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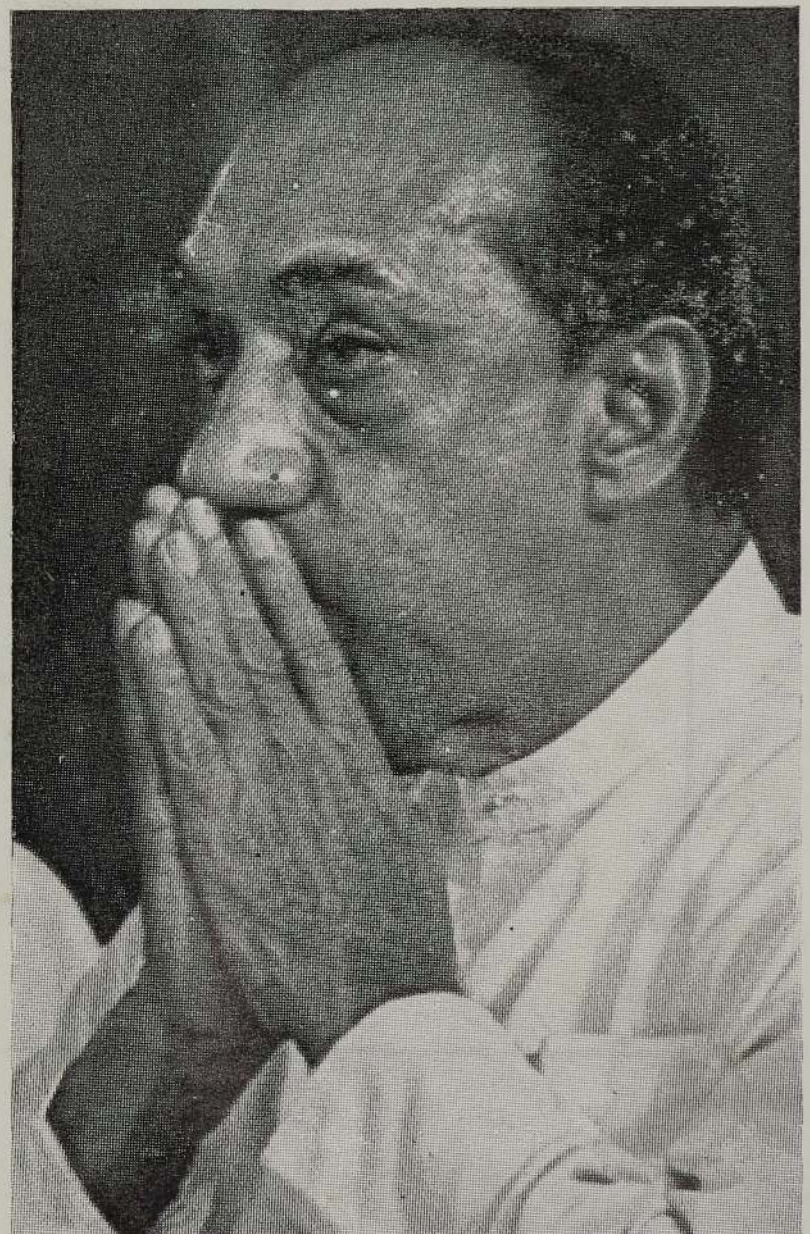
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Your move, I think

Circles of insecurity

— Mervyn de Silva

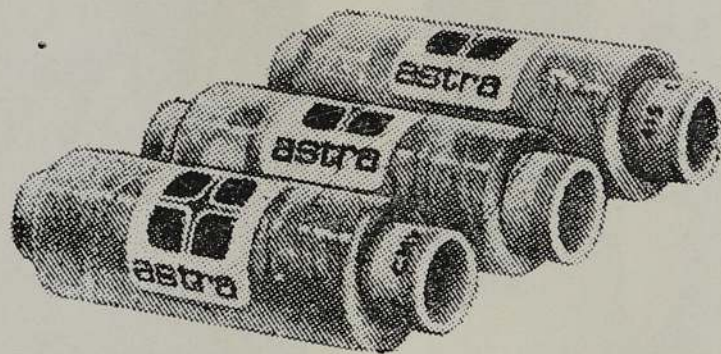


VELLASSA : Sinhala peasants into plantation "coolies" ?

— Gamini Yapa

- * Human Rights and the ethnic problem — Nihal Jayawickrema
- * The psychology of racism and fascism — Senaka Abeyaratne
- * Aftermath of July riots and the future of democracy — Gananath Obeyesekere

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HIGH COST OF VIOLENCE

"A solution to the ethnic problem is essential if we are to continue to attract foreign investment and tourists". Yes, that was Finance Minister Ronnie with what is now known as his signature tune. This time he played it to a visiting Reuters correspondent, but since July '83 he has played to both mass audiences and to parliament's packed house on Budget Day.

As long as the "war" is in the North, prospective investors may keep coming just to take a close look but word in the City is that they are unusually cautious in making firm commitments. It's a "wait-and-see" watchfulness, said the chairman of one of the island's biggest companies.

"July Tourist arrivals up" read a frontpage headline last week but the story itself didn't really dispel the gathering gloom in the hotel-cum-tourist industry. For obvious reasons a comparison with July 1983 can be quite misleading. A much more reliable indicator than month-by-month figures placed against the previous year's is a retrenchment drive by medium and small hotel owners, occupancy rates and sharp cuts in room rents. "It's a buyer's market" said the Sales director of a five-star hotel commenting on the present trend of hotel discounts.

While the Finance Ministry has stepped in to shore up the gravely threatened hotel industry (specially the 100% Sri Lankan owned hotels down the south-western coast) the Labour Department's problem reflects the situation more accurately. On the one hand, hotel employees are demanding monthly wage increases upto Rs. 150/—, while many hotel owners are appealing to the Depart-

ment for permission to lay off labour. "The ethnic violence has dealt a severe blow to the country's tourist industry" noted the TRAVEL TRADE GAZETTE (ASIA) in its August issue.

NO MARSHAL LAW

The feared privatisation of Universities is no more an imminent danger. Medicine for the sons and daughters of Sri Kotha's favourite people — a million a year bracket — is available at the Private Medical School but engineering, law, the social sciences will have to wait quieter times.

Meanwhile Peradeniya may go private, in a restricted area, though — security. A private security service may replace the police post which led to so much heated student agitation, and cost two young lives. The proliferation of private security agencies is an interesting post-1977 phenomenon. It reflects the steady breakdown of law and order, the rising levels of violence (and new kinds of violence) and the obsessive concern about "security" by an increasingly 'insecure' Colombo establishment. It could also have more sinister implications.

The new Vice Chancellor, Prof. Fernando has begun well. He has said that he accepted the post only on condition the police post was removed. The police post was also a reflection of the 'insecurity' of a Pro-UNP academic-bureaucratic cabal at Peradeniya which has succeeded in pushing even the government into all kinds of decisions that have brought the UNP no credit.

But the University Teachers Association, which includes many eminent pro-UNP men far less fascistic than the cabal, has consistently argued against a police post. Yet, a strong case for a restoration of the Marshal service has evidently been rejected. The new V-C will have to make sure that the 'private' security service does its public duties under his strict supervision.

TRENDS + LETTERS

Daliesque?

P. O Cuilleagain (LG 15 August) quotes Jonathan Rosenhead as listing, in "a grotesque cavalcade of injuries" caused by the plastic bullet, "eviscerated eyes". May I suggest that the only possible adjective is not "grotesque" but "Daliesque".

V. P. Vittachi

Colombo 3

Who dun it?

Kumari Jayawardena writes: "1958 the country was plunged into ethnic violence, in which sections of the masses also participated". If by this she intends to tell us that by and large the masses had little to do with that violence will she kindly let us know who dun it?

S. Wirasekera

Nugegoda

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Return to foreign policy status quo — Delhi's message

Mervyn de Silva

NEWS
BACKGROUND

Atavistic fears occupy the Sinhala mind. An hour long conversation with the Ven. Madihe Panaseeha Maha Thera began thus;

"To understand the present conflict and the ethnic issue we must begin with the history of this island... with the 'hela' people. Ravana and Vijaya and the birth of the Sinhala nation, the Sinhala land..."

The next stop in this ably conducted historical journey was Elara, his defeat at the hands of Dutugemunu, and Anuradhapura. There were two points which this highly articulate and influential monk impressed on us, his visitors.

(a) Sri Lanka and the Sinhala people had been the target for many centuries of invasion, aggression and incursion ("aakramanaya" was the word which received special emphasis) (b) the fall of Sinhala kingdoms and the relentless retreat of 'The Sinhala capital', Anuradhapura, Polonnauwa, Sigiriya right down to Kotte and Kandy.

Asked whether such fears lurked in the minds of the Sinhala people or in the minds of the Sinhala elite, he replied: "Both".

The threat-perception is evidently so real that there is now even high-level talk of 'contingency plans'. Earlier the WEEKEND gave great prominence to Dr. G. A. P. Ganepola, President of the World Federation of Sri Lankan Associations who argued with spirited combativeness and urgency for a "viable air-defence system" which would allow us to "hold the aggressors at bay for 6 hours" — the time necessary to get a UN peace-keeping force.

Mr. S. D. Bandaranayake MP (SLFP) wanted all Sinhala fishermen to be made the first line of our naval defence. Mr. N. U. Jayewardene demanded "a ring of steel" to protect the northern and north-eastern coast.

Such a discussion, however emotional, confused or callow, is sufficiently widespread to testify to the reality of the 'threat-perception'. Old deep-laid anxieties are re-awakened. Haunted by history, we re-live the dreaded nightmares of the distant past.

Past and Present

But the past is also present — the awesome presence of 50 million Tamils across the narrow 25 mile expanse of water known as the Palk Straits. So it is not merely a history punctuated by invasions and incursions, wars and violent conflicts, rise and fall of kingdoms, which breeds these fears but the stark fact of a great disparity in numbers — 12 million versus 52. In the larger South Indian configuration, we are hopelessly outnumbered.

This psychology has such a powerful, crippling hold on the average Sinhala mind that it plays tricks with commonplace facts and realities to distort and twist our everyday perceptions. **Tamilnadu is "South India" when in fact there are non-Tamil states in the South of India. Finally South India is India, a country full of chettiers and kanganis.**

As a result, the majority Sinhala (75% against 12.5%) is seized by what can be termed 'a minority complex'. That very popular, often anguished and morally defensive but patently ludicrous cry "But we Sinhalese have nowhere to go..."

("we, seven hundred million Indians have also nowhere to go...") is the most revealing of all typically Sinhala utterances in this unceasing debate.

The fears which fill the minority Tamil mind are those which are common to most minorities. Shaping the Tamil perception of their own fate is the fear of "discrimination" "second class citizenship" "suppression" and now, more fashionably "genocide".

Minority Complex

Mr. Amirthalingam's description of this conflict between two communities, each burdened with a minority complex, may not be the most accurate, but it will bear repetition. The TULF leader told a foreign correspondent "Their fear is historical, ours is now physical". So both the Sinhala and Tamil mind work within two circles of insecurity. Is there a third?

The air is thick indeed with the talk of physical threat — invasion intervention, the historical incursion from the north (i.e. Tamilnadu) infiltration etc. Is the source of the perceived threat, Madras or Delhi or both? Little clear-headed discussion of this question can be found even among the Sinhala intelligentsia.

The debate seems to have produced three broad schools — (a) the main danger is autonomous action by Tamilnadu, probably taking the form of 'infiltrators' or 'volunteers' as an auxiliary force helping the 'Tigers'. "How can we distinguish a Madras Ramasamy from a Jaffna Ramasamy?" asked a leading exponent of this school.

(b) there will be NO independent covert Tamilnadu operation, but a Tamilnadu exercise which

has the tacit approval of Delhi. This thesis is advanced by a group popularly called 'the inter-active theorists' i.e. whatever decision is made will be the result of an inter-action of interests, mainly Tamilnadu political pressure and Delhi's electoral needs, a process which will gather momentum as the general election approaches.

