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# **GORBACHEV'S CHINA VISIT**

**— Bhabani Sen Gupta**

**LANKA**

# **GUARDIAN**

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## **Another Look at Vasantha's “MIRROR”**

**— Jagath Senaratne**

**Also:**  
**Viraj Mendis**  
**Izeth Hussain**  
**Dayan Jayatilleke**

**Dilip Bobb**  
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## TOTAL DISARMAMENT

The country has not been handed to the IPKF. Foreign Minister and Minister of State for Defence Ranjan Wijeratne told services chiefs, including Army Commander Hamilton Wanasinghe and Inspector General of Police Ernest Perera, on his visit to the Eastern Province.

The Minister had ordered the security chiefs to immediately start arresting Tamil or other groups found with unauthorised arms in their possession. He had also ordered the setting up of six new police stations in the Samanthural, Pottuvil, Kalmunai and Ampara districts.

Minister Wijeratne reportedly told the top brass: "This is our country. Everything had not been handed to the IPKF. Do not allow anyone at all to carry any unauthorised weapons".

## POSTPONE REFERENDUM

The Federation of Assemblies of Muslim Youth of Sri Lanka (FAMYS), an umbrella organisation of 26 muslim youth organisations, has urged the Government to put off the scheduled July 5 referendum which offers the Eastern Province the option of de-linking from the North-East Provincial Council. The Muslims want a canton system where power is devolved to all three ethnic groups in the province, and not only to Tamils as at present.

A communique from FAMYS states: "Recent incidents directed against the Muslims in Kinniya and Kalmunai and against the Sinhalese in many areas in the East, are only new chapters in the tale of woes which began soon after the signing of the Peace Accord. These incidents confirm our

(Continued on page 9)

## No Sympathy

When, on the orders of New Delhi's RAW, Prabhakaran's murderers gunned down over 150 men, women and children, all innocent pilgrims, at Anuradhapura, the then President J.R. Jayewardene, immediately paid a visit of condolence to bereaved families — of the Bangla Desh flood victims! When an old man who chose to live all his life away from his native land, in the UK, finally decided that the UK climate was too cold for his aged bones and wanted to come back to Sri Lanka, not only were his expenses met but there was a lot of ballyhoo, TV publicity, etc.

But when Mr. M. Panchalingam, Government Agent of Jaffna, who did a grand job in the most dangerous post in Sri Lanka, for over 6 years, was gunned down like a dog, no VIP considered it worth his while to express his sympathy or even make a passing reference to this tragic event. Had Mr. Panchalingam been a pop-singer, a VIP caravan would have gone to the funeral accompanied by T V cameras.

(A Bemused Student  
of the G.O.P.)

## TRENDS + LETTERS

## Islamic dress for women

1. It is not correct to say that the Islamic dress for women of covering the entire body was "Arabic Custom absorbed into the Islamic tradition" or that the Arabian Muslim Women "walked around freely with unveiled faces" in conquered countries like Syria, Persia etc. The sayings of the Prophet of Islam and the practices of the Muslim Women at the time unmistakably indicate that they covered their entire body including their faces, well before the neighbouring Arab countries were brought under Muslim control. It has been reported that Fathima, the wife of the fourth Caliph, covered herself so much that her husband was unable to recognise her outside. What is significant here is that she was also the daughter of the Prophet.

2. Education the saying attributed to the Prophet is not correct. He said:

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# INDIA'S SRI LANKA POLICY: A DEAD-END?

NEWS  
BACKGROUND

Mervyn de Silva

It is purely fortuitous of course that a change of guard in Colombo coincides with the LTTE's acceptance of President Premadasa's unconditional offer to negotiate. A new High Commissioner has moved into 'India House'. The 'Dixit Era' is over. The diplomacy of the aggressively self-assertive and ebullient, Mr. Mani Dixit deserving such a title.

At the end of the day however, the objective will prevail over the subjective factor. Today, a qualitatively different situation presents Indian diplomacy with a new challenge. Before the 'Accord', Delhi and Dixit had to deal with a Jayewardene regime, increasingly overwhelmed by a harrowing domestic, mainly ethnic, conflict, in which India had an important dual concern the Tamil problem and strategic interests. The settlement represented the triumphant assertion of Indian power and Indian will. In these conditions, Mr. Dixit could be and was both policy-maker and forceful instrument.

India is no more an external force. Benign or malign, it is an active participant in the internal conflict. Denied the luxury of detachment and the comfort of dis-engagement at a moment of its choice. The problem-solver is a part of the problem. The regional crisis-manager is a captive of the crisis. Certainly, Sri Lanka is not Nepal, where the conflict of state-interests is resolvable through formal diplomacy alone, given the political will. In Sri

Lanka, India is already deeply embroiled in an intense, grievously divisive conflict where a growing complexity is only surpassed by the fury of its violence. In this raging conflict, India or more accurately its overpowering military presence is not merely a major factor but the common target of the two armed vanguards of the contending, equally fanatical nationalisms the LTTE and the JVP.

In the initial 'Dixit' phase, Indian diplomacy made the great breakthrough, using diverse instruments from the armed groups and international pressure to the air-drop. But the situation right now is getting worse with each passing month. So, the change-of-guard could be regarded as an intermission for a thorough searching review of policy. India's Sri Lanka policy seems to suffer now from a peculiar vice identified by the more perceptive and outspoken of present-day 'prostrakia' Soviet analysts as Brezhnevite 'immobilism' especially in the final post-Afghanistan years.

'Immobilism', as I understand it, is associated with the mytique of militarism; A naive faith in military power as the ultimate arbiter in all conflicts and a lack of imagination and flexibility. An insensitivity to the nature of conflict is wedded to and supported by the confident assumption that in the end, wright will tell. Behind the conviction is the arrogance of power. The phrase with its strong American associations is

used advisedly. In India's 'Afghanistan' and 'Vietnam' are phrases that come too trippingly on the tongue these days. These analogies are quite the rage among English-educated commentators, including reputed academics. In part, it is a sign of the habitual fascination of the westernised middle class with the prevailing fashions of the U. S. and British media which currently seem determined to crown the Rajiv Raj with the doubtful title of regional superpower.

More to the point, it is a reflection of a newly activated, ever-widening anti-Indianism, no longer an exclusive preserve of the Sinhala chauvinist. The ultra-nationalist JVP is not a party but 'state of mind', as Plantations Minister Gamini Dissanayake, a key negotiator of the 'Accord' told Parliament recently quoting a Sunday columnist. In short the JVP does not need to launch a recruitment campaign for supporters and sympathisers. They are already there, and even among the elite, still entrenched in the power-structure with their hands on the levers of administrative authority.

If its relevance has been reinforced, it is simply because the Indian opinion-cum decision maker is not only tempted, I fear, by the facile analogy but trapped by a predilection for a far-too easy extrapolation. The JVP is not the 'Naxalites'. Nor can the problem be handled the way the Mizo or the Gurkhas or Assam were tackled. And Sri Lanka is certainly not the



Punjab. The JVP is not class-based but increasingly draws cross-class support without being regionally confined. Sri Lanka does not have twenty five states. The Sri Lankan regime does not have the advantage of huge territory or 'space'.

The impact of the car bomb explosion in sensitive, ethnically mixed Trincomalee, the "neck" between the Tamil north and the Tamil-Muslim-Sinhalese east is a striking illustration.

The sound of a single bomb reverberates through the country setting off a chain reaction, always communal in character in a tiny tight little island, often explosive and uncontrollable, to put the regime under severe pressure. Does Indian policy have a total grasp of the true nature of the conflict and its complexity, and the daunting challenges confronting a regime seen by a majority of the people as a 'puppet' or at least a quasi-client of big foreign power. The instinctive reaction of the regime is to distance itself from the patron, to recover some legitimacy, thus straining the patron-client relationship.

The failure to comprehend fully the nature of the conflict and the negative, complicating effect of a visible, overpowering foreign military presence largely account for the US and Soviet defeats, not just external arms aid like Brezhnev after the Iranian revolution. Mrs. Gandhi may have perceived a security threat on India's exposed southern flank from a pro-US Jayawardene regime and feared the spill-over consequences of the Tamil separatist struggle.

But neither the Afghan child (nor the Vietnamese) has been nourished on anti-Russian (or anti-American) legends of tales from a history punctuated by 'invasions' from the North, the Sinhala child has been psychologically conditioned. This mental conditioning on Indian imperialism (like 'Yankee Imperialism' to the Latin American) is the JVP's deadliest weapon. The

IPKF is the trigger. The presence of an army larger than the Sri Lankan has opened the flood-gates of historical memory.

Indian Sri Lanka policy is now characterised by a sense of inertia and drift. 'Immobilism' is sustained by the heartening belief that in the end, sheer weight must tell. The application of such superior force on a fragmented situation can indeed help the process of cohesion. Here, it has achieved just the opposite, the least desired result it has divided the north-based Tamil community mostly through various types of Indian support or patronage to a multiplicity of anti-LTTE armed groups, and ironically, it has activated a dormant Sinhala nationalism, steadily energised it and then helped the cohesion of anti-Indian oppositional forces. Many a MP of Mrs. Bandaranaike's SLFP is talking like a non-violent JVP'er.

It is Indian policy which lacks cohesion. Once again, the American parallel seems more applicable. In one of his first lectures Hans Morgenthau cited de Tocqueville approvingly to argue that a constitutionally structured division of labour and responsibility stood in the way of the effective implementation of even the most clearly conceived foreign policy. The President cannot get his act together because too many guys, overtly or covertly, get into the act. The Indian constitution does not provide any such excuse. There is a strong impression among the best informed in Colombo that the different agencies of the Indian government do not always act in concert. Sometimes in fact working at cross purposes.

The negotiations with the LTTE give these matters an added importance and urgency. President Premadasa's unilateral ceasefire was aimed primarily, if not exclusively at the JVP, the main threat. Internal conflicts must be resolved, internally, since outside forces he argued, could otherwise exploit such conflicts to secure their own

interests. The JVP want the IPKF out. "So do I" said the President, then turning the patriotic gun at the patriots. Why doesn't the JVP stop its insurgency in the south? So that his army can tackle the Tigers and send the IPKF home? Why is the patriotic JVP killing Sinhala soldiers? The JVP response was an outright rejection. The Tigers seized the 'opening'.

The LTTE as I wrote in the last issue has lost its once unassailable political-military dominance in the north. The Tamil people, though still sympathetic and loyal to the 'Tiger' are craving for a return to normal life. The LTTE needs a breather. It would like to get the IPKF off its back. Premadasa can help.

The chances of a peace settlement are slim. Yet, the mere act of Jaw-Jaw has slightly defused tensions gaining the Presidency some much-needed strength. Internalism the negotiating process need not necessarily mean a loss to the external player. This is not a zero-sum game. Drawing the Tamil parties and armed groups into a broad Tamil consensus is an exercise in which India can help Sri Lanka. That could be the first step to alternative security arrangements in the north, allowing the IPKF to announce a major pull-out.

Former National Security Minister Lalith Athulathumuduli complained bitterly that when he established contact with the LTTE, his efforts were sabotaged by unidentified Indian Agencies. That must not happen, if things move reasonably well, Delhi can announce a Soviet Afghanistan style time-table.

The smooth airlift of the LTTE delegates from their jungle hide-outs by the SLAF helicopters suggested that the IPKF is unlikely to 'hinder' the negotiating process. (See *INDIAN VIEWS*). India, Mr. S. K. Singh was assured, would be kept informed.



At what point will India take a hand?

The talks between the LTTE and Sri Lankan officials have not yet touched a single substantive issue, though President Premadasa is reported to have said "you can discuss anything except Belam". Substantive issues — devolution, referendum and the future of present North-East council — will surface only when the 'Tigers' speak to the Ministers.

