

Memories of Fanon, Algeria: A conversation

with Eqbal Ahmad

— Dayan Jayatilleka

LANKA

GUARDIAN

Vol. 7 No. 15

December 1, 1984

Price Rs. 3/50

Registered at the GPO, Sri Lanka QJ/75/N/83

THE TENSION MOUNTS

— *Mervyn de Silva*



The threat to democracy in the Third World

— *Eqbal Ahmad*

* Impressions of Hanoi

— Rajiva Wijesingha

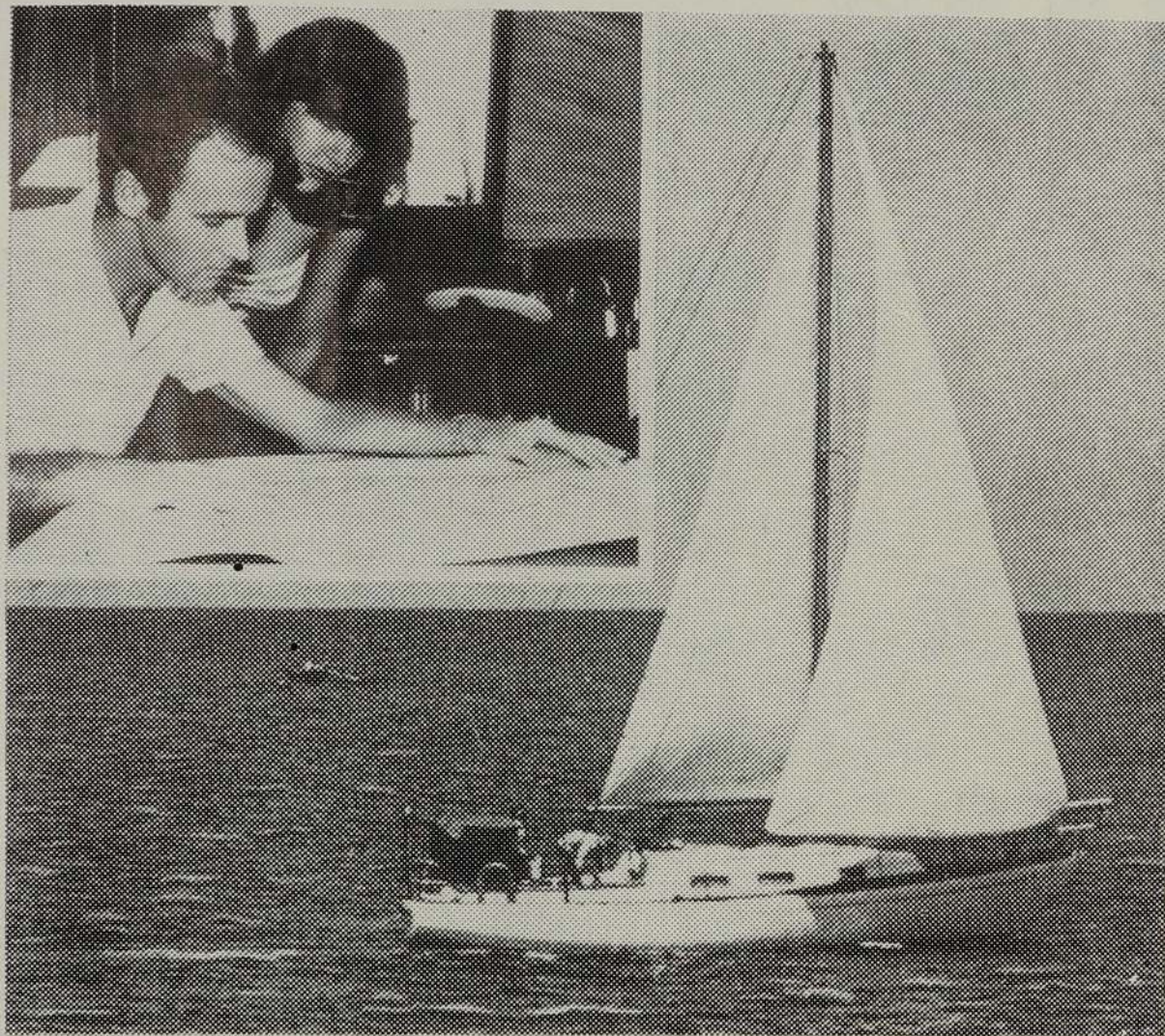
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NOT-SO-FREE EDUCATION

"Free education — the birth-right of every Sri Lankan child — is no longer free. In fact it is fast becoming a luxury only the rich can afford" says the opening lines of a lead story in the **Sun** groups WEEKEND, a newspaper increasingly quoted with cheerful accord and admiration by the government front-bench.

The WEEKEND now specialises in this kind of diligently investigated exposure of the actual impact of the UNP's post-77 economic policy. It has already revealed the stark facts about the state of public health, spotlighting malnutrition, and how the Food Stamps scheme, a substitute for the well-established food subsidy policy, hardly helps a large segment of population living on the poverty line.

Corruption and malpractices, says the report, are spreading like a canker through the educational system. Bribes, donations, under-the counter gifts, and hefty admission fees are the order of the day. Even state-run schools demand 10,000/- as an admission fee. In other words, lower-middle class public servant (the worker and the peasant be damned for their children don't need to be educated!) must spend six months salary to infiltrate his son into a school.

But why be surprised about corruption and malpractice making an insidious entry into the schools system? It is surely the New Order.

What gives surprise is that the new economic policy has won eloquent converts in the ranks of the Opposition, from the Opposition leader himself, to the socialist, quondam Trotskyist Mr, Anil Moonesinghe. Of course when they sing the praises of the N. E. P. (Sri Kotha variety) what they really have in mind is the absence of queues and ration cards, and all those super-markets full of goodies, lavishly advertised on TV. What is apparently beyond their understanding is that this is part of the package. The cuts, in real

terms, in social welfare is what keeps the air-conditioned super-markets in business, and the open economy "open" to all — like the Ritz Hotel, as a cynical British judge once observed, about British justice.

SACRED COW

The foreign investor is Sri Kotha's sacred cow. And none is more holy than the American investor. Now, an American investor engaged in a project approved by the Foreign Investment Advisory Committee has complained to President Jayewardene that he is the victim of harassment, intimidation and thuggery by persons closely connected to the UNP-dominated Kandy Municipality.

After the outburst of post-election violence in 1977, the first sign of what was to be a political phenomenon was the scandalous assault on Colombo university students, dragged by unidentified 'goons' to party hqrs and beaten up. Mrs. Bandaranaike was to call it 'UNP terrorism'. In a succinct study of the whole process published in this journal Prof. Gananath Obeyesekera termed it 'the institutionalisation of political violence' where the focus was on the role of party-sponsored hoodlums and an increasingly indisciplined police. It is not the UNP's image that is now the only casualty but its own settled policies.

NO WOOL

These trends continue to make a vicious circle of irony complete. When the policemen wounded in the attack on Chavakachcheri police station were rushed to the Colombo General hospital, the largest in the island, the medical personnel rightly forgetting their own recent battle with the policy when a doctor was assaulted in Kandy by a constable, rushed to the aid of the injured policemen. Alas, there was no cotton wool. (Recently, the health authorities was confronted by a shortage of slides to take blood samples of poor Dry Zone peasants stricken with malaria, a disease we were proud to claim was totally eradicated).

(Continued on page 21)

TRENDS
+
LETTERS

At Budget time

At last the authentic voice of the national bourgeoisie expresses itself fearlessly at Budget time through Anil and Anura. Hitherto, and with greater intensity from 1947, the comprador class had a field day.

On the right powerful interests within the UNP now take a political stand against the "free" economy. The meeting ground is being cleared; compromise resolutions and appeals for UNP-SLFP unity will flow in throughout the next year.

To think that Sirima who was always wedded to the Anil-Anura thesis missed the bus to become the senior partner of

(Continued on page 4)

LANKA

GUARDIAN

Vol. 7 No. 15, December 1, 1984

Price 3/50

Published fortnightly by
Lanka Guardian Publishing Co.Ltd.

No. 246, Union Place,
COLOMBO-2.

Editor: Mervyn de Silva

Telephone: 5 4 7 5 8 4

CONTENTS

News Background	3
CAP Seminar Report	5
'New' Economic policy and Agriculture — (5)	7
Challenge of Democracy in Third World	10
Reflections on Revolutions in the Third World	12
Jurists Decry Reagan's Foreign Policy	15
Impressions of Hanoi	16
Art — Amarasekera to Keyt — (2)	20
Book Review	22

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STALEMATE ON BOTH FRONTS

Mervyn de Silva

As the LG goes to press, the country awaits "an important statement" by National Security Minister, Mr. Lalith Athulathmudali.* While party leaders appeared to know more about the nature of the statement than they were ready to disclose, the government's own defensive measures, so highly visible to residents in Colombo and recorded, if in a somewhat fragmentationary fashion by the daily press, encouraged educated guesswork in the parliamentary lobbies as the budget debate took up the foreign ministry vote.

By Tuesday 27th, the security forces had taken into custody at least 4000 Tamil youths in Colombo. *Sun* Most of them, said the *Daily News* had moved to Colombo from the North and East recently, and many were bound for foreign destinations notably West Berlin, the favourite port-of-call and exit point for prospective expatriates and jobseekers.

These reports were generally read in the light of Mr. Athulathmudali's statement that the escalation in armed activities — the well-planned three-pronged attack on the Chavakachcheri police station which claimed nearly 30 lives was the most dramatic sign of this new trend — was directly linked to the post-Christmas Indian and more crucially the Tamilnadu polls and the electoral strategy of the opposition DMK. Evidently, a paralysed MGR has emboldened the Karunanidhi-led DMK, which sees a 'target of opportunity' in the AIDMK-Congress (I) alliance. Delhi and Madras have split the

seats on a 2:1 basis, with one-third conceded to the Congress (I)

Stepped-up violence in Sri Lanka can project the Sri Lankan issue once more on the screen of the Tamilnadu mind and enhance its propagandist potential. Reports from Madras suggest that the Sri Lankan ethnic question is no longer a high priority Tamilnadu concern — post-Indira problems have overshadowed this external issue — and therefore of not much propagandist mileage to the contending campaigners. This at least is the dominant view in Colombo, particularly in official circles.

The fact, is that the Sri Lankan intelligentsia finds itself groping in the dark in its fevered attempt to evaluate Tamilnadu political situation, the complexities of the relationship between the 'centre' in Delhi and regional-nationalist centres in the vast Indian federation, in reality a continent of nationalities. Most Sri Lankan assessments are hit-or-miss judgments, many coloured by wishful thinking or facile theories built on an editorial here or a speech there.

In the prevailing Sri Lankan state of mind, especially Sinhala elite thinking, conditioned more by primordial and paranoid fears and near-hysteria, the danger of selecting bits and pieces of 'intelligence' or information which fits one's own preconceived ideas or propagandist interests, is all too real. This distressing and dangerous gap in Sri Lankan thinking and analysis has to be filled by the evaluations of foreign scholars and specialists.

One of them was here recently — Toynbee prize-winner and inti-

mate friend of the Gandhi family Prof. Ralph Bultjens. Sri Lanka, he said, may have lost two valuable friends in Indira Gandhi and M. G. R. His more considered advice to Sri Lanka policy-makers and elite is more important for the future. "We must cultivate the South, rather than depending on the North. We cannot hope to solve our problems in Washington or Beijing. The solution lies in Madras and Delhi".

However deeply (and helplessly) we may be immersed in the current crisis — and truly it is the gravest in our modern history — we must start planning for the future, and a more rigorous schooling of our minds must be the inescapable starting point. Basically, educated Sri Lankan opinion must not only grasp the geopolitical realities of South Asia but understand implications of both the asymmetry of India's size, population and economic strength and the multi-ethnic complexion of Indian society, and the cross-border cultural affinities between nationalities living in India and in neighbouring states.

This, incidentally, was one of the main conclusions reached by a United Nations University Symposium held in Katmandu last week. The topic at this seminar which is part of a much larger U. N. U. project, was 'regional cooperation' and constraints on SARC. The participants included academics and analysts from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and the discussion which focussed attention on the 'nation-building process' examined the implications of crisis-points like Punjab, Baluchistan, Sri Lanka, the Sind etc.

NEWS
BACKGROUND

* **● STOP PRESS**

The Minister announced stringent security measures for the North, including a "No-Go" prohibited zone.

Whatever the correctness of the official analysis of the Tamilnadu situation and the DMK situation, it is clear that the government's urgent concern is security. And that problem has recently seen a dramatic expansion in its territorial scope. The arrests in Nuwara Eliya after the abortive sabotage attempt at Pidurutalagala (and, according to CWC sources, of the 7 arrested 2 belong to the CWC, 2 are connected with the UNP union) and the more spectacular "dragnet" in Colombo (200 arrests in 24 hours) illustrate this change most strikingly. In clarification, the government withdrew its description of "Lebanese-type mission" of the Chavakachcheri attack.

But will the separatist rebels mount that sort of attention-getting operation in other parts of the island, especially in the South, including Colombo? If the intention is to keep the propagandist pot boiling in Madras (and that is the favoured thesis) then spectacular operations will be high on the agenda, carefully pre-selected targets must be given top priority in the **modus operandi**. Thus, the heavily guarded Petroleum Corporation, the main bridges, Rupavahini and SLBC complex, and so on.