Strategic Factor

Whatever decision is made, the **determining** factor will NOT be Tamilnadu pressure nor the plight of Tamils in Jaffna (or elsewhere) but India's **national** interest. Tamil refugees may become a **casus belli** and humanitarian concerns may help mobilise international diplomatic support and may even become **post facto** justification but it will be India's interest that will be the basic determinant, and in this "national interest", the **strategic factor** is the principal imperative. However, no interventionist course will be adopted unless ALL possibilities of a political settlement have been exhausted (and all Indian diplomatic pressure moves have failed) and until the international community is convinced that Colombo has neither the inclination nor the will to negotiate such a settlement.

Since school "B", the inter-activists, have emerged as the dominant group its firmly held view that Sri Lanka's problems will start to ease AFTER the Indian polls has become something of a comforting conviction of the Sinhala middle-and-upper social strata.

This conviction, I find, is accompanied by the vicarious pleasure which the English-educated Sinhala middle class derives these days from each new problem that confronts Mrs. Gandhi. **Each crisis, from Punjab and Kashmir to Andhra Pradesh, and even a mere hijacking, is greeted with the same burst of sheer unalloyed joy which follows each glorious six by Duleep Mendis off Botham at Lords.** Incidentally, the exactly opposite reaction of growing disappointment and distress appears to characterise the general attitude of the expatriate Tamil intelligentsia, although its responses to Indian developments may have been reached through a line of argument much less naive. (See Box "INDIRA'S OPTIONS").

The native calculations of the Colombo theorists are largely founded on the belief that a much weakened post-election 'Centre' in India is certain to

prove immensely advantageous to Sri Lanka, whereas a Centre revitalised by an easy polls victory, will be more quickly tempted to use that newly acquired strength if only for demonstration effect.

Evidently, 'system-analysis' has made little impression on our, foreign policy or strategic affairs analysts, a group modest in number and intellectual equipment at the best of times. Not only do states, like other systems, seek to reduce domestic disequilibria and shape foreign policy accordingly, but often take refuge, wrote Prof. Frankel, in directing public attention to external dangers, real or imaginary, stemming from the international environment.

Colombo's elite should reflect more seriously on a connected issue. If in fact the 'Centre' has alienated too many region-based oppositional forces, then its sensitivity to Tamilnadu will be greater. Secondly, a 'Centre' which emerges from the polls more visibly weakened will respond to the stronger need for an external demonstration of power to ensure internal unification. It was Raymond Aron who spoke of the objective of "glory" as an important, if not too easily definable, dimension of national power and power projection. **Bangladesh was a post-election exercise.**

In my view, the Sri Lankan crisis lies at the inter-face of India's domestic politics and her national strategic considerations.

What Colombo analysts also tend to ignore is that neither the vicissitudes of domestic politics (governmental change for example) nor the changing fortunes of individual personalities, however powerful, **determine ultimately** critical foreign policy choices which are taken in accordance with the 'national interest'. And it is this 'national interest' which sustains a tradition in foreign policy thinking, a continuity.

To ask what in fact is India's "national interest" is also to pose the question, where does one locate that concept. In whose mind? Whatever term one may prefer — Indian bourgeoisie or governing

President replies to Indira

President Jayewardene's latest message to Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was worded in a "rather reassuring tone, giving expression to Mr. Jayewardene's anguish over the tragic events...", the Madras Hindu reported.

The message was handed to Mrs. Gandhi by Sri Lanka's High Commissioner, Mr. Bernard Tillakeratne, on his return to New Delhi after a weeklong consultation in Colombo.

The 'Hindu', which has often taken a hard line in its reportage of the ethnic problem here, assessed that President Jayewardene appeared to be adopting a "slightly flexible attitude" on the question of continued utilisation of India's good offices.

The 'Hindu' said the President was reported to have indicated that Mr. G. Parthasarathy as special envoy of Mrs. Gandhi, would be welcome to pay another visit to Sri Lanka at an appropriate time. There was no indication as to a likely date.

On the substantive political issues, the 'Hindu' reported, President Jayewardene had claimed that a broad consensus was developing on his proposal for a Second Chamber of parliament to give the District Councils special representation.

The President had repeated charges that the Tamil Tigers were bent on all-out conflict with the Sri Lankan armed forces to escalate the level of confrontation, the report added.

group or power elite — the study of the **actual** conduct of foreign policy in a reasonably large time-frame, permits a generally acceptable definition.

"Under Nehru" wrote Dieter Braun in his recent work on the Indian ocean, "India pursued a globally oriented foreign policy with an eye on the power blocs and usually at a careful distance from them. But under Indira Gandhi, priorities changed. By the time of the emergence of Bangladesh, if not earlier, the consolidation and protection of its dominating position in the sub-region, along with the elimination of Pakistan's long-standing claim to the greatest possible parity with India in particular, had become the primary goal". While western states, the same writer says, had largely followed the precept of Indo-Pak parity, the USSR from 1955 had persistently taken

account of India's "natural pre-eminence".

When Vice President George Bush visited India earlier this year, the phrase "pivotal power" was attributed to him. This could be an American version of "natural pre-eminence" and an American attempt to extend to India, the kind of recognition which Moscow has extended for 30 years. It could therefore be a US effort to loosen the Indo-Soviet linkage. Last year, the US beat the USSR to first place as India's trading partner. It is in this light that Mr. Douglas Liyanage's statement to the JERUSALEM POST should be read. U. S. assistance to Sri Lanka to fight Tamil terrorists, he said, cannot mean **direct** involvement because the U. S. does not want to clash with India.

Before Bangladesh, India's strategic perspective, Dr. Braun observes,

was fixed on **land** borders — the main theatres of conflict, with Pakistan and with China. **The Bangladesh war awakened India to the existence of another theatre, the sea, and the importance of another flank, the southern, and to sea power.**

Describing the Indian army as an "institutionalised holy cow — perhaps the last remaining" Richard Nations speaks of the deep "historical anxiety of Hindu society which has never exercised the imperial power necessary to unite a continental-sized civilisation subjugated by the Moghul and British empires". It is no Indira supporter but a leading member of the rival Janata party, Mr. Inder Gujral, who told the same correspondent "**Security comes first and is unquestioned we have suffered in the past because we have been weak**".

The southern front, the Indian ocean, with all its deepening tension and big power rivalries, has long been regarded as "an exposed flank". The establishment of a Southern Command at Trivandrum recently was a reflection of India's own threat-perception. **For Sri Lankans it is 'the threat from the North'; for the Indian policy-making elite, it is a threat from the South.**

Is it the threat of Tamil refugees? Is it primarily the anxiety of spill-over effects of our ethnic conflict and the escalating violence in the North? I think not.

A careful reading of Mrs. Gandhi's statements — and these in turn have been most carefully crafted — reveals the true source of Indian misgivings and apprehensions. The preoccupation is not with Sri Lanka or its unmanageable problems. **It is the intrusion of "external" forces or what Mrs. Gandhi likes to call the "induction" of Israeli interests i. e. the Israeli interests section in the U. S. Embassy.** Does Delhi agree with Mr. Liyanage that the U. S. does not favour "direct" involvement with all its attendant risks, but is not all that certain that "indirect" involvement can be ruled out? It is surely significant that even when Mrs. Gandhi speaks of Tamil refugees, she can refer

INDIRA'S OPTIONS

A COLD, logical assessment of India's policy on Sri Lanka yields the following:-

1. India is concerned over the anti-Tamil violence in Sri Lanka and has a right to be concerned.
2. Any extraneous involvement in Sri Lankan affairs will be unwelcome as far as India is concerned, because India cannot be regarded "as just any country".
3. India is interested in finding a permanent solution to satisfy the "legitimate" aspirations and ensure the security of the Tamil minority, through a process of negotiations between the Sri Lankan government and the Tamil leadership.
4. India does not wish to interfere in the internal affairs of Sri Lanka, but at the same time she "can't be entirely out of the picture".
5. India desires the unity and national integrity of Sri Lanka to be preserved.

If these together represent the framework under which India's Sri Lanka policy is mapped out, then obviously that policy has failed. Soon after the July holocaust when the Sri Lanka government was brought to its knees in the eyes of international opinion and had necessarily to adopt a defensive posture, Colombo gave tacit approval to India's friendly intervention. The Jayewardene government was compelled to receive both External Affairs Minister Narasimha

Rao and special emissary G. Parthasarathi, and allowed itself to be persuaded to go through the mockery of the Round Table negotiations. But on his recent visit to New Delhi, after buying the necessary time over the year to strengthen his hand both militarily and strategically, Jayewardene was in a position to say "Boo" to India's continued desire to help.

In other words, India has yet to establish her right to have a special interest in Sri Lankan affairs. On the other hand, the "extraneous involvement" in Sri Lanka which India has been considering unwelcome has been systematically taking place, and India as Chairman of the Non-aligned movement has been unable to prevent Sri Lanka from getting closer to countries that are outside it. The negotiation process that India got going has led to nowhere. The Tamil leaders who participated in that process are no longer recognisable as the leaders of the Tamil people. The charge that India interferes in Sri Lanka's affairs continues to be made with greater vehemence than before, while that "interference" has neither brought us closer to a permanent solution, nor ensured the security of the Tamils, nor has the chances of the "unity and national integrity of Sri Lanka" been brought any closer. On the other hand, with the Jayewardene government continuing to place confidence in a military solution, those chances have become remoter.

— Tamil International

to "spies". We have surely entered the third circle of insecurity.

The tangible attributes of power, says Richard Nations, symbolise the self-image of India today. And Mrs. Gandhi herself personifies India's new self-esteem.

Mrs. Gandhi's **realpolitik** commands, notes the writer "the unabashed admiration of the very intellectuals who criticise her methods as high-handed, ruthless and unprincipled." In the projection of India's role as a major power Mrs. Gandhi reflects the generation of post-independent India" commented an Opposition party leader. "The Indian elite is totally behind her."

Sri Lankans should not personalise the issue. Prof. Pran Chopra of the Delhi Centre for Policy Studies said in a recent article that **Mrs. Gandhi only symbolises and reflects what will remain dominant Indian thinking** long after she ceases to be what the ECO-

NOMIST once called 'the Empress of India.'

Atavistic fears cannot be removed tomorrow or by the next decade. But those fears are fastened on Tamilnadu. It is Prime Minister Premadasa who has stuck unwaveringly to his view that Sri Lanka's present problems are not located in Madras but Delhi. As the **TAMIL INTERNATIONAL** concludes sadly but correctly, India's policy options may start with tears for the Tamils but they certainly do not end there. **Behind the tears is the recognition of a threat to Indian security. Whether that is real or imaginary has no relevance to realpolitik and is therefore no comfort to us.**

It is not the unresolved ethnic conflict in itself but rather our foreign policy responses to that problem, manifestly an unprecedented challenge, which has forced us into a confrontation with our powerful neighbour, a

neighbour who was ready to accept half a million repatriates (a problem which was physically ours, and about which we could do nothing, with or without the help of the UN, US or Israel) and was also prepared to settle the disputed Kachchativu issue amicably. Those were a few of the tangible benefits of a foreign policy which operating within the parameters of nonalignment and friendship with our bigger neighbours could still afford to adopt the independent position, rightly or wrongly, of helping Pakistan in 1971!

The message from Delhi is not only "a negotiated political settlement" of the ethnic conflict but a return to Sri Lanka's nonaligned foreign policy status quo. If the consequences of failure prove terrifyingly costly, it is those responsible for our foreign policy demarche who will be answerable to the Sri Lankan people and to posterity.

Uproar in Lok Sabha

India's High Commissioner in Colombo, S. J. Chatwal called on Jayewardene and assured him that India was taking necessary steps to prevent any misuse of its territory by the Sri Lankan Tamil terrorists. But Chhatwal advised the president not to step up military operations as a result of the latest terrorism in Jaffna, and argued that any major military crack-down would only inflame passions, blocking chances of a political settlement.

In the wake of the bombing of Madras airport in early August, Sri Lankan Foreign Minister A. C. S. Hameed told Chhatwal that Sri Lankan intelligence had heard of a possible attempt on the life of Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M. G. Ramachandran. In reply, the Indian Foreign Office said it had noted the information but did not fear any threat to the chief minister's life. The warning was interpreted in New Delhi as telling India that the Tamil terrorists were a threat both to Sri Lanka and India, which also could be hurt by harbouring them.

Although cautious, official quarters in new Delhi are worried over

what Sri Lanka is doing in its Northern Province, the local belief is that Colombo is acting on a plan prepared by Israel's Mossad intelligence agency and some mercenaries hired abroad. The plan, it is believed, is to destroy the hard core of the terrorists through massive combing operations aimed at rounding up all able-bodied men for interrogation. Mrs. Gandhi is worried because this year she is scheduled to go to the polls and cannot ignore the pro-Tamil sentiments in southern India, especially Tamil Nadu.

