttered up the MEP show.

Some of the slogans however were surprisingly militant, including one which acclaimed the memory of the heroic youth who died in the 1971 April uprising. The enthusiastic participation of veteran women workers was also a happy feature.

One of the most interesting aspects of this year's May Day was the visible revitalization of the two traditional Left parties the LSSP and the CP, both of whom seem to have doubled their strength over the previous year. The alliance

last year's JVP demonstration! The CPSL contingent contained a sizeable core of the urban working-class and the massive floats of Marx, Engels, Lenin and a hammer and sickle were particularly welcome at a time when the SLMP is trying to project a non-Marxist Leftism. Rather odd though was the emphasis on World Peace and Anti-Nuclear issues. Though these are obviously the proper strategic slogans for the progressive movements in the 'First World', it is

- * **No party has expanded so much so fast...**
- * **No local politician while alive has had such an extraordinary personal appeal, but the phenomenon is bigger than Vijaya**
- * **The SLMP is a multi-class bloc, a transitional political formation and a potential mass movement**

with the Mahajana Party, a rapidly growing force, offers them viable political alternative. In short, hope. It was touching to see veteran LSSP cadre, dormant for some years, active in the party's fold again. Most surprising was the slogan that arose on occasion from some segments of both the MEP and LSSP contingents, namely "අපි යන්නේ කොයි පාරේ? විජේවීර ගිය පාරේ! ගමනායක ගිය පාරේ!" (on which road do we travel? The road of Wijeweera and Gamanayaka).

The Communist Party put on an exceptionally good show, the most attractive part of which was the women's detachment clad in Vietnamese style conical hats and military style uniforms that were so tight-fitting that someone remarked they must have been left over from the children's sections of

the Kalashnikov held aloft in the clenched fist rather than the dove with the olive branch in its beak, that is the symbol most closely related to the class and national liberation struggles in the 'Third World'.

Slogans calling for a political solution to the National Question and a halt to repressive measures in the north manifested themselves occasionally in the LSSP and CPSL contingents.

Vijaya

Vijaya has a good sense of timing. The SLMP formed the final contingent of the demonstration. Vijaya could have stood at the head of the entire demonstration with the other leaders and been on stage as they did to greet the procession. But

he permitted llangaratne and V. W. Kularatne to do that while preferring to stay with, and among, his people. And coming way down in the batting order, (like Sobers used to) shrewdly served to enhance the tense expectation of the waiting crowd. Crackers and cheers burst out when it was announced that Vijaya had entered the Park, and repeated appeals had to be made to the crowd to pull back from the sides of the pathway so as to let the demonstration get through. At one point as Vijaya passed, those of us lining the pathway had to scramble out of the way of the throng that was milling around him. It is significant that while the Party leaders on stage had only a single garland each, if at all, Mr. Kumaratunge was so bedecked with garlands one couldn't quite see his entire face. Once he was on the platform, someone with a screechy voice (which surely could not have been the Sarvodaya Gandhi's) had to implore the crowd not to lean against the stage for fear that it would give way.

It is hard to think of any political leader in Sri Lanka, who while alive, has had as much an extraordinary personal appeal as Vijaya Kumaratunge does today. **Still the most important thing that was revealed this May Day is that the SLMP phenomenon is bigger than Vijaya himself.**

An Embryonic Mass Movement?

The lower middle class housing schemes of Colombo North, the homes of Municipal employees and hitherto UNP strong-holds was a sea of purple. Young workers from Kolonnawa had discarded their 1977 green shirts for the SLMP's purple (now more plebian than royal). A vast swathe of the urban poor and the lumpen proletariat who have not been fully integrated in to the UNP structure or recently plummeting down from it, constitute a highly important component of the SLMP. The urban and rural petty-bourgeois youth and the unemployed are significantly represented. Ex-JVP trishaw drivers, lawyers, young Sinhala journalists, young doctors and University students are incor-

porated in the SLMP's base and middle ranks. The SLMP seems to have ripped off over half the SLFP's traditional support base and added on to it a thick layer of the 1977 new UNP's urban base (what I have earlier referred to as a dissident Premadasa constituency), while pulling in a segment of the JVP's youth base, and even attracting a number of old LSSP and CPSL supporters. Geographically, while its main strength remains concentrated in the urban and semi-urban areas, it has exten-

Ideology

It is important to note that the SLMP considers itself a Left party. This is particularly so at the middle and lower levels. The demonstrators repeatedly shouted slogans such as “අපට ඕන ආණ්ඩුවක්! සැබෑ වමේ ආණ්ඩුවක්! කම්කරු ගොවි — ආණ්ඩුවක්!” (We want a government, a genuine Left government! Workers-peasants government!) Many slogans were explicitly against the capitalists, 'feudalists' and imperialist domination. Impor-

- * **The slogans were not merely economic but ranged over every aspect of society**
- * **This was a massive indictment of the UNP's model of “development”**
- * **There was no invocation at all of the Bandaranaike name**

ded its original appeal, storming SLFP and UNP strongholds along the Colombo-Kandy road, such as Gampaha and Kegalle. It has also reactivated the old red belt, stretching southwards up to Bentara-Elpitiya and Ambalangoda. Supporters even came from Udunuwara, Anuradhapura, and Nuwara Eliya. Interestingly and explicably, the Mahajana Party fielded impressive contingents from areas where both UNP terror and SLFP pusillanimity have been at a maximum. (Kelaniya and Gampaha are cases in point).

The conclusion then, is that the SLMP has not yet crystallized into a party which is hegemonized by, or articulates the interests of a single identifiable class. (Though there is some speculation as to the role of middle bourgeois elements as belonging to a certain sociological group). It is in fact a healthier phenomenon; one with greater potential: a multi-class bloc, a transitional political formation and perhaps an embryonic mass movement.

tantly, and mercifully, neither Vijaya in his speech nor the demonstrators in their slogans made any mention of middle-path policies or Bandaranaike thought. Between Mr. Jayawardena and Mr. Premadasa's propaganda onslaught and Mr. Kumaratunge's studied refusal to make ritual genuflections, has Bandaranaikeism been buried? Never has a party expanded so far so fast as the SLMP has done in a matter of months, (JVP after Wijeweera's release displayed a similar capacity). Indeed the SLMP not only demonstrates that the Bandaranaike insignia is not only unnecessary but may even be counter-productive for a new, expanding oppositional movement. So Chandrika was just a little more than a face in the crowd and the applause she received was not very much more than average. As Vijaya once remarked to me some years ago, Kumar Rupasinghe was really Mr. Sunethra Bandaranaike while he was Vijaya Kumaratunga, a self made-man and a well known personality before he was associated with the Bandaranaike

family. What he did not add then was that he would remain a household name with or without the Bandaranaiques and even if the family reunited, pulling up the drawbridge and leaving him on the other side of the castle moat. Anura alone must now bear the battered true-blue banner.

More Radical than the Leaders

The slogans at the ULF demonstrations focussed critically on almost every aspect of society, and economy of Sri Lanka's post 1977 reality. From the killing of Somapala, the dismissal of at least 40,000 striking workers, the attack on Prof. Sarachandra, the lack of safeguards for women workers going to the Middle East, the proliferation of hard drugs, rapidly spiralling costs of goods and services, the privatization and hence the deterioration of the health care and the education systems, the postponements of elections, the colossal corruption, the intimidation of the judiciary, and the rape murder of Gnana-wathie were the recurrent themes.

What must be noted is that this critique went beyond the narrow economic grievances which usually characterize Trade Union May Days and constituted instead a more 'global' critique encompassing social issues. In other words it was a massive indictment of the UNP's model of dependent capitalist underdevelopment and its forms and effects at all levels of the social formation. The Mahajana Party/ULF phenomenon has the momentum and sweep of the 1956 wave but the rallying cry this time is not cultural or linguistic. Rather it is socio-economic and political in the sense of anti-dictatorial, anti-fascist (there were many such slogans to that effect) and for the restoration of democracy. As the crowd moved past with the youngsters shouting "ඔසව! ඔසව! කැරලි ඔසව!" (Revolt!) one recognized that while Vijaya and the leadership can afford to wait till 1989 and perhaps beyond, these people cannot, caught as they are in the continuing and downward spiralling process of underdevelopment and mass pauperization.

They consider this alliance not as one between the Centre and the Left but as an alliance of the Left: hence ULF and not UF. And they want a quick change. Vijaya's speech showed that far from inciting them, he was trying to keep up with them and may be even put the brakes on. He explained that previous alliances of the SLFP and the Left had benefitted only Mrs. Bandaranaike. This present

able to reply in kind. This met with a roar of approval from the entire crowd. "There is a saying in Sinhala" he reminded his audience "that it is only a fool who raises his hands in worship when he is beaten. We have suffered beatings continuously from 1977, and our arms are so weary that they will not rise up in worship of anyone. From today we will

* **'We have taken beatings continuously from 1977 No more !'**

* **A total absence of overtly racist slogans was a notable feature**

alliance had been forged with no general election in sight and with a question mark over even by-elections, so it could not be said that a bargain had been struck for narrow electoral gain. The struggle, he promised, would not be stopped until a workers' and peasants' government, a regime of the working people established and a classless society (sic) built. **None of this of course need be taken as face value. What is important is that Mr. Kumaratunga felt the need to make these pledges to his vast audience.** More interestingly he stated that his party's intention was to come into office through peaceful electoral means rather than through "conspiracies or bloody revolution". This is a statement Vijaya has repeatedly made on several occasions in the recent past and one wonders whether, together with his scrupulous avoidance of references to Marxism or Communism, it is meant to reassure the UNP government, the Police and armed forces, existing and potential financial backers, or all three. Anyway sensing the mood of the crowd, he switched gear somewhat and warned that if "Mahara methods" were adopted (methods he itemized as the cycle chain, the dagger, the sand-filled bottle and the smoke bomb) either to prevent general elections or in the course of one, then they were both willing and

not take a single step backwards". Another wave of applause. Thus the meeting announced and signified, "we are not afraid". This is nothing less than a radical fracture of the UNP's coercive control over society. A fundamental psychological breakthrough has been made collectively, at a mass level.

Non Racist

There was one poster that depicted the average Sri Lankan menaced by assortment of dangers including that of terrorism as symbolized by a leaping tiger. There was also a segment of the demonstration that briefly burst into a chant of "පැටව් පැටව්! සිංහ පැටව්!" ("cubs, cubs, Lion cubs") But this latter was not explicitly linked to any reference to the Tamils. **Almost all political observers were struck by the fact that there weren't any overtly racist slogans or themes in that days massive mobilization.** In fact the excellently organized Dodangaslanda contingent (led by Dr. Raja Wijetunga former MOH Ridigagama a young, intelligent, articulate, popular Social Democratic politician who had his arm dislocated by thugs during the Referendum campaign), carried a large banner which read "Let us commence a Left agitation for a just political solution to the Tamil National Question." This contingent as well

as the Yapahuwa section also carried placards condemning the burning of the Jaffna Public Library and the July riots.