In a city of a million, it poses a nightmarish problem for any security force. What is equally important is the enormous strain placed on an already hard-pressed police and army. Forced to spread its resources on a much larger terrain, the armed service presence may be thin on the ground.

In other countries, the response to the challenge has been conscription or a nation-wide call for volunteers. The first option could present a new dilemma. What if the conscripts include "undesirables" (politically oppositional elements) in sizeable numbers? As for a successful "volunteers" campaign, much will depend on the morale of the Sinhala youth, and their level of motivation. There too the UNP government faces a special predicament, partly a self-inflicted wound. The sudden introduction into the debate of "Mrs. B's civic rights issue reveals

the nature of this predicament. Understandably, a demonstrably embattled regime issues a clarion call — 'let all parties and political forces join hands to combat terrorism'. At least in part, the response of the large Opposition-led constituency (between a minimum of 40-45% Sinhalese to judge by the 1982 results) is bound to be coloured, and this too, understandably by virtual closure of the political system by the December 1982 referendum." I am not too worried about the loss of my civic rights.... after all, I am just one of 15 million people" Mr. Felix Dias Bandaranaike, the one-time think-tank of the SLFP is reported to have remarked recently.

And how far is such sharply divided and fragmented political opinion in our society reflected in the armed forces? In numbers at least, the expansion was most dramatic in the post-1971 years; that is, under Mrs. Bandaranaike. All these questions must of course be seen and studied in the context of worsening economic conditions for the large mass of Sri Lankan people. And arithmetic says that 70-75% are Sinhala-Buddhists.

Brigadier Nalin Seneviratne is an able and articulate officer who may have dipped his toe in hot water when he spoke in August to John Elliott of the *Financial Times* and Roan Tempest of the *Los Angeles Times*. Since he appears to have emerged unscathed by that experience, it was not surprising to see him offer REUTERS correspondent Brian Williams a candid summing-up of **the military situation** in the North: "All we can really do is hold and contain. We control areas but the ones we really dominate stop at the fences of our bases..." The Reuter

report published in the *Daily News* added "he had no illusions about what the security forces with their present manpower could achieve against an increasingly well-trained guerrilla force which could count on support from many local residents".

This admirably crisp professional assessment will come as no surprise to anybody who is even fairly conversant with elementary textbooks on guerrilla warfare. (The proliferation of instant pundits on the science of war, conventional and unconventional, in the correspondence columns of our papers, is another charmingly amusing by-product of these troubled times).

In an informal encounter last week between Sinhala and Tamil academics and professionals (a follow-up to the U. N. U./ Lanka Guardian sponsored seminar in May, a report of which was published in this journal in its July 15 issue), the conclusion reached was not fundamentally different. "A military stalemate" was the consensus.

What then of the APC, the political settlement and the negotiating process? "The APC is most unlikely to make an offer acceptable to the TULF". **If the TULF does not "buy" what the APC offers, then the all-important question of the TULF and the moderates "selling" the package to "the boys" does not arise.** Foreign Minister Hameed, an active APC participant disagrees. He told this writer "We are moving towards an agreement". He described his own attitude as "a cautious optimism".

Letter . . .

(Continued from page 1)

this alliance when she refused JRJ admission to the SLFP.

Ofcourse the trio will carry the MEP with them. Were Philip alive he would have led this crusade.

Robert Fonseka

Panadura

Development or crisis? — and the crisis of Development

“**T**he Third World: Development or Crisis? was the theme of a seminar held from the 9th–14th November in Penang, Malaysia. It was organised by the Consumer’s Association of Penang (CAP), one of the leading non-governmental organisations in the Third World. CAP is involved in issues which include the fulfillment of basic needs (food, nutrition, health, housing, transport, etc), food and product safety, environmental pollution and problems, the rational use of resources, specific problems of women, and business malpractices.

A background document issued by CAP described the major aim of the conference as the effort to get together Third world groups and individuals both in the Third and First Worlds who are working on various aspects of issues concerning the liberation of the Third World peoples. “Some are examining international structures while others are deeply committed to work at the local level. Hence the major aim of this conference is to get together all these groups and peoples working in their various areas to see and understand the problems in a holistic fashion” says the document.

The CAP document goes on to add that “Another important objective of the Conference is to explore the possibilities of setting up a Third World Network — a Third World Movement which can conduct research and speak on behalf of the Third World. The proposed objectives of this Network will be primarily to foster closer links among individuals and groups involved in Third World issues; to see, examine and find ways and means to disseminate information; to make people aware of the various forms of disinformation and

unequal trade relationships; and to work towards the transformation of our societies and human dignity which we deserve.”

The *National Echo* a leading Penang daily, commented in its issue of Monday November 12th. that “It seems clear that the purpose of the seminar is to centralise the greatest number possible of the worlds leading lights in the conceptualisation of Third World problems..... we have a very extensive continuum of topics that boggles the mind..... located within the confines of spartan but comfortable **Reccsam**, CAP has focused the Intellectual attention of 40 odd specialists on development from all over the world on a wide range of topics that affect the development of the Third World in the economic, cultural and political terms. **Reccsam’s** conference room has been turned into a high pressure market place of ideas. Twenty five different topics are being presented by some of the worlds most astute thinkers on the problems facing the Third World.”

The conference which was inaugurated by Anwar Ibrahim, the youthful Minister of Agriculture of Malaysia consisted of 25 sessions embracing the following topics: Third World Development — Some General Aspects of the Global Economy, Agriculture and Development in the Third World, Industrialization and Technology, Services and Product Dumping, International Banking and Finance, Aspects of Basic Needs, Transnational Drug Companies, Critique of Development — Asia, Caribbean, Latin America, West Asia and Africa; Third World Resources; Internal dynamics of Development; Culture and Media; International Relations and Diplomacy; Challenges and Prospects of

Democracy; Human Rights and Development; and finally Some First World Perspectives on the Third World.

Participants at the seminar, listed according to countries, alphabetically, included the following: **Bangladesh** — Anjan Datta; **Belgium** — Jose Lemmers (International Coalition for Development Action), **Brazil** — Roberto Remo Bissio (Third World Magazine and Third World Guide), **Canada** — Liz Martin, Wayne Ellwood (The New Internationalist), **France** — Michele Mattelart, **Guyana** — K. Balasubramaniam (Caricom Secretariat), **India** — Prem Chandra John (Asian Community Health Action Network), Satish Kumar (School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University), Sunil Sahasrabudhey (Gandhian Institute of Studies), B. Ekbal (Kerala Sastra Sahithya Parishad **Indonesia** — Adi Sasono (Institute for Development Studies), Dawam Rahardjo (Institute for Economic and Social Research Education and Information), Mulya Lubis (Legal Aid Institute), Sumarkoco Sudiro (Kompas Daily), Azyumardi Azra (Panji Masyarakat), **Jamaica** — Prof. George Beckford (Department of Economics, University of the West Indies), **Japan** — Jun Ui (Department of Urban Engineering University of Tokyo), Ichiyo Muto (Pacific-Asia Resource Centre), **Morocco** — Fatima Mernissi (Institut Universitair de Recherche Scientifique (IURS), **Nigeria** — Chinweizu (The Guardian), **Pakistan** — Chandio Munir Ahmad (Rural Workers Coop. Organisation, Karachi), **Philippines** — Manolo B. Jara (Press Foundation of Asia, Manila), Prof. Randolph David (Third World studies centre, University of Philippines), **Singapore** — Arun Balasubramaniam (Institute of Southeast Asian Studies), Michael Fremerey, Woo Yuen Pau, Yayori Matsui (Asahi Shimbun, Tokyo),

Sri Lanka — Neelan Tiruchelvam (Asian Council for Law in Development), Dayan Jayatilaka (Third World Forum), Ravindran Casinader (Inter Press Service-IPS), **Sweden** — B' jorn Ahren (SIDA). **Switzerland** — Anisur Rahman (I. L. O.), Hanspeter Schmid, Richard Gerster (Helvetas), Anne-Marie Hostenstein (IPRA Food Policy), Stefan Hartmann (Helvetas), **Thailand** — Alex Gordon (Social Research Institute, Chulalongkorn University), Suthy Prasartest (Faculty of Economics, Chulalongkorn University), Pornchai Veeruarong, Samran Rodpetch (Matuphcom Daily) **United Kingdom**—Garry Whannel, Prof. Peter Worsley (University of Manchester), Richard Fletcher (North-East London Polytechnic), Stanley Adams, John Madeley (International Agricultural Development), Judith Vidal-Hall ('South' Publications Ltd.), Richard Gott (Featuras Editor, The Guardian), **United States** — Cheryl Payer, Eqbal Ahmad (Institute for Policy Studies), Mark Dowie ('Mother Jones' San Francisco).

Samir Amin missed his flight, but his paper was one of those presented at the conference.

Malaysian participants included Martin Khor Kok Peng and Evelyn Hong of CAP, Lim Teck Ghee (centre for Policy Studies, University Sains), R. Theivandrum (Chief Deputy Director, Socio Economic Research unit, Prime Minister Dept.), Lim Jee Yuan (CAP), Meenahshi Raman (Advocate and Solicitor) Ahmad Mustapha (Gen. Manager, Besnama News Agency), Chee Yoke Ling (Faculty of Law, Union of Malaya), Rajeswari Kandiah (advocate and Solicitor), Gabriel Lee (Managing Director, Star Publication), Prof. Syed Husin Ali (President, Malaysian Social Science Association), Mohammed Sharif (Secretary, Tax Division, Treasury), Dr. Jomo K. Sundram (Faculty of Economic and Business Administration, University of Malaya), and Dr. Chandra Muzaffer (President, Aliran.)

Prof. George Beckford, a senior academic, commented at the closing seminar, that this was the most strenuous and demanding conference he had ever attended. The 'National Echo', Penang (Nov. 12th) described it graphically:

"IT is third day of the CAP seminar on Third World development and the delegates of this international gathering of idea-mongering are beginning to feel the strain.

"From the first day there has been a never ending process of session after session. At each session at least two working papers are presented. A total of fifty working papers are expected to be tabled by the time the seminar ends.

The sessions start at 8.30 am and the working day is not finished until 10.30 on the same night.

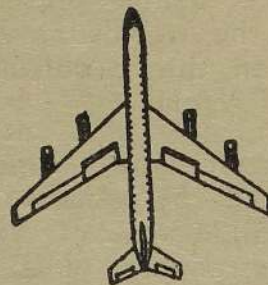
"The only breaks in concentration are for lunch and dinner, and bit of breathing space in between sessions.

* * *

IN terms of the actual physical capacity of the seminar on Third World development organised by the Consumer Association of Penang (CAP) it can be measured by the anticipated use of 3,000 realms of paper.

"What cannot be measured is this capacity of one and half million sheets of paper to carry on it the sweat, toil, frustration, hope and creative ability of the many millions of people whom the 1000 international delegates at the seminar present"

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Export-led growth strategy yet to produce worthwhile growth

N. Shanmugaratnam

While prices of imported inputs keep rising the government is concerned with regulating the price of paddy as it is an essential ingredient of the wage-goods basket. After all Sri Lanka's foreign investment promotion campaign is based on the promise of cheap labour. Keeping wages low in the urban sector is a basic rule of the export-led growth model. So paddy prices cannot be allowed to rise freely. Although the government cannot control prices of imported manufactured goods it can "regulate" the prices of domestic farm products. As far as the farmers who suffer from higher costs of inputs, including credit, are concerned the price of paddy has not gone up adequately to allow them a margin helping them to purchase their own consumption package. These farmers become the worst victims of "imported" inflation and imperfect factor markets. Distress sale and the loss of operational control over their lands are manifestations of their pauperization. The high level of distress sale also indicates that a sizable middle layer which can sustain its own simple reproduction from cultivation alone has not been able to consolidate itself. This failure is a serious indictment of official policy which talks of creating a stable self-supporting peasantry.

Siriwardhana (1981) has reported that of an area of 92.5 acres (38.44 Ha) of Mahaweli land granted to 37 settler families (at 2.5 acres per family) in 1976 in the H area, 61 per cent had passed under "hidden" forms of tenancy — Ande and lease — by the Maha season of 1979-80.²⁵ Thilakasiri (1980) reported even more staggering for another new hamlet in the Maeaweli area. There are some farmers who cultivate more than

six acres each while the cultivated extent of some others has shrunk to a stifling half acre in the showpiece land settlement project of the government which offered 2.5 acres per farmer only a few years ago in the name of an "egalitarian" and "restricted land tenure" Obviously the pace of subversion of "restricted land tenure" which was conceived of in the 1930's as a device to protect the 'peasant from himself' has gathered momentum under the "accelerated" Mahaweli scheme. Past experience had shown beyond doubt the irrelevance of the bureaucratic and static concept of "restricted land tenure" — a major plank of state aided land settlement policy.