The current intensification of operations in northern Sri Lanka created an uproar in India's parliament on 7 August, with the opposition demanding a statement on the situation in Jaffna. When the statement was made on 8 August, MPs called on the government to act to save the Jaffna Tamils, though they differed sharply on the measures that should be taken.

Typical were V. Gopalaswami from Tamil Nadu and P.P. Upendra from Andhra Pradesh, Gopalaswami wanted India to serve an ultimatum on Sri Lanka and argued: "If Mrs Gandhi

could send troops to Bangladesh in 1971 to protect innocent people, why can't she go to the rescue of the Tamils of Sri Lanka?" Upendra argued that short of going to war, India must do everything possible to save the Tamils.

The official statement to parliament, though carefully worded, made it clear that India takes a serious view of the presence of foreign intelligence agencies in Sri Lanka; disapproves of foreigners being used to help fight a Sri Lankan ethnic group, and believes that the ethnic problem will not be solved by stepping up military operations. Implying that there have been massive reprisals against the Tamils in the Jaffna peninsula and that there is no justification for such action, the statement goes on to mention the alleged shelling of Valvettiturai, a town which is reputed to be a major centre for smugglers taking goods into India.

Speaking in parliament on 8 August, Mrs Gandhi said that as in the past, Sri Lanka could have asked for India's help but had chosen this time to go to others, including Mossad. She

(Continued on page 16)

Women's movement — an important step forward

The first National Convention of Women was held on the 28-29-30 August 1984 at the Retreat House, Wennapuwa.

The Convention brought together women's organisations and women activists from all over the country, to discuss questions related to our specific forms of oppression as well as issues related to the overall oppression in our country. There were around 150 representatives at these sessions.

The topics discussed at the seminar in the form of workshops, included the Role of Women in the Current Political situation, Patriarchy, Women and Health, Education and Media, Class Struggle and Women's Liberation with special reference to the History of the Women's Movement in Sri Lanka, National Question, Myths on Women-Culture/ Tradition/ Religion, World Peace and Women, Women and Law, Experiences of Women's Movement in the Third World, and

Future Perspectives for the Women's Movement.

Speakers included Vivienne Gunawardena, Kumari Jayawardena, Sunila Abeysekera, Anita Fernando, Rohini Weerasinghe, Sr. Benedict, Monika Ruwanpathirana, Karuna Perera, Anna-thai Abeysekera, Shanthi Sachitha-

nanthan, Daya Leela Ferdinands Bernadine Silva, Kusala Abhayavardene Radhika Coomaraswamy, Nimalka Fernando, Kumudini Samuel and Pulsara Liyanage.

A special guest was Her Excellency Olga Chamorro Trias, the Ambassador for Cuba.

Letter

Burning of Jaffna Public Library

Gananath Obeysekera writes: 'A series of violent acts occurred in Jaffna in the end of May and early June 1981, of which the most serious was the burning of the Public Library by thugs from outside... The people of Jaffna identified the outsiders as thugs of a prominent politician.'

He nominates the CRM as his authority for this statement and even mentions Bishop Lakshman. Now, neither the CRM nor Bishop Lakshman ever said anything of

the sort. In fact the generally accepted view is that this monstrous act of vandalism was the work of the police who went berserk after two policemen were shot to death on 31 May.

A statement like this coming from a person of the calibre of Prof. Obeysekera can easily pass into general acceptance. Does the professor think that the bare truth is not damaging enough?

Siri Pathiraja

Colombo 5

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The peasants versus the multinationals

Gamini Yapa

The line of operations of the sugar companies will be such that each of them will set up its own sugar plantation in a central zone with a giant factory and an administrative complex. In addition there will be a peripheral zone of private small farmers, the surrounding area cultivating sugar cane with advice and aid of the company and setting the total produce to it at a price fixed by the company. The peripheral area will also be administered by the company unhindered by the regulations of the local government. Thus the Meta International will acquire a central zone of 10,000 acres and a peripheral zone of 42,000 acres and set up a factory with a daily capacity of consuming 2200 tons of sugar cane. Bookers International at Pelwatte will hold a central zone of 17,000 acres and a peripheral zone of about 7000 acres. Earlier they intended to cultivate their own plantation on 12,000 acres but now they want to extend it by 5000 acres at the expense of a few village communities. The Dutch company — H. VA International will get 6000 acres from Nakkala. Altogether 84,000 acres (more than 330 square kilometers) close to 1/20th of Moneragala district or about a half of Colombo district will be thus handed over to the multinationals for their use and administration.

The foreign investors have started their operations. Bookers International started clearing their central zone and has recently laid the foundation for the factory at Pelwatte, Meta International cleared about 100 acres of their central zone and set up a sugar cane nursery farm, which has to be used for

transplanting in 4 months. At Pelwatte the previously anticipated central zone was cleared without hindrance from the people of the area since it was unpopulated. But Super-Capital was to encounter resistance at Moneragala.

Peasants of Moneragala were to face stark reality when the Meta International started to work the central zone by cutting through peasants gardens, felling their trees, uprooting their lime and orange shrubs and sugar cane bushes. They intervened and stopped the work party and on inquiry were told by the officers that all the land was given over to the company, whatever the form of ownership they now enjoyed. The two Indian engineers, an A.G.A. served as interpreter, showed the peasants the plan of the whole area expected to cover the company's land. It showed the central zone enclosing about 10 villages with a population of about 3000. They own mixed permanent cultivations of about 1500 acres, and chena cultivations of about 4000 acres. Three ancient temples within this area own about 60 acres and it is said that they were offered Rs. 4,000 per acre to hand over that land without any hindrance. At the centre, the Haddawa forest of 600 acres which is a virgin forest keeping the ecological balance in the whole area, preserving the moisture feeding its fountains is to be completely wiped off the map to put up the factory.

At Pelwatte the central zone according to the new plan made by the company is to devour 5 villages with 357 households of about 2000 people. They have about 2000 acres under permanent cultivations and

5000 acres under chena cultivations. Nakkala Company has not yet started its operations. At Pelwatte the officers of Bookers International at the beginning told the peasants that they won't be affected and cleared the unpopulated virgin forest of about 12000 acres. But now they claim that another 5000 acres owned by the people of 5 villages mentioned above is owned by the company!

The multinationals are at work. Each of these companies at Moneragala and Pelwatte are to invest more than Rs. 2,500 million and the power of super-capital is infiltrating into all systems of administration in the area. For two years the people in the area were ignorant of what was really going on. Hence when the company showed up with the boundary drawing party, the people were to know the facts for the first time.

Even after the incidents where the people stopped the boundary drawing parties, and went in delegations to meet the MSA the intention of taking over peasant property was denied. The company officers who seem to be saboteurs are out to discredit the scheme by spreading these rumours they were told. When the people argued against deforestation of the area one politician had told them that it is for the good of the nation since when the forest area dividing them from coastal Tamil areas was removed the "tigers" would not be able to invade their territory.

Moreover, the peasants of the area, aware of the experience of the peasants who had their ancestral lands recently taken over by the Mutukandiya Project on the opposite bank of Heda Oya which flows through the proposed central zone of Meta International plantations, are now very much skeptical and vigilant about their own situation. At Mutukandiya it was only a few years back that the village folk were asked to leave their places and when they were reluctant or hesitant their houses and property were bulldozed while they had to run for their lives. And now families from distant electorates were brought in and settled in the colony

while the land owners of the land were pushed into the surrounding wilderness. And Mutukandiya is also a shining example of a certain type of national development.

Thus in July 1984 the peasantry of Moneragala began their protest movement. They activated the peasant unions existing in several villages all affiliated to the All Lanka Peasant Congress. New branch unions were formed and Moneragala District Committee of the ALPC took the lead against this encroachment. The peasants held village level public meetings of ALPC in almost all villages which were attended by practically all the people of these villages. The district committee issued a pamphlet with the title "Vellassa Peasantry in Danger", explaining the situation and calling the people to resist encroachment. At Pelwatte, since the earlier central zone was an unpopulated area, people were not affected and such a protest did not arise.

The firms responded with a leaflet saying that private property of the people would not be taken over. And it convened two meetings to explain the matter to the peasants through the MSA of Moneragala, GA of Moneragala and AGAs of the affected area. These were scheduled to be held firstly in July 1984 at Dombagahawela, then on 18th July 1984 at Siyambaladuwa. There the peasants were to be addressed by the MSA and the above mentioned administrative officers. But it was reported, that when asked to describe the plan of the company's plantations they refused to do so. Have the GA and AGAs been asked not to divulge the plan of the lands to be given over?

At the meeting convened at Dombagahawela Maha Vidyalya on 16th July the MSA, GA and AGAs had to face a barrage of questions from peasants but the replies did not meet with their satisfaction. The GA categorically denied the intention of evicting peasants and finally the meeting ended with the announcement that the Siyambaladuwa meeting to be held on 18th July was cancelled!

The next step was a press conference organised by the All Lanka Peasant Congress at Colombo on 28th July 1984 at which the members of the clergy and peasant lea-

ders of Moneragala and Pelwatte explained the situation to the press. At this conference, Appuhamy, from Madugama, an elderly peasant leader described the situation he himself had to encounter, when the company had ordered him to leave a part of the land which he had cultivated for nearly 40 years. When he refused to do so the officials of the company had the audacity to lodge a complaint at the AGA's office to the effect that he was encroaching on the Company's property. Regarding this he met the Moneragala GA at the latter's office on July 23rd and there had been a heated argument between them. At the end, the same officer who the previous week categorically denied the intention of taking over the property of the peasantry had told him that he had received instructions to remove all those living in the Central zone to make way for the company and the bulldozers.

The peasant leaders explained to the press that they have no intention to leave their ancestral lands. They said that they were the sons and daughters of the patriotic people who did not bow down to the imperialists a century ago. It was the same

assertion they made to the conference of various organizations convened by the ALPC to discuss the problem on the same day.

A prominent politician has tried to convince the peasants of the benefit of the plan.

"The Sugar companies coming here will plough your land for you. They will give you saplings. Will give you fertilizer. Will give you credit for cultivation. All you have to do is to sell the yield to the sugar company and pocket the money. Is it a hard thing?

"In the past people bought oranges calling them Bibile oranges. In a short time they would buy sugar calling it Moneragala sugar. Then who would be proud of that? Those who distribute pamphlets are defeated political groups. They are lying. They are not telling you the peasants the truth. This is for your benefit".

How will the peasantry respond? Will they accept the arguments of the companies that the plan is for their greater good? Or will the peasants oppose these moves? The question is not only important for Vellassa peasants. It raises basic questions of national economic policy and Sri Lanka's economic future

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And innumerable lies told?

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For the grand old lady gone in the tooth.

— PATRICK JAYASURIYA

Mysticism and political opportunism

Senaka Abeyaratne

Man lives by reason while animals live by instinct. Or so one likes to believe. The paradox about man is that among all the living species, he is the most creative as well as the most destructive, a hopeless hostage of Eros and Thanatos. Animals kill out of necessity while humans kill one another out of greed, envy, acquisitiveness and lust. Man feels no qualms about killing his own kind and is constantly devising new and more ingenious ways of doing so. War, destruction and sadistic aggression are constants in history. They have not diminished with the progress of civilization, so much so that Voltaire, the great French Philosopher declared, "Indeed, history is nothing but a tableau of crimes and misfortunes." A cursory glance at history is sufficient to establish that man's irrational excesses have far outweighed his creative, humanistic achievements. Man has sided more with the devil than with god. He has acted more with pride, vain-glory, hypocrisy, greed, envy, hatred, malice and lust than with kindness, generosity, compassion and love. At bottom then, are we any different from our hairy ancestors who had to chase, fight and kill in order to survive? Mankind has come a long way from Homo Erectus, to be sure, but its instincts remain deeply etched in our blood. Ordinarily, the power of reason is master and the power of the "dark side" its slave. But ever so often the slave revolts and splatters the pages of history with blood. "All earthlings are deranged," the Buddha once remarked with profound insight.