Of course this does not mean that those present were not racist. They could very well be marching Northward someday just as some of them may have participated in the July riots. But what it does go to show is that the Sinhala mass consciousness is not monolithically, statically and exclusively chauvinistic, and that anti-UNP or even anti-Establishment consciousness sometimes predominates in a complex articulation of facets and types of consciousness and ideologies, in the mind of the mass as well as the individual. Here the UNP is caught in a vise: if it is to deflect this anti-Establishment sentiment, it has to whip up mass chauvinism. If this is successful then, they run the risk of another July, international isolation and external intervention.

Ostrich Policy

The ULF leadership though, except for Mr. L. W. Panditha, the CPSL trade union leader, chose to pretend that there was no such thing as the Tamil Question. A foreigner listening to a translation of the speeches and slogans would have got the impression that there was no communal problem. (This behaviour is what Dr. Newton Gunasinghe has described in the last issue of the L. G. as an ostrich policy.) The SLMP/ULF has not got it into their heads that if they are to pose a viable alternative to the UNP and the SLFP, then they simply have to formulate and state their programmatic position on what is the dominant political issue of the day.

If Vijaya is bold, imaginative and farsighted enough, he will popularize the 'national peace through a negotiated political solution' slogan, which would be the slogan of the future, winning over the rational minded and moderate middle classes, the embattled military and the entire international community — all of whom perhaps look askance at the SLMP today. Of course it may mean a break with the MEP, but then perhaps Dinesh could be sufficiently educated on

this issue to be neutralized. In any event, it is Vijaya and not Dinesh who the people look to as their leader.

Mass Struggle

While even that "most innocent of Communists" Mr. Sarath Mutte-tuwegama scoffed at the idea of hanging on in there until 1989 for an election that may never come, the most militant, theoretically clear and thus the best speech of May Day was made by Dr. Colvin R. de Silva. He explicitly rejected the parliamentary path and called for the mass mobilization to go forward. He also reminded everyone that while the UNP was the **immediate** enemy, the fundamental enemy was the capitalist system, which masses would have to go on to topple. In other words the struggle should not only be anti-UNP but also anticapitalist, and for a socialist regime. (This of course flows directly from the LSSP Politibureau's extremely well argued recent statement to its Central Committee.)

The stress at the mammoth meeting was thus on **extra parliamentary mass struggle, which was demarcated from armed revolutionary struggle**. This is no imposition from without, but an accurate reflection of the character and consciousness of the masses gathered round the ULF. You can almost see it in their faces: for the most part they are not the material that go to constitute armed revolutionary vanguards. Their style is not the armed revolution, but the semi-spontaneous riot. Clandestine politico-military activity is not their bag. Their mood is 'lets have a rumble and let the better man win'. They're much more from the West Side (Story) than the Left Bank, and they're not in the game of attacking police stations or convoys. But they can take the UNP on in the streets. The specific weight of Colombo and the other towns in Sri Lankan society and economy, the lack of a vast urban/rural divide as in other 'Third World' societies and the numerous links between town and country, the plummeting of the real wages of fixed income owners and the proliferation of the urban poor

in the post 1977 period are crucial factors. Equally relevant are the voting patterns of the Presidential Elections and the Referendum (at which the UNP encircled the cities from the countryside), the urban and semiurban 'chain reaction' character of disturbances in contemporary Sri Lankan history (from the '47 strike, through the '76 Weerasooriya struggle and General Strike, to the July 1980 Strike, the White Paper agitation, July 1983 race riot and recent cricket riots) and the urban insurrectionary character of recent revolutions (Ethiopia '74, Portugal, '75 Afghanistan '79, Iran '79, Nicaragua '79). The urban/semi urban/coastal located lumpen/petty bourgeois youth support base of the Mahajana Party may thus prove to be the **Main Force** though not the **leading force** of radical social upheaval in Sri Lanka.

UNP Dilemma

Never has a Sri Lankan regime faced such painful options: either have a free General Election soon and run the risk of Mrs. B. being by passed and the 'Naxalite Plot' becoming a self fulfilling prophecy, or try to hold out till 1989, or abolish the vestiges of parliamentary democracy with the support of the top ranks of the Armed Forces and Colombo's dependent big bourgeoisie and run the ultimate risk of losing everything in an unpredictable social explosion or anarchy.

The SLMP had also better start thinking about programme and philosophy (do they have an alternative to the Open Economy other than the hated State-capitalism?) theory and ideology (there cannot be a non-Marxist Socialism. Being explicitly Marxist was not the cause of the JVP, downfall and did not prevent its earlier rapid expansion) and strategy and tactics (the Indonesian CP, much bigger than the SLMP, went down without a whimper).

Meanwhile, my most vivid memory of May Day: A banner reading 'U. S. imperialists out of Trincomalee' borne aloft by a young man clad in a red T shirt which bore the legend — "ARAMCO: Arabian-American oil company — Saudi Arabia." Such are the dialectics of dependent capitalist development!

IMF and political stability

Alain Cass

The connection between the 'festering Tamil problem', political stability and the dilemma of the government in its talks with the IMF is revealed in this interesting report by Alain Cass, F. T. Asia Editor:

"SRI LANKA and the international Monetary Fund (IMF) have suspended negotiations for a standby loan to tide the country over its economic problems in the wake of the civil strife which shook the island last summer.

"Mr. Ronnie De Mel, Sri Lanka's Finance Minister, just back from talks with both the IMF and World Bank in Washington says the country will have a balance of payments surplus of \$60m this year, chiefly as a result of higher tea and rubber prices and the IMF's \$50m is not needed.

"However, it seems clear that, having already made \$100m of

painful budget cuts to accommodate the IMF's stiff terms for a standby facility a fundamental disagreement remains over further austerity measures. These would include a further devaluation of the Sri Lankan rupee.

"Mr. De Mel concedes that further tough measures would be difficult at a time when the country's political stability remains in doubt over the long-festering problem of the island's minority Tamil community.

"Violence has again broken out in the northern province of the island, where the majority of Sri Lankan Tamils live. Efforts by India to mediate between the Government of President Julius Jayewardene and the Tamils have virtually ground to a halt.

"Relations between Delhi and Colombo have further deteriorated because Sri Lanka believes Tamil

terrorist groups are training in southern India.

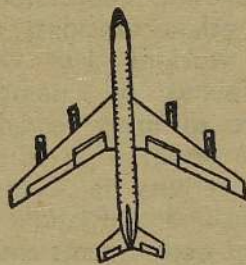
"Agreement with the Fund as a seal of good housekeeping is critical for Sri Lanka which is also negotiating with the World Bank for a \$210m structural adjustment loan.

"Mr. De Mel said in London yesterday that the IMF had assured him that they would support Sri Lanka's request for funds from the aid consortium countries which meet in Paris in June. Sri Lanka hopes to receive \$400m from the group.

"Although Sri Lankan officials are putting a brave face on the outcome of Mr. De Mel's Washington visit the Government is clearly not confident enough that the next few months will be stable enough to negotiate a credible package of austerity measures with the Fund."

— FINANCIAL TIMES,
London 5. 2. 84

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CLASS, ETHNICITY AND THE MALAYALI WORKERS

Kumari Jayawardena

Up to the 1930's, feelings of ethnic hostility among the working-class were, to a large extent, subsumed in the class consciousness that had been built up during the early decades of the labour movement, when the Colombo working-class, composed of all ethnic groups, had been involved in joint action.

However, even during these years, certain rumblings of communalism were heard among those workers who had been exposed to the petty-bourgeois ideology of the Buddhist revival and the temperance movements. Sections of the working-class, for example, had been involved in Colombo in the anti-Muslim riots of 1915, their agitation being based mainly on economic issues such as price rises. Even previously, in 1910, the railway workers had complained against the employment of Indians on the railways and at a Railway Commission of Inquiry held in 1913, had alleged that Indian Tamils and Malayalis were given preference on the railways over Sinhalese and Burghers. But the prevailing ethos among the workers of the early 20th century was one of class solidarity and joint struggle.

Economic Crisis

The thirties form a crucial period in the history of ethnic relations in Sri Lanka, the working-class, for the first time, becoming involved in serious antagonistic confrontation with a minority ethnic groups of workers. This was a decade of important political and economic changes; the new constitution of 1931 had granted a measure of

self-government, with a legislature (State Council) of 50 members elected by universal franchise. These reforms were enacted during the country's worst economic crisis, when the world depression led to a drastic fall in the prices of Sri Lanka's main exports. This resulted in retrenchment, the loss of employment opportunities and the impoverishment of the people, who fell victim to the malaria epidemic of 1934, when 100,000 are estimated to have died. These years also saw the decline of the militant labour movement of the 1920's, led by A. E. Goonesinha, and the emergence, in 1935, of the first left party in Sri Lanka.

The economic depression sharply increased ethnic tensions, especially since the working-class was particularly affected by unemployment. The closure of many tea and rubber plantations resulted in a decline in economic activity in Colombo and the retrenchment of labour by both government departments and private firms. At the same time, the presence in Colombo of non-indigenous, migrant workers aggravated ethnic antagonism. The trade union leaders of the 1920's resorted to a racist policy of arousing the Sinhalese working-class to fight 'foreign' workers, in this case, the target being the Malayalis. However, during the same period, the entry of the Left into politics made a positive impact on the ethnic issue. Many of the young Marxist leaders had recently returned from studies in Europe and the USA, imbued with ideas of internationalism and revolutionary change. They were joined by the local Socialist youth who had been

influenced both by the policies of ethnic solidarity of the labour movement of the 1920's and by Gandhism, with its appeal for ethnic and religious harmony among peoples. The policies of the Left were based not only on the unity of all communities against imperialism and the unity of all workers against exploitation, but also on a firm commitment to anti-racism and opposition to any form of discrimination against minorities.

The Malayalis

The Malayalis were a group of migrants from the Malabar coast and the princely states of Travancore and Cochin (which now form Kerala). They were an important part of the Sri Lanka working-class in the 1920's and 1930's, being known locally as Kochchiyas, since many were from the Cochin area. In Colombo, they worked in mills and factories and were employed in other key sectors such as the port and railways. In addition, Malayalis were popular as domestic servants in the homes of the European and local bourgeoisie. The Malayalis also included members of the Irava caste who had migrated to Sri Lanka to work as toddy tappers; there was also a petty bourgeoisie of Malayali clerks, teachers, small traders, owners of tea shops and eating houses. In 1911, there were around 1,000 Malayalis in Sri Lanka, but the numbers had risen to 30,000 in the 1930's the years of world economic depression which had also affected Kerala.

Change of Trade Union Policies

Under the impact of the seriously deteriorating economic conditions,

the policies of the trade union movement underwent a drastic change. The trade union leaders either did not recognise, or preferred to soft-pedal the fact that the retrenchment of workers and the shrinkage of employment opportunities were a direct consequence of the economic crisis. Unable or unwilling to argue this line with their members, they sought to preserve the employment opportunities available for the group which formed their major base of support — the Sinhala workers. These workers themselves were made to see the foreign workers, especially the Malayalis, as their main competitors, because they were allegedly prepared to work at lower wages. For the first time, trade union leaders spearheaded an organised campaign against an ethnic component of the working-class itself. The Ceylon Labour Union led by A. E. Goonesinha who had sponsored ethnic unity in the 1920's, launched a campaign against the Malayalis which became very virulent in the late thirties. Class consciousness dramatically and swiftly declined and an ethnic explanation of economic difficulties was popularised, especially in the newspapers and literature read by the Sinhala working-class.