With the Muslims calling for a postponement of the Referendum, it does look as if there won't be a vote in the East on July 5. How will the Sinhala Opposition parties and the JVP react?

If, and this is a BIG IF, the LTTE agrees to accept the enhanced devolution package that the Government may offer, what happens to the present council? The LTTE must be brought into the power-sharing exercise via elections. Does that mean a dissolution of the N-E council by the President? That would be the first confrontation between Colombo and Delhi.

The 'Tigers' will obviously try to grab as large a share as possible, along with its EROS allies. That would mean a downgrading of Delhi's favourite, the EPRLF.

For election purposes, to please President Premadasa up to a point, and to relieve pressure from the Indian army's top brass worried about morale, Mr. Gandhi may be ready to pull-out, as he said, 'the bulk' of the troops. But the IPKF will remain here until the future shape, size and colour of the N-E council is clear, and the EPRLF is 'protected'. All this on the assumption that the LTTE is not engaged in a time-buying tactical exercise only.

(Parts of this article appeared on the editorial page of the Times of India)

## INDIAN VIEW

# Misplaced Optimism

Dilip Bobb

The decision by the LTTE to smoke the peace-pipe with Premadasa has pitchforked New Delhi onto the horns of yet another diplomatic dilemma. Though officially India has welcomed the move, the implications of a deal between Colombo and the Tigers are serious for India.

Typically, South Block has based its response on the belief that any talks between the two sides are a preordained failure. But wishful thinking is no substitute for diplomatic foresight. Both Premadasa and the LTTE have solid, self-serving reasons for striking a deal that will rid them of the IPKF.

The current calculations in South Block are rooted in the premise that the only incentive for the Tigers to initiate talks is to buy time to regroup their forces. It is, official sources say, a ploy that the LTTE has employed before. South Block also believes that one compelling reason for the Tigers to buy time is that Mathiya, the number two man in the LTTE, has been seriously wounded and needs urgent treatment if he is to survive. "Mathiya is crucial to them. Prabhakaran is the ideological head of the organisation while Mathiya is the overall military commander," says a foreign ministry official.

But that is an argument with many holes. The IPKF has all along claimed to have broken the back of the Tigers. That is only partly true. Prabhakaran has eluded the IPKF dragnet with ridiculous ease, the Tigers have no dearth of young Tamil fighters it can recruit through threat or conviction and they have repeatedly demonstrated that their capacity for destruction

and killing is no less lethal than before. Moreover, the Mathiya theory is provided by RAW, whose intelligence record in Sri Lanka has been disastrous.

South Block also believes that there can be no common meeting ground between Premadasa and the LTTE: that no government in Colombo can afford to give away more to the Tamils than the concessions contained in the Indo Sri Lankan accord.

But here again, South Block seems to be ignoring the wood for the trees. Premadasa is now with his back to the wall and his political survival hangs by the slenderest of threads. He has, therefore, nothing to lose and everything to gain by going for broke. A peace pact with the Tigers will thus put Premadasa in a position to make the one move that will restore his government's electoral legitimacy — ask the IPKF to pull out. The LTTE has equally compelling incentives — undermining the hold of the EPRLF, which is its main rival in the north.

Regardless of the past, regardless of ideology and regardless of the inherent suspicion between the Tamils and the Colombo Government, the departure of the IPKF will be the ultimate victory for Premadasa and the LTTE. In the pursuit of that aim, the Tigers could be willing to accept concessions similar to those laid out in the accord. After all, by doing so they will achieve their most crucial objective — that of diluting the power of the EPRLF-dominated north-east provincial council.

(Continued on page 13)



## MAY DAY REPORTS

## Students, sangha steal the show

The meeting of the 'deshapremis' (patriots) associated with Mr. Rukman Senanayake's ELP stole the MAY DAY show this year, not just by numbers but by the spirit of solidarity between urban lower-middle class youth, students and the younger clergy. The sangha led the march. And the 'demo' too was marked by a spirited defiance that was lacking in the other rallies of the bigger parties — SLFP, and the Left Alliance (USA).

The crowd, several thousand strong, including a sprinkling of middle-aged, identified itself almost totally with the sentiments expressed by the speakers, and the crowd was not shy to show strong emotions.

The speeches were interrupted by occasional warnings from the stage that 'saboteurs' were attempting to disrupt the meeting, a reference to official 'agent-provocateurs' the large police presence was also a sign of special attention.

It also appeared that the students had organised their only security network which was very active. For instance they succeeded in getting 2 organisers who were arrested by the police released in 5 minutes. They also allegedly stopped some persons who were noting the numbers of the cars parked at. They dragged onto the platform a photographer suspected of taking pictures of the organisers.

The speeches of the ELP speakers and leaders were a mixture of scepticism of govt promises and realism about the UNP's aims. On the other hand, the speeches of the student

organisers, and the monks were a pungent critique of the prevailing system supported by demands for effective and radical change. They placed sovereignty, JPKE and Accord as the main issues and made only casual references to issues such as cost of living. Attacks of an 'ad hominem' kind were high-level. I. R. Jayewardene was singled out for heavy barrage. A group was accused of plotting a coup to regain control of the government. The underlying theme was the sacrifice the student movement had made to defend the rights of the people, and forcing the government to kneel at their feet. The speakers rejected government calls for talks saying only those who were losing the battle would be willing to talk. The government and LTTE appeared to be losing while they were not. They were on the path to victory. Therefore they called all the people to unite as a single force with the student movement to organise a general strike that would paralyse the government. Throughout the meeting deshapremis the students made reference to the heroic struggle being launched by the deshapremis, naming the JVP on a few occasions. They also attempted to establish that the student movement was not controlled by any political group. They were youth who had placed the country before their education and work and would be willing to make whatever sacrifice was needed to achieve their goal.

The crowd was high-spirited and quite disciplined, and there was only one minor altercation.

A. R.

## No Peace without fair elections

The SLFP President Sirimavo Bandaranaike told the party's May Day rally at Campbell Park that only a fair presidential election and parliamentary election could bring lasting peace to the country.

The peace promised at the recent elections was yet to dawn, she said.

A violent campaign had been mounted to chase away the Sinhalese and Muslims from the North and East.

Mr. Anura Bandaranaike, Gampaha district MP said peace would be a reality only when the JVP and the LTTE returned to the political mainstreams.

He said that the UNP took him to task at the general elections for his meeting with the LTTE leaders off the jungles of Vavuniya. The UNP now seemed to consider proper what they then said was improper.

At the MEP's rally in De Mel park, Mr. Dinesh Gunawardena said that the USA which had a secret love affair with the UNP should be aware of the response it had received at the elections. He urged workers, peasants and all national minded people to join the MEP to fight state terrorism which was at the root of the present crisis in the country.

The SLMP's Ossie Abeygunasekera said at the United Socialist Alliance rally in Havelock Park that the USA had been formed to fight for the rights of the workers, and their leader Vijaya Kumaratunga had to sacrifice his life for that goal. "We will continue this progressive march even if we have to make more sacrifices", he said.



# UNIVERSITIES OPEN

20,000 students in the island's several campuses returned last week after a prolonged absence of more than two years. The settlement followed talks between Education Minister Mr. A. C. S. Hameed, the IUSF, the University Grants Commission and Teachers' Associations.

The following are excerpts from an interview given by student leader Mr. Ranjith Ranasinghe

**Q. Were the talks fruitful?**

**A.** The discussion was successful when we consider the fact that the Minister of Higher Education agreed to meet all five of our demands. But we have serious doubts about the sincerity of the Government. A glimpse at the present situation would suffice to convince anyone about these suspicions. Recently, a very high-ranking Government official who addressed the Citizens Committee of Colombo, was heard saying, "we will burn down all the universities and not re-open them for five years". Can we have faith in a Government of this nature which is running with the hare and hunting with hounds?

In addition, Mr. Hameed himself has made highly contradictory statements on important issues.

1. During the talks Mr. Hameed agreed with us that Article 25A of the Universities (Amendment) Act of 1985 should be repealed. This is the legal provision which permits private degree awarding institutions to be established. But elsewhere he has said: How can this clause be repealed? It will prevent the establishment of private degree awarding institutions and will be against our policy of privatisation.

2. The Minister of Higher Education agreed with us that only six batches of NCMC students were involved, instead of eight. But in Parliament he has repeatedly mentioned eight batches.

3. We were told at the talks that only the North Lanka Medical College had applied for recognition under Article 25A of the Universities Amendment Act of 1985 and that it had been refused. Mr. Hameed had said in Parliament that the Institute of Technological Studies (ITS) was established under this clause.

**Q. What were the results of the discussion on student arrests?**

**A.** The Minister promised us that no student would be arrested unless there was sufficient evidence and that, too, only by the police. The Vice Chancellor of the relevant university would be informed within 24 hours of the arrest. The parents, too, would be informed.

We could have been satisfied with this arrangement if it were implemented. But only a few days after the talks two students were arrested without any evidence and nobody was informed. One of these students who belongs to the Vidyodaya University was abducted and now his whereabouts are not known. Another student from Kelaniya University who was held at a police station while the talks were in progress has disappeared. A total of about 13 students have disappeared without trace.

**Q. Publicity was given to the IUSF demand for compensation for the students who died. Will you comment?**

**A.** It is true. We demanded five lakhs of rupees for each of the students who were killed.

But I must add that this is not a condition for re-opening universities.

**Q. What has been done about the hostel facilities for university students?**

**A.** Nothing concrete had been done yet, although we were promised the Browas Hill camp building as a hostel for the students of Sathvapala Wanniguma University of Ruhuna. This building has not been handed over yet. Worse still, the Bhikkhu Hostel at Peradeniya is still occupied by the armed forces.

**Q. Do you think the universities will continue to function if they re-open on the 10th?**

**A.** We know that there is a plan to re-open universities without conceding our demands. One aim must be to unleash another wave of violent suppression on the students when they continue to agitate for their unsatisfied demands.

These agitations need not be an indefinite boycott of studies. They may be fasts or demonstrations. We must also realise that it will be difficult to envisage the extremes to which students will be forced by the situation. Afterwards the State will try its best to justify such suppression. Significantly, the amendments to the PTA which include clauses on university and school students, fuel our suspicions.

**Q. What do you have to say about the allegation that the IUSF is controlled by certain political parties, namely the JVP?**

**A.** We categorically deny this. Our leadership is not so weak as to become a outspaw of political parties. We will always take independent decisions and fight on behalf of the people of this country. But during the course of history if our aims overlap with those of any political party or parties, it is because that party or parties is also fighting for rights of the people.

S. I.



## SLMP's slamming match

Did the Sri Lanka Mahajana Party want its president Chandrika Kumaranatunga to fill the United Socialist Alliance national list parliamentary seat left vacant by the death of Samu Senanaya Party leader Colvin R de Silva? Or did they not? And, did Chandrika, widow of slain SLMP leader Vijaya Kumaranatunga and daughter of Opposition Leader Sirimavo Bandaranaike, want the seat or not? In a letter to the Sunday newspapers Chandrika said that she decidedly did not.

She also said: "It may be true that a handful of self-interested persons in my party have engaged in a conspiracy of distortion and lies, during the past eight months, with the purpose of eliminating me from the leadership of the SLMP and to prevent me from returning to politics within the progressive movement. Whether this is done for reasons of personal gratification of various types, or whether it is done in the service of unseen forces or for both reasons, only history can illuminate us".

The letter was sent from London where the SLMP president has been living since her husband was shot dead by assassins over a year ago.