Perhaps the prevalence of "hidden" tenancy is not a matter for alarm to the growth conscious policy makers if it can help accumulation via extension of cultivated area. Such a tendency would ensure that the land lost by settlers is in the hands of more enterprising persons who can produce better results. This process is indeed on as shown by some studies cited above. But hidden tenancy also involves pauperized "non-settlers" who are driven to seek some kind of anchorage in farming for subsistence reasons. Like the pauperized settlers they are also casual seasonal wage workers. This phenomenon is fairly widespread in the countryside and shows the lack of avenues of irreversible escape from the vicious circle of pauperization into regular wage employment via proletarianization. In the absence of such a pull the peasant who is dislodged from ownership of his land has no option but to continue in the circle of pauperization which offers some access to the means of

subsistence, albeit under sub-human conditions.

Pauperization operates as a vicious circle within the agrarian structure in the traditional village and the new settlement alike. Viewing landlessness as a purely agrarian problem can be very misleading.

Governments of Sri Lanka have used land alienation as a mean to "solve" or contain the problem but only to find it reproducing itself with added vengeance. The most obvious lesson from this long experience is that a final solution for this elusive "agrarian problem" cannot be found within agriculture since land is not the answer to "landlessness", if one takes development seriously. I shall return to this point for further comment in the next section. The point that deserves emphasis here is that the economic imperatives of the circumstances demand of the government giving strict precedence to land as a scarce "factor of production" subordinated to the logic of accumulation, over land as a means to "solve" landlessness for parliamentarist political purposes. This again is a contradiction with certain political implication which the UNP cannot afford to disregard from the standpoint of retaining parliamentary power.

Successive governments have used the device of "State Aided Land Colonization" to win electoral political support in the rural areas. With time the granting of land to the "landless" has become a matter of political patronage. Governments could resort to such populist practices because of the availability of vast tracts of state owned land in the dry zone. The UNP and the SLFP have strong rural support in the Sinhalese areas drawn from the peasantry

partly as a result of their land alienation policies. Subjectively, the landless and near landless peasants view their problem as an "agrarian problem" and land as its logical solution. The dry zone irrigation schemes have great appeal to them as there was the promise of developed land and other amenities *gratis*. With the launching of the Accelerated Mahaweli Project the populist propaganda also became highly activated. The UNP was determined to get maximum political mileage out of this project and it has succeeded to a considerable extent. But there is an ever present demand to manage the contradiction between the hard requirements of capital accumulation under imperialist hegemony and the minimum requirements that must be satisfied to keep the Parliamentary power intact in order to wield the state.

As long as accumulation enjoys primacy, and under the given circumstances of the day, peasant agriculture will be viewed in terms of its potentials not only to produce wage goods for the home market at cheaper prices but more importantly agro-industrial crops (food and non-food) for processing industries aimed at foreign markets. The challenge as far as the government is concerned is how to manage differentiation in such a way to promote physical efficiency in terms of output, marketable surplus, and diversification into agro-industrial crops to promote agribusiness ventures. This comes as no surprise as it is a part of the policy that has evolved since 1977. It is being very forcefully articulated today in terms of attracting the private sector including TNC's to make productive use of the land and irrigation infrastructure that has been developed. The example of the tobacco sector under the aegis of Ceylon Tobacco Company has been held as an appropriate model for TNC (or other type of firms)—petty producer linkage for agro-industrial ventures. Crops like sugarcane, soya bean, fruits and vegetables and meat and milk products have been listed for major ventures. As mentioned in an earlier section the APZ's and the new land policy have created the legal infrastructure for contract farming.

Diversification into agro-industrial crops for foreign and local markets is a necessary condition for the private sector to get more seriously interested in and involved with peasant agriculture. The government sees the private sector as a more efficient alternative to the *statals* and *para-statals* for the management of land settlements. In pure and simple terms the policy of the government strives to create new sub-sectors and projects in agriculture where specialized production of particular crops for processing will take place. This type of production will involve peasant producers and, wherever feasible (politically and economically), large scale production based on hired labour. There will be monopolist buyers of the farm produce for processing industry. This is what is being sought.

The role of the peasantry is being more strictly defined as a "factor of production" — in which role it is seen as a major contributor. A wide range of agricultural production activities that supply the raw materials for some highly profitable processing industries still have to depend on forms of petty commodity production due to agro-technical and economic reasons. Hence petty producers are an important category at least in a transitional sense until technological and other necessary conditions are satisfied for large-scale production of the important crops. But in the emerging pattern of economic transition there will be a shrinking space for the so-called independent small producer. Crops will be imposed on substantial sections of the farmers by direct and indirect means. They will be the risk-takers on behalf of the processing industries, the needs of which will determine the pattern of land use.

When peasant production is subordinated directly to the needs of a processing industry, say like the tobacco sector, vertical integration of the producers will be automatically looked after by the industry concerned. State will be relieved of a costly function and state capital can find more effective alternative avenues to promote privatization of capital. The subordination does not necessarily spell doom to all producers. Differen-

tiation will occur and pauperization will be a part of it as long as proletarianization does not become the dominant tendency. The subordination to the processing industry being direct without the intermediation of externally operating merchant capital will encourage accumulation within and the development of the productive forces. But this will depend a lot on the conditions governing the linkage and the freedom enjoyed by the producers with regard to bargaining for better prices and the choice of techniques. The same factors will also determine the specifics of differentiation.

Sri Lanka's government has done its best to attract foreign and local big capital into agriculture and agriculture-linked ventures. It has followed the advice of the IMF and the World Bank to make the best use of the ongoing internationalization of capital to satisfy the domestic dominant classes.

How much of the expectations of the government will materialize will now depend on the preferences of international capital which has a range of locational choice for agribusiness.

Concluding Remarks

A conjuncture of several internal and international factors justified the 'new' economic policy. Internationally capital has acquired great mobility because of the permanent technological revolution and some global institutional changes. Finance capital has succeeded in winning legitimation for its world organizations like the World Bank and IMF. Internationalization of capital is highly facilitated today. Internally the adoption of the liberalization strategy marked a particular point in class formation and the balance and realignment of the dominant class forces irrespective of its ideological manifestations the development of state capitalism under the leadership of the SLFP, with the support of the reformist left in the latter stages, served a transitional purpose. It occupied a historical space which was not voluntarily claimed by local private capital. But the state sector, under the demands of a populist ideology and the aspirations of a propertyless

middle class intelligentsia which was well entrenched within the government, extended into areas which already "belonged" to private capital. Development of capitalism demands a complementarity between state capital and private capital. The dominant ideology reflecting certain local class interests helped to turn this complementarity into a contradiction which took very antagonistic forms in the days of the United Front government of 1970-1977. This was the last phase of an economic policy and state management which undermined the logic of capital. The consequences turned out to be bad for capital and worse for the masses.

The 1977 strategy sought to restore the complementarity between state capital and private capital. State was used as a national instrument to secure foreign aid of various forms. The volume of capital mobilized by the government in this form has been unprecedented and its modes of utilization have enabled private accumulation and the economic strengthening of certain sections of the domestic bourgeoisie. State's activities have been most intense in the sphere of infrastructure development. Land and irrigation development and rural public works (IRDP) have received heavy doses of investment. The private sector has been granted an active role in this. The consequences are not so bad for capital but worse for the working class, the majority of the farmers and the lower middle class.

The most disappointing part of the experience with Sri Lanka's export-led growth strategy is that the economy has yet to produce the export-led growth worthy of the name of the strategy. The growth has been largely import-led. There are no promising signs yet of any leading export growth sectors in manufacturing. In agriculture the traditional export crops have not shown signs of recovery, nor have any new export crops emerged. The government has turned to agriculture in its desperate bid to find new export sectors. The yawning trade gap is managed with foreign aid and the fiscal crisis continues although the Minister of Finance congratulates himself quite generously at very budget.

It would be wrong to jump to a conclusion that the ideology of the past has died down. It exists as strong as ever and has its advocates within the government. Two areas that have served as instrument of the Sinhala Buddhist ideology, which often makes its political gains at the expense of the economic interests of the system as a whole, have been state corporations and land policy. Agricultural policy involves a sector that carries with it the majority of the country's population. The government has used it to play up to the needs of parliamentarist politics, but it has also struck a tough compromise in the interest of the basic goal of promoting private accumulation. Over the past year a broad alliance of various factions of the bourgeoisie and the petty bourgeoisie has been fostered with links with foreign capital under the overall hegemony of the finance capital of the World Bank and the IMF.

As pointed out in this paper, the government's internal contradictions have affected the future of the plantation system. A plantation system is inconceivable without resistant labour and the problems of continuing with the old order of things have been discussed here. In the peasant sector there is still scope for growth and exploitation of labour. The institutional changes are directed towards increasing the pace of intensification. This, while producing increased output and promoting the growth of the productive forces within the existing agrarian structures, will not necessarily reverse the trend of pauperization. Until now all the indications are that pauperization has been furthered. But how much of an agrarian problem is this phenomenon including landlessness?

As mentioned earlier, as long as landlessness is viewed as an agrarian problem the logical solution has to be land. Land reform or land distribution is viewed as a solution to landlessness. But this direct link between the two is only incidental in the final analysis. The democratization of an outmoded agrarian structure may become necessary to promote the growth of the productive forces, to turn the balance of class forces in favour of industrial

accumulation by breaking the power of landlordism in the countryside and to create a conservative and numerically strong section of small scale farmers as a political base for the consolidation and legitimation of the capitalist system. In this process the landless may become landed but developing capitalism absorbs the next generation, which is "landless" in an agrarian sense, in the urban labour market. "Landlessness" thus vanishes an agrarian problem.

It is the absence of this absorption that creates the "agrarian problem" in the countryside and not the lack of access to land. But where land is available a temporary outlet may be found. The question is how long this can go on in a country like Sri Lanka. State aided land colonization has been on for more than half a century. This costly extension of petty commodity production has neither given way to large scale capitalist farming nor solved the problems of landlessness and rural poverty. The problems are still with us and in terrible magnitudes. The stark lesson is that land is not the answer to "landlessness". The answer lies in turning pauperization into proletarianization, when the question is posed in terms of capitalist development. Capitalist rationality demands a conceptual differentiation between land as a means of production to promote private accumulation and land as a means of subsistence for the landless poor. And now as state aided land colonization comes to the end of the road — thanks to the Accelerated Mahaweli it has come faster than expected — with the land frontier reaching its limit the stark truth of underdevelopment stands demystified.

Sri Lanka's experiences with the 'open model' since 1977 are an illustration of the impact of the ongoing international division of labour on a weaker economy in the periphery of the world capitalist system. The liberalization, carried out in the name of export oriented industrialization, while integrating the economy further into the world capitalist market has driven it to agriculture in search of new export sectors. It would seem that Sri Lanka will have to content itself as

(Continued on page 24)

The challenge of democracy in the Third World

Eqbal Ahmad (Research Director, Third World Programme, Institute of Policy Studies, Washington D. C.)

As an idea, democracy has achieved sanctity in the Third World, especially with the ruling elite. No government seems prepared to officially renounce it. Even those who reject "Western democracy" as unsuited to native cultures and conditions have claimed home-grown varieties — Direct Democracy, Islamic Democracy, Basic Democracy, Guided Democracy, Grassroots Democracy, and the like — as their indigenous alternative. Only rarely, and briefly, do Third World rulers lay claim to an entirely different, indigenous system. Thus, General Mohammed Zia ul Haq of Pakistan recently declared his Martial Law regime to be a "shoorocracy". But within days he modified the claim declaring his shoorocracy to be an Islamic democracy soon to be legitimized by "non-party elections". A few monarchies excepted, the large majority of Third World states have been given a democratic or its equivalent, republican, appellation. Hence, there is the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the Democratic Socialist Republic of Syria, the Popular Socialist Arab Republic of Libya, and so forth.

More than two decades ago, Arnold Toynbee thought this "sanctification of the word democracy" a peculiar phenomenon, an "illogical syllogism". The great historian ascribed it to the "prestige" of the West, and to the equation of power with democracy: "The West European people live under democratic political regimes; the West European peoples are powerful; therefore, democracy is a source of power". (1)

Toynbee had a point. The Third World ruling classes' verbal "commitment" to democracy is a function more of the need to appear "proper" to the Western world

than to their estimation of democracy either as an ideological virtue or a political necessity. **Their democratic professions should, however, be viewed as more than an expression of Western hegemony in the Third World; it is also an acknowledgment of popular aspirations, a compliment of vice to virtue, of vested interests to the common good. The dictatorship occasional bows to democracy — by promises of elections, creation of rubber stamp parliaments, and the like — symbolize the legitimacy democratic ideals have gained in the Third World.**

In practice, the democratic form of government has been on the decline in the Third World. The pattern was apparent first in Latin America. Having experienced decolonization and its sequel — neocolonialism — several decades earlier than the rest of us, development in Latin America have continued to foreshadow those in the rest of the Third World. Authoritarian oligarchies emerged in the southern hemisphere through the 1920's and 1930's; they became stable in the 1940's, and with few exceptions (Cuba, Mexico, Venezuela, Columbia) turned into neo-fascist politics in the 1960's and 1970's.