The situation was also aggravated by the presence of a mass of cheap labour that could be used during strikes. For example, there were several strikes between 1929 and 1932 — Lake House (1929), Queens Hotel, Kandy (1931) and Galle Face Hotel, Colombo (1933) — when employers used the occasion to replace Sinhala workers with Indian labour, thereby increasing the prevailing resentment. In 1931, it was reported that the hiring of Malayalis instead of Sinhalese as house servants had led to 'disorder and unruliness' and the use of 'guerilla tactics, became commonplace whereby Malayalis were assaulted on the streets of Colombo'. (Ceylon Independent, 30 July, 1931). At the forefront of the agitation was the *Viraya*, the Sinhala paper of A. E. Goonesinha's trade union movement, which in the 1930's was used to whip up propaganda against the non-Sinhalese. In 1930, in tones reminiscent of Anagarika Dharmapala, the *Viraya* blamed the decline of the

Sinhalese on the 'white man, Coast Moors, Bohras and Malayalis' and this campaign increased in intensity concentrating, in subsequent years, mainly on the Malayalis.

The Issue of Unemployment

The key area of agitation and ethnic tension was that of unemployment. In the State Council the question was frequently taken up by Goonesinha, who had been elected to represent the working-class constituency of Colombo Central; he alleged, in 1931, that 1700 of the 3000 daily paid workers on the railways were Malayalis and added, 'Hundreds of Malayalis are coming here and depriving Ceylonese labourers of work by undercutting them'. (Hansard, 7 Oct 1931, p. 506). Even the May Day processions of the period reflected this animosity and in 1933, the police reported on 'the truculent attitude of Goonesinha's May Day procession against the Malayalis'.

The grievances against the Malayalis continued during the thirties since unemployment persisted in the country during this period; in many of the vitriolic statements in the Sinhala press, the competition for employment was frequently highlighted. The *Viraya*, in its main features, editorials and letters to the editor, published a constant barrage of abuse against the Malayalis. In these campaigns, the support of other non-Sinhalese 'permanent residents' of the country was also canvassed. 'The Sinhalese, who are the permanent residents of Ceylon and who are its inheritors, as well as other permanent fellow settlers in this country, are facing great difficulties now because of the scarcity of jobs. But thousands of Malayalis ... are finding jobs'. (*Viraya*, 28, Feb 1936).

The unemployment issue was raised at many public meetings of protest. In March 1936, a large meeting was held in Colombo North to discuss the Malayali issue. On this occasion, A. E. Goonesinha was reported to have spoken at length 'about the harassment and difficulties' that the local working-class was facing and the loss of employment because of the 'Malayalis taking their

employment away from them'. Goonesinha strongly criticised the government for its indifference to the question of retrenching and repatriating the Malayalis, also complaining that those who came forward to 'protect the rights of the Ceylonese' were accused by the police of stirring up racial strife (*Viraya*, 31 March 1936).

In these meetings and in the press, one of the frequent allegations made against the Malayalis was that they used unfair methods to gain employment.

On many occasions we have heard how one Malayali creeps into a factory ... then proceeds to threaten the livelihood of the other workers by using all types of tactics to fill that factory with his countrymen. Because the Malayalis are able to work for a very low wage and live in a state of deprivation they ... are a threat to the Ceylonese workers, (*Viraya* Editorial, 31 March 1936).

Boycott of Malayalis

The anti-Malayali campaign was carried on at several levels. In the State Council, A. E. Goonesinha urged the government to repatriate Malayalis and give local workers their jobs. Appeals were made to employers not to be tempted by the cheap supply of Malayali labour. House owners were requested to refuse to rent houses to Malayalis and to boycott their shops and tea shops. In an editorial 'Can we boycott the Malayalis?' the *Viraya* issued a call 'to support the campaign to boycott the Malayalis and to unite as Sinhalese' (1 April 1936); the following week, an editorial 'How should we boycott the Malayalis?' claimed that 'the call for a boycott is heard from all sides' and added 'What you should do is to call for the dismissal of the Malayalis from their jobs in your factory, estate, shop, bungalow, walauiwa and ask that Sinhalese be employed in their place'. This call for boycott was claimed to be non-violent, but the campaign was very aggressive.

We should think of ways in which we can make our struggle triumph through non-violent means, through a holy war (dharma yuddha). All those who love their country and love their fellow country men should ... launch a strong campaign in every village to call a halt to all dealings and trade with

Malayalis, a halt to renting out houses to them, a halt to all connections with them and a peaceful boycott of these people in a way that will protect not only our dignity but the dignity of future generations. *Viraya*, 6 April 1936).

It is interesting to note that in the agitation against Malayalis, the local Tamils were classed on the same side with the Sinhala 'sons of the soil'. For example, complaints were made of discrimination in Malayali tea shops against both Sinhalese and Tamils.

There are special plates and cups set aside for the use of Malayalis. For . . . the Sinhalese, Tamils and those who belong to another race, there are separate plates, cups and saucers. If a Sinhalese and a Tamil aiya were to go into one of these places. . . the waiter would call out 'tea rendu aiya'. Then the person . . . making the tea would know that it is not a Malayali but one of another race who is wanting tea. (*Viraya*, 16 April 1936).

The Chosen Aryan People

This upsurge of racism in Sri Lanka in the thirties coincided with the rise of Fascism in Germany and Italy and several local newspapers gave sympathetic accounts of the internal and foreign policies of Hitler and Mussolini. Many nationalist and labour leaders, especially those who had been influenced by the myth of the Aryan origin of the Sinhalese, found the language and rhetoric emanating from Germany and Italy, useful in their own propaganda.

In 1939, A. E. Goonesinha organised Sinhala New Year celebrations in Colombo, where he proclaimed that 'As Sinhalese we must unite under one flag'; the chief guest on this occasion was D. S. Senanayake, the Minister of Agriculture whose speech is of interest for its rousing appeal addressed to the Sinhalese

We are one blood and one nation. We are a chosen people. The Buddha said that his religion would last for 5500 years. That means that we, as the custodians of that religion, shall last as long'. (*Ceylon Daily News*, 17 April 1939, emphasis added).

Similar sentiments were expressed in the trade union papers of this period. One such letter in *Viraya* lamented the fate of the Sinhala people who were like a flock of sheep without a shepherd. To save

the Sinhala race there was a need for a 'group of virtuous, steadfast people, with a leader . . . a hero of great virtue and courage.' In fact, the need of the day was said to be for a leader like Hitler, who was implementing policies for saving the Aryan race from degeneration. (*Viraya*, 17 April, 1936).

Racism and Women

Another myth associated with this type of racism was that of racial purity, which had to be preserved by the country's women. This was one of the emotive themes of the 1930's in Sri Lanka, since many Malayali workers who had come alone to Sri Lanka, had married Sinhala women. The *Viraya* of the 1930's often commented that the Sinhalese were losing both their jobs and their women to the Malayalis and even alleged that this was linked to the black magic and charms for which the Malayalis were reputed. In 1936, A. E. Goonesinha, at a public meeting, spoke of the disgrace to Sri Lanka 'as a result of Sinhalese women falling prey to the wiles of the Malayali' (*Viraya*, 31 March 1936). The *Viraya* also favourably commented on reports of incidents where Malayalis were stabbed and beaten for having liaisons with Sinhala women (*Viraya*, 7 Jan 1931); the women themselves were urged not to shame the race by consorting with Malayalis, and plays were performed showing the dire fate of Sinhala women who were enticed and later abandoned by Malayalis.

This theme was developed, in its full racist sense, in a letter to the *Viraya* signed B. Sirisena, on "Mixed Marriages and National Development", Speaking with great approval of Hitler's Anti-Jewish policies, he wrote

It was Hitler, the leader of Germany who said that leadership cannot be expected from those who are devoid of Aryan blood. In his country he has therefore prohibited marriage between Aryans and non-Aryans. He has even declared illegal the employment of young Aryan German girls as domestics in the houses of non-Aryans. In countries like California and Persia too marriages with foreigners are prohibited. The intention of all these measures is the creation of a pure Aryan race. They believe that the children of Aryan and non-

Aryan marriages will be degenerate, devoid of any virtue. (*Viraya*, 17 April 1936).

He further suggested that taking inspiration from Fascist Germany, the Sinhalese should bestir themselves and prohibit mixed marriages between 'Aryan' Sinhala women and Malayalis.

Everyone says that unions between Sinhalese women and Malayalis — whether legal or illicit — should be prohibited. If this practice, which is certain to lead the nation to slavery and servitude, is prohibited, it will be a timely step for the cause of the Sinhala nation. It is the duty of all Sinhalese to advocate this measure. (*Viraya*, 17 April 1936).

Support for the Malayalis

Given the climate of opinion, it is therefore not surprising that A. E. Goonesinha also used the campaign for the boycott of Malayali workers to attack those anti-racist Liberal and Left politicians of Sri Lanka who spoke out on behalf of the Malayali workers. The Lanka Sama Samaja Party (LSSP), the country's first Left party, had been formed in 1935 and had challenged the hegemony of Goonesinha over the trade union movement; even earlier, in 1933, this Left group had captured the trade union of the Wellawatte Spinning and Weaving Mills (from Goonesinha) after leading a long strike at the Mills; a large proportion of these textile workers were Malayalis, who, during the strike, were involved in violent clashes with Goonesinha's supporters. During these years, the *Viraya* retaliated by constantly accused the LSSP of betraying the Sinhalese. An editorial entitled 'Have the Malayalis received the patronage of the Samasamajists?' said

Alas, what are these Communists doing to our great and proud nation? . . . Because of the Samasamajists . . . and because of the Malayali traders . . . the Sinhala poor man has to starve to death. His meal has gone to the foreigner. How can the poor Sinhala man compete with the Malayalis who receive support from the Communists? (*Viraya*, 31 March 1936)

Allegations of treachery, were levelled against the leadership of the LSSP and the columns of the *Viraya* of the years between 1935 and 1939 were filled with personal

abuse of the Marxists; particularly vicious tirades were directed at the party president, Dr. Colvin R. de Silva and the other prominent LSSP leaders — Philip Gunawardena, Dr. N. M. Perera, Leslie Goonewardena and Dr. S. A. Wickremasinghe.

The actions of the traitors of a race.....will lead to the downfall of that race.....At a time when the campaign to boycott.....the Malayalis is proceeding.....several Samasamajist Sinhala lunatics are trying to go against this trend.....N. M. Perera Colvin R. de Silva, Dr. S. A. Wickremasinghe.....have been making baseless allegations against this campaign.....Dr. Wickremasinghe boasted of the way in which they had helped a group of Malayalis who were thrown out of their jobs at the Alutkade Oil Mills. Isn't the attempt made by these individuals to keep the Malayalis here, an insult to the entire Sinhala race? (*Viraya*, 16 April 1936)

Support for the Malayalis also came from others such as Dr. A. P. de Zoysa, the Independent Member of the State Council for Colombo South, who spoke at several public meetings on behalf of the Malayalis and on one occasion said 'show maitri to the Malayalis... they are our kith and kin'. The *Viraya* responded sharply 'At a time such as this, when we Ceylonese are united and, in one voice, are decrying the Malayali plague and are trying to rid our country of this disaster... the words uttered by Dr. de Zoysa on a Malayali platform, are truly an insult to the entire Sinhala people'. (*Viraya*, 5 July 1936). Such attacks on de Zoysa continued in subsequent years and when he addressed meetings, he was greeted with cries of 'haro hara' and 'Kochchi Zoysa'.