The SLMP Central Committee met immediately, on the day the letter appeared in the newspapers, and issued a communiqué containing the following resolution:

"The Central Committee of the SLMP unreservedly condemns and rejects the allegations contained in the letter published in the Sunday papers of April 30 1989 as baseless and without foundation and to say the least is unworthy of a President of a political party and further reaffirms its full confidence in the political bureau of the Party".

## Jaffna GA shot dead

Jaffna's Government Agent M. Panchalingam was shot dead at Nallur as he attempted to flee from a gunman carrying an AK-47, police said.

"He had 23 rounds pumped into him, eight in the head", a senior officer said.

Mr. Panchalingam was the most senior civilian official to be killed by the Tamil separatists in the Jaffna peninsula.

Reports reaching Colombo said that the GA, accompanied by his family, had been visiting his brother at Nallur. Three persons had called at the brother's house apparently to check whether Mr. Panchalingam was there.

Thereafter, a single individual carrying a parcel had come into the house. The GA, fearing that there was a gun in the package, had attempted to flee. The gunman had chased him firing several rounds.

The authorities who had at first discounted the possibility of the LTTE being responsible for the attack as Mr. Panchalingam had maintained a good relationship with the Tigers later said that they were not altogether ruling out the possibility that the GA was a victim of the LTTE.

The Tigers had an axe to grind with him for organising the election in Jaffna despite their ban and were also unhappy about arrangements being made to re-open the katcheries for five days of the week.

Mr. Panchalingam had served as Jaffna's GA for over six years, the most crucial period in the northern district's history. He managed to run the administration during the tense days of 1987.

The 54 year-old administrator joined the state service as a DRO after he graduated from the University of Ceylon and rose to be the Government Agent.

## Local youths for EP security

The State Minister for Defence, Mr. Ranjana Wijeratne said during a recent visit to the Eastern Province that the IPKF will soon be withdrawn from the EP and local youths recruited to protect their own areas.

Some provincial councillors who were present said that Mr. Wijeratne had blamed the EPRLF for the Trincomalee car bomb and asked him to explain it. Mr. Wijeratne said that his statement had been based on what people in the area had told him.

## SLFP MP calls for all-party talks

Mr. Mahinda Wijesekera, a leader of the 1971 JVP insurrection and now an SLFP MP for the Matara district, wants President Premadasa to hold all party discussions as a means towards restoring peace in the country. He said so when the President met Matara district MPs recently. Mr. Wijesekera however said that he wanted it clearly understood that he was not advocating a national government.

He commended President Premadasa's initiative in inviting militant groups to peace talks, and said that if after an all party consensus some groups chose to remain outside the democratic process action could be taken against them and public opinion could be created for this.

## Tea in trouble

The Central Bank in its annual report (1988) has drawn attention to a worrisome development in the tea industry. Production costs had increased by 17 per cent in tea manufactured by the Janata Estates Development Board (JEDB) and 13 per cent in the case of the Sri Lanka State Plantations Corporation (SLSPC).

The Bank has warned the tea industry not to price itself out of the international market through inordinate cost increases.



## Minister slams political interference

Mr P. Davaratne, Minister of Lands and Mahaweli Development, has found political interference to be the cause of the disastrous state of affairs in the State Timber Corporation. If even 20 per cent of its affairs were allowed to be run without political interference, the corporation could be a profit making body, the Minister said during his first official visit to this state run institution. ●

## A solution soon?

In a major May Day pledge, President Premadasa announced at the UNP's Galle Face Green rally that he would find a speedy solution to the problem of 3500 public servants not yet reinstated after their general strike in July 1980, nine years ago.

The President said that he had appointed a four-man committee of ministry secretaries to

go into the problem, and work out a solution within two weeks.

## Attacks by "SS" and LTTE

Southern subversives attacked the Sri Lanka Army cantonment at Panagoda on the morning of May 2. They came in three vans and the attack lasted an hour, according to newspaper reports. A Government press release said "armed groups of persons attempted to break into the Army Cantonment, Panagoda by attacking the sentries". The release said that the attack was repulsed within a few minutes "and three armed youth lay dead. Five soldiers were injured".

In the North, the LTTE attacked the IPKF camp at Vavuniya on the evening of May 1. Forty LTTE prisoners held in the camp, escaped. Two IPKF guards were killed. An unspecified amount of arms was also taken.

## Trends...

(Continued from page 1)

*belief that devolution of power to any single ethnic group sacrificing the need for a balance of power between all, is fraught with the greatest danger"*

## REMOVE ENEMY, SAYS CM

Chief Minister Varetharaja Perumal of the North-East Provincial Council has asked the central government to stop colonisation in the Welloya area "and remove the enemy from there immediately if they desire peace in this area", according to a press release from the Provincial Council.

*The Chief Minister is reported to have said that if this is not done, "the experiment in democracy may fail".*

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# JVP view on invitation to talks

One can beg for peace and keep doing so many times without number. One can pray for it, hope for it. But true peace is achieved not by such means but by deed, only by removing the factors that have led to its destruction.

The authorities have repeatedly begged the JVP to agree to a dialogue, to renounce violence and to join the democratic process. Would peace dawn simply because this peace—player is repeated? If peace fails to materialise should the JVP be held responsible?

This great 'peace endeavour' is but propaganda spread through the news media. Current events clearly show that it is not a sincere attempt to restore peace but a design to burden the JVP with responsibility for destroying it. Why? Because the UNP and its Government, who are the real destroyers of peace, have repeatedly refused to take even one step towards its restoration.

Today the people have taken up arms against the UNP and its Government, and against the USA which is collaborating with them. What are the reasons for this armed struggle? None other than the Government's anti-popular tactics, the Government's despotism which disregards all protests from the people and the fact that the State has prevented the people from fighting its actions through democratic means.

Ever since UNP came into power in 1977 the cost of living has been tremendously high. This resulted from the harmful economic policy adopted by the UNP.

Democracy justifies the widespread opposition to this policy. Yet, how did the Government respond to this opposition? Was it not by using party thugs and the police to unleash a terror campaign against its political opponents and the masses who were crying out for remedies for their problems? No part of

the masses has escaped the assaults.

## Terror campaign

Universities were invaded and attacked.

Workers' picket lines were attacked and comrade Somapala was murdered. Women were assaulted. Bombs were flung at nurses. The Buddhist clergy and intellectuals too, were attacked. These are only a few examples of what took place in the course of twelve whole years. These were not done by the people against the UNP Government. Who then, initiated the violence? Who destroyed the peace?

Was this all? Was it possible to contest election in a democratic manner? No!

Who suppressed democracy? The JVP? or the UNP Government?

While the peaceful masses of this country were democratically opposing the Government, violence and force were used to fulfil its aims. The twelve-years history since 1977 is filled with living proof to this effect.

The beginning of the present crisis is nothing but this undemocratic aggression. This situation worsened when the State unjustly proscribed the JVP and its students organisations and trade unions which were involved in democratic politics. The destruction of peace began at this juncture.

What is quite obvious in all this? Isn't it the fact that the masses have been robbed of their democratic rights by the State and the party in power? That the sovereignty of the people which is reflected in their right to choose rulers in free elections, has been robbed by the ruling party? This is the first factor that pushed the masses towards violence. Where no democracy exists, where their rights are robbed through violence and police suppression, do the masses have any alter-

native other than resorting to violence?

The situation deteriorated further when the Indo-Lanka accord was signed on July 29, 1987, completely ignoring tremendous opposition from the people. Hence, our nation became a puppet, manipulated according to the needs of Indian imperialism. Indian imperialist forces were brought into the country. The Northern and Eastern provinces were declared the Tamil homeland. The Provincial Councils system which dealt a death blow to the unity of our nation was accepted under pressure from the Indian imperialists.

## Up in arms

People including Buddhist monks, were murdered while protesting in a peaceful manner. It was subsequent to the signing of this accord, which betrayed our nation, that the people took up arms against the UNP and its Government. This was in order to protect the freedom of the nation and the democratic rights of the people. If the UNP and its Government are not responsible for the gravity of the present situation, then who is?

Yes! Can these historical events be forgotten and peace restored?

Anyone who wishes for peace, anyone who wants to restore peace, must first accept that peace was destroyed as a result of the policy followed by the UNP and its Governments. Not only that. If it is the cause, then the effect can be nullified only if the cause is eradicated. Why should discussions with the JVP be necessary in order to do this? Was it the JVP which committed the crimes that destroyed peace?

The main problems are the fact that democratic freedom has been buried, sovereignty of the people robbed and the freedom of the nation betrayed. For these, the State is answerable to the masses and not to the



JVP. The JVP, too, does not have the right to even slightly jeopardise the rights of the people by agreeing to any compromise. The people are demanding their rights, their sovereignty and the freedom of the nation. It cannot be arrested by holding talks with the JVP or arriving at a compromise with them, but only by unconditionally restoring the rights of the people. There is no need to talk to the JVP in connection with these matters.

The other question concerns the sincerity of the invitation to discussions. According to what the authorities say, the proscription of the JVP has been lifted. But how funny! Persons who were released from custody recently had to give guarantees that they would not have any connection with proscribed political parties. Which party was the target? Are the security forces combing the countryside in search of JVP members because the proscription has been lifted? Are the JVP members arrested because the proscription has been lifted?

During the bogus unilateral ceasefire, were not the photographs of 21 persons suspected of being JVP leaders sent to police stations and orders given to apprehend and destroy them quickly? Has not a contract been given to an I.O.T. unit, promising a gratuity of one million rupees for the assassination of our chairman, Comrade Rohana Wijeweera, and general secretary Upatissa Ganyake?

### Bogus proposal

The Government presented an unpublicised bogus peace proposal to the Opposition parties recently. Didn't this contain a secret plan? During the bogus ceasefire a high-ranking minister toured the country, meeting security and administrative bigwigs. Didn't he give instructions and prepare plans to continue flushing out operations after the 19th of April? Wasn't a leading politician from the South heard saying "We don't

want people in the South. We only want control".

Isn't lists of proletarian activists prepared and these persons hunted? Likewise, haven't lists of student activists been compiled and handed over to RDP and STF and special squads? These are what a Government that is incessantly preaching peace on the radio and TV, is doing behind the backs of the people.

New laws are being formulated from the Indemnity Act and the PTA. These laws are to permit a person to be kept in custody indefinitely, and to permit a claim for indemnity after killing a person in custody. Are these done in order restore peace in a democratic manner? Those in authority must answer these questions. But it should also know that the people have a clear understanding and will not be misled by the answers, whatever they may be?

Mr. Premadasa is inviting us to talks in an environment such as this. Are we such fools as to have discussions with a Government of this nature? We will never hesitate even to sacrifice our lives, if necessary, to fight for the rights of our nation and our people. Even now our comrades are laying down their lives in carrying out these duties. But we are not so insane as to walk into a trap and commit suicide.

One more important point has to be revealed. It is no secret that in the recent past our party had a continuous dialogue with other political parties. Comrade Gamini Maasinghe who represented our interests at these talks was abducted last November while travelling in a car. He was with Dr. Gamini Wijesekera, the General Secretary of the Eksath Lanka Janatha Party.

Last year, talks were held between students and Mr. Hameed on the University crisis. These students were secretly photographed and later abducted. Such was the destiny of persons who tried democratic policies

in a country where democracy does not exist.

### Respectable party

Mr. Premadasa has said that he is ready to turn up for talks with the JVP without an armed guard. Yes! Since the JVP is a respectable party, he should not fear to do so. But we who know the record of the UNP and its Governments will not be so foolish as to play into their hands. Mr. Premadasa should understand this fact clearly.

So also should the existing situation regarding peace and regarding their plea to us to join a democratic process that does not exist. If Mr. Premadasa wants peace we will not hinder him from attaining it. As detailed here it is his party and his Government which have destroyed peace. The ball remains in his court where the restoration of peace is concerned.