Man's behaviour, in a given place, in a given time, is a product of his environment. This applies just as much to his irrational behaviour as it does to his rational behaviour. Man shapes society and in turn it shapes him. To quote Dewey, "A

vast network of customs, manners, conventions, language, and traditional ideas lies ready to pounce upon every new-born child, to mould it into the image of the people among whom it has appeared." The cultural norms, mores and proscriptions of society are predominantly those of the ruling class. It makes it its business to saturate the individual with its ethos from the day he is born. It does this most ingeniously, by using the family as the instrument of instruction in morality and mental hygiene. The family is the agent of society, transmitting the ideology of the ruling class from one generation to the next. The parents instil in their offspring all the values inherited from their progenitors: duty, obedience, conformity, compliance, reverential awe, etc.

An important (but not the only) component of this moralistic education is suppression by the parents of the child's natural sexuality. The small child is made to feel ashamed and guilty of its sexual needs and impulses, particularly its incestuous, parricidal wishes, which characterize the oedipal phase of child growth. Psychoanalysis has established the power, the pervasiveness, and the lasting impact of these oedipal wishes and fantasies. During this period the child's mind is like a raging storm. Its attitude towards its parents is typically ambivalent and the range of emotions it experiences includes heterosexual and homosexual wishes, incest, penis envy, castration fears, jealousy, hatred, remorse, even murderous, cannibalistic wishes as well as loving and obedient ones. The early, childhood conflicts resulting from these violent emotions do not disappear but persist in the adult, largely as an unconscious residue. Freudian analysis has revealed that it is largely this unconscious residue that motivates violence, revolt and rebellion, if and when it occurs in adult life. Man is from the onset a victim of an authoritarian ideology and time and again revolts against it.

Of all the emotions experienced in

the instinctual life of early childhood, one of the most pronounced is the child's fear of the loss of its genital organs, described in psychoanalytic literature as castration anxiety or the fear of genital injury, depending on the particular sex of the child. As to why this is so is precisely for the reason stated earlier, that parents tend to react with wrath to the child's overt sexual behaviour. There is nothing more it fears, for instance, than to be caught in the act of sexual self-gratification, which in the eyes of its parents is an unforgivable sin, a sacrilege. This anxiety on the whole is so great the small child fears that any form of disobedience will result in castration or genital injury. (In adults the castration complex can persist so severely in the unconscious as to cause orgasmic impotency, frigidity, sexual anhedonia, vaginismus, etc). Thus, through an experiential process (in which guilt, shame and fear play a large element) the child quickly learns to avoid discharging its sexual impulses. This occurs through suppression (a conscious process) as well as repression (an unconscious process). Psychoanalysis postulates that it is largely through the mechanism of repression that the child achieves control over its instinctual drives. What is repressed, however, does not disappear but is merely dammed up in the dark recesses of the mind. Man's penchant for committing irrational excess is attributable of the frequency with which the repressed contents of the unconscious "possess" the soul by forcing their way into the sphere of consciousness.

Mankind is thus caught in a truly existential drama. It has created a society which attempts to "civilize" man by punishing him (from the time of his infancy) for his most natural biological urge, to reproduce. The guilt, shame and anxiety this evokes, however, are so profound as to distort normal psychic development and produce an irrational character structure. It is this irrational character structure of the average human being which produces the "mystical contagion" of the masses — their inability to think and feel in a rational way. This perhaps explains why society has

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a fascination to be ruled by false prophets and mystical demagogues. This century alone has been sprinkled liberally with such demigods — Stalin, Mussolini, Hitler, Mao Tse-Tung, Ayatullah Khomeini — to mention the *creme de la creme*.

Ultimately, society is nothing but a collection of irrational human beings divided into two fundamental classes, the ruling class and the masses. The masses are subsumed under an authoritarian ideology and exploited by the ruling class through a system of power, coercion and political indoctrination. The system controls not only their minds but also their material existence. Freud himself was of the opinion that "the work which make civilization possible is supplied by a suppressed majority of people who share too little of its wealth". There is virtually no known society in the world (regardless of whether it is capitalist or socialist, democratic or totalitarian) which is not sustained by an authoritarian ideology superimposed upon a system of inequality. The differences are only ones of degree and not of kind. Thus, nowhere in the world is there real freedom for the masses. The most famous quotation associated with Rousseau, "Man was born free, and everywhere he is in chains," assumes profound significance when viewed in the sex-economic perspective of radical psychoanalytic theory, the essence of which has just been outlined.

Ultimately, the parental home, the church and the school are the three principal institutions exerting a compulsive moralistic pressure on the masses. It is through exploitation of these three institutions that the ruling class binds the youth to its system and moulds them into obedient, law-abiding citizens. It uses its entire power apparatus to maintain this state of affairs, for the more rebellious the youth, the greater the threat to the establishment. But the ruling class are shrewd psychologists. It understands only too well the frailty and vulnerability of the individual psyche and its capacity (to use Jung's words) "to fragment only too easily under the onslaught of unchecked emotions," those same emotions which rocked the child during its oedipal phase of growth. The ruling class is aware that by manipulating the social psyche (which is the individual

psyche amplified), it can unleash the power of the "dark side" to its own advantage.

It does this through a variety of methods ranging from the propagation of lies and fallacious arguments to mass indoctrination. Mystical contagion — the "soil of mass psychology" — is the most important ingredient exploited by the ruling class to permeate the masses with its subversive ideas and kindle their murderous impulses embedded in the unconscious. Nowhere are the mythical sentiments of the masses so evident as in such issues as language, religion and race. The inflammation of these issues is the recourse most frequently used by chauvinistic elements and political opportunists to incite the masses and set off one group against another. Under Hitler's regime in Nazi Germany, this practice was perfected into an art. In Aryan soil Hitler discovered a "soil of mass psychology," a rich substratum in which to breed his fascist germs. By mounting a campaign of mass indoctrination in which he closely alloyed religious nationalism (fascism)¹ with racism (anti-Semitism), he stirred the mythical sentiments of millions of Aryan Germans and injected them with his diabolical ideas. It is truly remarkable as to how a psychopath like Hitler could have collectivized the libido attachments of millions and obtained the unconditional surrender of their supergos to him, *en masse*. Hitler became their false prophet, their mystagogue. In 1939, Germany launched the bloodiest war and the greatest pogrom in history.

The fact that the masses were economically devastated and psychologically demoralized clearly assisted Hitler in his campaign to arouse their irrational passions, particularly of the middle classes. They were desperate for a new social, political and economic order. Hitler founded one, not on humanistic ethics but on a morass of treachery, subterfuge and political intrigue. The three major pawns in his stratagem were religious fanaticism (fascism), racism (anti-

1. The concept of religion is not used here in its conventional sense but rather in the broader sense that Fromm defined it, as "any system of thought and action shared by a group which gives the individual a frame of orientation and an object of devotion."

Semitism), and violence (negative emotions). By manipulating these pawns he involved Germany in an ignoble cause and exposed the dark, pathological side of human nature. Once more, history witnessed a "folie a millions."

Whenever the state begins to foment jingoism, religious fanaticism and militant chauvinism (which Reich aptly described as sadisticnarcissistic mysticism), it is a danger signal for society, a radar warning of an impending flight into madness, decadence and catastrophe. Mass indoctrination and deception are the cornerstones of statecraft. Rarely does the state possess the integrity or courage to dispel mysticism and enlighten the masses with the truth. Mysticism is the very ingredient the state depends on to achieve its political ends. The question of who ultimately gains from civilization may be largely a polemical one. But for those interested in promoting the greatest good for the greatest number, it is perhaps the most burning of contemporary issues.

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POLITICAL VIOLENCE AND THE AFTERMATH

Gananath Obeyesekera

The racial riots started on the night of the 24th. Those of us who witnessed the situation that night felt that the government would impose an immediate curfew. I know of several senior government officials and politicians who said they telephoned the President on the seriousness of the situation, which he must surely have known anyway, since mobs demonstrated near his private residence. Yet no curfew was imposed until 2:00 p.m. the next day and by this time most of the damage to property and looting had already taken place. One thing must be clearly stated: President Jayewardene is not a racist. It is likely, therefore, that his inaction was due to bad advice he received from groups within his own party. Even more incredible is that neither the President nor any member of the government appeared on national TV or radio, exhorting the people to calm down, or condemning the violence unleashed. The President made his speech five days later with practically no compassion extended to those who suffered most — the Tamils of Colombo. The tone of the speeches of other government leaders was the same: these speeches were designed to placate the Sinhalese community — not a word of compassion for the Tamils. Mr. Lalith Athulathmudali, the young Minister of Trade, opened his speech to the nation thus: "A few days ago, my friends, I saw a sight which neither you nor I thought that we should live to see again. We saw many people looking for food, standing in line, greatly inconvenienced, seriously inconvenienced." Here was the leading intellectual in the government speaking of the hardship faced by

Sinhalese people queuing up for food when 70,000 Tamils were in refugee camps! Equally astonishing is the fact that neither the President nor any Minister of the government made an official visit to a single refugee camp to console the dispossessed.

The public utterances of government leaders seemed to be carefully orchestrated. It was as if they viewed the racial violence not as a product of urban mobs but as a mass movement of Sinhalese people in general: hence possibly the refusal to extend compassion to those who actually suffered. This came out clearly in the President's own speech on July 28 where he promised to introduce legislation to ban separatism or even talk of separatism. He said furthermore that because of the violence initiated by Tamil terrorists, "the Sinhalese people themselves have reacted". Prime Minister Premadasa was even more explicit:

"We have now taken a decision to include in the Constitution that even advocating a division of the country is illegal. No one would be able to even talk about it. Such a campaign will be made illegal. We would not only deprive those advocating any division of the country of their civic rights, we would even bring legislation to confiscate their properties. Those advocating any division of the country will not be able to talk about it even in a foreign land. Because we would punish them on their return to Sri Lanka. The President yesterday promised you that such actions would be ordered by the government. He said so to dispel any doubts that you may have had in your minds

But see what has happened today. Today they have heard rumours that tigers (Tamil terrorists) have come to Colombo and invaded Colombo. Just imagine the great destruction and

the crimes committed based on such wild rumours. Our people not only were aroused but also engaged themselves in violent acts. They have taken clubs and other weapons and engaged in violent acts. As a result even our Sinhala and Muslim brethren have been subjected to harassment."

The words "our people" appear several times. It is certainly true that the greatest destruction of property occurred in the area represented by Prime Minister Premadasa (Colombo Central) yet the "our people" in his speech does not refer to those specific elements of the city population. According to the government scenario those committing acts of violence were the generality of Sinhalese people. This is certainly not the case: most middle-class people, as well as ordinary villagers I know, have a strong Sinhala-Buddhist identity, but they did not engage in acts of violence against Tamils and were for the most part shocked by the brutality and suddenness of these events. It is true that some connived at these events, but others gave Tamil refugees shelter in their homes at great personal risk. They were not without a profound ambivalence; but this was not a mass movement of the Sinhala people against the Tamils. If this were so, one must give up any hope for the future, not just of the Tamils, who could flee to the north and east of the island or to South India, but more so for the Buddhists entrapped in their own violence. What a fate for a nation subscribing to a religion of nonviolence!

Both the Tamils hurt by these events and even Sinhala people, as well as the foreign press, openly stated that the government either

condoned the attack or it was done by factions within the government. As a response to this, the government came out with its own theory of an international and local Communist conspiracy. Even nongovernment leaders made the same point. Ariyaratna, a leader of a voluntary organization called Sarvodaya, in his speech spoke of a situation created "by intrigue of both national and international origin". This time it was not a Naxalite plot, not an internationally aided Communist plot to take over the country. The President even implied the possibility that the killing of the army personnel may also have been part of the plan. According to this anti-government plot scenario the Muslims and Christians were to be massacred next. The parties who allegedly planned this overthrow of the government were proscribed, these being the JVP (the political group that spearheaded a youth insurrection in 1971), the NLSSP (a tiny Trotskyite group), and the Communist Party. Dark doings by foreign embassies were also hinted at by the local newspapers.