A. K. Gopalan's Visit

However, the Malayali presence was also to influence Left politics in Sri Lanka. In Kerala during the 1930's there was wave of militant anti-imperialist and anti-feudal agitation, when workers, peasants, students and others were caught up in struggles led mainly by the Socialist faction of the Indian National Congress, which was very active in the state from 1934 onwards. The joint Secretaries of the Congress Socialist Party in Kerala were **E. M. S. Namboodiripad**,

(who headed the first Communist government in Kerala in 1957-59) and **A. K. Gopalan**, who was to become one of the most popular Communist leaders of Kerala and the leading organiser of the peasantry.

In 1939, A. K. Gopalan visited Sri Lanka to establish fraternal links with the Left movement, to make political contacts among local Malayalis, and to raise subscriptions for the Kerala socialist paper, *Prabhatham*, which had been started in 1935 by Namboodiripad. Gopalan addressed many public meetings in Colombo, including one at the Town Hall, where he spoke on Socialism and the peasant struggles in Kerala; he also spoke at a large meeting of workers at the Wellawatte Spinning and Weaving Mills organised by the LSSP and addressed the LSSP May Day rally in 1939, where he urged the radical Malayalis in Sri Lanka to work with the LSSP.

Gopalan was also to personally experience the prevalent anti-Malayali hostility, including unsuccessful attempts by ruffians to break up his meeting at Wellawatte and anti-Malayali plays, songs and incidents which he witnessed; in later years, he noted in his autobiography 'I arrived in Sri Lanka at a dangerous time... Sinhala Malayali enmity had reached its zenith'. (Gopalan, **In the Cause of the People**, Madras 1976).

Malayali Workers & the Communists

The LSSP in the thirties, had taken a non-racist stand and had bitterly opposed the virulent campaign that had been launched against the Malayali minority. It was a period when the leaders of the LSSP kept in close contact with the Congress Socialist Party, being inspired by the militant peoples' struggles all over India during these years. They visited India each year for the Congress sessions, and hosted Indian Congress Socialists like Nehru, Kamaladevi Chattopadyaya and A. K. Gopalan when they visited Sri Lanka.

In 1940, there was a split in the LSSP when the Trotskyists expelled the Communists, who regrouped as the United Socialist Party in 1940 and

later formed the Ceylon Communist Party in 1943. One of the key sections of support for the United Socialist Party came from a Malayali Socialist group and from the Toddy Tappers Union. This union was composed of militant Malayali workers, who in 1939 and 1940, had been involved a series of successful disputes and strikes over wages. The Union was led by Communists including the President, K. Ramanathan (an Indian Tamil), the Secretary, M. G. Mendis and P. Shanker, the most active of the Malayali Communists of the period; this Union became one of the strongest in the non-plantation sector, and its strike successes influenced Malayali and other workers in the urban sector. When the Communist-led Ceylon Trade Union Federation (CTUF) of 16 unions was formed in 1940, the leading union in the Federation was the Toddy Tappers Union, and among the CTUF leadership there were several Malayalis, the best-known being **K. Mahavan**. The Communists also published a Malayalam paper, *Navashakti*, which was run by full-time Malayali political workers — Vasu and Thangappan. In addition it should be mentioned that the successes of certain Left candidates in the Colombo Municipal Council elections of the period was based to a large extent on the Malayali vote.

The strong class conscious actions and the pro-Communist positions taken by the Malayali workers of Sri Lanka can be attributed to several factors; these include their earlier tradition of militant strike action in the 1920's, the influence of the growing Kerala Communist movement of the period and the visit of its leaders to Sri Lanka, the racism of the Ceylon Labour Union, the support for the Malayali struggle given by the local Left movement and the success of the toddy tappers strikes. An official of the Labour department, describing the success of the Communists in mobilising the Malayalis said, 'Malayali labour buffeted hither and thither by racial animosity and stern employers, found a platform in this new party, to ventilate their grievances'.

* * *

In the 1940's the majority of the Malayalis returned to India, while many of those who stayed on

married Sinhalese, the next generation becoming assimilated into the Sinhala community. However, a study of the Malayali presence in the thirties — when the Malayalis were not merely the main target for racist attacks, but also formed an important component of the Left movement — given us many insights for an understanding of class and ethnic relations.

The petty bourgeoisie

The anti-Malayali campaign of the 1939's brought chauvinism right to the forefront of the working-class movement, when large sections of the Sinhala working-class, were made to respond to the idea that the main enemy was the Malayali. The poverty, unemployment and lack of opportunities in a colonial economy, rent by the economic crisis of a severe world depression, proved to be the breeding ground for rampant chauvinism among workers, who a few years earlier had participated in joint struggles against the employers.

In this context, the opportunism of the petty bourgeois working-class leadership was also exposed. As a class, the petty bourgeoisie in Sri Lanka had shown (and still shows) a remarkable agility in moving from radical political stances to racist positions in a short space of time. A. E. Goonesinha, who had been a close associate of Anagarika Dharmapala and was himself a product of the Buddhist education and temperance movements, abandoned his militant policies of the 1920's and regressed into chauvinism in the 1930's ending up finally on the side of the ruling class.

The Fascist connection

Earlier articles in this series identified certain component elements of Sinhala Buddhist consciousness and attempted to show how they were used, especially by the Sinhala petty bourgeoisie of the 19th and early 20th century, against Christians and Muslims. By the 1930's, we find that this ideology had spread among the Sinhala working-class. A forceful propaganda campaign during these years, revived the belief in the 'chosen' nature of the 'Aryan' Sinhalese as guardians of Buddhism

their racial 'purity' and their inherent right to the country as 'sons of the soil'; non-Sinhala, non-Buddhist aliens were condemned and there were allusions to the need for a 'holy war'. The working-class newspapers of this period very aggressively asserted this ideology of Sinhala Buddhist supremacy and the old battle cries of Dharmapala that the Sinhala people were in danger of being swamped by aliens who were taking away their jobs and their trade, were repeated in almost every issue of the Ceylon Labour Unions' paper. At public meetings and even at May Day rallies of the Union, class issues such as wages and conditions of work were submerged by anti-minority propaganda. During these years, workers were continuously urged not to forget that they were both Sinhalese and Buddhist; for this purpose, the trade union papers particularly highlighted the Sinhala New Year and Vesak festivities in order to augment the Sinhala Buddhist consciousness of the working-class. In addition, the propaganda of an earlier period on the Aryan origin of the Sinhalese, which had not been stressed by working-class leaders of the 1920's, was not only revived, but was also given a new lease of life in the context of the rising tide of Fascism in Europe.

The fact that the working-class was able to adopt such ideologies, forgetting very quickly the feelings of class solidarity that had been built up during the earlier phase of joint militant action, is relevant today. It provides a pointer to the underlying strength of Sinhala-Buddhist consciousness among all classes of people, which may be dormant in certain periods, but can be swiftly aroused, especially when their material survival is thought to be at stake. Moreover the power of racism to retard the growth of class consciousness, and the ways in which such ideologies can be used by ruling groups for their own purposes, are some of the lessons to be learnt from a study of the early phases of class and ethnic consciousness in Sri Lanka.

**NEXT : Discrimination Against
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For Appointments

LENIN'S CONTRIBUTION

Tara Coomaraswamy

Lenin's intellectual debt to Hobson, Hilferding and Bukharin

Lenin's great achievement was the concise and striking characterisation of monopoly capitalism's chief features; he generalised tersely and effectively from a mass of detail, without comprehensive coverage of relations between nations within the world economy. His aim was to extend the laws of motion of capitalism discovered by Marx, to a new epoch, and to show their continued validity and operation, albeit under altered conditions and in altered form.

Theoretically he owed much to Hobson and Hilferding¹ (a debt freely acknowledged within his work) and to Bukharin (though he could not mention Bukharin's "Imperialism and World Economy" to which he had written a Preface, since it was not published until the year after his own book).

Hobson's brilliant pioneering synthesis located the economic taproot of imperialism in the search for overseas investment outlets by capital unable to find domestic opportunities due to congestion of industry and failure of consumption at home to grow. He pointed to the rise of giant financiers who formed the "central ganglion" of an increasingly cosmopolitan capitalism, and who skilfully manipulated socio-political forces which contributed to the maintenance of imperialism and generated its ideology.

Externally the competition between imperialist states led to the territorial division of the world and increased the propensity towards internecine conflict among these states. Internally there mushroomed a rentier class dependent on overseas investment income. Hobson blamed lack of effective demand on the failed promise of liberal democracy, manifested in highly unequal income distribution. He could

with some justification be termed the first Keynesian, especially in the centrality he assigned to the state in providing the necessary domestic incentives to investors, through redistributive taxation and generation of more purchasing power. He thus strongly argued the possibility of increasing domestic consumption and therefore of nullifying the imperialist drive.

This is obviously a major point of difference with Lenin, who agreed with his identification of the dynamic behind imperialism — capital export — but rejected his theoretical premise of underconsumptionism.

The Austro-Marxist school to which Hilferding belonged made valuable contributions to Marxist theory based on a conceptualisation of the significance of German and US industrialisation. Hilferding focused attention on the growth of increasingly monopolistic positions of capital — cartels, trusts and mergers, orchestrated (or choreographed!) by a new class of capitalist — the financial capitalist or financier, who became separated off from class of industrial entrepreneurs, and whose centrality in corporate decision-making was paradoxically significantly enhanced by the diffusion of ownership through the joint-stock principle. A few capitalists could thus gain control over much larger aggregations of capital than they themselves owned.

Hilferding was the first to explicate the role of tariffs as a weapon of aggression in the conquest of foreign markets, by providing a subsidy in the form of high internal prices, thus enabling firms to undercut foreign competitors and practise dumping. The economies of scale made possible by these means generated further accumulation at home. This a strong state, overseas expansion and colonialism were intimately linked with finance capital. Hilferding however rejected the idea of "capitalist breakdown" as avoidable through

organisation of "general cartel" to do away with competition, which he saw as the Achilles heel of capitalism, leading to crises and disequilibrium.

Bukharin's analysis, while it also puts forward and elaborates a finance capital explanation of imperialism, with the tremendous growth of the state military and administrative apparatus as "the remnants of the old *laissez-faire*, *laissez-passer* ideology disappear", is more interesting where it deals with the international ramifications of imperialism and the meshing of its national and international aspects: international division of labour and reproduction of capitalist relations on a world scale, a world market and world prices, equalisation of interest and discount rates through formation of a world market of money capital, equalisation of socially necessary labour (though Unequal Exchange theorists would quarrel with this.)