To restore:

1. Totally abrogate the Jayewardene-Gandhi accord which buried the freedom of our nation and made the nation fall prey to Indian imperialism.

2. Drive out the Indian invading forces from this country immediately.

3. Annul the Provincial Councils. They are a powerful threat to the unity of our country. Their formation was undemocratic.

4. Disarm all paramilitary and auxiliary forces such as the STF, RDP, NAR, NAK and Homeguards. Disband all killer squads such as the Black Cats, Yellow Cats, PRRA and SRRA. They were formed to suppress and assassinate political opponents. Cancel all promotions given to murderers.

5. Cancel the results of the presidential and general elections.

6. Respecting the sovereignty of the people, appoint a Board of Caretakers and hold all elections again, under conditions in which everyone could parti-

(Continued on page 22)



# Why I was deported from Britain

Viraj Mendis

It is three months since I was deported from Britain. The vicious press campaign against me has subsided. I would like to express my view of the attacks on me, and the basis of my political position in the *Lanka Guardian*.

The Sri Lankan media on the whole parroted the British Home Office line that I am a fraud, that my politics have been an invention, a device to stay in Britain. But even a rudimentary examination of the facts about my case will show that the truth is exactly the opposite — i. e. that if I had not got so deeply involved in political activity as a member of the Revolutionary Communist Group it would have been inconceivable that the British Home Office would have taken action to deport me in May 1984.

In fact the Home Office lawyers used my political activity during the 1980 — 1984 period as the central argument to undermine the strong case I had to stay in Britain on the basis of my length of residence and roots in the community. (over ten years stay is usually sufficient.) It was my political activity brought me to the attention of the Home Office and it was also the reason for its determination to deport me, as the Tribunal explains "... The appellant's 12 year residence in this country is... a matter which weighs in the scales in his favour, but his conduct during this period also has to be considered... this was not a case of mere passive non-observance of the immigration regulations. The appellant has actually campaigned against immigration controls..."

The Home Office reserved this argument to the legal hearings where they knew that the adjudicators, who are specially chosen for their colonialist back-

ground, would share the sentiment. The British Government never openly argued that they held my political work against me because that would have destroyed their argument that my politics were bogus!

It should not have surprised me that the Sri Lankan media responded in such a pliant way to British wishes. The British influence here is overpowering. The economic system, the education system, the whole ethos of the parliamentary system, is of British design.

In 1948 although power was transferred to the Sinhala ruling elite it remained a client state of Britain.

To this day British companies control 90% of the world packet Tea trade, and a substantial part of Sri Lanka's export earnings is through Tea. Apart from Brooke Bond, other major companies like ICI, CEC, Lucas, Lloyds, Standard Chartered and Pearl Assurance play an important role in Sri Lanka. As the Lloyds Bank Economic Report 1986 put it: "The UK is one of the leading investors in Sri Lanka". The Thatcherite "free trade zones" means freedom for trade, and enslavement for the workers. Sri Lanka is mortgaged to the IMF and the World Bank. The British Government's recent investment in the infrastructure show that it regards Sri Lanka as a long term investment prospect and the UNP regime as the best guardian for this.

This is the background to the British connection with Sri Lanka. This is the reason why, Thatcher, was able to have me handcuffed to two British policemen in an Air Lanka plane — which is against international law. It is the reason why the mighty struggle to get my passport here failed. But when

it was publicised in Britain, one little nudge from London and my passport was virtually delivered to me.

But it is not simply that the Sri Lankan media was doing Britain's dirty work, for there is something even more serious behind these attacks on me. It is the almost pathological opposition to my political position. My position is that of a Sinhala communist giving unconditional support for the right of the Tamil people to self-determination, which practically means giving political support to the LTTE. The feelings on this matter go very deep. What is extraordinary about the situation in Sri Lanka is that despite anti-Tamil riots, unprecedented bloodshed, poverty, economic political and military crisis — the basic Marxist position has such little currency among Sinhala people. The British have done their job well. After "independence" successive Sinhala governments attacked the basic rights of the Tamil people sensing the power of the British divide — and — rule policy. The Sinhala government disenfranchised the plantation workers to reduce the representation of Tamil people in parliament and started an Israeli-style colonisation of the north-east to undermine the Tamil majority there. They introduced the Sinhala only policy. The Gandhian civil disobedience movement for Tamil rights, was crushed by the guns of the Sri Lankan military. The 1972 constitution effectively made Sri Lanka a Sinhala Buddhist nation, Sinhala chauvinism was such a strong political force that political parties used it as a tool to gain support. The Sinhala left and the intelligentsia were either silent or actually collaborated with the racists. Vicious riots where thousands of Tamils died and racism at every level led to the Tamil



youth taking up arms to fight for Tamil Eelam.

In December 1869 Marx argued the position that a socialist in the oppressor nation should adopt on the national question. "... That quite apart from all phrases about 'international' and 'humane' justice for Ireland — which is taken for granted in the International council — it is in the direct and absolute interest of the English working class to get rid of its present connection with Ireland. ... The English working class will never achieve anything before it has got rid of Ireland. The lever must be applied in Ireland. That is why the Irish question is so important to the social movement in general".

At the turn of the century as capitalism reached its Imperialist stage, national chauvinism increased and internationally the national question and its solution became central in progress. Lenin used Marx's position on Ireland as the basis for his brilliant work on the principles and tactics on the national question.

Lenin called the chauvinism against national groups "the greatest evil" "... the greatest obstacle in the struggle against the autocracy". Lenin went on to explain "... The article of our programme... on the self-determination of nations cannot be interpreted to mean anything but political self-determination i. e., the right to, secede and form a separate state ... this article in the Social — Democratic programme is absolutely essential to the Social-Democrats of Russia".

The "Nationalism" taught to the Sinhala worker and peasant is a "nationalism" of a dominating kind with respect to the Tamil people. The Sinhala worker or peasant is asked to see himself as a member of the ruling nation. Marx's argument on this matter rings true for the Sinhala people. Marx argued

that the English worker sees himself as a member of the ruling nation in relation to the Irish. In doing so he turns himself into a tool of the aristocrats and capitalists of his country against Ireland, and thus strengthening the domination of himself. The antagonism between the English and the Irish worker is the secret of the impotence of the English working class, despite its organisation.

If you look at the IVP you see how diabolical the situation is. Here is an armed and Politically powerful force, against foreign domination, based on poor peasant youth, against the dictatorial UNP regime, against capitalism and yet not able to make common cause with the Tamil Liberation struggle. The LTTE has made several principled appeals to the Sinhala people to make common cause with them, most recently LTTE said to the Sinhala people; "... The very laws and militia used for the oppression and genocide of the Tamils have been turned against you. Capitalism will not hesitate to kill people for selfish interests. For this it will befriend even enemies. The murders committed by the Sinhala government in the south and under the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord only prove this. You must realise the reasons for our struggle and the time must soon come when you will recognise Tamil Eelam. Our fullest co-operation is always there for your struggle to redeem the lost sovereignty."

The JVP destroys its anti-Govt. thrust with their opposition to Eelam; On this central issue they are in unity with the UNP Government. A nation that oppresses another cannot itself be free. But it is the Tamil people that are taking the brunt of the Indian force and it is the LTTE which is physically fighting them back.

As Lenin argued: "It was from the standpoint of the revolutionary struggle of the English

workers that Marx, in 1869 demanded the separation of Ireland from England. ... Only by putting forward this demand was Marx really educating the English workers in the spirit of internationalism. Only in this way could he counterpose the opportunists and bourgeois reformism. ... Only in this way could Marx, in opposition to the merely verbal, and often hypocritical, recognition of the equality and self-determination of nations, advocate the revolutionary action of the masses in the settlement of the national question as well".

Unity must be a free alliance. Not unity imposed by the British — when in 1833 it "united" the Tamil and Sinhala Nations of the Island for administrative convenience — and continued the divide and rule policy!

Only on a solid foundation could unity be built and the only path to this on this island is revolutionary unity, the unity of the Sinhala oppressed with the Tamil Liberation struggle against their common enemy — the Imperialist backed Sri Lankan regime.

## Misplaced...

(Continued from page 5)

South Black may be proven right in predicting the collapse of the LTTE-Premadasa talks. On current form, the chances of the talks succeeding are pretty slim. But equally, South Black could be underestimating the imperatives on both sides. There were signs last week that New Delhi is finally reconciling itself to the prospect of an IPKF pull-out. Rajiv Gandhi hinted as much at the army commanders conference. Foreign Secretary S. K. Singh is making his first diplomatic foray to Colombo next week to discuss the redrafting of a new treaty. Having burnt its fingers in Sri Lanka already, New Delhi can least afford to be complacent.

(Radio Today)



# Sinhala and Tamil Left and the Tigers

Dayan Jayatilaka

None of us have fully understood how, why and when the LTTE qualitatively superseded the Eelam Left — with consequences for us all. This is a crucial question for all students of politics and contemporary Sri Lankan history.

Even before 1983, the bourgeois chauvinist elements in Tamil Nadu financed the Tigers, dreaming of a Pan-Tamilian kingdom. This gave the LTTE a headstart in terms of fire-power. The LTTE succeeded because they were narrow nationalists while the Tamil leftists didn't because they were less so. Though there were many avoidable lapses on the part of the latter, I accept this explanation, in the main. This is true of the JVP and the southern revolutionaries grouped in the VK, NJVP, and SJV as well.

Let us look at a snapshot, as it were, of the configuration of political forces in 1986. What about the Left? What about the internationalists? On both sides there were anti-racists and internationalists — political parties, groups (aspirant politico-military vanguard organisations) and democratic and mass organisations. At least one of these, the Vikalpa Kandayama (VK), presented a secular, multi-ethnic revolutionary alternative; one of Sinhalese and Tamils working together for common anti-systemic purpose. Given the political praxis of the LUF, the situation of the internationalists among the Sinhalese (i.e. the strategic allies of the Tamil Liberation Movement) and the Tamils were jeopardised because

it was very, very difficult for the internationalists position to gain mass support when at that point in time the Eelam struggle was targetting not only the soldiers, not only the Police, not only the informants, but, as I said earlier, also the non-combatant working people of the Sinhala nation. The LTTE's acts of terrorism created shock, dismay and confusion among the ranks of Sinhala revolutionaries and as such, put paid to efforts to open up a complimentary 'second front' of struggle in the south. They rendered extremely difficult the practice of proletarian internationalism on the part of the Sinhala revolutionaries, and more tragically of all, may have also resulted in the creation of insurmountable barriers between the working masses of the Sinhala and Tamil nations.

So by this time the class and popular democratic struggle is submerged beneath a blanket of ethnic, or perhaps more correctly, ethno-religious chauvinism. Already because of the reformist and class collaborationist policies of the major parties of the Sinhala Left, the working class movement was in a weak condition. In July 1980 the left party-led trade unions launched a general strike on the modest economic demand of a wage rise of Rs. 300 per month. 70,000 workers were fired, 432 of them have committed suicide, to date. The Government used armed violence against the workers and one worker, Somapala, died.

Because of the historic errors of the traditional Left, compounded by the inability to resist State terrorism, the working class movement went into recession. Which then are the non-racist components of the Sinhala polity? The biggest is Vijaya Kumara-

tunga's party, the Sri Lanka Mahajana Party (SLMP) which is a breakaway of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party. It is not a Marxist-Leninist or even a Marxist Party but a socialist and progressive-democratic party. Vijaya was a very enlightened figure who went to Madras and Jaipur and entered into a dialogue with the Tamil militants. The Communist Party of Sri Lanka, the Lanka Sama Samaja Party, (formerly Trotskyite, but now Social Democratic), a split-off of the LSSP called the Nava Sama Samaja Party, (related to the militant tendency of the Labour Party in Britain), a few Maoist groups which are in decline in Sri Lanka, a few other Trotskyite groups add the three armed struggle-oriented groups referred to earlier, comprised the non-racist Left. One of the last mentioned, the Vikalpa Kandayama, was linked to, but in no sense a front organisation of the EPRLF, and the other two, affiliated to PIOT.