For once the public was skeptical of these "complots", as Richard III would have said. In the first place, all three of the proscribed parties were sympathetic with Tamil language aspirations, and two (JVP and CP) were supposedly in cahoots with the terrorists while one (NLSSP) openly sided with the Tamil demand for a separate state. It was difficult to believe that the very groups sympathetic to the Tamils would systematically plunder, loot, and destroy Tamil homes and gruesomely murder men and women. Several Sinhalese people I met were willing to believe that these groups may have got involved later in the destruction of factories. But even here I know an owner of a factory and a manager of another who could identify the looters as members of the government trade union. Similarly it is difficult to believe that a government so promptly informed of a Naxalite plot by the CID a day after the Presidential election were ignorant of a more serious plot by Marxist groups to create race riots. In other words,

the government was forewarned of a plot that did not occur but not warned of one that did! Thirdly, if the racial riots were caused by Marxists, why did the government imply that it was a popular uprising by the Sinhalese and why in heaven's name did no one offer sympathy for the dispossessed or visit refugee camps? The rhetoric of plots was obviously less for local consumption than for the Thatcher and Reagan governments whose cooperation was necessary to rebuild the economy. It is also obvious that these actions would further eliminate political opposition to the ruling party and reinforce the power of the Presidency.

VI. Prospects for the future: the political issue

Needless to say, the future for Sri Lanka is bleak. But behind the rioting is the spectre of increasing authoritarian rule. The prestigious Indian newspaper, *The Hindu*, commenting on President Jayewardene's "victory" at the Referendum stated in an editorial of December 25, 1982: "Mr. Jayewardene will be leading the country towards one-party rule with all its menacing implications — and, in the end, may have won nothing but a Pyrrhic victory". In my view the recent riots would not have occurred — at least on the same scale — if the general elections had been held, providing Parliament with a strong opposition. The very existence of an opposition creates criticism of the government and provides opportunity for public debate. The actions of the J.S.S. would have been subject to Parliamentary criticism, and so would have been the ultranationalism of government party leaders. The motives for such criticism might have been unprincipled political opportunism, but their effect would surely have brought about division and debate among the two major Sinhalese political parties. It is therefore sad to hear eminent Sri Lankan political scientists and intellectuals, both local and expatriate, say that Westminster-type constitutions are of little use in Third World Nations and strong presidencies are required. Surely we are dealing here with the prison house

of language, where a convenient label like "Third World" is reified to designate a single social and political reality. It is also a mistake to assume that modern political institutions imported from the West have no parallel in tradition, since forms of voting and consensual government are not alien to traditional societies. Introduced political processes can often thus be given traditional validation. Sri Lanka with its long history and tradition of Buddhist thought took readily to the concept of universal suffrage so that it had the largest voluntary voter turnout in the whole world. People understood the power of the vote and they used it to vote out practically every government in power since independence. There was also no attempt to tamper with the electoral process itself. Moreover, it was doubtful whether Sri Lanka ever had a Westminster-type government, except on paper. They had, through the long years of British rule and after, adapted the Westminster model to suit their own character and institutions. The one key institution they held in high regard was the free vote and free elections. The overthrow of this institution and the mass violence and impersonation of voters that followed have led to serious public disillusionment and demoralization to be seen and felt everywhere. People, both in villages and cities, have told me on several recent occasions, that they will not vote hereafter because it is "useless". This to me heralds the impending death of the democratic process.

The pernicious myth that it needs a strong authoritarian ruler to govern "Third World" countries is partly responsible for the present situation, providing intellectual justification for one-party rule, not just in Sri Lanka but elsewhere also. If Marcos uses his army to crush opposition, Sri Lanka (which has no army to speak of) has created a parallel institution in a government trade union that has a paramilitary function. In doing so she may well have created a model for other small nations to emulate. The impending development and expansion of "Home

Guards" I fear may also have a similar effect.

All this means that one should not be deluded by words like "Westminster type government" "Gaullist-type regime" or that charmingly innocent term "Home Guards": one has to probe the reality that lies beneath. The implications of that reality are also clear: unless the government holds a general election soon, under conditions which permit people to exercise their vote without fear and intimidation, one of the few democracies of the Third World will surely go the way of nations like the Philippines.

The erosion of political institutions has a paradoxical effect for it eventually creates a peculiar dilemma for the rulers themselves. The ruler who can no longer rely on supra-personal institutions to carry on the process of government, is forced to personalize them. Increasing personalization inevitably pushes the authoritarian ruler to balance one power group or institution against another. In doing so he gets trapped in an internal conflict that takes on a momentum of its own and undermines the very basis of his authoritarian power. This seems likely to be the fate of Sri Lanka, as it has been the fate of other Third World countries.

President Jayewardene is a man of some stature; it is possible that he may have realized that a monster has been created in recent years (perhaps unwittingly). The monster seems now to have taken on a life of its own and must be tamed or killed if democracy is to survive in Sri Lanka and the President himself be given a niche in history.

VII. Prospects for the future: the ethnic issue

What about the immediate issue, that of the secession movement in the North and the Sinhalese reaction to it? One thing is clear: if the intention of the thugs was to push the Tamils out of the

Sinhalese areas, they have surely succeeded. Not all Tamils have roots in the north and east, so some will have to come back and settle in Colombo and elsewhere, but professionals will probably leave the country and anyone with alternatives will resort to them. If the intention was to stifle the secessionist movement, then surely the strategy has backfired. The moderates among Tamils have been virtually eliminated in this polarization of forces, and more people, especially youths, who have seen or heard of the macabre nature of the riots are now likely to join the terrorist organizations. This is a real pity for, in my view, political sovereignty on the basis of language cannot work in South Asia. This is especially so in Sri Lanka.

Underlying the language uniformity which one sees in large areas of South Asia are serious and persisting divisions on the basis of culture and social structure. In the Tamil areas of Sri Lanka these differences are especially conspicuous. We noted that there are two major sets of Tamil speakers, Hindu and Muslim. Sri Lankan Muslims do not consider themselves Tamils (in the ethnic sense) but Muslims. Prior to the language conflicts between Sinhalese and Tamils, there were endemic conflicts between Muslims and Tamil Hindus, some extremely violent, particularly on the east coast. This was to be expected given the Hindu-Muslim conflicts on the mainland. Assuming the existence of an independent Tamil state, one set of minority problems would be replaced by another. The Tamils would now be in a majority vis-a-vis the Muslims, but proportionately speaking, the Muslims would be a larger minority vis-a-vis the Tamils than the Tamils are in respect of the Sinhalese!

In addition to this there are deep subdivisions among the Tamils living in different areas of the island. The Jaffna Peninsula, where most of the political agitation takes place, is self-consciously identified with high Hinduism and a patriarchal ideology and the great tradition of Dravidian culture. By contrast

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the East Coast Tamils are mostly matrilineal, practice Dravidian folk religion and claim origins in Kerala. Even today there is considerable suspicion and hostility between these groups, especially the resentment by East Coast Tamils of the economic domination of northern merchants. The recent Tamils imported into the central highlands by the British are generally of low caste and remain divided from the two previous groups. These divisions between the various groups of Tamil speakers are reflected today even in the political system where the government party has three Ministers in its cabinet representing the Tamils of the East and the inland regions while Tamils of the North are represented by the TULF which is an opposition party. What the recent riots might have done is to push people from the east and central areas into a larger Tamil movement. If so, Sinhalese extremists would have fulfilled a prophecy — not theirs but that of their opponents.

One must also mention that great divider in Hindu society — caste. The aristocratic caste of landowners or Vellala dominate the politics and economy of the north and east and constitute about 40 percent of the population. In recent years the hegemony of the Vellala has been challenged by the Karaiyar (traditionally fishermen) who have moved into professional and entrepreneurial positions. There are also other large and powerful minority castes (e.g., Koviars, Makkuvars) who are opposed to both these castes and are not likely to welcome the perpetuation of Vellala hegemony. Finally there are untouchables and near-untouchables who are barely considered human by the rest of Hindu society and consequently were some of the first Buddhist converts in this region. Caste is compounded by another division, that of Tamil-speaking Christians of the North (5 percent) who are politically and economically powerful. A

striking feature of recent politics in both Sinhalese and Tamil areas is the extreme language chauvinism of the Christians. It is as if their marginal position in Buddhist and Hindu society has forced them to overemphasize their ethnic identity. But it is equally likely that in the event of an exclusive Tamil-Hindu domination in the North, the Christians would be in an even more vulnerable position than the Muslims. The realities discussed above are reflected in the current political scene where, in spite of years of universal suffrage and democratic process, there are only two non-Vellala members of parliament representing the Hindu-Tamil areas.

Thus, the upshot of the preceding argument is that in the eventuality of the Tamils achieving political independence (or even a form of federalism), there will arise a series of "minority problems" which will be as serious and internally more disruptive than those which prevail now between Sinhalese and Tamils. Language unity is an illusory one in Tamil Sri Lanka (as elsewhere in South Asia); the reality is internal division based on religion, caste, ethnic origins, etc. It should also be remembered that even the northern terrorist groups who are fighting to establish a separate Tamil State (Eelam) are not a single entity. They are also fractioned into smaller groups based on caste affiliations and vying for political dominance. One of the terrorist groups currently very powerful, has a Karaiyar caste leadership and power base, while the other (now operating from South India) is Vellala caste based. Indeed recently the latter has openly upbraided the Karaiyar organization for killing the thirteen Sinhalese servicemen in ambush in Jaffna and thereby triggering the massive Sinhalese reprisal and violence.

It is clear that current political realities seem to defy immediate political resolution of the inter-ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka. Yet it is virtually certain that only political compromise by both sides can bring about any lasting solution.

To the credit of President Jayewardene it must be stated that he started this process of compromise, by introducing legislation to give greater autonomy to the Tamil regions of the country. But much of this remained on paper since reactionary elements in his own party did not permit the implementation of government policy. On the Tamil side terrorist organizations did not brook compromise, and moderate Tamils did not speak up for fear of reprisals from terrorists. While it is likely that when the riots broke out the President was advised not to impose an immediate curfew, since some strong-arm tactics against the Tamil business community would facilitate negotiations, it is however unlikely that the President or the Prime Minister would have condoned the use of UNP unions for mass reprisals against Tamils. But an analysis of events makes it equally clear that elements within their own party forced the issue, and once urban mobs were roused, all sorts of pathological elements in the city population went on the rampage. Contrary to Tamil opinion I do not believe that the government actually organized the riots; rather it was organized for the government by forces which the government itself had created, albeit for other purposes. Perhaps the government is yet unaware that this manyheaded monster it created may not only destroy its creator but also the entire democratic fabric of Sri Lanka society.

Uproar . . .

(Continued from page 6)

added: "We are showing great restraint and doing everything possible to help the Sri Lankan Government to settle the problem."

She added, however that India was worried not only about human-rights violations in Sri Lanka, but also about the reaction in India; 44,000 refugees had already arrived from Sri Lanka and this was bound to increase tension. However, pointing out that Tamils in southern Sri Lanka were widely dispersed, she remarked: "Whatever action we take must help the Tamils and not precipitate their annihilation."