International interpenetration of capital was countered by a trend towards progressive nationalisation of capital and its closing up within national confines through the creation of the largest possible territory within which competition was obliterated precisely in order to be more competitive on the external market.* Bukharin cites the policy of British imperialism as aiming by "fusing the colonies with the metropolis, towards forming a vast single empire with a general tariff wall." Unlike Hilferding, Bukharin saw war as the inevitable outcome; peaceful coexistence of national cartels required perfect equality in economic and military strength such that no state would see a comparative advantage in continued struggle: this was patently Utopian. In his later work (See: Rosa Luxemburg and N. Bukharin, "Imperialism and the Accumulation of Capital" edited

* Note the formation of regional organisations like the ECC and EFTA after World War II.

by K. J. Tarbuck) Bukharin appears to suggest, like Hilferding, that the anarchy of production could be eliminated, as in the case of state capitalism with a planned economy. He misuses a quote from Marx in support, overlooking the qualifying conditions stipulated by the latter which would in effect entail not a regulated capitalism but its dissolution and supercession, since for Marx what needs to be eliminated in order to prevent crisis is not merely disproportionality between branches of production (the "anarchy of production") but disproportionality between valorisation of capital and consumption, or between exchange values and use values.

Lenin

"Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism" was written by Lenin in exile in Switzerland, and both the tone of the book and its professed aims (see his Prefaces) indicate that its message was primarily political. By revealing the Great War to be "an annexationist, predatory, war of plunder, and intimately connected to capitalism, Lenin sought also to make plain the reasons for the collapse of the Second International and the divisions in the working class movement. The emphases given to various aspects within the book must be assessed in the light of these concerns; this would partly deflect two charges commonly levelled against Lenin's work: i.e., of Eurocentrism and lack of theoretical depth. Lenin's work, as with Luxemburg's can be seen as contributing to debates over the major theoretical problems which beleaguered the Socialist movement at the time: the question of capitalist breakdown and working class strategy in the event of war (cf. the running polemic against Kautsky). Lenin was attempting a portrait of a moribund capitalism which however displayed in its decline certain contradictory and confusing features from the point of view of the proletariat; the temporary rejuvenations of capitalism in its struggle to survive had to be shown to be deceptive. As with face-lifts, so with crises: the greater the "lift", the greater the fall.

Lenin's more general aim was, as he says, to provide a "compo-

site picture" of the salient features distinguishing imperialism from previous epochs. Where Luxemburg was concerned to stress continuity in capitalist development, Lenin wanted to underscore the qualitative and unique characteristics of imperialism. His brief definition was: "Imperialism is the monopoly stage of capitalism." He provides a vivid picture of increasing concentration and centralisation of capital, and of the combination movement which transformed competition into monopoly. Much of the ground covered by Hilferding, Bukharin and Hobson is repeated.¹ The colonial "boom" intensified with the reaching of the limits of competitive capitalism and by Lenin's day the territorial division of the world had been completed.

Lenin stressed export of capital rather than commodities as being distinctive of monopoly capitalism. His theory of over-accumulation was never fully spelled out; he does say that "over-ripe" capitalism is partly traceable to the "law of uneven development" (perhaps his only original contribution — different from Bukharin's use of the phrase in that it describes the ability of "late developers" to overtake early starters); i.e., rivals to Britain's erstwhile trading monopoly developed their industry behind tariff barriers, but since monopoly bred retaliatory monopoly, the process continued on a continually expanding scale.

At this point occurs a statement notoriously taken to prove Lenin's "underconsumptionist" leanings:

"It goes without saying that if capitalism developed agriculture, which today is everywhere lagging terribly behind industry, if it could raise the living standards of the masses, who in spite of the amazing technical progress are everywhere still half-starved and poverty-stricken, there could be no question of a surplus of capital."

However, it is precisely in support of uneven development, both within the domestic economy and on a world scale that he adduces this "argument", often advanced by petty-bourgeois critics of capitalism.

"But if capitalism did these things, it would not be capitalism; for both uneven development and a semi-starvation level of the masses are fundamental and inevitable conditions and constitute premises of this mode of production."

Lenin therefore maintains that it is the falling rate of profit which forces out surplus capital to backward regions where capital is scarce and costs of production are low. He rejected Kautsky's suggestion that the division of the world by finance capital on a world scale signalled the possibility of a cessation of international rivalry, pointing out that

"The capitalists divide the world, not out of any particular malice, but because the degree of concentration which has been reached forces them to adopt this method to obtain profits. And they divide it "in proportion to capital," "in proportion to strength," because there cannot be any other method of division under commodity production and capitalism."

The changing balance of forces engendered by the law of uneven development made international cartel agreements inherently unstable arrangements. While some countries (Germany, Japan, the USA) were growing at a faster rate, other older imperialist powers (Britain, France) had far greater territorial possessions.

"The question is: what means other than war could there be under capitalism to overcome the disparity between the development of productive forces and the accumulation of capital on the one side, and the division of colonies and spheres of influence for finance capital on the other?"

Moreover, imperialism was a struggle not merely for control over "agrarian regions", as Kautsky defined it, but for every kind of territory; the motive force of modern imperialism was not industrial but finance capital, and its characteristic feature was precisely that it strove "to annex not only agrarian territories but even more highly industrialised regions (German appetite for Belgium, French appetite for Lorraine.") The quest for hegemony led the great powers to policies of competitive annexation and (ultimately) to a redivision of the world.

Kautsky's political volte-face from 1913 or so onwards was connected with his denial of imperialism as a necessary outgrowth of capitalism. A person who proposed the voluntaristic explanation of imperialism as a retrograde phenomenon and merely one possible foreign policy of capitalism (argued Lenin) was equally capable of the fatuous notion of an "Ultra-imperialism": even the social-liberal Hobson could be credited with a more accurate assessment than Kautsky² regarding the necessity of war and the nature of capitalism's stake in imperialism:

"The new imperialism differs from the older, first, in substituting for the ambition of a single growing empire the theory and practice of competing empires, each motivated by similar lusts of political aggrandisement and commercial gain: secondly, in the dominance of financial or investing over mercantile interests." (Hobson as quoted by Lenin.)

Two further signs of a decaying and parasitic capitalism were: (a) the growth of rentier strata in imperialist nations, who lived by "clipping coupons." Here he and Hobson were both proved wrong: the picture of Western Europe — as a vast extended Riviera upon which sunned Europe's upper classes while great "tame masses of retainers, no longer engaged in the staple industries" of agriculture and industry but performing "personal or minor industrial services under the control of a new financial aristocracy" — failed to materialise. (b) The bribing of sections of the working class with part of the super-profits extracted through imperialism — the "labour aristocracy" thesis. Under renegade leadership part of the working class became merged with the bourgeoisie and its policies in the practice of "social chauvinism." This proved a more fruitful theme. (The nucleus of a similar thesis may also be discerned in Bukharin, who himself cites Engels' connection between the conservatism of the English proletariat and the monopoly situation of England in the world market. Bukharin, like Lenin, pins his faith on the effects of the war in awakening the proletariat to its genuine and long-term interests).

As regards the necessity and viability of capitalist develop-

ment in the backward areas, Lenin had this to say:

"The export of capital influences and greatly accelerates the development of capitalism in those countries to which it is exported. While, therefore, the capital may tend to a certain extent to arrest development in the capital-exporting countries, it can only do so by expanding and deepening the further development of capitalism throughout the world." (Emphases mine)

A more complex view of the effects of capitalism on such regions is found in "The Development of Capitalism in Russia" (1899), where Lenin shows awareness of factors retarding capitalist industrialisation, which included: weakness of the indigenous bourgeoisie due to their dependent position vis-a-vis foreign capital, competition from industries of more developed countries, and resistance to change on the part of traditional social structures. The interplay between "internal" and "external" factors and the meshing of different modes of production, create unique conditions for assimilation of "capitalism" (cf. the current debate on "modes of production" vs "social formation.") However, he did not doubt that the end product would be a fully developed capitalism in the mould of Western Europe.

The two distinctive features of Lenin's analysis are therefore: the law of uneven development, and, linked to this, inter-imperialist rivalry which must end in war. He alone held out no hope of peaceful solution of these conflicts. The superiority of Bukharin's analysis in many respects must however be noted. He goes more deeply into certain processes and mechanisms: the function of tariffs; the role of the state; national and international organisation of capital; etc. He also makes more of the distinction between productive and loan capital (both covered by the term "finance capital"). Lenin tended to mean loan capital when he talked of capital export; this distinction later proved significant for a qualitative shift in capitalism (i.e. towards greater export of productive capital as an important mechanism of imperialism; dealt with in another section of this essay).

Critiques of Lenin would obviously pertain to the other writers above at certain points, due to the large derivative component in his work; nevertheless it will be convenient to retain the practice of referring to "Lenin's" theory.

Gallagher and Robinson have argued against Lenin's thesis of a qualitative change in British expansionism after 1870; they reject the notion of a sharp break between the imperialism of the nineteenth century and that of the three preceding centuries. The ideas of "informal empire" and "imperialism of free trade" are introduced to support their formula of "trade with informal control if possible; trade with the rule if necessary." The reasons for abandoning reliance on diplomatic and economic leverage for direct rule, they trace not to any basic change in Britain's economy but to (a) internal upheavals in colonial areas themselves due to the corrosive effects of the European impact; (b) changes in the European balance of power. The "scramble for Africa" was governed by strategic rather than economic considerations, according to them (chiefly, the route to India). Data on trade, settlement and investment would appear to tally with their thesis. However, they concur with the need to account for the change in the pace of colonialism after 1870, while denying any casual link with changes in the metropolitan economy. This still leaves wide open the question of what caused the balance of power to shift in Europe and why it had to take this particular form.

Colonialism is thus attributed to the specific problems created by prior expansion which again are explicable as part of the processes accompanying the inevitable assimilation of capitalism into the economic and social structures of the whole world. A. G. Hopkins attempts to rehabilitate economic theories of imperialism in the face of Gallagher and Robinson's attack. His micro-studies show how manufacturing and commercial interest in West Africa were behind British occupation, and supported partition to prevent occupation, by other imperialist nations.

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GEORGE KEYT AT 83

H. A. I. Goonetilleke

The George Keyt Retrospective celebrating the artist's 82nd birthday has been followed a year later by an exhibition of his most recent work at the Sapumal Foundation gallery. The 1983 exposition enabled the viewer to take in the astonishing saga of his magisterial hand from 1927 to 1983, the dazzling fecundity of the last three years alone, is on display in the current show. The 186 paintings and drawings span the universe of sacred and profane love in all its piquant, pensive and pulsating moods. They offer a magniloquent glimpse into the unceasing and untiring artistic vision of Sri Lanka's most illustrious and distinguished living painter. If any further evidence was needed by faint-hearted 'culture vultures' and Doubting Thomases, the pictures at 32/4 Barnes Place, come as a splendid demonstration of undiminished vigour and undiluted radiance.

Keyt continues to inhabit the favoured and congenial terrain of romance and passion, permeated alike by anguish and contemplation, with the familiar dexterity and verve. His hand has not lost its cunning, and his mind remains a fresh and lively instrument probing the permutations and combinations of that secluded world of meditative desire and its less philosophic manifestations. His lines, thick or thin, embrace the imagination with an unfaltering skill and exultant tension. The forms they embody are clothed with undeterred lustre and many-hued feelings — they force us to come to terms with an entire world of mystic fantasy and hidden thought which lies palpitating at the boundaries of our mundane vision.