These three groups were not Trotskyite, not traditionally Maoist. They were heavily influenced by the Latin American revolutionary current. That is the picture of the revolutionary formations in the south at that time. Given their meagre strength, the level of consciousness of the working class and the state of the Left parties, there was no chance of the class struggle being levered out to a point that it would break through to the surface. This did not mean, however, that an anti-UNP struggle was not possible. Given the relative strengths of the opposition parties, and above all of mass chauvinism, it is the SLFP that would be hegemonic in this.

It would be metaphysical to think of the Vikalpa project as simply an attempt to operationalise the ideas of one or two revolutionary oriented individuals. One must also recall the

(This is part of 'Work in Progress', a study of the current crisis. It is partly based on a lecture given at the J. N. U., Delhi.)



actual political situation as it evolved from 1977 and mentally recreate the conditions that prevailed, bearing in mind the dialectical interaction of ideas and events. The abduction of and attacks on students, the effect of the massive dismissals of workers, the death of Sampala and attacks on pickets in July 1980, the political struggles participated in against the Referendum, the 'crisis of conscience' of Bloody July 1983, the shooting of the two campus students in 1984, all impelled the Vikalpa and other similar group to come into being. Was it premature? The end of the road had been reached for other methods of struggle and an instrumentality had to be formed for a new mode of intervention in the conjuncture. Something had to be tried. The Gordian knot had to be cut, not picked at, and this needed a sword. Active measures had to be taken to forge the instrumentality, measures violating the bounds of bourgeois legality. Was it a mess-up? yes, but the Moncada attack was a cock-up to beat them all as was the "Granma" landing. So also the 1927 defeats in China and Puncussan in Nicaragua in 1967.

### QUESTION OF CULTURE

I think it was correct to try to create a revolutionary nucleus — after all that is what it was, no more. It was correct to begin military training and to put full time cadres into the field. Building a wide open outfit like the Nava Sama Samaja Party (NSSP) would have been plain silly, what with the 'revolution in the counter-revolution', though eventually an above ground political wing of that nature needed to be set up. I think our errors and defeats were due in the lack of a division of labour, which is because the outfit was not big enough. This, in turn, is sourced — in the sense of the lack of new recruits and later, morale problems — in the ebb tide of the working class and democratic movements due to the defeat of the July 1980 general strike and the over-determination effect of mass

ethnic consciousness from July '83 onward. Should we then have waited for a high tide? No. It was necessary to try to fashion an instrument to lever the working class and democratic movements out of their rut. Even if some day there were to have been a "high tide" with the maturation of the economic crisis, there had to be the material capacity for intervention i.e. an organisation. That was the lesson drawn from the general strike of 1976. However, one now realises that the 'Gordian Knot' was also a question of culture and further more that culture imposes restraints on the availability of the "sword" with which to cut the knot. It meant that we could only come up with a "razor blade", good enough for shaving, but did not have the metal with which to forge the sword!

The left parties (SLMP, CPSL, LSSP, NSSP), if they were to have outblanked Mrs. Bandaranaike, who had the advantage of going with the dominant chauvinist ideology, had to lead mass struggles. Only then would they have been seen by the masses as the main anti-UNP force. There, the NSSP was correct, but then if one took up various issues close to the people and launched strikes, mass demonstrations, etc., the state machine would pulverize that. So then, one had to begin where we did.

This perspective in no way excluded mass struggle even of the Gandhian sort. Nor did it mean that mass struggles must await the ceremonial unveiling of the politico-military vanguard. It was correct to decide to try to create something material to resist the repression of the post-1982 period and it was also correct to link up with the Tamil left to demonstrate that such internationalism was desirable and possible. It was right not to wait 'till tomorrow' to start preparing. It was correct to bridge the gap between the ideologue and the activist. It was right to try to unify theory and practice.

If we were racist, we too could have got recruits in the military. Then training and arms aids would have been easy — thanks to inside help.

Mudalalis would have given us funds, monks would have hidden us in their temples, and youths reared on "Robini" and similar romantic nationalist fiction would have come looking for us in order to join up. We paid the price for our adherence to the principles of internationalism and anti-racism, but it was one worth paying. I would like to think that the historic leadership of the EPRLF and we represented a somewhat better side of our two peoples, while the LTTE and JVP represent the contrary. Certainly we are more in tune with the rest of the world, including the world Communist Movement.

As far as the north and the east go, the LTTE and TELO are basically narrow nationalist formations. The PLOI is a contrivist and an eclectic formation. The EROS is supposedly Marxist but I see little Marxism in an organisation that can blow up working class commuters in trains (not even the bourgeoisie, which would be reprehensible enough), and manual labourers at a soft drinks factory, in Colombo! Their's is a turgid, pseudo-sophisticated Marxist rhetoric combined with urban terrorism, a mix very familiar to students of terrorist groups in Western Europe. At the level of political tactics and manoeuvre, however, I must say that they are exceedingly intelligent and sophisticated. The EPRLF is the only group which is so far, not engaging in internal executions, in drug trafficking or in the killing of Sinhalese civilians. Its leader Padmanaba has practiced internal democracy in the party and has recognised the need to direct the Tamil struggle along the principles of People's War, attempting, albeit unsuccessfully, to build an organisation that could do this (replete with a triadic structure of Party — PLA — Mass Fronts).



## THE DAYS OF THE TIGER

With the attacks on Tamil citizenry by the (Sinhala) army and the retaliatory and massive counterstrikes by the LTTE and EROS militants on the Sinhalese, chauvinism mounts in the south and becomes overwhelmingly predominant. In the first case, that is the nature of bourgeois armed forces; that is the way they are supposed to be, but that is not the way the liberation fighters are supposed to behave! I think we are all familiar with Mao's rules for discipline and points of attention — and the treatment of Kuomintang and even Japanese soldiers even at a time when the Jaopaneese were looting, raping and pillaging China! Their treatment is an example to us of how a people's war is waged. To give another example, you'd know that in 1974, the Portuguese soldiers carried out what turned out to be an abortive revolution. Their radicalisation took place while they were in black Africa; the treatment of the soldiers who were captured by the national liberation forces permeated the Portuguese army, creating the conditions that led to the overthrow of fascism in 1974.

This is not at all the way that the LTTE behaved. If it had continued its relentless armed struggle against the Sinhala armed forces, while it engaged in political propaganda in Jaffna — they had radio and they had the ability to put up posters — then certain cracks and fissures may have appeared in the Sri Lankan army. This was not done. Far from that being the case, repeated attacks were made on Sinhala civilians. Mao, Giap and Guevara have often told us that the fundamental distinction between the oppressor regime and the people must be recognized and observed scrupulously in practice. Civilians must not be harmed. The liberation forces must not become a mirror image of the bourgeois forces. Their behaviour and morality should be qualitatively different from that of the reac-

tionary forces, stemming from and simultaneously underscoring the fact that the war of the former is a just one while that of the latter is an unjust one. The moral factor is more important than the temporary material advantages that the enemy may have. The terrorist actions can only vitiate this moral advantage and blur the justice of a given cause.

The national liberation and revolutionary movements' response to atrocities committed by the bourgeois forces should be the creation of mass organisations and rural self-defence militias and the launching of well-organised, well co-ordinated and devastating offensives, on the military, political, diplomatic and economic fronts, directed against the capitalist system and the state. This is the lesson taught by revolutionary leaders throughout the world, and who dares say that the revolutionary forces and peoples of China, Vietnam, Cuba and Nicaragua did not suffer repression and atrocities at the hands of reactionaries on the scale witnessed in Eelam?

Acts such as the Anuradhapura massacre violate the fundamentals of revolutionary morality and tarnish the glorious memories of the dead heroes of the Eelam liberation struggle. Even if short term political and military advantages have accrued to the Eelam movement due to such deeds, they cannot outweigh the negative consequences of these acts of political criminality, reminiscent of the Deir Yassin massacre committed by the Zionists in 1948.

Now, in the first place, these acts are totally amoral, because, after all, we must remind ourselves what liberation fighters are fighting for. "Not just for something different, but for something better" It is an alternative that is more advanced in terms of social development. It is more humane and enlightened. It is very difficult to make a better society with those who have no compunction about

killing women and children and old people! In October 1987, during the LTTE's attacks on Sinhala civilians in the East, women and children were being thrown into burning huts. What is then the difference between the bestiality of the oppressor and the national liberation forces? There has to be a qualitative behavioural difference.

In May 1986, we have another landmark. While May Day was being celebrated in most parts of the world, even under the Emergency rule of the bourgeois, authoritarian, dependent, chauvinist regime of J. R. Jayawardene, May Day, the day of the working class was being 'celebrated' by the LTTE in Jaffna with the slaughter of 150 Tamil militants belonging to TELO! They were supposed to be anti social elements, criminals. Even if this were true, I would have thought that they at least deserve a fair trial. There was no May Day here in the liberated zone! We know that when a zone is liberated, it is supposed to mean that there is people's power. Now, the motivation for the massacre was not even ideological. One can understand, though not justify, the members of one ideological persuasion killing members of another ideological persuasion. But the TELO, and the LTTE are ideological colleagues. In fact, they had militarily co-operated in the years before. After Uma Maneswaran left the LTTE, and Prabhakaran was in tears and on the verge of giving up, it was Kuttimani of TELO who said "Tambi, it's okay, don't give up — we will work together".

The LTTE and the JVP do not mind if their victims, are as economically disadvantaged as they, or even more so.

Kuttimani's successor, Sri Sabaratham was killed by Kittu in May 1986. Even in tribal warfare, the one attacks 'The Other', i.e. one who is from a different locality. But this is not even tribal warfare, as the TELO also originated in Val-



vettiturai. It is socio-political racialism. These are people who live in the same areas, youths of the same generation; these are sometimes neighbours, even members of the same extended family.

Many individuals refer to the LTTE as a "Tamil patriotic (i.e. nationalist) force". I would like to look at that formulation again. The whole problem in Sri Lanka is that in the numbers game, the Tamil people are in a minority, and as a minority, (though they are a nation in social terms) they are oppressed and they want their rights. Even speaking in utilitarian terms, when you are faced with an enemy who is numerically stronger than you, it is not very smart to go around killing militants of other groups. Let's forget Marxism, socialism, liberation, people's war, everything. It's neither patriotic nor particularly intelligent to kill 150 trained militants. I'm sure you have some idea of what it costs to train one militant. How difficult it is for that person to leave his home, his family, his ambitions and go to a training camp — it is very hard. And then you struggle to survive. You move every week through army controlled terrain. That is difficult enough. To just kill off several hundred of those militants is not very patriotic.

It's also not particularly patriotic to kill Sinhala civilians because the survivors and those who see it on TV or read about it, then go and sign up with the Sinhala armed forces. We have heard that one of the fundamentals of a people's war is to unite the many, defeat the few; to identify and isolate the main enemy. But Mr. Prabhakaran was busy 'uniting the many' against himself. He seemed to have forgotten that the Sinhalese were the many. Every time there is a slaughter, the opposition says to Lalith Abuluthmudali get more arms, more soldiers. Bourgeois armies dig their own graves by slaughtering innocent

civilians and forcing the general populace to take up arms in self defence when it perceives a threat to its collective existence. Liberation forces should not indulge in similar behaviour because it could only have similar results and this would be enormously and irreversibly counter productive. The Sinhala bourgeois regime had been attempting to forcibly arm civilians, but after the Anuradhapura massacre the civilians in that area had themselves stormed the Kuchcheri and Police Station demanding weapons. So the LTTE was the best of pressure groups, because the affected people go to the opposition politicians and the opposition, in any case, thinks the conduct of the war a very good stick to beat the Government with.