The Left and Sinhala chauvinism

Kumari Jayawardena

Much has been written about the 'betrayal' of the Left parties in joining coalitions with the Sri Lanka Freedom Party in 1964-65 and again in 1970-75. But the real betrayal was not so much in their short periods of participation in coalition governments, but in **their succumbing to racism and dividing the working peoples along ethnic as opposed to class lines.** In doing this the Left leaders, went against the basic non-racist principles they had consistently and forcefully advocated for twenty five years. One of the most eloquent of the LSSP leaders, Colvin R. de Silva had denounced racism in 1958, as 'Neanderthalian recidivism':

I am confident in my knowledge...that large numbers of people, who in 1956 were not ready even to contemplate giving Tamil any place at all, today say in this desperate way: 'Well, if the only way we can go forward is by Tamil also an official language, let us do it if that is the only way out of this.' My hon. friends say, 'If you do it, you will have a Sinhalese communalist uprising... But I say that, if we place faith in... **those large masses of the country who are sick and tired into death of these communal conflicts, if we would rely on them and have the courage of our convictions to act along the lines of relying on them, this can be achieved.—Failure of Communalist Politics** by Colvin R. de Silva quoted in Wanasinghe, 1966. (Emphasis added)

Instead of giving this leadership to the masses, however, the Left was caught up in strategies designed to obtain electoral success and ensure some sharing of power. From the working-class point of view, there had been two historic events in 1963, the formulation of 21 demands of the working-class by the Joint Committee of Trade Union Organizations, representing a wide section of urban and plantation trade unions, and the coming together, for the first time, of the Left parties (LSSP, CP, and VLSSP) in a United Left Front formed in August in 1963, which aroused the enthusiasm of the radical forces in the country. But in June 1964, both platforms crumbled when the

LSSP accepted 3 portfolios in the Bandaranaike government. At the election of 1965, the coalition was defeated and the UNP formed a government with support from the Federal Party, which had returned 14 M. P.s from the Northern and Eastern provinces. The joining of forces between UNP and the Tamil politicians of the FP, and the support for the government from the two appointed members of Ceylon Workers Congress, unleashed a wave of communalism in the country; this backlash was encouraged, as a matter of political opposition to the UNP, not only by parties like the SLFP but also by the LSSP and the CP. Now the view from the Left was as follows:

On one side was the united front of the LSSP and CP. Only the Sinhala Buddhists supported them. Who supported the UNP? Local and foreign capitalists, Indians led by Thondaman, Tamils led by Ponnambalam, the Catholic Church, Muslims who were against the trade policy of the coalition government, **thuppahi** elements who do not support our national culture capitalist newspapers, all of them backed the UNP. The UNP was able to get a majority of seats because in addition they received the support of Sinhala Buddhists who do not have a clear understanding of Buddhist Philosophy. Thus the Coalition received the **unsullied votes of the people of this country.** The UNP received the votes of the minorities and a small sections of the majority community. (Editorial, Janasathya, 28 March 1965, quoted in Wanasinghe op. cit., Emphasis added)

Thus did the Sinhala chauvinism of the Left hit out against all minorities — in short against all un-Buddhist un-Sinhala elements of the population. Significantly, by this date the Left had also begun to use the word **thuppahi**, a derogatory term meaning half-caste, without cultural roots — not dissimilar to Anagarika Dharmapala's 'infidels of degraded race.' In an article 'Nation grieves at Sinhala New Year,' the Janamathaya (of 9 April 1965) wrote:

...How can we celebrate Sinhalese New Year at a time when the nation has been betrayed by an alliance of the UNP, the Catholic Church, Sing-

leton Salmon, Thondaman, and the Federalists?

The Sinhalese nation will weep during this Sinhalese New Year. The people who love the nation, the motherland and language will lament. (Wanasinghe, op. cit., p. 122)

Ethnic hostility in the 1960s thus spread to many sections of the Sinhala population including the working-class; it was directed mainly against the Sri Lanka Tamils, the Christians and the Indian Tamils. In all these instances, the Left leadership was responsible for promoting ethnic antagonism among the working peoples, even though important sections of the workers were Tamils and the Sinhala working-class included Christians.

Against Christians

In the 1960s, the Christians once again became the targets of attack. There had been a Buddhist 'revival' directed against the privileges of the Christian elite in the 1950s; in the spirit of Anagarika Dharmapala, the profession of Christianity was associated with immorality, drunkenness and alien 'vices' and the banned scurrilous pamphlet of the turn of the century Kanni Mariyage Hati (The truth about the Virgin Mary) was republished in the 1950s. In the election campaign of 1956, the MEP had skillfully drawn on these prejudices; the sensational political poster of the period showing the Buddha being challenged by the evil hordes of Mara (John Kotelawala with belly-dancers, drunks, cow-slaughtering, ball room dancers, urban socialites, and (significantly) Americans doling out dollars, in his band-waggon, with a church in the background. The Left was also drawn into this campaign against Christians, whose image as 'enemies' was further reinforced by the resistance of sections of Christians to the takeover of their schools by the government in 1960. Instead of limiting their criticisms to conservative elements of the Christian clerical hierarchy, who opposed radical changes,

Christians as a whole were denounced and vilified as 'anti-national' by the Left.

In the mid-sixties, Left newspapers frequently indulged in anti-Christian attacks. The LSSP paper **Janasathiya** in 1965 had headings such as 'Catholics help illicit immigrants to escape Army net' (July 18); and 'Buddhist G. A. transferred and a Catholic appointed' (20 Oct). Stories that Christians were unfairly taking high office were also publicised in **Janasathya**, 'Catholic influence has begun to spread...In addition to appointing two — Catholics and one Protestant to three of the highest posts in parliament, they have appointed Catholics for the post of Mayor and deputy Mayor in Colombo.' (11 April). The CP was no less virulent; its paper, the **Aththa** of 9 April 1965, under the editorial caption 'No place for Buddhists', also commented on the fact that speaker, and Chairman of Committees of the parliament were Christians. (Quotations from Wanasinghe, 1965, p. 120-123).

Against the plantation workers

The Left parties also supported the Sirima-Shastri pact between the Sri Lankan and Indian governments under which Sri Lanka citizenship was to be given to 300,000 persons of Indian origin, with 650,000 to be repatriated, ostensibly on a voluntary basis. This was clearly a shift of position from the Left's earlier uncompromising policies towards plantation labour. When the UNP government of 1965 received the support of the Ceylon Workers Congress and its leaders Thondaman and Annamalai were made Appointed Members of Parliament, the Left attacks on plantation workers and their leaders took on a chauvinist turn.

The **Aththa** reflecting CP opinion, was at the forefront of this campaign, making allegations that the government was giving concessions to the minorities and that the repatriation of plantation workers under the Sirima-Shastri Pact was threatened. Some of the **Aththa** headings left no doubt about their line. Referring to Mrs. Bandaranaike's electoral defeat and Indian workers' repatriation, the paper attributed the phrase 'Before Meenachchi could be sent Sirimavo was chased out' to Thondaman, the

CWC leader (30 March 1965); and 'Thondaman leaves for India like a Chola King who has conquered Lanka' was another story in the same issue.

The LSSP **Janadina** also tried to arouse hostility to the plantation workers, even taking a stand against voluntary repatriation, thereby implying that the Sirima-Shastri agreement had an element of forced repatriation of these workers to India:

Another Secret, Pact! Concessions to Thondaman!

Political observers believe that Mr. Dudley Senanayake has entered into an agreement with Mr. Thondaman as well. One of the main conditions of that agreement is that only those who volunteer will be repatriated. (29 Nov. 1966 quoted in Wanasinghe 219)

Against the Sri Lankan Tamils

The main thrust of the Left propaganda of the period was, however, directed against the demands of the Federal Party and its leaders. The campaign was conducted on a basis of virulent Sinhala chauvinism and all the prejudices of the majority community were revived.

The LSSP **Janadina** led the racist onslaught. Some of its headings in 1965 included 'A secret attempt to make Ratmalana a Tamil town' (6 July); 'Sinhala Buddhists Arise! (9 July); 'Federalists win-English Rules; Sinhala finished.' (23 July); 'Sinhalese in the North in danger' (25 Aug); (Wanasinghe 1966: p. 213-17). On the question of the attempts to frame regulations on the use of Tamil in the North and East to ease the ethnic problem (the Dudley-Chelvanayagam Pact), the **Janadina** wrote, under the heading 'Tear the Pact!':

Patriotic organisations are making rapid preparations to hold a series of meetings throughout the country to mobilise public protest against the Dudley-Chelvanayagam pact which betrays the birthright of the Sinhalese. (23 Nov. 1965 quoted in Wanasinghe 1966, 218).

It would have been difficult, during this period to distinguish the LSSP and CP Sinhala journals from the typical communal writing of the Sinhala Buddhist press. To give only one example, on 5 December 1965 the **Janadina** wrote:

The Tri Sinhala awakens! Three processions to save the Country

The Pancha Maha Bala Vegaya is now

making preparations to have three processions to the holy places in the Tri Sinhala starting from the Statue of Vihara Maha Devi at Victoria Park, This step is to show public protest to the Dudley-Chelvanayagam Pact which betrays the birthright of the Sinhalese to the Tamils. (ibid, 2/9)

In addition, racist slogans to weaken and discredit the government were even introduced by the Left into the processions and speeches on May Day 1965 — the main cry being 'Dudleyge bade masalavadai' (Dudley has swallowed masalavadai) — a racist reference to the support of the Federal party to the government. Apart from this sully of the historic workers day by Sinhala chauvinist slogans, the Left was also involved in the National Day of Mourning on January 8th 1966 which had been planned to include a general strike and a display of black flags, as well as an oath to defend the rights of the Sinhalese to be taken by M.Ps before Vihara Maha Devi's statue. There was not a great response to the call for a strike and black flags, but a crowd which marched to Parliament crying 'Para Demalu apata epa' (Down with the outcaste Tamils), after the oath-taking ceremony, was stopped at Kollupitiya, where police firing killed a Buddhist monk. Emergency was declared by the government which used the occasion to victimise the workers. (Wanasinghe, 1966, p. 223-24).

Thus the Left, whose main contribution to the political life of the country had been to promote democratic and Socialist ideology, that was essentially non-racist and based on class unity and class action, was to lead the working class, not only into coalition governments, but more dangerously into racist politics. The long years of struggle in building up class consciousness among a multi-ethnic working-class was abandoned, and instead, the poisoning influence of racism was injected into the system, resulting in sections of the working-class participating in the subsequent programs that occurred in the country, both in 1977 and in 1983.

(To be continued)

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Application of Human Rights Law to the ethnic problem

Nihal Jayawickrema

In examining the question whether a solution to the ethnic problem lies through respect for human rights, it is useful to remind ourselves that minority communities no longer have to depend upon the 'tolerance' or 'goodwill' of the majority for their existence or livelihood. They have rights in common with, and no less than, everyone else. Indeed, by reason of the need to protect the distinctive character and identity of minority communities, which is after all what constitutes the cultural mosaic of the world in which we live, they sometimes enjoy additional rights. If we understand this position correctly, it will become apparent that minority grievances in Sri Lanka are basically human rights violations.

The constitutional settlement of 1946, on the basis of which the minority communities agreed to subject themselves to majority rule in an independent Sri Lanka, and in consideration of which Independence was granted, consisted of three primary components:

- (i) a second chamber — the Senate;
- (ii) an independent Public Service Commission vested with the power of appointment, transfer, dismissal and disciplinary control of public officers; and
- (iii) section 29 of the Constitution which prohibited the use of legislative power to restrict or prohibit the free exercise of any religion, or to make persons of any community or religion liable to disabilities or restrictions to which persons of other communities or religions were not made liable, or to confer

on persons of any community or religion any privilege or advantage which was not conferred on persons of other communities or religions.

Implicit in this constitutional settlement was the recognition of three human rights basic to any minority group: the right to participate in the decision-making process at the national level, the right of access on general terms of equality to public service in the country, and the right to freedom from discrimination. The background to this settlement was a resolution previously passed by the State Council — in fact, six weeks before the appointment of the Soulbury Commission was announced — that Sinhala and Tamil should be made the official languages of Sri Lanka within a reasonable number of years. In keeping with the spirit of this settlement, Sri Lanka's first Prime Minister, D. S. Senanayake, included in his Cabinet two Tamil politicians — the Members of Parliament for Mannar and Vavuniya, and later invited the Member for Jaffna, who was also the leader of the all Ceylon Tamil Congress, to accept a portfolio.

That was 1946. Thirty years later, on 14 May 1976, at Vaddukoddai, the Tamil United Liberation Front declared that the Tamils of Ceylon were a separate nation, distinct and apart from the Sinhalese, and resolved to establish the separate State of Tamil Eelam. What is it that happened in the intervening thirty years that impelled the large majority of the Tamil-speaking people of the Northern Province to endorse that declaration at the general election held in July 1977?

I venture to submit that it was primarily a gross denial of human rights. Apart from the fact that the constitutional settlement of 1946 was unilaterally abrogated by the majority community in 1972 when a new constitution was drafted and enacted without any corresponding safeguards acceptable to the minorities, an examination of the Vaddukoddai Declaration itself reveals that many of the grievances enumerated therein are alleged infringements of human rights.