We are brought face to face with the magical language of an

imperious brush and a supremely animated hand, and are compelled to partake in the living relationship between the artist and his inner experience — a relationship of necessity to him, in which we must try to perceive not only the vessel but also the wellspring! To penetrate the sources of his inspiration is to step into another domain, where the painter, no longer a prey of the temporal, waits to seduce the leaden-eyed and the heavy-footed. Each picture solicits our intelligence and a sensual response to make the exercise of participation meaningful. Without a poetic flight on the part of the spectator, the lines cannot engulf, the colours inflame, and the forms become flesh — the painted image remains an inviolable illusion, an inert symbol, revealing little and exposing nothing. Keyt has been long enough with us for the special meanings of his personal mythology to be understood. They are neither enigmatic nor perverse, and each line, brooding or exuberant, each form, quivering or quiescent, is seldom inaccessible to our visual and mental embrace.

Towards a new theoretical synthesis

Dayan Jayatilleka

The 4th Congress of the Vietnamese Workers Party held in December 1976, had this to say in its analysis of 'The World Situation, the international duty and the foreign policy of the party':

"In the present historical conditions when capitalism is well into its last stage and has become an obstacle, a reactionary force to the development of human society, socialism emerges

as the immediate goal of struggle of all countries. Never has the socialist revolution a more powerful potential for development than today. All movements for national independence and democracy are closely linked with socialism and oriented to socialism. The road to socialism ensures all nations genuine independence and keeps them away from neocolonialist domination. It also ensures genuine democracy, democracy for the majority of the people in society, a democracy which goes far beyond the limits of outmoded bourgeois democracy." (My italics — D. J.)

(Communist Party of Vietnam 4th National Congress Documents — FLPH Hanoi — 1977).

Le Duan's essay on the October Revolution and the Vietnamese Revolution' penned on the 60th anniversary of the 1917 Russian Revolution reaffirms and restates this thesis in a masterly form.

(Those who characterize the VCP slogan of 'raising high the twin banners of national independence and socialism' as Trotskyistic, should reread Ho Chi Minh and Le Duan thereby remedying their theoretical illiteracy. But let us not digress.)

It must be admitted in all fairness, that many Soviet and Eastern European Marxist theoreticians have been arriving at correct positions on the problems of revolutions in the periphery. Taking place over the last five years or so, this can be attributed in part to the increasing exposure of Soviet and East European academics to the new Marxist thinking in the '3rd World' on dependency and underdevelopment. Another reason has been the increasing prestige and influence of the Vietnamese and Cuban CP's

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GUEVARA'S VIEW (Box 1)

"MARX could only intuit the development of the world-wide imperialist system. Lenin listens to its heartbeat and gives his diagnosis.....Not many years later, Stalin systematized the (Lenin's) idea to the point of considering the possibility of socialist revolution in the colonies."

Che Guevara. (February 1964) 'On the Budgetary System of Financing. In 'Venceremos' — Selected Speeches and writings of Ernesto Guevara edited by John Gerassi.

"The National bourgeoisie have joined American imperialism and must meet the same fate as the latter in each country. Even in cases where there are pacts or common contradictions shared by the national bourgeoisie and other imperialisms with American imperialism, this occurs within the framework of a fundamental struggle, which will, in the course of its development, necessarily encompass all the exploited and all the exploiters. The polarization of the opposing forces of class adversity, is, till now, swifter than the development of the contradictions among exploiters because of the division of the spoils."

'Guerrilla Warfare: A method' (Sept. 1963) Ibid

"Neocolonialism first developed in South America, throughout an entire continent, and today is beginning to make itself felt with increasing intensity in Africa and Asia. Its method of penetration and development has distinctive characteristics. One of these is the brutal one with which we became acquainted in the Congo. Brute force, without hesitation or subterfuge of any kind, is its ultimate weapon. There is another than is more subtle: penetration of coun-

tries that liberate themselves politically, ties with the nascent native bourgeoisies, development of a parasitic middle class that is in close alliance with big-city interests on the basis of a certain transitory prosperity or minor improvement in the peoples standard of living due to the fact that in very backward countries the mere transition from feudal relations to capitalist relations means a big advance, apart from the tragic consequences they bring for the workers in the long run.

".....But force is being shown in another series of Asian and African countries in a much more subtle form and we are witnessing what has been called the South Americanization of these continents, that is, the development of a parasitic bourgeoisie. The latter adds nothing to the wealth of a nation; it even deposits its huge ill gotten gains in capitalist banks outside the country and enters into agreements with the foreigner in order to reap more profit, with an absolute scorn for the welfare of its country people."

'On our Common Aspiration — The Death of Imperialism and The Birth of a Moral World.' Speech delivered February 26, 1965 in Algiers during Afro Asian Solidarity Conference (Ibid)

"On the other hand, the autochthonous bourgeoisies have lost all their capacity to oppose imperialism — if they ever had it — and they have become the last card in the pack. There are no other alternatives: either a socialist revolution or a make believe revolution."

— Message to the Tricontinental: 'Create two, three, many Vietnams. (April 1967) In Venceremos' ed. J. Gerassi.

AMILCAR CAARAL'S VIEWS

(Box 2)

"WHAT really interests us here is neocolonialism. After the Second World War, imperialism entered a new phase: on the one hand, it worked out the new policy of aid, i.e. granted independence to occupied countries plus 'aid' and on the other hand, concentrated on preferential investment in the European countries; this was above all, an attempt at rationalizing imperialism.....(Neocolonialism's) current framework in the undeveloped countries is the policy of aid, and one of the essential aims of this policy is to create a false bourgeoisie to put a brake on the revolution and to enlarge the possibilities of the petty bourgeoisie as a neutralizer of the revolution....."

Brief Analysis of the Social Structure in Guinea (1964) 'Revolution in Guinea' p. 60.

"In the case of neocolonialism, whether the majority of the colonized population is of native or foreign origin, the imperialist action taken the form of creating a local bourgeoisie or pseudo bourgeoisie, controlled by the ruling class of the dominating country..... The creation of a native pseudo-bourgeoisie..... opens up new perspectives in the social dynamic, mainly by the deve-

lopment of an urban working class, the introduction of private agricultural property, and the progressive appearance of an agricultural proletariat."

"The submission of the local 'ruling' class to the ruling class of the dominating country limits or prevents the development of the national productive forces. But in the concrete conditions of the present-day world economy, this dependence is fatal, and thus the local pseudo-bourgeoisie however strongly nationalist it may be, cannot effectively fulfil its historical function; it cannot freely direct the development of the productive forces; in brief it cannot be a national bourgeoisie."

"Bearing in mind the essential characteristics of the present world economy, as well as experiences already gained in the field of anti-imperialist struggle, the principal aspect of national liberation struggle is the struggle against neocolonialism."

"Another important distinction between the colonial and neocolonial situations is in the prospects for the struggle. The colonial situation (in which the nationclass fights the re-

pressive forces of the bourgeoisie of the colonizing country) can lead, apparently at least, to a nationalist solution (national revolution); the nation gains its independence and theoretically adopts the economic structure which best suits it. The neocolonial situation (in which the working class and their allies struggle simultaneously against the imperialist bourgeoisie and the native ruling class) is not resolved by a nationalist solution; it demands the destruction of the capitalist structure implanted in the national territory by imperialism, and correctly postulates a socialist solution."

"It is sufficient to recall that in our present historical situation..... there are only two possible paths for an independent nation: to return to imperialist domination (neocolonialism capitalism, state capitalism) or to take the way of socialism."

— 'The weapon of theory'. Address to the 1st TRICONTINENTAL conference, Havana (January 1966)

'Revolution in Guinea' (p. 73)

DEBRAY'S VIEW

(Box 3)

"UNLIKE the anti-colonialist wars of Asia and Africa, the American national liberation struggles have been preceded by a certain experience of political independence. The struggle against imperialism thus does not take the form of a struggle against foreign forces of occupation, but proceeds by means of a revolutionary civil war: the social base is therefore narrower, and the ideology consequently better defined and less mixed with bourgeois influence—at least, that is the historical tendency. While in Africa and in Asia the class struggle and national struggle may be blurred by the tactical implications of the national front, or delayed until after liberation, in South America class struggle and national struggle must, in the final analysis, go together. The path of independence passes by way of the political destruction of the dominant class organically linked to the United States by the co-management of its interests."

— Castroism: The Long March in Latin America (1965) 'Strategy for Revolution' p. 76

"But at the very moment when the existence of Cuba proved that the conquest of power was not a priori unrealistic, the unilateral repercussions of the 20th congress of the CPSU and the general orientation

then adopted by the international working class movement led the CP's to take the line of 'national democracy' of 'United Front with the Bourgeoisie'—a peaceful road the same as that defended by the Columbian Party a short time before (9th Congress 1962), the Mexican Party (13th Congress), the Bolivian Party before its scission (2nd congress in 1964 in which the peaceful road was considered the most probable), the Chilean Party (13th Congress), the Argentinian Party and the Brazilian Party. The example of the Brazilian CP is revealing. Under the direct influence of 'destalinization', it made a right about turn in 1958, very much within its tradition, and in March of that year called on Communists to form a 'United Nationalist and Democratic Front' whose leadership logically devolved onto the national bourgeoisie."

— Problems of Revolutionary Strategy in Latin America (1965) 'Strategy for Revolution' p. 125

"That democratic and socialist aims should be interlinked is quite normal and indeed inevitable 'during the period of imperialist decadence, when the world is changing over to a socialist mode of production'. But what was special about this particular period was that, by causing the Latin American bourgeoisie allied with imperialism to react as they did, the Cuban revolution in the event

telescoped the distance and the transition between the two stages to such a point that they became virtually simultaneous.....Class contradictions were so enormously exacerbated that a bourgeois-democratic national revolution could only in fact be national if it became internationalist and could only be bourgeois-democratic if it became socialist. It was not possible to break with foreign monopoly capitalism and ensure national independence without rapidly breaking with national capitalism; for linking the two was the umbilical cord that kept national capitalism alive."

A Critique of Arms Vol II— Revolution on Trial (1977)

"Revolutionary nationalists are unable to relate national oppression to class exploitation they forget that national oppression is only an effect of international exploitative relationships, and that there can be no cure for the one without an attack on the other. They forget that it is capitalism itself (once it has got to the monopolistic stage) that engenders and sustains imperialism. In other words they cannot see how in practice the contradiction nation/imperialism is linked up with the basic contradiction salaried labour/capital, in other words international proletariat/international bourgeoisie."

A Critique of Arms Vol II— Revolution on Trial (Penguin Bks 1977)

A SALVADOREAN COMMUNIST PARTY VIEW (Box 4)

"WHEN the CPS speaks of the driving forces of the Salvadoran revolution, it does not include any sector of the bourgeoisie. However, we do think that some individuals or groups, or even sectors, at a given moment could adopt an attitude in favour of progress.

"This policy is in line with a CPS thesis that independent capitalism is now historically impossible in El Salvador, and we think that in Latin America as well. Therefore, no sector of the bourgeoisie, because of its condition, nature and class essence can carry out and be consistent with the anti-imperialist tasks, which, in the long run, determine the fate of the revolution and its democratic objectives.

"There can be no real democracy for the majority of the Salvadoran masses, nor can there be an effective solution to the problems of the land, in the framework of dependency. No dependent capitalist country can be a model for solving those problems. So, there is no bourgeois sector that can consistently confront imperialism, because there is no longer any possibility for independent capitalism.