Surely a liberation movement should try to stir up the enemy's rear base? The rear base of the Sinhala bourgeois state consists of the Sinhala people. Destabilizing this rear base means not merely launching military raids into Sinhala majority areas, but more importantly, stirring up class struggle and the popular-democratic forces, anti racist and anti war movements, solidarity and support campaigns, in Sinhala Sri Lanka. Terrorist acts like the Anuradhapura attack and the ones of May '86 and April/May '87, far from helping this process, only solidifies the enemy's rear base and when it does create dissent against the UNP regime, it actually strengthens the most chauvinistic sectors of Sinhala society and its polity. While J. R. Jayawardena was being severely criticized, a sentiment was also growing to the effect that all power should be handed over to the military.

If the crisis-ridden and corrupt UNP is replaced by the chauvinists, the Tamil people will face a far fiercer foe, with the morale of the rank-and-file military men being boosted. The tragedy of the oppressed Kurds points to the fate of minorities under fanatical regi-

mes. More Kurds have been killed after than under the Shah! Similarly, the Eritrean struggle was doing much better under the Haile Selassie regime than against the Ethiopian Dergue. A populist-chauvinist government in Sri Lanka, supported by the lower-middle ranks of the armed forces and the Buddhist clergy will only succeed in massively mobilizing the Sinhala people against the Tamil movements. Yet it is the social-chauvinists and clerico-fascists who were strengthened by the terrorist trend that predominated in the Delfa movement since the Anuradhapura incident.

If it was imagined that 'Anuradhapura tactics' would strike a 'balance of terror' and deter the Sinhala army from slaughtering Tamil civilians, the subsequent killings at Delfa, at Anuradhapura and throughout the East prove that this tactic of deterrence simply does not work. Liberation movements should never aspire to undo the bourgeoisie in terrorist atrocities.

Most national liberation struggles are fought by a majority of the people against a foreign occupier or aggressor (the U.S. in Vietnam, the French in Algeria) or a group (the whites in South Africa) that is numerically smaller than the occupied peoples. It is necessary to stress that one of the specific features of the Tamil national liberation struggle is that it is waged by an oppressed nation which is a national minority. Hence it is strategically most important not to engage in a course of action that would unite, mobilize (and possibly arm) almost the whole Sinhala nation (except a few revolutionaries) against oneself. Hence the importance of winning over sections of the Sinhala working masses; or, at the very least, neutralising those sectors that cannot be won over. Anuradhapura did not in the least help this latter process!

In May of 1985, the supposedly Marxist EROS, starts



planting bombs. They had done it earlier in 1985 but then it did not work out—there was a bomb in the Oberoi which blew up a maid, but then they got 'better' and more ambitious. As a result there were people blown up in the Ceylon Telecommunications Office, in the commuter trains and a number of other targets that the EROS chose to call 'economic targets'.

The LTTE and EROS resorted to the cynical practice of occasional and slightly belated denials and condemnations of these heinous deeds, but such condemnations could have been invested with credibility only if those guilty of these acts were publicly identified and publicly punished. Surely organisations which mete out severe punishment for petty theft can do no less in the case of the slaughter of civilians, including children? In any event, such a transformation in behaviour, following a genuine self criticism, did not take place and by this time, the non racist internationalist Sinhala Left was getting more and more marginalised.

Naturally, State terrorism was first focussed against striking and picketing workers and university students. State terrorism caused the murder of two unarmed students in mid '84. It is in response to this that the 'Vikalpa' arms itself. The crack-down begins. The organisation goes underground—it goes into a semi-clandestine mode in December '85, and its key activists go completely underground in the first week of January '86.

The spearhead of the repression is a new unit created by the state, called the Special Operations Unit of the National Intelligence Bureau, forged with the help of the U.S. and Israel. By this time George Shultz had made his famous 'Synagogue speech' in New York, about preventive counter-terrorism. They selected several—I think 8—countries in which this programme would be tried out.

Sri Lanka was one of them. Now, while much of this was directed against the Tamil guerilla struggle, that guerilla struggle had advanced to such a point that these techniques could no longer bear fruit as there was no information-gathering capacity on the ground; there were no agents, nobody could speak Tamil. But these were used in the South. So we faced the full brunt of the revolutionised counter-revolution.

You see, July '83 caused a leap both in the capacity of the Tamil guerillas and in the capacity of the state, but not in our capacity. So there was this asymmetry to start with.

A young Sinhalese boy or girl was no longer just interested in the history of oppression of the Tamils by the bourgeoisie. All he wants is to do something, and as far as he is concerned the government is not doing anything. So he signs up with the JVP.

### MAHAVAMSA MARXISM

I don't buy the distinction between 'bad leaders' and 'mised followers' in the JVP. The JVP's rank and file joined the movement out of fanatically 'patriotic' motives, to play Dutugemunu, as the ethnic war hotted up and the government was seemingly ineffectual in securing a military victory. Wijeweera changed his post - '77 line and returned to a modified version of his pre-1971 line, because he shares these views and also to attract this lot. The leaflet following the first raid on the Katunayake airbase, slammed the government for its ineffective air raids on Jaffna, while the Central Committee's leaflet of June '87 excoriated the government for attempting a political solution based on devolution in place of the pursuance of military victory. It's not just a question of the 'top' misleading the 'base', but also of the constituency—with its consciousness-influencing the apex. From a civilizational point of view, from the point of view the political culture of our

society which is still in advance of many third world societies, from the point of social development as a whole and the interests of the class struggle of the proletariat for socialism in particular, these elements are a retrogressive force.

The rational Left hopefully can and shall take on the bourgeoisie and its repressive apparatus in its own time, in its own way and supported by social forces that can put in place a more advanced social formation. Having the Shah's regime replaced by Khomeini's Pasdaran didn't help the Iranian Left! "How can they run a 20th century society along 7th century lines?" they used to scoff. Well, now they've found out, the poor souls.

I see a real continuity, in a politico-historical sense, between the JVP and those who blocked the Bandaranaike-Chelvanayagam pact in 1957 and the Dudley-Chelvanayagam pact in 1966. The JVP is today the armed vanguard and the new generation of the selfsame Socio-cultural forces that thwarted a devolutionary (i.e. power sharing) settlement of the Tamil national question from 1955, thereby causing a separatist armed struggle for two decades and Indian intervention three decades later. When there was agitation against the B-C pact and the D-C pact, causing the abrogation of both, there was no 'open economy' and the Referendum had not taken place. I do not deny the other causes of the outburst of July 29, 1987. One cannot deny that socio-economic and democratic streams of dissent fed into this, but the Accord was not simply 'the straw that broke the camel's back'. The forces of **Sinhala-Buddhist hegemonism** have an autonomous existence, and cannot be reduced to socio-economic causes.

It must be emphasized though that bourgeois democratic reform (devolution) was a result of 15 years of armed struggle and 30 years of mass struggles against the bourgeois state and successive



albeit rival bourgeois regimes. This reveals something about the character of the state under which we are living. So much struggle, suffering and sacrifice to win this basic bourgeois democratic reform!

## CONTENDING CHAUVINISMS

Some may think that the Sinhalese (JVP) and Tamil (LTTE) will get together to oppose Indian intervention, but I doubt that really happening. They oppose Indian intervention because they really want to get at each other's throats! Currently it is the IPKF that stands in the way. Both the JVP and the LTTE are opposed to the Accord and the IPKF but they are against it for two different and divergent reasons. The JVP wants to get rid of the IPKF and the Accord and wants all the concessions granted to the Tamils under the Accord rolled back. The question of the JVP and the LTTE is therefore one of twin and contending chauvinisms of a petite bourgeois, populist variety. So the LTTE and the JVP, though they are very similar in their behaviour and though they may even collude temporarily, will eventually contend, because they are both exclusivist, hegemonistic and supremacist in ethnic terms. They are also incapable — and perhaps this is the key of political power-sharing. How viable is the attitude of these two movements? Can the Tamil people win a separate state for themselves, overcoming the hostility of the majority Sinhalese? Conversely, how can secessionism be thwarted and unity built, except through regional autonomy? The LTTE and JVP prescriptions lead to ethnic civil war, to permanent strife. How realistic are their projects within a multi-ethnic society — one and one located on India's doorstep?

The objective reality is that the Sinhalese and Tamils have to share this island and live in peace. That is only possible on the basis of autonomy. Both the JVP and the LTTE are trying to override objective laws which will eventually override them.

Even if the JVP seizes power, it will be unable to hold it. If the JVP looks like it is about to seize power, the IPKF may move in from the East, carve a corridor and seal off the plantations. Even if this does not happen, arms infusions into the hill country by Indian agencies, may render that area the Dien Bien Phu of armed Sinhala populism.

The only forces on the Sinhala and Tamil sides which can cooperate are those forces who are committed to the vision of a multi-ethnic, multi-religious Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka with a federal or semi-federal State structure. These men and women, Sinhala and Tamil, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu and Muslim, are increasingly peripheralised and find themselves fighting a bitter battle for sheer political and physical survival.

By December 1986, we've the so-called December 19 proposals which were hammered out between the TILF, Indian Minister, P. Chidambaram and Nawar Singh, and the Sri Lankan Government.

Perhaps the December 19 proposals were the best set of concrete proposals to come out, as it envisaged the excision of the predominantly Sinhala district of Amparai. I think it was more workable in the longer run than the temporary merger of the totality of the existing Northern and Eastern Provinces envisaged in the Accord. But the Tamil militants were ambiguous on this. I think everyone was looking over their shoulder at the LTTE. The EPRLF and the others in the ENLF (at that time minus the Tigers), did not wish to be outflanked by the latter. In fact from the time of the SAARC Summit in Bangalore in November, these others were trying to outflank the LTTE, accusing it of being about to sell out the Eelam struggle in exchange for recognition as the sole representative of the Tamils! Thus the 'maximalist' character of the ENLF response of November 3rd, 1986 to the proposals

put to them through M. G. Ramachandran. But this game of jockeying by all parties concerned, led to a monumental defeat for the entire liberation movement, the whole struggle and the Tamil people. If the brakes were applied at the time of the Chidambaram mission, the Tamil struggle would not have plunged down the precipice to destruction. Note the shift between Thimpu and December 19th. By the latter date the supremacy of the LTTE is recognised by the Government of India.

That the Eelam groups did not seize the December 19 opportunity was a mistake. Their argument was that you can't trust the Government. For the last thirty or forty years, they have been 'had'. Now, I think, the best way to demonstrate that would have been to go through with the process of negotiations, and then allow the government to demonstrate its bad faith. This is why the Chinese communist party went to Chungking and the Vietnamese went to Paris for the peace talks.

If, on the other hand, peace talks work, it is good because it causes a partial reopening of the democratic space, which permits the building of mass organisations particularly in the city. But Prabhakaran basically has no such perspective because of his ingrained militarism. In a strangely contradictory fashion, this 'pure militarism' precluded the exercise of the only military option that could have forestalled the reforms which Prabhakaran feared would bury the Eelam struggle. This option was nothing other than the Sandinista tactic of successful attacks on garrisons and the triggering off of partial and then total popular insurrection. This was and is not possible in the Tamil case because there was no unified or even coordinated vanguard. Under whose banner were the people supposed to rise up? This disunity and armed rivalry among the vanguard organisations was the



single most important strategic drawback of the Tamil liberation struggle. What was needed was organic unification of the vanguard. It was not understood that unity leads to a more than arithmetical addition of forces, creating an atmosphere and a division of labour that results in a multiplication or geometric progression in strength (as did the unification of the three Sandinista tendencies). By mid-'86 the disarray and fratricidal strife had to be taken as one of the aspects that concretely constituted the conjuncture that prevailed.