In Asia, the Middle East and Africa, an overwhelming majority of decolonized states began the era of independence as constitutional, generally parliamentary democracies. The constitutions, legislatures, and legal frameworks of the independent states were modeled after the colonial metropolises. The principles of separation of power, rule of law, adult suffrage, and government by elected majority were widely accepted. Many of these notions, jettisoned in practice, continue to define the ideal of government; their restoration

constitute today the primary demand of opposition movements in most Third World countries, a fact which underlines the persistence of democratic ideals. Yet, since the 1950's, when the first set of military (coups d'etat) occurred in the Middle East, Asia, and Africa, the democratic form of government has receded among us. In fact, since the mid-1960's, its absolute opposite — neo-fascist dictatorships — have been on the rise throughout the Third World. (2)

Of the eight identifiable contemporary systems of power in the Third World, even monarchies and settler colonial (Israel, South Africa) have proved somewhat harder than parliamentary governments. (There are: (1) Elective-Parliamentary: e.g., India, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Jamaica, Venezuela. (2) Ascriptive-Palace: e.g., Morocco, Nepal, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Jordan. (3) Dynastic-Oligarchic: e.g., Nicaragua under Somoza, Haiti, Paraguay. (4) Pragmatic-Authoritarian: e.g., Ivory Coast, Senegal, Tunisia, Zambia, Cameroon, Egypt. (5) Radical-Authoritarian: e.g., Algeria, Tanzania-Mexico, Iraq, Syria, Somalia, Libya. (6) Marxist-Socialist: e.g., Cuba, Vietnam, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, Angola. (7) Neo-Fascist: e.g., Brazil, Indonesia, Chile, Uruguay, Argentina (pre-Alfonsin), Iran, Zaire. (8) Settler-Colonial: Israel, South Africa. (For a brief discussion, see Eqbal Ahmad, "Post-Colonial Systems of Power", *Arab Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 11, No. 4, Fall 1980, pps. 350-63.)

The decline in democratic practice has been persistent not merely in the quantitative sense of the number of countries where dictatorships have replaced pluralistic politics but, more ominously, in qualitative terms. The last two decades have witnessed the impo-

sition of government by armed minorities which seek to perpetuate their power by sapping the strength of civil society. State power that expanded in many countries beyond law, devouring the countervailing institutions which are necessary to check untrammelled abuses of power. Centralized coercive governments have been suppressing traditional as well as modern pluralities — the social, cultural, and educational institutions which invest societies with their organic and creative substance. For principled and critical citizens, life has become increasingly precarious, pressures on the poor have mounted under the mainly pro-Western praetorian regimes. It is a stark fact of Third World life that during the last twenty years we have moved precipitously from dictatorship to tyranny, from authoritarianism to totalitarianism: from Peron to Pinochet, Sukarno to Suharto, Ayub to Zia, Abdul Karim Qasim to Saddam Hussain.

The paucity of democratic politics in the Third World is paralleled by the poverty of literature on the subject. In the first flushed years of decolonization, when constitutional democracy was adopted by the newly independent countries, many non-Marxist Western scholars claimed that democracy was a gift of the West to the East. They claimed for colonialism the kudos of having bequeathed democratic ideas and institutions to the colonized and ascribed its successful practice to the colonized and ascribed its successful practice to the colonial education of the native elites. However, after these infant democracies were overthrown often by those other "gifts" of colonialism — the armies and the bureaucracies — the scholars dwelled on the unsuitability of democratic government to Third World condition. In many instances they have argued for the necessity, even desirability of authoritarian rule during a necessarily prolonged "transition" from tradition to modernity. They presume that our "political cultures", being authoritarian, are inhospitable to democratic development. Our preindustrial; feudal "conformism" is held as

being inimical to the exercise of critical choices. Our beliefs, systems, values and habits are thought to be resistant to rational political discourse. Our social structures are believed geared to promote personalism, and charismatic following rather than shared decision-making. Our economic and social environment are portrayed as lacking the "requisites" of democracy. Above all, the great majority of Third World peoples, ill-fed, and maltreated, are deemed too ignorant to cast their ballots intelligently and rationally on the basis of issues and programs. The "failure" and "erosion" of the earlier democratic experiment is offered as proof of these postulates. These estimations of the Third World's unpreparedness for the democratic enterprise are echoed by our authoritarian rulers and their supporters. *These, however, add a certain anti-Western and nationalistic flavor to the condemnation of democracy. It is rejected as a borrowed, Western form of government alien to the "genius of our culture", unsuited to the needs of an illiterate mass, and stranger to a gloriously ancient civilization. The great nation in question is, nevertheless, said to believe in "true", as against the formal, Western-style democracy. These proponents of the Third World's unique avocation promise to find for the country concerned an alternative system of democracy appropriate to the needs and talents of "our" great nation (or religion, or civilization). This invariably entails the institution of a democracy without "divisive" political parties, without an "irresponsible" and "negative" press, and without "permissive" laws and "uncooperative" judges. The "failure" of liberal democracy in the Third World is cited as empirical proof of its unsuitability, and its alleged rejection by the people. (4)*

While the Third World's ruling elite and their foreign supporters have treated the issue of democracy negatively, the political left has, by and large, ignored it. The antipathy of the former is understandable. This paper argues that it is not in their interest to promote democratic development. **The indif-**

ference and in some instances outright hostility of the left is harder to explain. Even the emergence of a lively debate on the question of democracy in Eastern Europe, the USSR, and to a lesser extent, in China has failed to arouse much interest among Marxist scholars of the Third World. This lack of interest is evident in the symposia and anthologies in which the "state of the art" and collective interests of scholars in the field are normally reflected. (5)

The tendency of the left to ignore the question of democracy betrays a conventional outlook, the failure of large number of Third World Marxists to break from the presumptions and attitudes which grew out of the European experience in the 19th and 20th centuries. Just as the Third World left adopted Marx's and Lenin's view of the role of religion in society, without examining the objective realities, they swallowed whole Marx's and Lenin's largely critical view of bourgeois democracy as a mechanism for perpetuating class rule. This posture has serious problems and requires re-evaluation. It flows from an excessively textual and a historical interpretation of Marx and as a result, it bypasses the idealism and profoundly democratic values in classical Marxist conceptions. These include the belief that true democracy entails the elimination of division between governors and the governed; that it requires an operative commitment to the principle of equality and to empowering the disinherited masses; that it necessitates the dissolution of the coercive apparatus of centralized states; and that the essence of democratic development lies in a definitive devolution of power through its direct exercise by "communes"

A necessary, though at times much too compulsive commitment to seizure of power often promotes on the left an almost exclusive preoccupation with tactic, and blinds us to the problem of democratic consent and how to win it for socialism. Thus, we come

(Continued on page 24)

Reflections on revolutions in the Third World

Dayan Jayatilleka

“Frantz wrote ‘Les Damnés’ in just 3½ weeks. Later we knew that he had been suffering from leukaemia at the time”, said Eqbal Ahmad to me as we walked around the ‘Recsam’ grounds in Penang at which the CAP seminar was held. Eqbal likes to walk a lot. The son of two well known personalities in the Indian National Congress, who in 1947, had opposed the setting up of Pakistan, he joined the Algerian FLN in 1961, at the age of 23.

“They told me to work in the Press and Information Ministry, and to meet Mr. Fanon, at 2.00 o’clock one afternoon. At precisely 10 minutes past two I was sent into his office, and was surprised to be greeted by a well dressed black man. Of course that was Fanon. After a brief conversation he asked me whether my reading skills in French were as bad as my speaking. I said no. I got the job”.

Frantz was very considerate towards his colleagues. On occasion the rest of us used to work till the early hours of the morning. Fanon would come around three or four times, make coffee for us, and bring it over to our desks.

When I used to return to Tunis from the ‘Wilayas’ (the guerilla commands located in the ‘interior’, that is, in Algeria), Frantz used to take me to a cafe in town, and as I got progressively drunk, he would wag his finger at me and admonish me half-jokingly of not having sufficient discipline and behaving like a bourgeoisie.

What is my predominant impression of him? Well let me tell you a little story: Five years ago, the Algerian Ambassador phoned me and invited me over to meet

Dr. Eqbal Ahmad, a Pakistani, spent the years 1960-63 with the Algerian FLN and worked for three months with Frantz Fanon. In 1971 he was arrested together with Fathers Philip Berrigan and Daniel Berrigan and accused of a plot to kidnap Dr. Henry Kissinger, thereby becoming one of the famous Harrisburg Seven. He was editor of *Afric Asia* (Paris) and is on the Editorial Working Committee of *Race and Class*. He has taught at the School of Labour and Industrial Relations at Cornell

University and is currently Professor in Social Studies, Hampshire College, Amherst, Massachusetts. A Fellow of the Adlai Stevenson Institute, he is now a Senior Fellow at the Transnational Institute (Amsterdam) and its counterpart, the Institute of Policy Studies (Washington D. C.). He is a frequent contributor of *New Yorker* magazine, the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times*. Currently being tried in absentia by a Military Tribunal in Pakistan, he is 49 years old.

Josie, Fanon’s wife. Late in the conversation she said she remembered Frantz referring to me as ‘the hard one’. This surprised me and I countered that to an older man, I must have appeared a tough, angry, young one. At that point, Josie turned to the Ambassador and said: ‘You know, when Frantz died, he was just thirty-four’. Then it hit me: He was a young man, but never behaved boyishly. He was always so serious minded and mature an intellectual”.

The Algerian Revolution

Dr. Ahmad then proceeded to answer my question on the disappointing denouement of the Algerian Revolution, specifically its failure to make the transition to a socialist revolution, as did its contemporary, the Cuban. He traced it to the ‘Battle of Algiers’. That defeat meant the smashing of the advanced socialist cadre and their withdrawal to the countryside. This delinking with the working class of Algiers, and the weight of the countryside, influenced the ideological trajectory of the revolution adversely. Next came the division between the ‘interior’ and the ‘exterior’. The leaders in the exterior were afraid of the advanced cadre in the interior, one of whom toured the ‘wilayas’, strengthening and fighting

for the control of the military by the political. He was assassinated on the border, and everyone thought mistakenly, that the French did it. As the moment of decolonization drew near, the leadership in the exterior, built up a conventional army and held it reserve. So when Algeria became independent, there were three forces in the arena: the battle — weary ‘wilayas’ which had borne the brunt of the fighting; the rested, well-trained and well armed conventional force now under the command of Bourguiba; and finally, the political prisoners coming out of jail. The most prominent among the latter was Ahmad Ben Bella, to whom Radio Cairo had given much publicity and so had the French, in order to show that the struggle was foreign — inspired. So we had the ‘wilayas’, legitimacy but no power. The exterior leadership, with power (the Army) but no legitimacy, and Ben Bella with legitimacy but without power. Ben Bella and the Army united, to the detriment **both** of the ‘wilayas’ and the exiled leadership.

Meanwhile the mass movement was surging ahead. The workers movement had taken over the factories and but forward the slogan of ‘auto-gestion’ (i.e. workers control and self-management), perhaps

the high point of radicalization achieved by any revolution in the 'Third World' until then. Despite having smashed the radicalized 'wilayas', Ben Bella perhaps because he was responsive to the urban mass movement and also because he saw political opportunities in the phenomenon, supported 'auto-gestion'. In 1963 he held to draw up the Charter of Algiers. Seven of us worked on it and it still stands as one of the most radical and detailed political programmes worked out in the Third World. We repeatedly urged Ben Bella to broaden and strengthen the auto-gestion movement, but instead he moved precipitously to establish workers militias. At that point Bourguiba made his move, imprisoning Ben Bella, and smashing the auto-gestion. Bourguiba, incidentally was a very austere, puritanic man. The only luxury he permitted himself was smoking".

'Return of the Cities'

From the Algerian revolution, Dr. Ahmad went to discussing revolutionary warfare and Third World revolutions in general. After all he was the author of an 80 page essay on 'Revolutionary warfare and counter insurgency' in the volume on "National Liberation: Revolution in the Third World" edited by Norman Miller and Roderick Aya in 1971. He also penned a critical essay on Regis Debray in a collection of entitled "Regis Debray and the Latin American Revolution" edited by Leo Huberman and Paul M. Sweezy of the *Monthly Review*. Dr. Ahmad says he is revising, updating and expanding his writings on revolutionary Warfare for publication soon. Two new sections will be those on Urban Guerilla Warfare, totally missing from his earlier work, and the question of democracy within the revolutionary organization. He believes passionately in the latter and rejects a view which he 'bought' for some time, mainly that it is necessary to remain silent on these issues for the sake of solidarity. He says that from the Battle of Algiers right up to the Tupamaros, urban guerilla warfare pure and simple has proved a failure. However, in the contemporary period, the cities have become the engine

of revolution in the Third World in terms of the upsurge of working class, democratic and popular movements and insurrectionary struggles. The best analysis of this phenomenon The says has been undertaken by his nephew Ifthikar Ahmed in a recent essay called 'Return to the Cities' in which he deploys a wealth of data to explain this phenomenon in terms of global political-economy.

Eqbal Ahmad went on to speak in glowing terms of "the poor people of Southern Lebanon, a mere 110,000 in all" who, even after the dispersal and segmentation of the PLO, fought the Israeli occupying army and forced them to retreat, thus gravely damaging the myth of the latter's military invincibility.