"The only possible capitalism is capitalism dependent upon imperialism, under one form or another. There is a very big difference between this situation and the role of the national bourgeoisie in the colonies.

"This is linked with the progress of class formation, which has been different in the colonies and in Latin America. In our countries there is no issue about whether or not capitalism will win out, because what already exists is dependent capitalist society, and this is the type of society that is in crisis, not the pre-capitalist vestiges.

"In El Salvador, what has reached a crisis is the entire structure of dependent capitalist society. Without solving that structural crisis, there can be no real solution for the problems of a democratic nature. At present, with a revolutionary situation ripening and the crisis sharpening to an extreme degree, the bourgeoisie is splitting apart, and there are sectors which for the sake of finding a way out or a way to rule, may at a given point adopt a position in favour of revolution.

"In Nicaragua this was very evident. The CPS feels that this has nothing to do with the historic role and attitude of the bourgeoisie in, and in regard to, the revolution. It is, instead, the result of the political crisis inherent in a revolutionary situation."

Schafik Jorge Handal, General Secretary, Communist Party of El Salvador (CPS)

Interview given to Mario Menendez Granma June 8th 1980.

within the world communist movement. Then again, in the periphery itself, the Communist Parties have been influenced by the theory and practice of revolutionary intellectuals and movements outside their ranks. For instance, the 1975 Conference of the Latin American and Caribbean Communist and Workers Parties showed a considerable shift to the left, influenced by the revolutionary movements of the area as well as the theoretical positions of the Cuban Party. The foreign policy reverses suffered by the USSR at the hands of various 'progressive' 'national' bourgeoisies (Egypt, Somalia, Iraq) is still another factor which has led to a reassessment and gradual abandonment of the National Democratic State/Non capitalist path' formulation in favour of the relatively more advanced formulation 'path of socialist orientation'. A few CPs in Latin America, the Caribbean and the Middle East have gone even farther in

their arrival at correct positions. In Latin America, the Salvadoran CPSL is an example. (See Box 4)

In short, reality itself is forcing the theoreticians of the Soviet Union, East Europe and the pro-Soviet CPs, to critically reevaluate their earlier ideological constructs and approach correct positions. This is no surprise since objective socio-economic phenomena assert themselves, in the last analysis, in the realm of consciousness.

There has not emerged, however any one revolutionary leader who has provided a coherent conceptual framework for an understanding of neocolonialism in its totality, through Guevara, had he lived, may very well have accomplished this. (See Box 1) No one stands in relation to the contemporary historical period as Lenin stood in relation to the period of imperialism and Marx stood in relation to the period of

pre monopoly capitalism. Still, in the context of the present crisis of theory, there exist elements from which to begin the construction of such a 'total' or 'macro' theory of revolutions in the period of neocolonialism. These are the insights of Lenin and the last theses of Stalin; the positions drawn up by Le Duan; the comments of Fanon¹ and more importantly of Cabral (See Box 2) on the dangers of neocolonialism; the writings and speeches of Castro and especially Guevara (the loss of his notes on the Political Economy of underdevelopment, is an immense one); and the truly excellent political theorizing of Regis Debray.² (See Box 3)

A study and integration of these theoretical 'raw materials' will help us recognize and understand correctly, the problems of revolution in the periphery in the contemporary period. Foremost among these problems is that which concerns the present stage i.e. the content and character of the peripheral revolutions. A correct understanding of this is of paramount importance, for, as Lenin said:

"The question is not how fast do we move, but **where** to move. The question is not whether the workers are prepared, but how and for what they should be prepared."

1. See Marguerite Jayatileka's series on fanon in Lanka Guardian Vol 4 Nos 16, 17, 19, 20, 22. (Jan 1st - April 1st, 1982.)

2. See 'The Marxism of Regis Debray' - by Hartmut Ramm.

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The development of the concept of development

Immanuel Wallerstein

A case can be made for the assertion that the concept of development is not merely one of the central components of the ideology both of Western civilization and of world social science, but is in fact the central organizing concept around which all else is hinged.¹

I am not interested here however in the history of Western civilization. I am interested rather in the history of social science, indeed in the very concept that there is something called social science, or (to be more accurate) that there are various disciplines that collectively make up the social sciences. This is not, as any rapid glance at the historical evolution of the organization of universities will show us, a self-evident idea. What today are called the humanities have long been studied. What today are called the natural sciences have a very long history. The social sciences however were invented and inserted into the curriculum only in the nineteenth century.

This is itself a remarkable fact which is insufficiently observed and/or celebrated. For example, the *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, published in 1968, does not even have an entry for "social science(s)" as such.² This is no accident but in fact reflects the dominant ideology of world social science.

The invention of the social sciences required a particular extension of modern secularism. The natural sciences are based on the assumption that natural phenomena behave in predictable (or at least analyzable) ways, and are therefore subject to intervention and manipulation. The struggle to establish the legitimacy of this perspective

encountered, as we all know, the resistance of many religious authorities and of all those who believed that such a view would stimulate man's *hybris* and undermine social stability. We have little patience today for any who still preach such a backward form of resistance to scientific enquiry.

The social sciences basically make a parallel assertion: social phenomena behave in predictable (or at least analyzable) ways, and are therefore subject to intervention and manipulation. I do not for a moment suggest that this belief was unknown before the nineteenth century. That would be an absurd suggestion. But I do suggest that such a perspective did not really have *droit de cite* before then.

The French Revolution in many ways crystallized the issues involved in this concept and served as an ideological turning-point. By legitimating the concept of the rights of man, the revolutionary process bequeathed us the legitimacy of deliberate social change which no amount of conservative ideologizing since has been able to undo. (Note that conservatives are reduced these days to arguing that social interventions ought to be "cost-effective," a dramatic comedown if ever there was one.)

If social intervention is legitimate, it can only be because what is not perfect but is perfectible. It is in the end only some variant of the idea of progress that justifies the enormous social energy required by social science, the most complex of all forms of knowledge. Otherwise, the whole exercise would be an aesthetic game, in which case poetry or mathematics might be more appealing modes of activity. And if what is not perfect, but is perfectible, we may be drawn to portray the alternatives as an antinomy of

reified forces. This is of course what did happen historically. In the wake of the French Revolution and all the ideological turmoil it generated, social commentators of human "development" began to make a distinction that was crucial for all subsequent analysis — the distinction of society and state.

In general, the state represented what was, and was not perfect, and society represented the force that was pushing towards the perfectibility of the state. But at times, as we know, the imagery has been reversed. No matter! Without the distinction of society and state, social science, as we know it, would not have existed. But it is also true that, without the distinction of society and state, the social movement, as we know it, also would not have existed. For both social science and the social movement have claimed to incarnate views about the underlying society against the pieties of officially-stated analyses and policies.

Thus, the epistemological links between social science and the social movement are profound, which to be sure justifies the great suspiciousness which political conservatives have always shown towards the enterprise of social science.

Let us look more closely at the antinomy of society/state. An antinomy involves a permanent tension, a permanent misfit or contradiction, a permanent disequilibrium. In some sense, the intent of both social science and the social movement is to reduce this antinomy, whether by harmonization or by violence or by some *Aufhebung* (transcendence) of the pair.

The question of course immediately arises, which society, which state? The difficulties involved in answering this query have been so enormous

that the query itself has, for almost 200 years, been largely skirted. To skirt a query is not however to neglect to answer it. It is to answer it secretly, by burying the answer in a largely unspoken premise.

The premise was that the state were those states that were "sovereign", that is, those states which reciprocally recognized each other's legitimate existence within the framework and the norms of the interstate system. There were in addition aspirants to this status, entities not yet existing whose existence was advocated by various national movements. And there were candidates for elimination, usually small-sized units which larger states wished to absorb, and whose legitimacy was thereby put into question by some ideologues.

But generally speaking, everyone "knew" which the states were, and a large part of the enterprise of nineteenth-century (and indeed twentieth-century) history has constituted essentially a reading back into the past of a continuing history for such "states."

If then "society" was to remain in permanent tension with the "state," and the states were particular geographically-bounded, juridically-defined entities (which however had histories), then it seemed to follow that each state was a society or had a society, and each society had a state. Or at least, it seemed to follow that this is how it ought to be. Nationalism is the name which we give to such an analytical credo in the realm of politics and culture.

This thrust to parallelism of boundaries of society and state had immense hidden implications for the epistemology of social science as it in fact historically evolved. For it determined the basic unit of analysis within which almost all of social science has been written. This basic unit was the state — either a sovereign state or a politico-cultural claimant to status — within which social action was said to have occurred. The "society" of such a "state" was adjudged to be more or less cohesive, more or less "progressive" or "advanced". Each "society" had an "economy" which could

be characterized, and which had "home markets" and "foreign markets". Each "society" had a culture, but it also had "minorities" with "subcultures", and these minorities could be thought of as having accepted or resisted "assimilation".

You may be thinking that anthropology at least represented an exception. Anthropologists scorned the modern state and usually concentrated on some other entity — a "tribe" or a "people". But in fact all the anthropologists were saying was that in what today we call the peripheral areas of the world-economy, which was in the late nineteenth century largely dominated by colonial powers, the formal state was a thin social layer lying over the real political entities which were the so-called "traditional" political structures. The startingpoint for an anthropologist dealing with an acephalous society was the same as for an historian dealing with central Europe — a primordial and largely fictive politico-cultural entity which "governed" social life, within which the real society existed.

In this sense, both the anthropologists and the Germanic historians of the nineteenth century could be hard-nosed British empiricists as incorrigibly romantic. For myself, much as I think the "romantics" were wrong, they seem to me less wildly off the mark than our hard-nosed and arrogant empiricists. In any case, the subsequent transformation of vocabulary indicates the stateness-orientation that was always there. Central European **Volker** and Afro-Asian "peoples" who came to dominate a sovereign state thereupon became "nations". Witness the Germans and the Burmese. Those that didn't get to dominate a sovereign state became instead "ethnic groups", entities whose very existence has come to be defined in relation to one or more sovereign states. Poles are an "ethnic group" in the U. S. but a "nation" in Poland. Senegalese are an "ethnic group" almost everywhere in West Africa except Senegal.

Thus, the state came to provide the defining boundaries of the "society", and the "societies" were

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Neo-colonialism: . . .

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(Continued from page 21)

the entities which were comparable one to the other — in the famous billiard ball analogy to individuals within all of human society³ “Societies” were seen as collective entities going along parallel paths in the same direction. That is to say, it was societies that were “developing”. “Development” (or in older terminology, “progress”) was a measurable (or at least describable) characteristic of societies.

This use of “societies” as the basic unit of social science had two clear consequences. It rendered plausible two fundamental options of the philosophy of social science that very widely adopted in the nineteenth century. I call these two options “universalization” and “sectoralization”.

Universalization is the presumption that there exist universal laws applicable to all of human society or rather all of human societies. The objective of social science is said to be the clear statement of these universal laws (in the form of propositions that are “falsifiable”). The limits to our ability to state these laws are the limits of our pre-

sent ignorance. The enterprise of social science is the search to reduce this ignorance. This is a realizable task. Once such laws are stated, or a significant number of them, we shall collectively be able to deduce applications that can be used at the level of policy. That is to say, we shall be able to “intervene” effectively in the operation of these laws. The model obviously is that of classical physics and its applications in technology and engineering.