It was the sole recognition of the LTTE as the representative of the Tamil people, not devolution of power to the Tamil people, that was the Tigers' over-riding motivation. Thus December 19 came and went.

In the meantime, the situation on the ground wasn't looking too good, because in early 1987, the Sri Lanka army launched something called Operation Giant Step. This pretty much cleared the Tamil areas, apart from Jaffna, of the LTTE. This was possible in the East mainly because of the political errors of the LTTE, vis-a-vis the Muslims. It maintained the fiction of the Tamil speaking people. If you demand nationhood on the basis of language, then the British and the Americans should be one nation; shouldn't it? So, the Tamil Eelam groups were unable to see the specificity of the Muslim community (and, one might add, the plantation Tamil community), in the same way that the Sinhala Left was for a long time unable to see the specificity and autonomy of the Tamil national question. These groups permitted the Muslim people to be manipulated by the Government of Sri Lanka.

### IGNORING GIAP

That was in the East. But the real problem, as General Giap reminds us, is that if you try to override the objective laws of the development of a phenomenon, the objective laws

will override you! Now, the LTTE had forgotten the objective laws of the development of a people's war. We are familiar with the structure of a People's Army — there is a rural militia, there is a local guerilla which operates in a geographical locality and there is a strategic mobile force. The LTTE had no such structure. They used to hit and move which is fair enough but then the army would move in and the people could not defend themselves because there was no rural militia. Why was there no rural militia? Because the agrarian question was not understood by the LTTE as the centrepiece of the national question. You know that the national question is in the main an agrarian question. But there was no organisation of the peasantry. You can't have a rural militia without having a party structure in the village. There was no such thing, because there was no party.

So it was the strategic mobile force which was having to do all the fighting. Of course, there was support. Nobody is gain-saying that. I would be surprised if in the case of a national struggle there was no mass support. But it would be incredibly populist to believe that you should support a struggle simply because it has a degree of mass support. That is not the criterion for supporting a struggle. The Confederationists in the American Civil War were mass based. So was Hitler. Bravery in a civil war is not a criterion either. The Japanese fought very well. (All this must be borne in mind when we take a position on the JVP). So because there was no such rural militia component, the Sri Lankan army managed to cause a shrinkage of the zone of control of the LTTE. We know that in a People's war and in guerilla warfare, this kind of thing happens. There is a constant shift, an uneven development. But in the case of the Tamil Eelam struggle there is a longdrawn secular trend of the shrinkage of the zone of control of the Eelam fighters.

### Letters . . .

(Continued from page 1)

"Seeking knowledge is a sacred duty for every Muslim"

We all know that education and knowledge referred to in the saying is Quranic and Islamic knowledge and not what passes as education in schools and universities today. It is an indisputable fact that the Golden Era of Islam was when Muslims had the Quranic knowledge.

3. In trying to emphasise the prominence the Prophet gave his wife two glaring mistakes have been made:

- (a) That he was troubled by visions for seven long years and
- (b) he made a final decision to become a messenger of God.

He never had visions for seven years prior to Prophethood. It was just once during one night in the month of Ramadhan when Angel Gibreel appeared before him and announced the Prophethood. The experience did trouble him but not even seven days passed before he realised that he had indeed been chosen by God Almighty to be the Last and Final Prophet.

Secondly, that he made a "final decision" implies that God Almighty made an "offer" of Prophethood which was under consideration for seven long years before a decision was made by the offeree to accept. Doesn't it sound rather ludicrous in a God — man relationship?

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# INDIA AND EELAM: Sri Lanka's dependency syndrome

Izeth Hussain

## THIRD OBJECTIVE

It can be argued that India has for long had aspirations towards great power status. Nehru once observed in the Indian Parliament that a great power cannot help but behave like a great power, and we might suspect that is what the Peace Accords are really about. Kuldip Nayar, in an article published in *The Island* 23/1/89, wrote that Nehru had recorded a note in the Ministry of External Affairs in 1962 that it was a little naïve to think that the trouble with China was simply over a territorial dispute. According to that note there were deeper reasons. "And the test was as to whether any one of them would have a more dominating position than the other on the border and in Asia itself." Apart from the Peace Accords and the IPKF presence here, India's briskly efficient gendarme operation in the Maldives might be taken as confirmation of the regional great power status to which India has aspired from the time of Nehru.

Questions can also be raised about the fact that the IPKF never tried to capture Prabhakaran and never tried to eliminate the LTTE militarily. As there could be several reasons for this, we need not jump to conclusions about sinister motives. Nevertheless, there can be suspicions that the failure to eliminate the LTTE is part of a strategy aimed at keeping the IPKF here indefinitely. If the LTTE is not eliminated or neutralized effectively, India can

argue that the IPKF presence here has to continue as in the alternative fighting will erupt once again between our troops and the LTTE. And if the LTTE could be contained without being eliminated, showing itself to be not much more than a nuisance through an occasional incident, we could have some degree of normalcy in the North and East, but that would be only by grace of the IPKF and only under the aegis of the Indian Government. That would mean a serious erosion of sovereignty over part of the island, and we will be seen to have succumbed to Indian tutelage or hegemony.

There are, however, very important reasons for which the Indian Government might not want to keep the IPKF here. For one thing, the fact that the LTTE can go on killing Indian soldiers will hardly be acceptable to a democratic government which can be embarrassed by the opposition. Furthermore, the Indian Government must certainly be mindful of the American experience of the quagmire in Vietnam and of the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. Besides, it is not necessary at all to keep the IPKF here to secure any great power objectives, as shown by the example of US hegemony in Latin America which required, not military occupation, but an avuncular posture backed by readiness to send in the marines to knock the stuffing out of errant Latinos.

There are no grounds for assuming, whatever suspicions we may have, that India has been acting in terms of a game-plan which has matured in the Peace Accords and the IPKF presence here. Certainly India might want to act like a great power to-

wards us, but what is really important is that whether or not India acquires dominance over Sri Lanka depends not just on India but on ourselves, probably far more on ourselves than on India.

## HISTORY'S LESSONS

Sri Lanka's history from the time of the Tamil invasions could be instructive in this connection. Foreigners were repeatedly invited to come into this country because of quarrels among the Sinhalese or for other reasons. After some time these foreigners, who knew a good thing when they saw it, took over parts of the island until the British, the shrewdest and ablest of them all, took it over in its entirety. Now, after a spell of independence, we have yet once more invited the foreigner to come right in, this time because of quarrels between the Sinhalese and the Tamils. It is said that history repeats itself. It is also said that the only thing we learn from history is that we will not learn from history.

The foreigners who came to Sri Lanka enjoyed a protracted stay as they came in the heyday of Western imperialism. The imperial era has ended, times have changed, and we can hope that the IPKF will not stay here for a century and a half because the whole trend of international relations has turned against dominance and unequal relations. That is why so many countries have chosen to be Non-Aligned, and why there has been the phenomenon of "de-alignment" in Europe. All this is probably the consequence of an ideology which has been gathering momentum since its formulation in the European Enlightenment of the Eighteenth Century. Whatever

*The writer a retired Foreign officer was Ambassador in the Philippines. The article is based on a talk at the Margat Institute.*



the impetus towards great power status in India and other countries, the counter-movement is powerful and global in scope and it seems reasonable to think that whether or not a small country succumbs to the designs of a giant neighbour depends to a large extent on the small country itself.

We must also note that it is not inevitable that stronger powers always prey on the weaker ones. It is not inevitable that a country well-equipped with the means of exercising power in the international arena will always deploy them. Today, we have the case of Japan which does not want to emerge as a great power, contenting itself with defeating practically everybody in practically every field of its choosing, in peaceful competition without wanting to boss anyone. In the past we had the case of the U.S. which, until after the Second World War, contented itself with hegemony over Latin America although it could have asserted itself as a world power.

The global trends are certainly favourable to our independence whatever might be the intentions of India. But we have to make certain choices if we want to avoid dominance, neo-colonialism, hegemony, or some other form of unequal relations with India. We can conjure up an image of India in terms of Kashmir, Hyderabad, Bhutan, Goa, Sikkim, the wars with Pakistan and its break-up, and the border-war with China, and regard India as an inveterate aggressor, boiling with ambition to become a great power and dominate all its neighbours. We can recall Panikkar's book on India as an Indian Ocean power, forgetting the context in which it was written and choosing to ignore the point that a Dravidian historian's pride in the past maritime glory of the Dravidians may not be shared by other Indians. We can invoke the name of the Subramaniam, and the lucubrations of other theorists, and work ourselves up into a state of fury, ignoring the fact that their views are

not necessarily those of the Indian Government. We can, in other words, show suspicion and hostility towards India and most certainly provoke a reciprocal suspicion and hostility. There is such a thing as a self-fulfilling prophecy, and a projection of India as a regional great-power out to dominate Sri Lanka could bring precisely that to pass.

Alternatively, we can recognize that India could have legitimate interests in relation to Sri Lanka, specifically that the Tamil problem should be solved so that there will be no further fall-out in Tamil Nadu and that we should not get together with a foreign bower against India. And we can also recognize an obvious convergence of interest, as India does not want a break-up of Sri Lanka any more than we do.

In regard to the Tamils also there are choices to be made. We can engage in a selective reading of Sri Lankan history and convince ourselves of an ancient, enduring, and irreconcilable hostility between Sinhalese and Tamils. Or we can emphasize the peaceful interaction between the two communities, and the accommodativeness of Sinhalese civilization which has over the centuries transformed so many Tamils into Sinhalese. We can choose to note or choose to ignore the basis for a convergence of interest following on the IPKF presence here, which has not turned out to be a pleasant experience for the Tamils. Even earlier the LTTE and other groups came to be regarded in Tamil Nadu as an alien intrusion and an absolute nuisance. The experience of the last couple of years or so should convince the Tamils that they are Sri Lankans who have to live in Sri Lanka and have to interact with the Sinhalese.

Behind what looks like a commonsensical and pragmatic approach to problems there are usually assumptions of a theoretical order which are not made explicit. In this article the assumption is that many Third World countries show what might

be called a dependency syndrome. It has been customary, for the Third World intelligentsia to blame the economic ills of their countries on neo-colonialism, on what has been done to them in the past and what supposedly continues to be done to them in the present, whereas in fact their ills can far better be explained in terms of disastrous economic policies and the inept, brutal dictatorships for which so many Third World countries have been notorious. Perhaps the erosion of traditional beliefs and systems and ways of life that is inevitable with the socio-economic changes taking place in the Third World leads to a sense of helplessness, and hence a propensity to blame others for the shortcomings of the Third World countries themselves. This, in effect, means that they think of themselves as dependent on others. In so far as we think of the Tamil problem in terms of what the Indians have done and might do, not in terms of what we ourselves have done and can do, we may be unwittingly displaying a dependency syndrome which could be dangerous for the future of this country.

### JVP view . . .

*(Continued from page 11)*

cipate freely and the masses can vote freely.

The end of the curse of a twelve-year UNP rule will be seen only if these demands are fulfilled. Then it will not be necessary to pray for peace, because the masses will not be left with a cause to fight for.

But these cruel UNP rulers will not come forward to rectify the wrongs committed by destroying the nation and the peace in the Island.