India at the Crossroads

Dr. Ahmad is a frequent commentator on South Asian affairs in the quality American press and had some original observations on India. While he is a great admirer of the quasi-federalism and secularism that has kept multi-national India together for so long, he notes that Indian industry was enormously powerful but 50% of its people were living below the poverty line. Hence there was insufficient internal demand for its products. When I interrupted to tell him that this was the old Chinese argument that concluded with the need for India to penetrate the regional market, he said that his own view was distinct from this thesis of Indian expansionism. There are two other ways that India could go, he asserted: an internal restructuring and redistribution of income that could expand the domestic market or, and this he considered the more likely prospect, a massive shift into defense spending and the **militarization** of the economy. The big Indian business houses were already sending the brightest young people on scholarships to the West for the purpose of strategic studies. This he saw as evidence of a burgeoning 'military — industrial complex' in India. He remembers asking Moraji Desai at the time the Prime Minister, why India was going in for the production of the

Jaguar, a long-range attack aircraft, when millions were starving. "You do not understand, Dr. Ahmad" said Moraji kindly, "India is the only one of the World's four big powers that does not have long-range attack aircraft". Later Eqbal was invited for a chat by Mrs. Indira Gandhi, then in opposition. He asked her about the decision to produce the Jaguar. She disagreed with it vehemently and he was elated, until she added "I think the contract should have been given to Dassault". He went on to argue passionately his case that India's income disparities were such that they should not go in for this kind of venture. "But you do not understand, Dr. Ahmad" explained Mrs. Gandhi kindly, "India is the only one of the world's four big powers that does not have long-range attack aircraft".

India-Sri Lankan relations

Dr. Ahmad who is a renowned student of U.S. Foreign and military policy towards South Asia and the Third World, and whose anti-imperialist credentials have been questioned by any revolutionary movement or regime, finds it amusing that there are sections of the Sri Lankan Left who seriously believe that U.S. is working for or wishes the break-up of India. The long term aim of U.S. is to have a quasi-alliance with India and China against the Soviet Union, he says. The Soviet Union is not entirely unaware of this which is why it does not destabilise Zia regime in Pakistan which it could if it so wished to in a matter of months, for without a pro-American Pakistan the *raison-d'être* for the Indo-Soviet linkage would be gone. Rajiv Gandhi's close associates are Indian businessmen and could preside over such a shift away from the USSR, but Dr. Ahmed believes that this is much more a long or medium term scenario and definitely not a short term one.

This is certainly not going to take place in a time-frame that would affect the current ethnic time frame in Sri Lanka, he said. His reading of Delhi's policy is that it would give selective support to the Tamil guerilla groups but would not resort to direct military

intervention. It would not actively assist in carving out a separate state in Sri Lanka because it is highly averse to secessionism, particularly in the current context. But if the struggle gains such a momentum that the setting up of such a state were imminent, neither would it actively move to prevent it. What it would do is to support, at that point of time, the more nationalistic and less Marxist oriented segments of the Tamil movement. India's preferred policy however, and the one he presumes it's adopting at present would be to give selective support to Tamil guerillas in such a scale that they could keep the Colombo Government off balance and bring things to a point that Colombo accepts a political settlement that is seen in the region and the world to have taken place under Delhi's auspices. Such a role of peace maker would underline India's role as the preponderant regional power much more than would a direct military intervention. Delhi's primary objective is to make Colombo recognise of that role.

Nativism and the Left

From the ethnic crisis, we moved on to discuss the current situation of Sri Lankan Left. I had earlier given Dr. Ahmad, the sixth anniversary issue of the L. G. which contained Newton Gunasinghe's analysis of the contending 'lines' in the Lankan Left, and went on to apprise him of the debates we were now involved in, on the question of culture. I also told him that we detect fascistoid tendencies in 'line one' and consider this debate part of the anti-fascist struggle in the domain of ideology. He strongly agreed, urged us to continue this ideological struggle, said he would do anything in this regard and volunteered to write an article on this theme for the L. G.

He said that he had spent three months in Iran and almost had a nervous breakdown, going from Left grouping attempting to convince them that the Westernized liberal bourgeois elements such as Karim Sanjabi, Mehdi Bazargan and Bani-Sadr weren't their main enemy. "I trekked from meeting to meeting warning them that they would be

slaughtered. But no, they wouldn't listen, they were too fixated by the 'anti-bourgeois' struggle and the idea these sections would be utilized by U.S. imperialism. Now however, after defeat, they seek me out, tell me I was correct and ask me for my opinions", said Dr. Ahmad. He thinks that the Sri Lankan Left must bloc with those liberal elements, if any, who support a negotiated political settlement to the ethnic issue. The Left must also struggle against any tendency to elapse into isolationism, primitivistic parochialism, **nativism** and **traditionalism**, which is evidence of the inability to offer the people a **future-oriented** alternative programme. In Iran today, the hegemonic social forces are the mullahs and the lumpen-proletariat. The latter dominate almost all the institutions of today's Iran. Some analysts even characterize the Iranian regime as a classical fascist one, and term it 'clerico-fascist' he said.

Our conversation that night concluded with an assessment of Third World leaders. He had met Che at the U.N. and remembers him as "a very beautiful man, radiating a clean glow". Inevitably we spoke of Fidel and I commented on the ovations that he received at NAM summits and the UN General Assembly, from Heads of State and representatives of many reactionary pro-U.S. regimes. That I thought, reflected the moral-ideological hegemony that Fidel exerted. "You think **that's** ideological hegemony?" scoffed Eqbal. "Let me tell you a story: in 1965 I was interviewing senior U.S. officials about the conduct of the Vietnam war. I managed to talk to Asst. Secretary of Defence, Kirkpatrick, at the Pentagon. After the interview I asked him about Guevara's disappearance and whether he gave credence to the rumour that Che had been imprisoned or executed as a result of a power struggle. Mr. Kirkpatrick rejected the theory totally. I asked him why. 'Because', he replied, 'Fidel Castro says it is not so, and in politics, Castro has never been known to lie'.

"**That's** ideological hegemony for you", concluded Eqbal Ahmad.

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JURISTS DECRY REAGAN'S FOREIGN POLICY

(This statement has been inserted in the *International Herald Tribune*, *TIME*, *NEWSWEEK*, *Le Monde* and other leading journals by the I. P. O., Vienna.)

The International Conference on the Reagan Administration's Foreign policy convened in Brussels from 28—30 September, 1984 under the auspices of the International Progress Organization. Reports were submitted by international jurists and foreign policy specialists on various aspects of the Reagan Administration's foreign policy. Among the participants of the conference were Sean MacBride (Nobel Peace Laureate, Ireland), Prof. George Wald (Nobel Laureate, Harvard University), General Edgardo Mercado Jarrin (Peru), General Nino Pasti (former Deputy Supreme Commander of NATO) and Hortensia Bussi de Allende (Chile). The reports were presented before a Panel of Jurists consisting of Hon. Farouk Abu-Eissa (Sudan), Attorney, former Foreign Minister, Secretary-General of the Arab Lawyers Union; Prof. Francis A. Boyle (U.S.A.), Professor of International Law from the University of Illinois, Chairman; Dr. Hans Goeran Franck (Sweden), Attorney, Member of the Swedish Parliament; Hon. Mirza Gholam Hafiz (Bangladesh), Former Speaker of the Bangladesh Parliament and currently a Senior Advocate of Bangladesh Supreme Court; Hon. Mary M. Kaufman (U.S.A.), Attorney-at-Law, prosecuting attorney at the Nuremberg War Crimes Trial against I. G. Farben; Dr. Jean-Claude Njem (Cameroon), Assistant-Professor at the Faculty of Law, Uppsala University, and a Consultant of the Government; Prof. Alberto Ruiz-Eldredge (Peru), Professor of Law, former President of the National Council of Justice; and Dr. Muemtaz Soysal (Turkey), Professor of Constitutional Law, University of Ankara. An accusation against the International legality of the Reagan Administration's foreign policy was delivered by the Honorable Ramsey Clark, former U. S. Attorney General. The defense was presented by a legal expert of the Reagan Administration.

Based upon all the reports and documents submitted and the arguments by the advocates, the Brussels panel of Jurists hereby renders the following conclusions concerning the compatibility of the Reagan Administration's foreign policy with the requirements of international law:

A. Introduction

General Introduction. The Reagan Administration's foreign policy constitutes a gross violation of the fundamental principles of international law enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations Organisation, as well as of the basic rules of customary international law set forth in the U. N. General Assembly's Declaration on the Inadmissibility of Intervention in the Domestic Affairs of States and the Protection of Their Independence and Sovereignty (1965),

its Declaration on Principles of International Law Concerning Friendly Relations and Co-operation Among States in Accordance with the Charter of the United Nations (1970), and its Definition of Aggression (1974), among others. In addition, the Reagan Administration is responsible for complicity in the commission of Crimes Against Peace, Crimes Against Humanity, War Crimes and grave breaches of the Third and Fourth Geneva Conventions of 1949.

B. Western Hemisphere

Grenada. The Reagan Administration's 1983 invasion of Grenada was a clearcut violation of U. N. Charter articles 2 (3), 2 (4), and 33 as well as of articles 18, 20 and 21 of the Revised OAS Charter for which there was no valid excuse or justification under international law. As such, it constituted an act of aggression within the meaning of article 39 of the United Nations Charter.

Nicaragua. The Reagan Administration's policy of organizing and participating in military operations by opposition *contra* groups for the purpose of overthrowing the legitimate government of Nicaragua violates the terms of both the U. N. and O. A. S. Charters prohibiting the threat or use of force against the political independence of a state. The Reagan Administration has flouted its obligation to terminate immediately its support for the opposition *contra* groups in accordance with the Interim Order of Protection issued by the International Court of Justice on 10 May 1984.

International Court of Justice. The Panel denounces the patently bogus attempt by the Reagan Administration to withdraw from the compulsory jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice in the suit brought against it by Nicaragua for the purpose of avoiding a peaceful settlement of this dispute by the World Court in order to pursue instead a policy based upon military intervention, lawless violence and destabilization of the legitimate government of Nicaragua.

Mining Nicaraguan Harbors. The Reagan Administration's mining of Nicaraguan harbors violates the rules of international law set forth in the 1907 Hague Convention on the Laying of Submarine Mines, to which both Nicaragua and the United States are parties.

C. Nuclear Weapons Policies

Arms Control Treaties. The Reagan Administration has refused to support the ratification of the Threshold Test Ban Treaty of 1974, the Peaceful Nuclear Explosions Treaty of 1976, and the SALT II Treaty of 1979, in addition to renouncing the longstanding objective

of the U. S. government to negotiate a comprehensive test ban treaty. As such the Reagan administration has failed to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament as required by article 6 of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty of 1968.

Pershing 2 Missiles. The deployment of the offensive, first-strike, counterforce strategic nuclear weapons system known as the Pershing 2 missile in the Federal Republic of Germany violates the Non-Circumvention Clause found in article 12 of the SALT II Treaty.

No-first-use. In accordance with U. N. General Assembly Resolution 1953 of 24 November 1961, the panel denounces the refusal by the Reagan Administration to adopt a policy mandating the no-first-use of nuclear weapons in the event of a conventional attack as required by the basic rule of international law dictating proportionality in the use of force even for the purposes of legitimate self-defense.

D. Middle East

Lebanon. For the part it played in the planning, preparation and initiation of the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon, the Reagan Administration has committed a Crime against Peace as defined by the Nuremberg Principles. Likewise, under the Nuremberg principles, the Reagan Administration becomes an accomplice to the Crimes against Humanity, War Crimes and Grave Breaches of the Third and Fourth Geneva Conventions of 1946 that have been committed or condoned by Israel and its allied Phalange and Haddad militia forces in Lebanon. Such complicity includes the savage massacre of genocidal character of hundreds of innocent Palestinian and Lebanese civilians by organized units of the Phalangist militia at the Sabra und Shatila refugee camps located in West Beirut that were then subject to the control of the occupying Israeli army.

The Palestinian Question. The Reagan Administration's policy towards the Palestinian people as the Reagan "Peace Plan" of 1 September 1982 violates the international legal right of the Palestinian people to self-determination as recognized by U. N. Charter article 1 (2). As recognized by numerous U. N. General Assembly Resolutions, the Palestinian people have an international legal right to create an independent and sovereign state.

Israeli Settlements. The Reagan Administration's declared position that Israeli settlements in the Occupied Territories are "not illegal" is a

(Continued on page 24)

FOREIGN RESPONSES

Rajiva Wijesinha

Over all there brood the shadows of the United States and the Soviet Union. The Russians of course would like more recognition, and aid and assistance would to some extent amount to this, of what must seem to them orthodox and amenable Marxist-Leninist states. However, they clearly cannot seem too eager about this. Hence what amount almost to hole and corner assignations and interrogations, as to what developments there have been in the attitude of any nation, what perceptions as to the attitudes of others, even perhaps a marginal disquiet as to what Vietnam could just conceivably independently be offering in exchange. After all it cannot be denied that the population in general is not overfond of the Russians. They resent foreign domination, and they have fought several wars to assert that fact. Though the Russians are there by invitation, in so unequal a relationship there must be an element of patronage, and if it were to become too obvious there is little doubt that the Vietnamese would resent it more actively. As it is, the large numbers in the Embassy, the obtrusive progress of Russian gentlemen and, even more obviously, ladies in the street, the preponderance of Russian books and the insistence on teaching Russian in the schools, all provoke reactions that suggest a more cosmopolitan attitude on the part of the Vietnamese.