Let me examine very briefly three areas in which the Tamil community has been subjected, in my view, to discrimination on grounds of race, language, national or social origin:

Citizenship

The Citizenship Act of 1948 accorded Sri Lanka citizenship to a person born in Sri Lanka only if his father had been born in Sri Lanka. If he had been born outside Sri Lanka, it was necessary that his father and his paternal grandfather should have been born in Sri Lanka. It was an extremely rigid law. India, for instance, granted citizenship at about the same time to all persons born in India and to those who had been ordinarily resident in India during the five preceding years. Both those elements were absent in the Sri Lankan law. Neither birth in this country, nor residence however long, were qualifying factors. The effect of our law was to render stateless and disfranchise practically the whole of the Indian Tamil community in Sri Lanka which then accounted for 11.7 of our total

population. Did this law, by prescribing a two-generation link with Sri Lanka as a prerequisite for citizenship, in full knowledge of the fact that the Indian Tamil community would not have been able to establish such a link, make persons of that community liable to a disability to which persons of other communities were not made liable? In other words, did that law discriminate against the Indian Tamil community? In my view, it appears to have, and despite the existence of section 29 of the Constitution, both the Supreme Court and the Privy Council, in what bore the stamp of classic political judgements of the day, upheld the action of Parliament on the ground that it was "a perfectly natural and legitimate function of the legislature of a sovereign country to determine the composition of its nationals". While that may well be so, both these Courts overlooked the fact that our Constitution specifically provided that in performing that function, Parliament must not discriminate against a particular community already resident in the country. Thereby, both courts failed to accord the minorities the protection they had sought at Independence, and rendered nearly a million people stateless.

Language

The Official Language Act of 1956 provided that the Sinhala language shall be the one official language of Sri Lanka. One of its consequences was that Sinhala alone became the language of administration, and public servants were required to obtain proficiency in Sinhala in order to earn their increments, and, eventually, even to survive in the service. Did this law discriminate against the non-Sinhala-speaking people of Sri Lanka? This is no longer a matter for argument since the District Court of Colombo, before which that question was fully argued in the case of **Kodeeswaran v. The Attorney General**, held that it did, and that it was therefore a law which Parliament was not competent to make in view of section 29 of the Independence Constitution. Despite the fact that successive governments have chosen not to act upon that judicial pronounce-

ment, that judgment remains unreversed to this day, and is the only authoritative pronouncement on the subject.

Education

In the early 1970s, the process of selection of students for higher education was regulated and a system of standardisation combined with quotas was introduced in the hope that it would thereby secure a more equitable distribution, media and district-wise, of the limited number of places available in the universities. The effect of this policy, and the enormity of the injustice it caused to the Tamil community, raises this issue to the level of a major human rights problem. For instance, in 1975, the admissions on a district basis into the medical faculty were 29 from Galle and 29 from Jaffna, whereas on the basis of merit only 18 had qualified from Galle as against 61 from Jaffna. Similarly, on a district basis, Galle and Jaffna each secured 20 places in the science and engineering faculties, while on the basis of merit, 24 should have entered from Galle and 56 from Jaffna. It will be interesting to know how many of those students from Jaffna who in that year were shut out of universities unjustly, and denied the right to education and employment, and diverted out of the mainstream of life in the country, today belongs to that category which our political leadership so perfunctorily describes as "murderers, rapists and kidnappers".

The application of human rights to the ethnic problem will reveal not only the three aberrations that I have already referred to. They were merely examples picked out at random. If I were preparing a more comprehensive list, I would probably add:

(a) the failure to provide a proper system of local government to the North since about 1973; the postponement of the Kankasanturai by-election from 1973 to 1975; the interference with elections to District Development Councils in 1981; the extension of the life of Parliament in 1982 contrary to the wishes of the majority of voters of the Northern province; and the virtual proscription of the TULF in 1983 by the Sixth Amendment to the Constitution, as acts which appear to have infringed the right of self-determination;

(b) the district quota system or admission to universities in force since 1977; the prohibition on the establishment of private schools imposed by the Assisted Schools and Training Colleges (Supplementary Provisions) Act of 1961; the exclusion of Tamil lawyers from original courts in the South by reason of the operation of the Language of the Courts Act of 1961 and the Constitutions of 1972 and 1978; the systematic acquisition of control by a predominantly Sinhalese government of the national newspapers, radio and television, coupled with the frequent closures of the *Suthanthiran* and *Saturday Review* newspapers published in Jaffna under the public Security Ordinance; and the withdrawal of the traditional safeguards of criminal procedure by means of special laws and emergency regulations directed primarily at the Northern Province, as acts which appear to have infringed the right to freedom from discrimination;

(c) the interference with the conference of the International Association of Tamil Research held in Jaffna in 1974, and the burning of the Jaffna Library in 1981, as acts which appear to have infringed the right of minorities to the enjoyment of their own culture;

(d) the motion of no-confidence in the leader of the TULF moved in Parliament by government backbenchers in 1981, and the dissemination in Sinhalese areas of inflammatory speeches made on that occasion by Ministers and Members of Parliament; the events of May 1958, August 1977, July 1981 and July 1983, and the failure of the State to afford adequate protection to persons and properties belonging to the Tamil community; and the conduct of service personnel in the Northern Province vis-à-vis civilians, otherwise than in the course of hostilities, as acts which appear to have infringed the right to security.

IV. A Solution through respect for Human Rights

I have attempted to demonstrate how, during the past thirty years, while the international community, with the active encouragement of successive Sri Lanka Governments, kept moving towards an international regime of human rights, a new legal

order based upon respect for human rights, here in Sri Lanka the human rights of the Tamil minority community appears to have been progressively and systematically violated. Our general apathy in this regard appears to have been jolted into action by the traumatic events of July 1983, and we now see the phenomenon of the All Party or Round Table Conference. Whatever else that conference may offer, it appears to me difficult to envisage how, without an absolute commitment to human rights, an atmosphere of confidence and security could be created among the people of the Northern Province, sufficient in strength to persuade them to re-enter the mainstream of political, social and economic life in Sri Lanka. But any serious attempt to protect human rights must be based upon an influence more constant than the ebb and flow of public or political opinion. It must be grounded in the relative stability of a legal process and the rule of law. It must be supported and confirmed by the consciousness of a people themselves committed to that objective.

How then can a Sri Lankan Government make a commitment to human rights? It is suggested that action be initiated immediately in at least four very sensitive and significant areas:

1. The right of "self-determination" which enables a minority community to freely determine its political status and freely pursue its economic, social and cultural development, does not authorise action which would dismember or impair, totally or in part, the territorial integrity or political unity of a sovereign and independent State, if that State respects the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples, and is thus possessed of a government which represents the whole people belonging to its territory without distinction as to race, creed or colour. The demand for Eelam can, therefore, be met by the dismantling of the present highly centralised Sri Lankan governmental structure and the establishment of viable units of regional administration to which sufficient legislative and executive power is devolved to enable the minority communities "to freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development". The province appears to be an economically viable

unit, and if combined with the restoration of local government at village and town levels, may satisfy the requirements as well as the aspirations. Such devolution will necessarily have to be complemented with power-sharing at the Centre: an objective which may perhaps be achieved by the creation of a second chamber of Parliament through which the different ethnic groups of Sri Lanka could participate in the national decision-making process. The right of self-determination is, of course, quite incompatible with the Special Presidential Commissions of Inquiry Law, Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act or the Sixth Amendment to the Constitution, all of which are legislative measures which operate to produce a result which is the very antithesis of that right.

2. The right of every citizen "to vote and to be elected at genuine periodic elections which shall be by universal suffrage and shall be held by secret ballot, guaranteeing the free expression of the will of the electors" cannot mean that Parliament elected for a particular term can, by extending its own life, substitute itself for a general election, even by means of a referendum. Accordingly, a negotiated political settlement of the ethnic problem appears to be possible only if those who negotiate possess the authority to do so. Such authority, in the context of a parliamentary democracy, can be obtained only through "genuine periodic elections". The shrinking and debilitating complexion which the All Party Conference appears to assume from time to time is perhaps due to the fact that most of those who participate therein seek to do so on the basis of a limited mandate obtained by them as far back as 1977.

3. The right of access to higher education "on the basis of capacity" may not necessarily preclude a state from according some preferential treatment to students from underprivileged or ill-equipped schools. It does, however, insist that merit be the criterion for entry into tertiary education, and that weightage for the less-privileged should not result in the exclusion of any

who, through their own efforts, have satisfied the minimum requirements for such entry. In Sri Lanka today, it would appear that the diversion of even a fraction of the funds allocated for military operations in the North into the expansion of university education in the country, would enable the Government to respect this right.

4. The right of a person whose rights or freedoms are violated to have "an effective remedy" appears to require a more comprehensive Bill of Rights than that provided by the 1978 Constitution. It should be a Bill of Rights which is capable of being enforced in respect of executive, legislative and judicial action, as well as against the private and corporation sectors. The Bill of Rights could be supplemented with a Race Relations Act similar in form to that in the United Kingdom, and with a Human Rights Commission on the lines of those established in Canada and in Australia in order to give it a wider access than would be possible through a legal system alone which is already barred by incredibly high fees and tortuous rules.

In conclusion, it is necessary to remind ourselves that we still lack a human rights consciousness in this country. This can be remedied if religious, non-governmental, and civic organisations take the initiative to educate public opinion and awaken public conscience to take a positive stand in favour of a political solution to the ethnic problem instead of chasing that illusory hope of peace through terrorism or a military victory. This should not be difficult if we all accept the simple truth, which is common to all our religions, that freedom, justice and peace can be founded only upon a recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all the members of the human family, be they Sinhala, Tamil, Moor, Malay or Burgher.

Surplus extraction or surplus absorption ?

Tara Coomaraswamy

(3) b. The period of the late '60s to the present (see Table in L. G. Aug 1st) is on the whole only quantitatively different from the preceding one, except that raw materials have again become central, the oil crisis being one reason. Socio-political barriers in LDCs have restricted movement of international capital and forced it to take new forms such as the joint venture, while seeking to expand productive capacity at home alongside renewed efforts to extend foreign markets. Export of commodities, while always important, becomes even more vital, as excess capacity grows within the MDCs. Most recently, "stagflation" induced by the oil crisis has made low-technology labour-intensive production even more desirable, reinforcing foreign capital's interest in LDCs.

Certain problematic issues cannot be adequately treated here; e. g. (a) the relationship between and the relative strength/autonomy of the national state, national capital and international capital. International economic policies of national states are the product of both internal forces to do with class relations and external forces generated by international capital and class antagonisms at an international level. Policies cannot be traced simply to one or the other; e. g., devaluation of sterling cannot be construed as a weapon wielded by the British bourgeoisie in their struggle with the British proletariat. "National" capital is not synonymous with the "national state". To talk of "national" or "international" capital is necessarily a simplification.

(b) Similarly there exists considerable dispute over the existence/nature of inter-imperialist rivalry, which is fundamental to any theory of imperialism, since it revolves around the question of continued competition as the dynamic force behind capitalist expansion, and relates to the opposition: "surplus extraction or surplus absorption"? in terms of which much of the contemporary debate on imperialism is phrased.

(c) The notion of "unequal exchange" as currently used (by e. g., Emmanuel, Amin) has uncertain status

as a Marxian concept. As it has been pointed out, exploitation is not a relation between nations but between classes; also capitalist exploitation takes place through the production process, not through exchange. To imply that it can do the latter, implies also that non-capitalist modes of production produce value, undermining a fundamental element of the Marxist theory of capitalism, i. e. the labour theory of value based on wage labour. Marx's reference to unequal exchange in "Capital" III is not clear. While this remains a problematic area, may be appropriate for the present purpose to treat the process involved as one of primitive accumulation.

The relationship between developed and developing nations is sometimes debated in terms of whether the dominant problem for capitalism today is surplus extraction — (i. e. more in the Leninist mould) — or surplus absorption — (those who take off from Luxemburg's analysis — though this is questionable). Two factors need to be initially considered: the dependence of MDCs on LDCs, and the effects of monopoly capital.

The obsession with capital export, following Lenin, has obscured other forms of exploitation. Capital export is now supposed to largely take the form of cross-investment by MDCs. That there is a net inflow of surplus to MDCs is not denied — in fact it is usually used as a stick to beat Lenin with (though as pointed out earlier, it does not contradict his thesis but corroborates the idea of a worsening problem of capital surplus). The surplus extracted may in fact be even greater, since calculations based on actual Balance of Payments flows are deceptive; the greater part of investment in LDCs is said to be out of retained profits; also, service charges, technological rents and royalties of various kinds add to this concealed surplus, and in addition there takes place unequal exchange, argued by some to be the main mechanism of surplus extraction.

The importance of exports to LDCs is doubted by those who point out that inter-MDC trade is much

greater than MDC-LDC trade. (Mandel queries the possibility of LDC purchasing rising, considering their continuing impoverishment in dealings with MDCs. Nevertheless the significance of trade figures must be carefully examined; value of exports is no guide to volume: a large part of MDC trade consists of expensive, high-technology goods such as armaments and defence equipment generally, communications systems, etc. In terms of bulk, MDC-LDC trade is arguably still considerable.