LENIN'S...

(Continued from page 15)

References

1. (— Though Lenin rejected Hilferding's conclusion regarding an international cartel, and Hobson's under-consumptionism together with its political implications): finance capital's role in intensifying the formation of monopolies and cartels, heightened by recurrent crises which mop up less successful entrepreneurs who go to the wall (p. 29); the personal links between banks, industry and government (pp. 40-41); the export of surplus capital in search of “fields for profitable investment” (p. 60) which creates an international network of dependence on, and connections of, finance capital (p. 59); the pervasive influence of the monopoly principle, extending

from the domestic economy into foreign ones in the search for raw materials and markets (pp. 79-81) and spheres of investment (pp. 61-62).

2. Kautsky assumes a quasi-liberal position when he posits the “reactionary ideal” of a return to competitive capitalism. Not only was this impossible (Lenin approvingly contrasts Hilferding here) but it overlooked the fact that monopoly arose precisely out of free competition! (Lenin, p. 87)

Letter

The Press

One noted the difficulty the pro-government Sinhala press was experiencing when it had to announce the pay rise of the President. It is only a forthright press that could boldly say that the highest of the land should be paid the highest while of course upholding the claims of many others who are in less-privileged positions.

The servile attitude of this section of the press is a shame to the government they uphold!

V. K. Wijeratna

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BOOK
REVIEW

Shelton Kodikara

W. A. Wiswa Warnapala and L. Dias Hewagama, *Recent Politics in Sri Lanka: The Presidential Election and the Referendum of 1982*. New Delhi, Navrang Publishers, 1983. 240p.

Wiswa Warnapala's and Dias Hewagama's short monograph on the Presidential Election and Referendum of 1982 is presented as "an attempt to maintain some continuity in (the) psephological studies in Sri Lanka". Considering that studies of elections and electoral behaviour have by no means proliferated for a policy which has experienced more than 50 years of adult suffrage and no less than eight parliamentary general elections, these latter in the period 1947 to 1977, the monograph must be regarded as a welcome addition to the literature. Only two general elections have so far been subjected to detailed study — the 1956 elections by the late Dr. I. D. S. Weerawardhana, and the 1970 elections by Professor A. J. Wilson. These have been supplemented by articles: Sir Ivor Jennings himself showed the way to academic research in electoral studies with his article on the 1947 elections (*University of Ceylon Review*, July 1948), Weerawardhana wrote on the 1952 elections (*Ceylon Historical Journal*, July — October 1952), Namasivayam and Samara-weera have contributed pieces on the 1956 and 1977 elections, respectively (*Parliamentary Affairs*, Summer 1956 and *Asian Survey*, December 1977). Namasivayam's *Parliamentary Government in Ceylon*, published in 1960, was itself a useful

study, while Howard Wriggins' *Ceylon: Dilemmas of a New Nation*, published the same year offered valuable insights to the electoral process in 1956. Apart from these, and other general works on Sri Lanka (e.g. Kearney, Wilson), two other books relating to the electoral process in Sri Lanka need mention: Marshall Singer's *Emerging Elite: A Study of Political Leadership in Ceylon* (1964), and Janice Jiggin's *Caste and Family in the Politics of the Sinhalese, 1947 — 1976* (1979). Both these works might be considered methodologically suspect, and Jiggins' book contains glaring errors of fact. Yet they embody a new approach which is behaviourally oriented and attempt to make use of the survey to elicit data about caste political behaviour, one of the most important dimensions of the electoral process in Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka political scientists have been loth to embark on this sensitive area of political enquiry in the island, and they have also not resorted enough to quantitative methods of analysis based on interviews and surveys. Political Science has not been a favoured branch of study in Sri Lanka at the best of times, and political scientists seeking information by interview or by questionnaire, are often suspected of ulterior motives. Warnapala and Hewagama have not relied on the method of the interview or the survey — their reliance is mainly on the newspaper press and on official documents, and the reader does get the impression of a hurried preparation — but their argument is supported by eleven useful statistical tables dealing with the distribution of votes by district, polling division, and party for both

the presidential referendum polls, the number of voters and percentage increase per district, voting strength by district, and the distribution of the estate Indian population.

The argument is briefly as follows. Article 30 (2) of the 1978 Constitution imposed, in effect, 'a constitutional restriction on the President's power to seek a mandate before the expiry of the (six-year) term of his office'. However, the Third Amendment to the constitution gave the President the power 'at any time after the expiration of four years from the commencement of the first term of office by Proclamation (to) declare his intention of appealing to the people for a mandate to hold office by election for a further term'. The Third Amendment was passed in Parliament, as constitutionally required, by a two-thirds majority, and the Supreme Court did not deem it necessary that the amending act should be ratified by the people at a referendum, as provided for certain classes of amendments under Article 83. Had the Court held otherwise, and deemed a referendum necessary for the passage of this amendment, an affirmative referendum would have been soon followed by the presidential election, thus duplicating a reference to the people of a vote in favour of the incumbent resident. The Supreme Court held that the amendment did not infringe the sovereignty of the people (Article 3) since election by the people had been made a pre-condition for appointment to the advanced second presidential term. The authors have a point, however, when

they support the argument advanced by the Civil Rights Movement at the time that the Third Amendment, and the advancement of the presidential election to October 1982, pre-empted the voting rights of a large number of people who might have become eligible to vote between 1982 and 1984. There is no doubt, also, that the amendment 'enabled the President to choose a time for election which was more propitious for him' and to take advantage of a political situation in the country when the opposition forces were 'in utter disarray'. (pp. 1-2)

The 'disarray of the opposition' is itself subjected by the authors to succinct analysis as a factor in President Jayewardene's victory in the poll on 20th October 1982, and they aver that the failure of the Communist Party initiative to agree on a single common candidate to oppose President Jayewardene was the factor which, 'from the inception of the campaign strengthened the campaign strategies of the incumbent President'. (p. 10) Perhaps this factor was marginally important, though one might argue that the showing of the non-SLFP opposition candidates was not all that impressive in terms of the proportion of votes gained at the election. More important may have been the disarray within the SLFP itself, which precluded an effective campaign for the SLFP candidate. The extent to which Dr. Colvin R de Silva's 'law point' had an impact on the electoral result may also be exaggerated by the authors. But certainly the general analysis of the presidential poll, undertaken from a sharply oppositional standpoint, raises many issues for discussion on an important event of Sri Lanka's recent politics.

The other issue discussed by the authors is the Referendum of December 1982, which legitimised the postponement of general elections, which were due in August 1983, for a six-year period up to August 1989. This was done through the Fourth Amendment to the Constitution, which Amended its Article 161 to the effect that "unless sooner dissolved, the First Parlia-

ment shall continue until August 4, 1989, and no longer, and shall there-upon stand dissolved". This very controversial decision to substitute a referendum for general elections is subjected to a good deal of critical comment by the authors. They refer to President Jayewardene's reference to 'rolling up the electoral map of Sri Lanka' during the presidential election campaign, and surmise that the reason for the postponement of elections 'perhaps was that he wanted political stability without intermittent electoral changes to guide the process of economic development.' (p. 116) The authors are probably right in stressing that the President was greatly preoccupied with 'the institutional problem relating to a potential source of future conflict between President and Parliament.' (p.129) Since most analyses at the time gave the ruling party a clear majority at a general election which might have been held in 1983, it would appear, as the authors have indicated, that the necessity to retain a two-thirds majority for the ruling party was also a major consideration in the postponement of elections.

However that may be, this postponement, taken together with the abolition of by-elections under the constitution, the nomination of MPs, and the holding of mini-general elections, have certainly ushered in what the authors have called 'a new kind of electoralism in Sri Lanka.' While all the implications of the new electoralism are not clear, some of its consequences can be mentioned: proportional representation, Parliament-wise, is yet to be implemented. The constitution of 1978 stipulated 196 members of Parliament; the present Parliament, however, can only have 168 members, as provided for under the 1972 constitution. And there has been effected, it would seem, a major shift in the constitutional balance of power in favour of the executive branch of government.

In the concluding section of their study, the authors have presented interesting comparisons between the voting figures for the presiden-

tial election and the referendum. Thus, although the affirmative vote for the referendum increased a few percentage points from the vote received by the incumbent President, (52.9% to 54.4%), the aggregate voter turn-out dropped from 6.6 million for the presidential election to 5.8 million for the referendum, a drop of 10 percent points from 81% to 71%. The Opposition polled 2.6 million votes at the referendum as against 3.1 million votes for the ruling party, but this latter figure constituted only 38% of the total vote. 71% is an unusually low turn-out for an election in Sri Lanka, and the authors attribute this largely to strong-arm methods used by elements supporting the ruling party prevented committed opposition voters from exercising their vote in certain areas. Flushed with the results of the presidential election two months before, support for the ruling party at the referendum by some elements took the form of "terror, fraud, intimidation and personation (*sic*), which are without precedent in this country". (p. 197) But there was also probably an element of inertia among the opposition forces after the presidential election, and factions of the SLFP, as noted by the authors earlier in the book, went in different directions on the referendum. In the aftermath of the referendum, by-elections were once more provided for, in certain contingencies, through the Fifth Amendment to the constitution. This enabled the government to declare a mini-general election for 17 constituencies, in which the vote had been adverse to the government in the presidential and referendum polls, but the authors have not made this a part of their study. Though all too concise an account and inclined to be polemical in style, Wiswa Warnapala and Dias Hewagama's study is essential reading for the student of recent politics in Sri Lanka.

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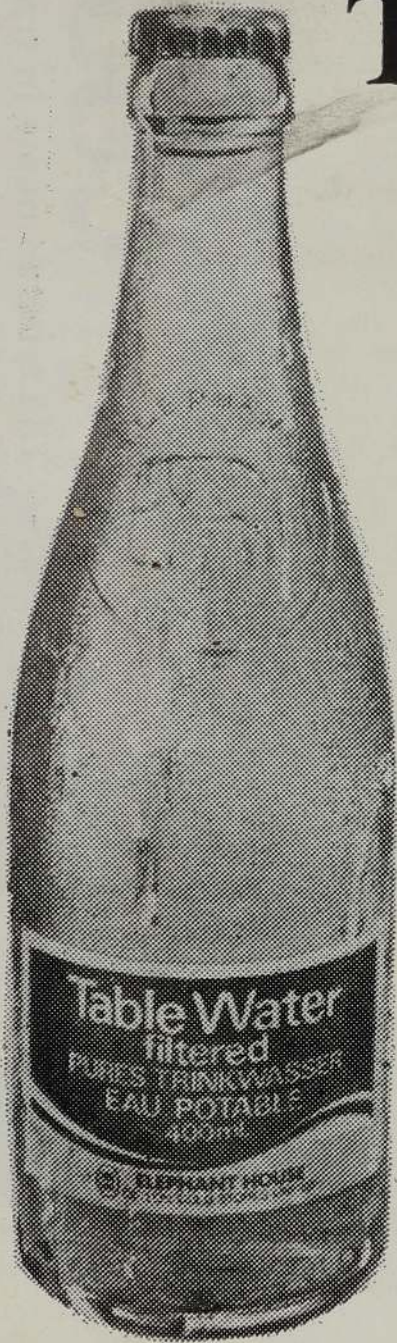
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