The Americans of course have no official presence. Apparently after the war the Vietnamese had wanted reparations, or at least aid, as a condition of recognition. By the time they dropped this demand, Carter was about to establish relations with China, and before he could move on even had he wanted to go to Vietnam, the Cambodian problem intervened and of course the Chinese determination in that regard. Fortunately however, though

America does control the purse strings with regard to UN agencies, either the capacity or the intransigence is lacking to prevent some of them from functioning in Vietnam-Cambodia of course is another question.

Yet, leaving aside the question of as instance, there are problems even about trade. The Socialist blood is dominant here, perhaps unfortunately so. One heard for instance the story about the country that took a million bicycles (one of the most prominent of Vietnam's manufactured goods), when its population is less than ten times that amount. They must use an awful lot of bicycles, the Vietnamese say wistfully; the cynical claim that they are re-exported to the West for the dollars Vietnam so desperately needs, instead of which it has to make do with bartered goods. The positive thing, if it can be called that, is that the Japanese have begun to move in, to be ready and waiting to start making profits the moment things open up.

Whether it will be soon no one can tell. The Americans of course still have an embargo, Vietnam being officially still an enemy. My merchant banking friend in Hong Kong said rather lamely that it was because it was thought that they still held prisoners of war, an unlikely story according to the diplomats in Hanoi. (Of course, my friend in Hanoi also added airily, no one's interested any longer in Sri Lanka either. We think it's a bit uncivilized, apart from being unsafe of course, that your government has done nothing about the massacres. The German confirmed this — and his bank of course had no problems about dealing with Vietnam if there were ever sufficient incentive. Perhaps my sympathy should more anxiously be expended upon ourselves).

Vietnam anyway continues poor, the poorest nation perhaps that I

have yet seen except possibly for Nepal. There are very few cars in the streets, hardly any consumer goods in the shops, little beyond the basics in the market; more importantly, the streets are badly lit, the houses predominantly peeling and decayed, the children small and frail. Outside Hanoi, or rather in the one small town through which we passed and the spreading countryside, the situation seems even more bleak. The Japanese, who lost their war to the Americans might seem to have been luckier even if they were not given reparations, at least they received aid, as did the Germans, benefits from which victory debars one!

Yet there are positives too to be registered. There is no starvation. The child labour one reads about in Thailand, the homeless one sees in Bombay or even in Colombo, the beggars and the waifs, are not in evidence in Hanoi. The importunate shining of children so many foreigners have to put up with in Sri Lanka does not exist, instead there is a healthy independence about the amiable curiosity of both young and old. There may be few cars, but everyone apparently is given a bicycle, and the streets are full of them, careering wildly about it seems, but obviously in patterns that preclude accidents. The education system is as comprehensive as our own, very different from what obtains in most other parts of South East Asia. And this year at last food production has begun to show signs of improvement.

Parks and cathedrals

So the memory that remains, though the people might be slight and could do with better nourishment and perhaps more possessions, as doubtless most nations could, is one of content

ment. Characteristic are parks, in which the young frolic (vast numbers of them, and if one thing seems more essential than any other, it is an accelerated programme of family planning) while old men, eager to use their now rusty French, limp in the afternoon sunshine; couples sit on the terrace of the cafe overlooking the lake while policemen in red and white singlets row across the water or perform gymnastics on a decorated platform put up specially for the anniversary celebrations. There is even a hoopla stall where they are unwilling to take any money, but hand out heaps of rings to be flung at packets of cigarettes, local and foreign, the latter at the back.

The park is called Lenin Park, but reminds one rather of the Bois de Boulogne, where the old men play boule with the same air of languid enthusiasm. There are other traces too of the French, most notably the opera house constructed in 1911, not especially grand but full of glitter, with tiers of balconies and elaborate stair cases. Apart from performances by the young, it is used now too for revolutionary dramas of a characteristically socialist sort, as the costumes carefully laid out backstage for the explorer indicated, blue peasant blouses and smart tunics and a beautiful dress in a special place for the prima donna.

And above all the houses. Avenue after avenue in what must have once been the elegant quarter and was still relatively distinguished of three or four story yellow or white structures with balconies and turrets and shuttered windows that dominated the facades. Oddly enough, perhaps because of the tranquil air, I was reminded most of Narbonne, deep in the south of France, where I had spent a few warm and lazy days seven years before. That too had been unhurried, a museum where no one else came all afternoon and I had fallen asleep, cheap restaurants with squalid exteriors where the food had been divine, sudden perceptions of the continuity of civilization and the sense of community in the most diverse places. Hanoi of course was a capital city, and one was always conscious of the political forces that governed it and

the lives of its citizens, but the parallel wrought by memory has its significance too.

There was also a cathedral. Set in a quite square just by the little lake, it had been built over a hundred years ago in a modest Gothic style that made all the more impressive the high arched ceiling of the central nave. If had to be approached from the back, for the great wooden front doors were only opened for services, held twice a day and more often on Sundays. Finding the entrance was made even more difficult by the fact that the school that had belonged to the cathedral and was still just next to it had been taken over by the government and been walled off from the cathedral complex. One had therefore to go down a little alley some way off, past the cardinal's palace and several other buildings belonging to the complex before arriving at the right door. Of course it was locked, and the rain was coming down in torrents, but application at one of the buildings where a young priest was conducting a small catechism class soon produced an older and more authoritative priest who came out into the rain with the keys. We talked at length in French after I had looked around; **though religion is not encouraged there is no concerted attempt at undermining it**, and there are even a few seminaries from which the occasional ordination takes place. Certainly out in the countryside too one saw not a few churches, though there was no opportunity to see their condition. My new acquaintances chief regret seemed to be that there was little possibility of a visit from the Pope. Even the fact that they had no more involvement in education he seemed to accept philosophically, with not more than a slight sigh. Of course my comprehension may not have been perfect, and he may have thought it necessary to be cautious; but he seemed ingenuous enough, and in any case it was somewhat different from the repression I had somehow imagined would obtain.

Art and culture

If Catholicism relatively speaking was flourishing, so too as one

would expect was Buddhism. The city was full of pagodas, baroque affairs with tiers of golden Buddha images rising behind ornate altars, kings and princelings with splendid beards also enshrined on either side, huge china pots elaborately decorated, intricate figurines and flaring joss-sticks. In some there were rooms around the central courtyard in which classes were taking place, one of what seemed youthful cadres, the other conceivably incipient monks. Two of the pagodas were locked, but one was opened on the spot by a decrepit old lady who seemed to live in a tiny room underneath the shrine; the other was guarded by a fierce female who might have been a budding nun from her headgear, but was more probably a representative of secular authority, for before she would consider letting me in she wanted to see my papers. I had of course not brought them, it being the first and only time in Vietnam that I was confronted by that irritating requirement of overzealous states.

Only one pagoda, that of Literature ironically, was no longer in use, apparently now a museum for which an entry fee was charged. It is in a long walled courtyard divided into several sections by fantastic gates. The longest rectangular area has several ponds in which little boys fish, while others play cards in the shadow of the gate; in the outer court a host of young people were staying with two guns, which they proudly showed me as we passed. Otherwise all is still, rows of monuments to dead ecclesiastics mounted on giant tortoises, heavy gongs cast in resoding bronze that died thinly away, little old men pouring themselves tea in the cupboards alongside one wall in which they seemed to live.

The other pagodas showed more signs of worship. I arrived at one just before noon, to see plates piled high with offered food, chickens and crustaceans and mounds of sweetmeats, more it seemed than I had noticed in the market place. In another a stout middle-aged lady tried to teach how to pray, insistent that I follow her

in striking three times the gong before the altar. On the little altars on either side there are pictures of the recent dead, a surprising number of them with fresh flowers or incense before them. In another temple the old custodian told me with pride about one of the kings whose statue crowned one of the altars, how he had defeated the Mongols three times in the 11th Century.

A very different form of Buddhism from that in Sri Lanka, I would have thought, **except that in one pagoda there were actually Sinhalese letters to be seen!** It was one of four languages, Vietnamese and English and I think Thai being the others, under a colourful series of pictures depicting Jataka stories ranged right along the top of one of the walls of the courtyard. It was beneath this that the classroom was situated in which I thought I noted incipient monks.

Then there were the museums. Culture is represented by a museum of history and one of art. The downstairs of the latter is a picture gallery, with specimens from the first half of the century that seemed to derive to some extent from the French, Cezanne and Renoir and even to some extent, incongruously as slant-eyed beauties walked across stately lawns, Watteau. In the last few rooms there was modern art, classics doubtless as compared with similar works of the last few years that were on display too in what seemed a temporary exhibition near the little lake. Uncle Ho was dominant here, surrounded by his nephews and occasionally nieces, in recreation or sometimes creation such as the planting of trees. More striking were pictures of the war, of destruction and of resistance; and of course there were the usual examples of rousing socialist art, though thankfully not too many, of eager young men engaged in strenuous manual labour. Such theoretical aspirations seemed a far cry from the grace one saw in the people, very different from their large patrons.

Real art was upstairs in the art museum also in the museum of history once one had got beyond the

potsherds and bronze fragments that showed how long ago civilization had begun in that area. Porcelain and bronze, large monstrous mendicant figures from the seventeenth century and delicate miniatures from half a millennium before, jade and jadeite, and the massive tortoises that seemed to provide some sort of continuity even if mainly for the dead. The rooms were quiet, with only the very occasional visitor, and unobtrusive guards who padded about silently, only once or twice attempting in halting French to point out some particular speciality. They seemed proud of how far back it all went, and no wonder, for what came out most clearly in the history museum was the number of wars that had to be fought to preserve the various kingdoms.

Memories of liberation

And so to the most interesting museum, refusing to alter all these years, that of the Liberation. Almost incredulously I felt obliged to touch the remains of the B-52s, standing lopsidedly on the lawns, the terrifying dragons bearing fire and destruction of which one had read. There were relics too of other aspects of what was evidently considered the same thing, batteries captured from the French and, more startlingly, guns used against the Chinese in the wars of 1979 and 1981. It seems that the liberation has still to be brought to final fruition.

The Museum is set in the old French fort, right in the heart of Hanoi, between the little lake and Ho Chi Minh's grand tomb. (The body incidentally, more fearfully lifelike apparently even than Lenin's, could not be seen, having been taken away to Moscow for repair; however two soldiers stood outside replete in braid and pomposity, very different from the amiable policemen to whom one had grown accustomed, also present of course to wave one away almost apologetically from too near the monument while the soldiers stood impassive.) The fort is the army headquarters now, and entry beyond the Museum is restricted, though there too the same easy air pre-

vails as in the rest of the city. One decaying tower alone remains of the four the walls originally possessed, and from halfway up one can look down on the city and imagine the helplessness of the French soldiers as the irresistible tide of nationhood rolled up the streets in 1954. **De Gaulle, the French told me, had probably been ready to reach an agreement with Ho Chi Minh in 1946, in spite of the prejudices of the French military governor, but then he had gone out of office and the whole wretched cycle had begun.** The former American State Department official met later, who had indeed been to Vietnam himself, and to Cambodia, unofficially of course, in 1983, confirmed that Ho Chi Minh had turned then to the west; Russia had at that stage not wanted to let down the French Communists who had of course been unable to support independence for Vietnam in their drive for electoral popularity in France; America had however seen in Ho Chi Minh's ideology an insuperable barrier and had in time thrown its weight on the other side.

Inside the museum, in addition to a massive model of Dien Bien Phu, which finally did for the French, there are pictures of how the war was carried on. The equipment they had was minimal; men survived in tunnels for years, emerging at intervals to strike a blow before retreating to wait patiently again. In between there are letters the leaders wrote, the furniture they used, even their personal possessions, elevated now to the status of relics; and there are also remains of the conquered, ten powerful nations brought down by sheer force of will, themselves involved not only against common sense but even against their own interests. The French certainly are back in force, the only nation to possess too a Consulate in Ho Chi Minh city. They too will be ready when things open up, after thirty years.

Of course one had read the Amnesty Report before going to Hanoi, about the Re-education camps in which thousands of officials and military leaders of the former Saigon regime are still held. It is not a pleasant account and the theory that such detention without trial

is better because it does not leave a permanent blot on an individual's record simply does not hold water. However, the numbers do seem to be coming down' and the most recent figure evidently quoted by the American Secretary of State, much lower than previous suggestions advanced, was 10,000.

This was in the context of taking them into the United States. The problem is that Hanoi insists on all being taken, and this would include common criminals too since theft and so on are also considered crimes against the state and therefore fit subjects concerning which re-education should be applied. The numbers involved however will probably make the problem relatively easy to resolve, once the bickering is over and sufficient points have been scored on either side. After all, far more boat people were absorbed all over, though of course those were largely the overseas Chinese whom regrettably the Vietnamese distrusted as possible fifth columnists in the light of deteriorating relations between China and Vietnam. Those in the re-education camps are ethnic Vietnamese, but doubtless except in Vietnam itself that is simply a detail.