Also, as with Kemp's argument regarding the role of even a small degree of foreign investment in stimulating growth, it could be suggested that LDC markets continue to be vital for expansion, whatever their relative size compared with MDC markets. (Note in addition the existence of excess capacity).

It is worth risking a fairly long quotation from Rosa Luxemburg at this point for its prophetic qualities:

If capitalisation of surplus value is the real motive force and aim of production, it must yet proceed within the limits given by the renewal of constant and variable capital (and also of the consumed part of the surplus value). Further, with the international development of capitalism the capitalisation of surplus value becomes ever more urgent and precarious, and the substratum of constant and variable capital becomes an ever-growing mass—both absolutely and in relation to the surplus value. Hence the contradictory phenomenon that the old capitalist countries provide ever larger markets for, and become increasingly dependent upon one another, yet on the other hand compete ever more ruthlessly for trade relations with non-capitalist countries. The conditions for the capitalisation of surplus value clash increasingly with the conditions for the renewal of the aggregate capital — a conflict which, incidentally, is merely a counterpart of the contradictions implied in the law of a declining profit rate.

A further form of releasing commodities onto LDC markets is through

government and international agency aid ("aid imperialism"). This has grown in importance alongside the disincentives to private foreign investment of political instability and rising nationalism in the developing world, and coincides with a structural change in MDC economies, a shift towards increasing production of capital goods since World War II. Thus the real significance of ideologies of "development," "industrialisation," and "economic growth" urged upon LDCs was to ensure markets for machinery and equipment industries in MDCs. This again points to the enhanced role of the MDC state and the close links between international agencies and capital (national/international). (What it also testifies to is over-production in Department I — alongside excess capacity in Department II industries — as MDCs attempted to combat underconsumption in the latter by shifting to the former).

Dependence on the Third World for strategic raw materials (certain ores, oil) has increased with the accelerated development of nuclear power, the space race, and the arms race. Some of those who maintain the vital importance of LDCs for this reason (Magdoff, Mandel, Jalee, Emmanuel) also cite unequal exchange as a continuing mechanism by which the Third World is drained of its resources while being underpaid for them. Different levels of labour productivity on the world market means that smaller amounts of labour exchange against greater, through the operation of the law of value at an international level. This renders Third World manufacturing industries important as exporters, and enforces specialisation in raw materials or semi-processed goods.

The need for imperialism, surplus extraction and expansion might be questioned, and hinges on the role of competition. Against those who argue the "redundantist" position (Kidron, O'Connor, Barratt-Brown) — that Third World poverty is residual rather than central to MDC prosperity — it should be pointed out that monopoly is still oligopoly, internationally, if not nationally.

O'Connor (7) queries the "rate of profit", as an anachronism, in view of price — fixing and market — share agreements by giant firm.

Unfortunately, under conditions of more or less free trade, similar conditions cannot be enforced upon foreign competitors (see for example the effect of Japanese car imports on US, British and German car industries). Tariffs are increasingly being clamoured for by national industries. Overseas expansion enables profit levels sufficient both to protect domestic markets as well as to build up credit in the fight for international hegemony (which is to be seen as a long-term defensive measure). Inter-imperialist rivalry is as central to capitalism as in Lenin's day, though mediated by various international organisations. The shifting balance of power is in the modern era characterised by recourse to economic weapons rather than to political ones. A powerful inducement to good behaviour within the capitalist world, preventing rivalry from expressing itself in more explosive form, is the existence of the Communist bloc. Also, the destructive potential of modern weaponry is so horrific as to discourage war, unless in terms of conventional methods of warfare.

The effect of excess capacity and over-accumulation of money-capital within MDCs has further domestic repercussions in the form of credit inflation, caused by proliferating consumer credits and mortgages (though limited by relation of loan repayments to current consumer income) in the attempt to buy consumption demand from the future. This only temporarily conceals the growing gap between purchasing power and productive power.

One school of thought (Baran and Sweezy, Kirdon, O'Connor) sees the problem for developing economies to be one of "surplus absorption" rather than surplus extraction. The political barriers put up by nationalistic sentiments in LDC has necessitated the tactical retreat of foreign capital, to return in more cautious forms such as the politically more acceptable joint venture, which however curbs the degree and rate of capital export from MDCs. The space race and the "permanent war economy" (Kirdon) perform the function of absorbing or "wasting" the accumulated "economic surplus" (Baran and Sweezy) defined as the difference between total national product and socially necessary costs of

production (reproduction of the system and productive capacity). Technological change and Research and Development account for a fraction of the surplus; oligopolistic enterprises with a market-sharing plan are said to favour inputsaving rather than output-increasing innovations. Product differentiation, forced obsolescence, advertising, increased "social consumption" (education, culture, amenities) all do their bit, but are limited by criteria of 'capitalist rationality' and the class relations of capitalist society. The publicly most acceptable avenue for conspicuous consumption on a large scale is permanent rearmament, which contains a built-in propensity towards obsolescence and a high rate of technological innovation. Investment in means of destruction, unlike means of production, does not (a grim tautology) embarrass by rewarding investors with a greater return flow of output.

The "surplus absorption" school seems superficially to follow in the steps of Luxemburg, who first pointed to the function of militarism as a means for the realisation of surplus value. Her argument, however, far from financing armaments from the unconsumed surplus product, derives it from taxation of variable capital; this allows a certain amount of money to first mediate an exchange between capitalists and workers, and in addition, by breaking free of the circuit, to provide a new demand for capital accumulation, in the hands of the state. This reduces demand for a corresponding amount of consumption goods, it is true, but from the standpoint of the economy, it has the same effect as if

the capitalists had succeeded in depressing wages by a 100 units without detracting from the work performed, seeing that a lower output of consumption goods is equally the inevitable result of continuous wage cuts.

Moreover it is achieved by the politically safer medium of taxation, instead of wage-cuts.

The subsequent restriction in the production of means of subsistence does not represent a loss of markets for capital as a whole, but rather a saving in the costs of producing surplus value. Surplus value is never realised by producing means of subsistence for the workers—

however necessary this may be, as the reproduction of living labour, for the production of surplus value.

As Mandel points out, how could production of weapons (and therefore the production of commodities, i.e. production of value) be equated with the waste of surplus value? And how could such waste lead to accelerated economic growth? For armaments production to assist in solution of growing imbalance between the production of means of production and the slower growth of consuming power—and hence of the falling rate of profit, two conditions would need to be fulfilled: (1) the arms sector would have to exhibit a secular decline in the OCC; (2) purchasing power for the new armaments must come from total surplus value, leaving the real wages (purchasing power) of workers intact. Both are obviously absurd.

In normal circumstances, it is unthinkable that a lower organic composition of capital than in Departments I and II could permanently prevail in the weapons sector... It is even more unthinkable that capitalists would organise the production of weapons in order to increase the social sum

of wages instead of attempting to bring it down.

(Armaments is thought of as Department III)

The function of taxation is thus to provide a new opening for capital accumulation, hence for more surplus creation and profit. (The "third market" is assumed to exist alongside the capitalist system of production). The problem of realisation ultimately concerns the surplus value produced in the form of consumption goods in Department II, and armaments production cannot help resolve that dilemma.

Luxemburg observes, further, that taxation draws out capital from non-capitalist sectors (such as the peasantry) and concentrates would-be hoards of the lower-middle classes (representing future scattered demand for a multitude of commodities) to constitute a regular and homogeneous type of demand in the hands of the state, i.e. for armaments.

The motive for capital accumulation is surplus creation and profit—and there is no reason to suppose that it is otherwise in the case of armaments. Demand is initially

provided by the state, through taxation and loans (inflation can up to a point be useful in stimulating real economic growth). But also, there must be noted in this connection, not only the growing world arms trade (armaments are a commodity like any other) but also the direct links between armaments, international capitalist interests and foreign policy. The permanent arms economy is functionally related to imperialism, to securing investments and raw materials through protection of "free trade" in the "free world".

The existence of the Communist bloc powerfully intensifies this situation. The capitalist bloc needs to ensure that no parts of the world under its hegemony escape into rival camp. Baran and Sweezy seem in fact to provide contradictory explanations for militarism: both surplus absorption and the "Communist threat" so far as they stress militarism as a "waste" of surplus, they are spurious descendants of Rosa Luxemburg, who was consistent in maintaining that surplus creation was the overriding compulsion of the capitalist system from start to finish.

(To be continued)

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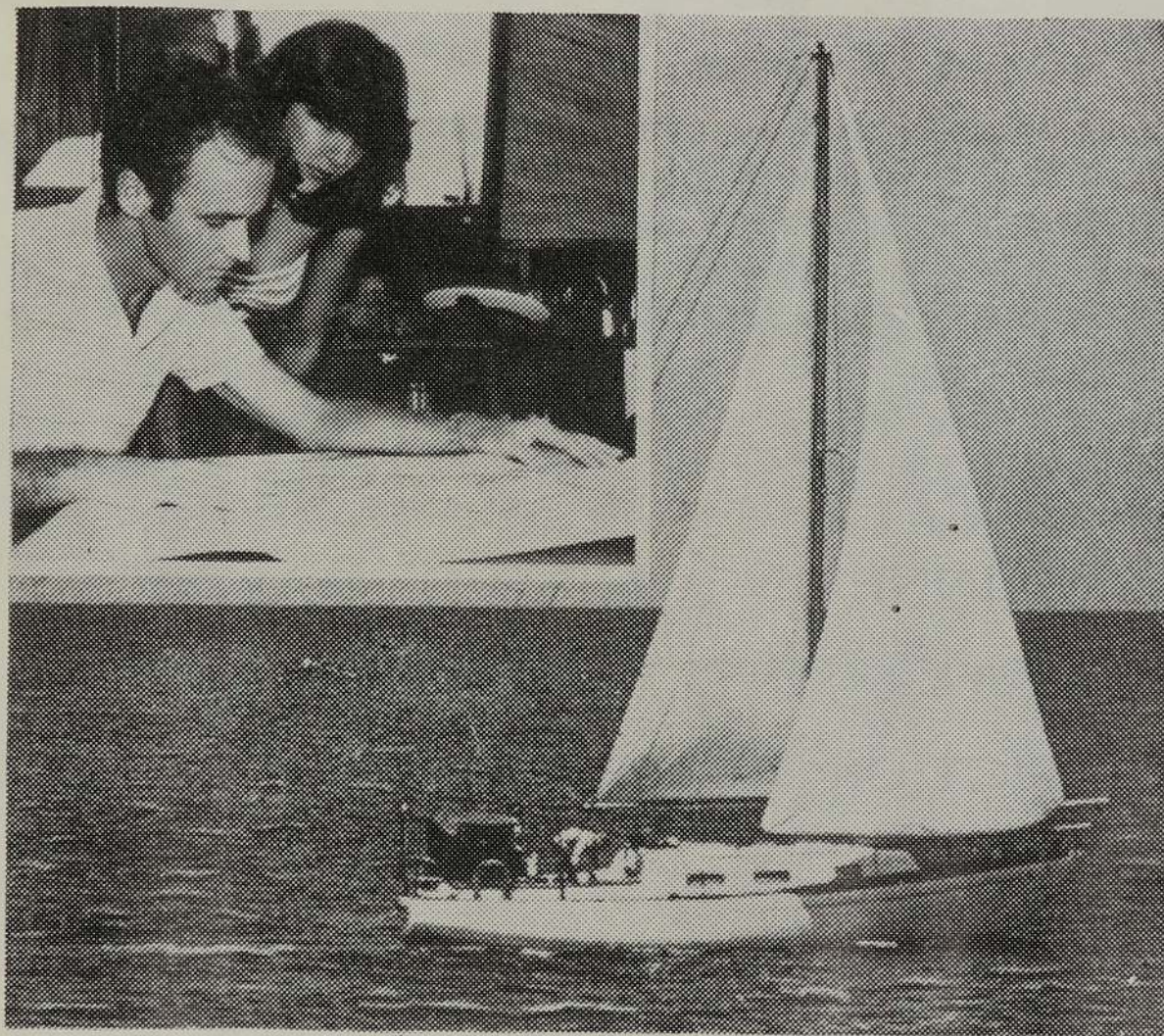
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