It would have been instructive to have seen it all oneself though, but of course that could not be arranged. What is generally possible if one presses is a visit to Ho Chi Minh City, the Saigon of youthful legends, where the lifestyle is apparently very different to that in Hanoi, more cosmopolitan. The diplomats certainly welcome the opportunity to go there whenever possible.

But in a week that had not proved possible. The only journey outside Hanoi. Apart from the long drive from and to the airport, across the new bridge built by the Russians to withstand across the Red River, was a picnic on the Sunday to two pagodas. Permits had to be obtained, but about those there was no problem. About the roads there was. It had rained the previous evening, and it drizzled steadily all morning, and by the time we left the main road and go onto the dykes that dominate the countryside (it had been a close thing as to whether

they would be bombed during the war, just before Kissinger decided to give up, and the floodgates opened) the dirt roads were impassable. The cars slithered wildly for some time while our guide insisted that things would improve, and then we decided to abandon the project.

So we lunched in what must have been the best restaurant in a small town, where they gave us a private room. In a sense it was more impressive than the restaurants in Hanoi, where you ate in close stone-flagged rooms up narrow stairs that rose, though the food was delicious, from dirty streets and squalid passage-ways. For our picnic we had a view out over a little ornamental pond, which also turned out to be the only lavatory in the restaurant, and beyond to fields across which cows wandered along with their keepers to view us with detachment as we made our way steadily through cold chicken and camembert.

The only irritant was what seemed to be the local party informer who insisted on joining us. We told him that we were Russians, myself Cuban, but he seemed dubious about this and regarded us with a beady eye while pouring himself glass after glass of our precious champagne. As the afternoon wore on and we grew more benign, even towards him, he seemed only to get more morose. Even the heaps of bananas we left him, bought in a mistaken fit of enthusiasm in the market, failed to move him to warmth.

It was only as we left that, vague memories of a long ago visit to Russia floating through my mind, I had a brainwave. 'Nasvidanje.' I said.

His face burst into a broad smile, the wrinkles all closely crinkled up. 'Nasvidanje.' he burred, clutching both my hands in his and shaking them vigorously. 'Nasvidanje.'

It obviously justified everything.

Yet in Hanoi one realized it had been silly to feel disquiet.

Alliance does not mean dependence, as the current history of so many other South and South-East Asian countries testifies. In any case, it was not in small towns nor even in the former Saigon that the future of the cause would be decided. The flurried diplomacy in Hanoi, the questions, the answers the contacts, even if they did not ultimately decide anything, were what mattered. From that one could discern a softening of harsh outlines, a readiness to accept the country on its own terms that would in turn lead it to establishing internationally the identity it had in the real sense never been without. The only way it could lose that would be through bitter intransigence that would weaken it further; and even that was dubious, given how impressively it had survived its trials for so long.

(Concluded)

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The eighties so far has not produced anything worth noticing

Tilak A. Gunawardena

While the 43rd Group looked towards Europe for inspiration, others who were emerging from rural backgrounds were looking towards India for guidance. Young men who had the talent enrolled themselves at Santhinikethan for music, dance, and art, and when they returned they caught the imagination of the vast majority of the people, who were closer to India in culture than to Britain. Their musical productions, dances and exhibitions presented new horizons to people, who were looking for things closer to their own culture and values. Samarakoon, who really studied music and who composed the national anthem, held his first exhibitions in the forties, and he showed his unmistakable allegiance to the new Bengal school. Drawing mainly with water colours he went for a delicate abstraction, put without the juxtaposition of perspectives as in Keyt. They were dominated by a literary symbolic sense, and which has become the main mode of those who kept on painting in the same style. They were interested in colour, but not in the way colour was used by the French Impressionists. They were trying to find visual counterparts to ideas in Buddhism, so the paintings are given such titles as 'Maitree' (compassion), Mara (evil) or Love. An abstract idea provided the initial impetus and paint and line were to guide the viewer to an establishment of a certain religious rapport with the work of art. Manjusiri who was a Bikkhu once, followed Samarakoon in spirit, but found a style of his own in his better known paintings.

There was a Marc Chagal atmosphere about them, again with the symbolic aspect given prominence.

1956 marked a change that is still being discussed. In social terms power passed from the British incited representatives of the bourgeoisie to the petite bourgeoisie who were largely educated in Sinhala, and predominantly Buddhist by upbringing. But long before 1956, and the irreversible political changes that took place at the time, cultural changes were also taking place. With the departure of the British the agitation for a re-ordering of society on new lines was on. But the nature of the new society was not at all clear, and as in all ex-colonial countries of the East, there was a need for a re-affirmation of the pre-colonial national, cultural or linguistic identities. In Sri Lanka there was agitation for the replacement of English as the official language by Sinhala mainly, and the inculcation of Buddhist values among the young in place of European ones. How far these objects were achieved is another matter, but these agitations did not leave art untouched.

In the fifties Mapalagama Wipulasara started a campaign against Mudliyar Amarasekera, and got him ousted from the post of President of the Ceylon Society of Arts, which post he held for a long time. That was typical of the kind of politicisation of life that had taken place. Everywhere people who were essentially British in their outlook, and who held positions of prestige and power were threatened, and then removed

from their offices either through the ballot, or through the direct intervention of the Government. In the field of art it was this tendency that was responsible for the Mudliyar's departure from the main seat of artistic administration. At the time the Annual Society of Arts exhibition was the main artistic event, and all those who had serious ambitions of becoming recognised artists sent their work to the Art Gallery. It was artists like Mudliyar Amarasekera who decided on whether a painting, drawing or sculpture was to be exhibited or not.

He and others on the selection committee decided on the kind of art to be encouraged, and they naturally preferred the naturalistic. It is true that a number of artists like Stanley Abeyasinghe, J. D. A. Perera, Tissa Ranasinghe, Lankatilake, who had talent, and who were infinitely better than Amarasekera did get the opportunity to exhibit periodically. But with the rise of the Sinhala intelligentsia, and their active participation in the government and in policy making bodies, art of the elder establishment too came under scrutiny. Mapalagama Wipulasara, a bikkhu, who learnt the rudiments of painting from Mudliyar Amarasekera, opted for a slightly modernised temple mural style of painting that was current prior to the arrival of the British. Wipulasara wanted the temple style painters given a prominent place in the annual exhibitions of the Society of Arts, and the management refused, and for good reasons. Their paintings were no better than copies of Kandyan temple murals,

confined to two or three basic colours, and showing no sign of awareness of developments in painting either in Europe or India. They were simple, stylised, two dimensional drawings, more in the nature of designs than paintings. With the force of the awakened masses behind them, Wipulasara was successful in ousting the arch enemy of the Sinhala Buddhists from his dictatorial place in the Society of Arts. There followed hundreds of imitations of temple murals (of the pre-Sarlis era)

The Wipulasara movement did not take long to run into difficulties. Artists are by nature experimental, if they have some talent and imagination. No serious artist would consider imitating someone else, and once artists realised the futility of the traditional mode advocated by a person who had little or no creative imagination, they went elsewhere. From the sixties onwards even though there were exhibitions, there were no really fruitful trends visible. The work of the 43rd Group had also no admirers, and George Keyt was the only one among them who continued to paint and exhibit. Politically the left failed to achieve much success. Economically the country was facing serious difficulties, with prices of tea and rubber falling, and prices of essential commodities rising. The United Front Government of 1956 was followed by a U.N.P. government, and then again by an S.L.F.P. dominated government. Neither government brought about any far reaching changes that improved the lot of the ordinary people, and the left in particular was almost completely wiped out at the 1977 elections, bringing a Government pledged to free trade, and anti-socialist measures. During this period we have the rise of Senaka Senanayake, who showed unmistakable talent as a young man, and who had the resources to travel and exhibit abroad. Interesting though his styles are, he will not be recognised as a great painter. His background was bourgeois, and insulated from the kind of day to day struggles of the general run of painters, he has been happily experimenting with formalistic elements, and pro-

ducing murals in hotels to lull the incoming tourists into a sense of mild euphoria.

A couple of years ago George Keyt, exhibited paintings in a phase that may be termed 'SAIVAITE' and I think it marked the end of the road for him. There was nothing new in it except the subject matter, and even that failed to arouse much of a response from viewers. With nothing meaningful happening in society, he probably took refuge in sex. The phenomenon of the young in the west turning away from banalities of consumerist societies and migrating to the East in search of religion, marijuana and sex, I thought was partly reflected in Keyt's paintings of the 'SAIVITE' phase. And recently, as I observed at the beginning of this article, he had exhausted the possibilities if the SAIVA cult too, and is back at square one. In spite of Ian Gononetilake's very sympathetic review that appeared in some of the leading daily papers, Keyt does not pose any new artistic challenges. He has recoiled from taking new creative steps and has provided the viewer with only the ghost of his earlier work. The eighties so far has not produced anything worth noticing, for the challenges that the artists face today are formidable. On the one hand it is difficult for them as for others to see a very bright future ahead, and on the other the very struggle to make sense out of the present cannot leave much energy for artistic creation.

(Concluded)

Trends . . .

(Continued from page 1)

Mrs. Sunethra Ranasinghe, the Minister of Teaching Hospitals, admitted that there was a serious shortage of cotton wool in the Accident Ward. No money? The General Hospital staff had to get the urgently required wool from the Army Hospital.



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History and ideology in Sri Lanka

BOOK
REVIEW

N. Shanmugaratnam

*Ethnicity & Social Change in
Sri Lanka (Social Scientists
Association, 1984)*

“All history”, wrote Engels in August 1890 in a letter to Conrad Schmidt, “much be studied afresh”. History writing is a class business although some historians do it unconsciously. Colonial historiography employed terms like “rebellion” and “mutiny” to discredit people’s revolutionary uprisings as criminal acts of miscreants against ‘law and order’. (The word “terrorism” has gained wider currency in contemporary official literature aimed at discrediting liberation struggles). The Colonial Raj left behind a trained native academia which adopted the same paradigm but with certain minor alterations to meet the changing ideological needs of the establishment. When such historiography turned its probe into the precolonial periods it became even more vulgar. In the hands of some authors ancient chronicles with their myths and ideological adulterations of facts assumed the status of authoritative sources. Marc Bloch said, “the historian is in no sense a free man. Of the past he knows only so much as the past is willing to yield up to him.” But as to how much the past will yield, and in what quality, will depend a great deal on one’s approach to it.

Almost all the written history of our earlier past is a history of great kings, court intrigues and dynastic battles. Looking at some of our text books of history one wonders how all this happened without the people who “alone are the motive force of history”, to borrow a pregnant phrase from the now forgotten Little Red Book. And as such history trickled down into the common sense of the people through the various channels of the ideological state ap-

paratus it turned into folklore enriched by popular creative accretions. People viewed and lived their past through folklore. The new ideologues of modern nationalism have managed to turn folklore into authentic history with their own ‘creative’ contributions — some ingredients of populism to create a new ideology with a cross-class appeal. History has never been told as pure facts but as an amalgam of carefully chosen facts and fiction interwoven by an ideology. It is this last element that holds the key to ascertain the class bias of historiography and the motives of the historians.

But Engels’s call has not gone unheeded in Sri Lanka. The authors of the twelve papers contained in “Ethnicity and Social change in Sri Lanka” (published by the Social Scientists Association of Sri Lanka, SSA) have addressed their minds to some of the burning issues of history in our times. The topics cover a wide range of problems from the peopling of Sri Lanka to the politics behind standardisation in university admissions and much misconceived matter of ethnic imbalances in employment. I am no historian. My concern with history is mainly political. Like many of my fellow Sinhalese, Tamils and Muslims in Sri Lanka, I am keen to understand the historical roots of the agonising communal strife that has torn our society. I attended the SSA seminar of 1979 at which the papers in this book were presented and discussed for two days. At the end I was a better informed man. The publication of the papers as a book is most timely. These studies give us the hope that interpretation of Sri Lanka’s history at academic levels

is no more a monopoly of the prize fighters of the establishment. It has become a terrain of struggle between the forces of mystification and demystification, between the status quoists of the official academia and the critical mind of a new tradition. One sees the clearest signs of an alternative paradigm emerging.

Settling accounts with the past

History is a field where the present haunts the past although in real life the reverse holds true. Many who claim to be value free analysts of the past invariably interrogate it with an ideology of the present. Communalist ideology reinforces a backward looking predilection and an obsession with an imaginary golden past. One of the hottest issues of history at the popular political levels of our society is ‘who came first, Sinhalese or Tamils?’ Many Sinhalese and Tamils have got highly worked up over this, each side trying to prove its claim for “proprietaryship” on the basis of the date of “coming”. Senake Bandaranayake in his paper on the peopling of Sri Lanka, has exposed the fallacy and the utter irrelevance of the ‘who came first’ fight to a scientific discussion of the National question as we face it today. He draws our attention to an often forgotten but a most fundamental fact that there was an indigenous population whose existence in Sri Lanka could be traced to thousands of years before the Tamil and Sinhalese languages and the Buddhist religion appeared on the stage of history. However, I should hasten to state here most emphatically that I reject Senake’s idea of a ‘poly-ethnic nation’. He had not explained this historically and conceptually. The idea of a ‘poly-ethnic nation’ is a dangerous one in the context of Sri Lanka’s post independence developments. I shall deal with this at length in a

subsequent article which I propose to do on the current situation. In this note I am concerned to discuss only the papers on early history contained in this book under review.

In the light of the analysis presented by several authors in this collection it would be unscientific to look at our history as one of simple migrations of people from the mainland into the island. Sri Lankan history has to be seen as the evolution of a diversified society on the basis of complex internal dynamics conditioned by external factors. Migrations were absorbed by social forces that emanated from within. These migrations did not occur as two mutually exclusive processes consisting of an "Aryan" North-Indian stream and a "Dravidian" South Indian one with the former always coalescing with a previously formed Sinhala population and the latter with a Tamil population. There was continuous mixing of the indigenous and the incoming populations and change of linguistic and religious identities took place due to the spontaneous assimilating effects of changing social environments.

On the basis of an internal dynamic the Sinhala language evolved into a unique Sri Lankan tongue over a long period and the Sinhala ethnic formation was shaped by the internalisation of the external elements that came in various cultural forms mainly from India. In a comparable, but not exactly the same manner, Sri Lanka Tamils, in spite of a common language and religion with the people of what is now known as Tamilnadu, evolved into a specific Sri Lanka ethnic formation. It would seem that Buddhism and Saivite Hinduism had adherents from both linguistic groups until late in history. Leslie Gunawardene (*The People of the Lion: Sinhala consciousness in History and Historiography*) says that the terms Buddhists and Sinhala did not always denote the very same group but "two intersecting groupings and though there was a substantial population which came within both, there were people who belonged to one group but not the other". (p. 28).

No doubt there were invasions from the Tamil kingdoms of Southern India and there were wars between Tamil kings and Sinhala kings for

territorial conquest. And there were more numerous wars between Sinhala rulers of petty kingdoms for the same reason. 'Sinhala king versus Tamil king' wars cannot by any reasoning be interpreted as 'Sinhalese versus Tamils' wars as popular belief has it. Most of the migrations from South India into the island were peaceful or non-aggressive ones and there is hardly any evidence to doubt that a majority of the South Indian immigrants of the pre-colonial times became assimilated into the Sinhala ethnic formation. It is also likely that among the present day Tamils there are descendents of Sinhala speaking internal migrants who settled in predominantly Tamil speaking areas. All this happened in days when people had not heard of a thing called the 'Aryan Race'. Those were days of spontaneous or voluntary integration and assimilation. There was no historical space for demagogues who spoke of a Sinhala blood unpolluted by the "pagan" Tamils.

The conception of the formation of a diversified Sri Lanka society on the basis of internal processes does not underplay the role of the external dynamic. It restores the dialectical unity between the external and the internal. The primacy of the latter in the dialectical interaction between the two is due to the most obvious reason that it constitutes the field of manifestation of the interaction. That the internal constitutes the basis of evolution of ethnic identity is very easy to see as far as the Sinhala formation goes. But due to the distorted perceptions of history that pervades all levels of our present society many Sinhalese may not be willing to accept the fact that the Sri Lanka Tamils constitute an ethnic formation highly independent of the South Indian Tamil Society. In fact historically the Sri Lankan Sinhala and Tamil formations have been highly inter-dependent. The commonality of language and religion between the Sri Lankan and Indian Tamil peoples and the impact of latter day Sinhala Buddhist ideological projections have obscured the distinct identities of the two. In the past Tamil communalist politicians have also made their contributions to Sinhala perceptions

Sri Lankan Tamils as an extension of the 50 million "Dravidian" masses across the Palk Strait. But now, with each bout of anti-Tamil violence a growing number of innocent, helpless Tamils look up to India and particularly to Tamilnadu for their much wanted security. After July 1983 the emotional link across the Palk Strait seems to have suddenly acquired incredible dimensions, it looks as though Sinhala chauvinism had made its self fulfilling prophecies. However, we need to reconstruct history without letting the present obscure or distort the past. In this regard I find the papers of Leslie Gunawardena and Siriweera most enlightening. The absence of a study dealing with the earlier history of the Tamil ethnic formation, complimenting the paper of Gunawardena, in this collection is only too conspicuous.

It would have been most helpful to the reader if there was a study of the formation of the Jaffna kingdom, its state and the regions it covered. We know from other studies that the coastal Sinhalese and the Tamils (a major part of whom probably belonged to the Jaffna kingdom) resisted the Portuguese unsuccessfully. The relations between the two peoples during this period deserve the closer scrutiny of historical research to obtain a fuller picture of Sinhala and Tamil ethnic identities at the time of the first western colonial occupation. The informative and valuable contributions of Sivathamby and Kailasapathy deal with relatively later periods.

Susantha Goonatilleke has made an attempt to reinterpret the formation of Sri Lanka culture as an outcome of changes in the internal productive forces which had certain common features with the processes of change in Southern India. Some of his interpretations and postulates seem inadequately elaborated and I wish to raise a few points from my own theoretical stand. I must hasten to add that I am not competent to question the archaeological evidence and the sources. My interest in the interpretations offered by Goonatilleke and the other authors is in terms of a materialist conception of history to which I subscribe.

(To be continued)

Export-led . . .

(Continued from page 9)

a primary products exporter in a world of "comparative advantages". But agricultural intensification with export orientation without an industrialization that can systematically expand the home market through proletarianization is no solution to underdevelopment. This proposition takes us back to the international division of labour, the workings of which make the whole idea look not only impractical but illogical within the world context in which Sri Lanka finds itself today due, at least partly, to its own choice of "development strategies".

(Concluded)

The Challenge . . .

(Continued from page 11)

to ignore fundamental political conclusions such as those that Karl Marx could reach in *The Class Struggles In France*. In this work (Part II), Marx observed that the republican constitution sanctions the social power of the bourgeoisie while withholding the political guarantees of this power, thus imposing upon it "democratic conditions which at every moment help the hostile classes to victory and jeopardize the very foundations of bourgeois society". The observation applies precisely to the Third World in our time. It is in recognition of this reality that the Third World bourgeoisie and its metropolitan allies have been so determinedly hostile to constitutional and democratic government.

The left's failure to focus on the question of democracy has exacted a very heavy price in modern history. Following the October Revolution, successive socialist movements have taken power without expressed ideas, much less detailed programs, on socialist transition. The result has been unexpected shifts in fundamental policies, trials, and some very costly errors. Since 1949, out of

a dozen Marxist, and many more non-Marxist "socialist" countries, only two — Cuba and Nicaragua — have so far tried seriously to develop institutions and practices capable of providing not only a modicum of participation but also some accountability of the government to the governed. Beyond slogans for people's democracy and popular power, little thought and less effort has gone into such basic questions as how, through what mechanisms, are people best invested with maximum power; what is the socialist commitment to human liberation from patriarchal culture and political authoritarianism; are the consequences of concentrating power in centralized governmental bodies in conformity with socialist ideals; is there a co-relation between the exercise of liberty (normally dismissed as bourgeois freedoms) and the achievement of ideological hegemony. It is not an accident that all known movements of dissidence in socialist countries and all instances of popular protest have occurred in relation to the demand for greater democracy.

(To be continued)

Jurists decry . . .

(Continued from page 15)

violation of U. S. obligations under article I of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 to ensure respect for the terms of the Convention (here article 49) by other High Contracting Parties such as Israel.

Libya. The Reagan Administration's dispatch of the U. S. Sixth Fleet into the Gulf of Sidra for the purpose of precipitating armed conflict with the Libyan government constitutes a breach of the peace under article 39 of the U. N. Charter. The Reagan Administration's policy to attempt to destabilize the government of Libya violates the terms of the United Nation Charter article 2 (4) prohibiting the threat or use of force directed against the political independence of a state.

E. Africa, Asia and the Indian Ocean

Apartheid. The Panel denounces the Reagan Administration's so-called policy of "constructive engagement" towards the apartheid regime in South Africa. This specious policy encourages discrimination and oppression against the majority of the people of South Africa; it hampers effective action by the inter-

national community against apartheid, and facilitates aggressive conduct by the South African apartheid regime against neighbour states in violation of the U. N. Charter. As such, the Reagan Administration has become an accomplice to the commission of the international crime of apartheid as recognized by the universally accepted International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid of 1973.

Namibia. The Reagan Administration has refused to carry out its obligations under Security Council Resolution 435 (1978) providing for the independence of Namibia, as required by article 25 of the U. N. Charter. The Reagan Administration has no right to obstruct the achievement of Namibian independence by conditioning it upon or "linking" it to the withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola in any way. Both the U. N. General Assembly and the Organization of African Unity have recognized SWAPO as the legitimate representative of the Namibian people, and the Reagan Administration is obligated to negotiate with it as such.

Indian Ocean. The Reagan Administration's continued military occupation of the island of Diego Garcia violates the international legal right of self-determination for the people of Mauritius as recognized by the United Nations Charter. The Reagan Administration has accelerated the rapid militarization of the U. S. naval base on Diego Garcia as part of its plan to create a jumping-off point for intervention by the Rapid Deployment Force into the Persian Gulf. As such the Reagan Administration's foreign policy towards the Indian Ocean has violated the terms of the U. N. General Assembly's Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace (1971).

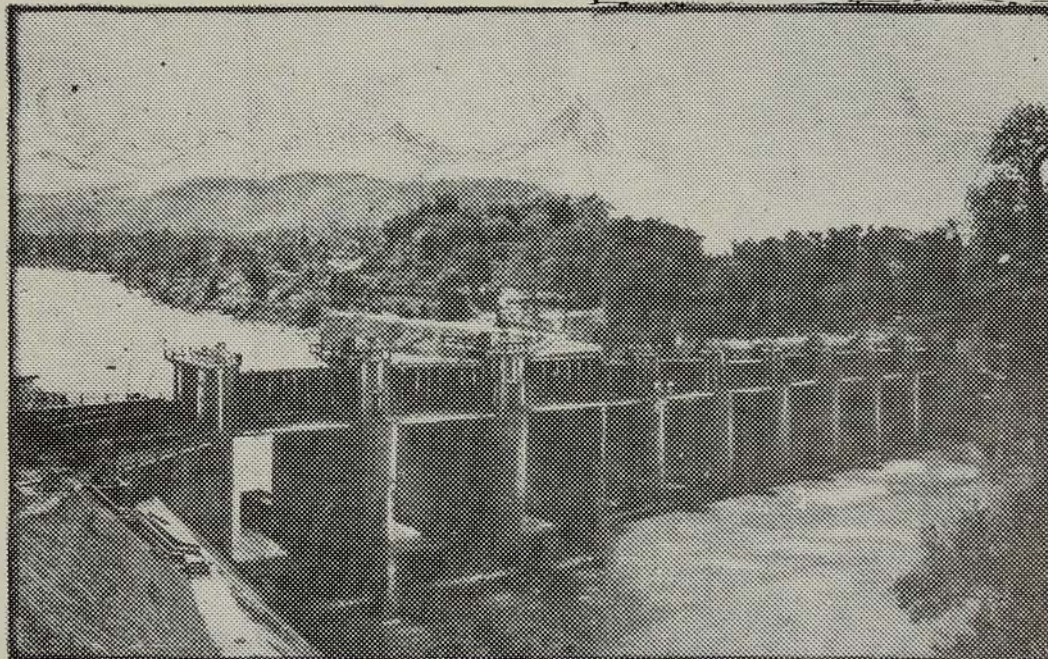
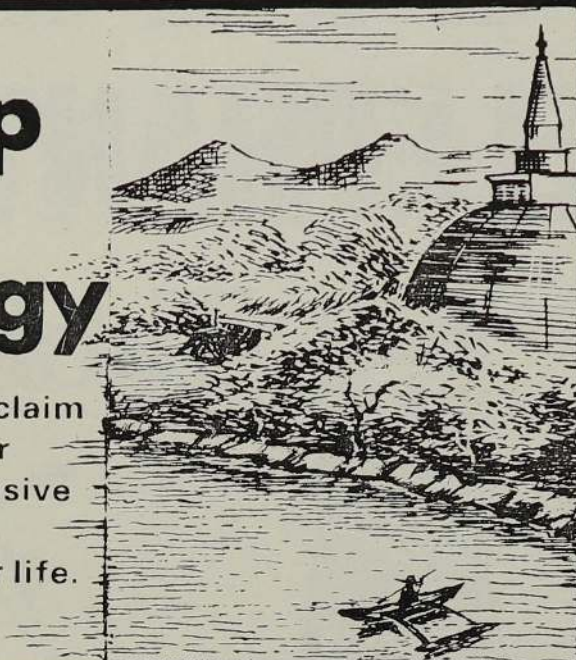
F. Conclusion

United Nations Action. From the fore-going, it is clear that the Reagan Administration has substituted force for the rule of international law in its conduct of foreign policy around the world. It has thus created a serious threat to the maintenance of international peace and security under article 39 of the United Nations Charter that calls for the imposition of enforcement measures by the U. N. Security Council under articles 41 and 42. In the event the Reagan Administration exercises its veto power against the adoption of such measures by the Security Council the matter should be turned over to the U. N. General Assembly for action in accordance with the procedures set forth in the Uniting for Peace Resolution of 1950. In this way the Reagan Administration's grievous international transgressions could be effectively opposed by all members of the world community in a manner consistent with the requirements of international law.

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