Only after this vile ruling class has been mercilessly driven out that peace will dawn on his country. Only then can freedom for the nation and rights for the people be won. There is but one avenue open...fight onto victory!

*(Sunday Times)*



# Gorbachev's visit — Deng's 'crowning success'

Bhabani Sen Gupta

Party and government leaders in Beijing are busy preparing for the long-awaited summit between Deng Xiaoping and Mikhail Gorbachev, which, as an eminent Chinese scholar told me, will be the "crowning success" of Deng's 11 year helmsmanship of Chinese affairs. Drafts of a joint communique have been exchanged. A strong Soviet team of foreign policy experts is in Beijing putting final touches to the draft. The central point of the draft is the two largest communist countries joint commitment to the creation of a new international political order based on the five principles of peaceful coexistence, an important Chinese source indicated in the course of a recent discussion in Beijing.

The Chinese leaders would have liked to play the Gorbachev visit rather on a muted note. For the simple reason that they do not want to give the Americans an impression that China and the Soviet Union are edging closer to one another. But the student agitation for more democracy and faster political reforms will probably weigh strongly with the leaders that the welcome to Gorbachev must be warm and played up. Gorbachev is more popular with the younger generation than with the older, many Chinese told me. To hug Gorbachev warmly will be to tell the students that the Chinese leaders too are committed to democracy and political reforms.

Indeed, the Chinese leaders will be very pleased if Mikhail Gorbachev publicly praises China's economic and political reforms. The economic reforms have brought home a rich harvest, though not without creating

some serious distortions and problems. Inflation is running probably at more than 20 percent. China's own leading economists have identified several serious contradictions in the economy brought about in a decade's single-minded modernisation. By



Mikhail Gorbachev

Third world, including Indian, standards. China looks prosperous and its people better off in food, clothing, health and housing. Though not in higher education, transportation and scientific and technological manpower.

However, the political distortions created by the get-rich-quick strategy of economic development lend an extraordinary importance to the visit of Gorbachev to Beijing on May 15. The students, supported by workers and the common citizenry, have raised the demand for democracy and political rights. The Chinese leaders have been keenly following political reforms in the USSR, Hungary and Poland, without showing much readiness to introduce similar reforms in China. As Gorbachev will be keen to pick up whatever he can from China's experience of economic reforms

so will the Chinese leaders quiz him on the hows and whys of the political reforms he has pushed through in the USSR in the last three years.

Four major institutes in Beijing that work on different aspects of international affairs have been busy for months weighing the pros and cons of the Gorbachev visit and the impact of normalisation of Sino-Soviet relations on world affairs. The Chinese do realise that the event will be as historic as the Sino-US and Sino-Japanese breakthrough of February 1972. A broad consensus seems to have evolved in China that normal relations with the USSR will be good not only for China but for the whole world, and that it will not hurt China's relation with the United States and Japan, countries the Chinese care for more than any other nation.

Several hours of discussions with international relations scholars at the Institute of Contemporary International Affairs and the Beijing Institute of International Strategic Affairs gave me ample insights of the impact on world politics the Chinese expect from the May 15 summit between Deng and Gorbachev. The Chinese scholars, 30 in all, made the following consensus points:

First, normalisation of Sino-Soviet relations presupposed the removal of three obstacles: the presence of Soviet troops in Afghanistan; the Vietnamese military intervention in Cambodia; and substantial reduction of Soviet troops along the Manchurian border with China and in Mongolia. Normalisation of Sino-Soviet relations will therefore first of all bring about relaxation of tensions and resolution of conflicts in the areas

*Dr. Sen Gupta, Senior Research Professor at the Centre of Policy Research visited China last month*



where the three obstacles existed. In Chinese thinking, normalisation of Sino—Soviet relations will help promote better relations between China and India, India and Pakistan, Pakistan and the USSR, China and Vietnam and ASEAN countries. It will help to gradually relax the situation in South and South-East Asia.

Secondly, normalisation of Sino—Soviet relations will help promote the establishment of a new international political and economic order. The Chinese argument is that once the world's two largest communist nations demonstrate that they can build their relationship on the five principles of peaceful coexistence and promote mutual economic cooperation on terms of equal mutual benefit, it will certainly influence global trends and processes. Chinese scholars visualise that in the not distant future China, Japan, South Korea and the USSR would jointly work for the development of the enormous untapped resources of Siberia.

Thirdly, normalisation of Sino—Soviet relations will widen and activate exchanges of ideas and experiences among the socialist countries and push forward the progress of their economic and political reforms. Each socialist country must follow its own chosen path; there can be no copying of each other's model. But once relations between China and the USSR get friendly, each will understand better what the other is trying to do, and socialist countries will be in a better position to help each other on terms of absolute equality and equal mutual benefit.

The Chinese academics and party and government officials I was able to meet said that there were, of course, certain misgivings in some quarters about normalisation of Sino—Soviet relations. However, these misgivings would gradually yield to the seminal changes occurring in global affairs. They were convinced that world strategic

realities had changed fundamentally and there could be no return to the old cold war alliances. The understanding that has grown between China and the United States as a result of 17 years of cooperation will not easily collapse. Both needed each other. The detente that is growing between the USSR and the US is also very different from the detente of the 60s and the 70s. It is going to be deeper and wider, more durable because it is dictated by common needs. Western Europe will be getting out of the cold war in the years to come, and Japan will be a powerful independent centre of power.

In the world of the 1990s and beyond, there will be no strategic alliance between China and the United States nor between China and the USSR.

The Chinese, then, see normalisation of their relations with the USSR as part of a global process which will get irreversible. As one eminent Chinese scholar put it, "Normalisation of Sino—Soviet relations is being realised when there emer-

ges the trend of dialogue and relaxation of tension in the international situation. US—Soviet and European—Soviet relations have already been improved first, and the improvement in Japanese—Soviet relation is also under way. The current development of Sino—Soviet relations has lagged behind that of US—Soviet and European—Soviet relations. In this situation, if Sino—Soviet relations remained abnormal, it would not only harm China's and the USSR's reforms and development, but also distort the world balance of forces."

The Chinese came to the decision to normalise state-to-state and party-to-party relations with the USSR after long, comprehensive deliberations. They have placed China's own economic, political and strategic interests above every other consideration. They do not, however, belittle their existing differences with the Soviet Union, and I found many of them wonder what surprise Mikhail Gorbachev would bring for China.

(To be continued)

### SO THE PARTY'S NOT FASHIONABLE?

*Hey perestroika, the screen shatters again  
Old etchings and sketchings no longer remain  
Krushoff's no drop off, but Breshueff's the bane  
For the nations stagnation, scapegoat with no brain?  
The picture's reforming, here's the 20th Congress  
Toadies denouncing all earlier progress  
Each climber is pouncing his prey in the Press.  
The Archives are beehives, a buzzing with 'D's  
DSc's and D Phils perestroiking theses  
The judgements of History aren't cerebral games  
To restructure each decade by shifting the blame  
The Verdict is there in what has been done  
By the people who've chosen their leaders each one  
And what has been achieved in Seventy two years  
Needs no patronizing, Perestroika, or tears  
So send all those toadies a packing the West  
On its 2000 year old barbaric Quest.*

U. Karunatilake



# Vasantha's ambitious experiment

Jagath Senaratne

CINEMA

Vasantha Obeysekera's new film "Kudapatthaka Chaya" is woven around the lives of four individuals, namely Dhanaratne (Vijaya Kumaranatunge), his wife Vimala (Sunethra Sarathchandra), Vimala's younger sister Nanda (Swarna Mallawaarachchi), and Nanda's boyfriend, and later husband, Priyathilleke (Sunath Gunatilleke).

Vimala's and Nanda's parents are both dead, and Nanda is brought-up in wealthy businessman Dhanaratne's lavish home. When Nanda is a little child, her relationship with her brother-in-law Dhanaratne is like that between a daughter and a loving father; at that stage in their lives, Vimala and her husband don't have children of their own, and they bring Nanda up as if she were their own child. Obeysekera captures scenes from these early years in poignant filmic vignettes — Dhanaratne running after Nanda and playfully throwing her slight body effortlessly in the air, and Nanda learning her school lessons at Dhanaratne's elbow at the dining table, are two sequences which come vividly to mind. Homely scenes typical of numerous households.

With the passage of time, as the little girl blooms into an attractive young woman, Dhanaratne's attitude undergoes a qualitative change. He becomes angry at the slightest evidence of Nanda's healthy and innocent attraction towards males of her own age group. Nubile Nanda's innocent coquetry infuriates Dhanaratne who camouflages his sexual jealousy behind a pious facade.

Dhanaratne rapes Nanda, and thereby changes the entire course of the rest of her life. From then on develops a situation which, thick with sexual deception, hypocrisy, fear, intimidation, and bad faith, ensnarls

the fate of the four protagonists till murder itself is the only answer. Dhanaratne's death is prefigured in the horribly scarred face that Nanda, sometime, imagines to be her own.

Nanda's love-hate relationship with Dhanaratne continues even after her marriage. Dhanaratne uses his powerful personality, wealth, and psychological hold over the woman for his own ends, while maintaining the facade of a benevolent brother-in-law for the benefit of the world at large. Dhanaratne is wealthy and also carries considerable political clout; he is a philanthropist, and generally "a man who can get things done". Obeysekera's portrayal of Dhanaratne is profoundly subversive of a certain type of pompous, corrupt, and extremely unpleasant figure prominent in contemporary Sri Lankan society. This is one of the critically incisive thematic strands of the film.

## Form

The form of this film merits special mention. The first twenty minutes are a scintillating exhibition of the filmmakers' art. Composed, sometimes, of as many as 4 to 5 narrative 'layers', these twenty minutes are extremely demanding of, and rewarding to, the discerning viewer. The cutting, inter-cutting, flash-backs and flash-forwards pour into the screen, and the viewer needs to concentrate very hard if he is not to lose his footing in the deluge.

Some of the narrative 'layers' — for example the interrogation of Nanda and Priyathilleke at the Police station, with the disembodied chattering of the motorola adding yet another subtheme — is actually done entirely through the medium of sound. Even in his earlier film "Dhadayama", Obeysekera used

the sound track in new and innovative ways. Obeysekera's cinematic imagination is not limited to the visual alone. For him the sound track is not there to merely carry information 'passively-supportive' of the visual. He is prepared to experiment with the sound track, and give it a 'relative autonomy'. The disjunctures which he sometimes creates between the sound and visual tracks generate a particular cinematic experience which is necessarily more demanding of the viewer's imagination than conventional cinema. At moments like this the film that a viewer 'sees' is actually composed of, (a) the visual information on the screen, (b) the information carried through the sound system and, (c) visual imagery which the viewer has to generate in his mind, to match the sound track. This means that the viewer's mind cannot merely passively absorb audio-visual information, as most conventional cinema. The mind has to remain alert and actively interact with the film, or else lose track of much of the substance being conveyed. What Obeysekera has done here is still no doubt somewhat experimental; however, there is a distinct advance in his ambitions when compared with "Dhadayama". These twenty minutes are a pointer to the yet undiscovered areas of creativity latent within the filmic medium, and underscore Obeysekera's masterly talent.

As the film progresses, its structure quickly becomes simpler and simpler, and by the middle of the film its form has become entirely conventional. Figure 1 is a (necessarily) simplified graphical representation of this process of 'simplification'. Here, I feel, is the reason for much of the weakness of the film. Admittedly, the



entire film could not have retained the form of the first twenty minutes — the audience would have been completely mentally exhausted after, probably, a mere quarter of the film. However, by intentionally attenuating the form of the film without compensating for this in some other way, the Director makes a profound mistake.

Let me elaborate. As the 'layers' are stripped away, i.e. the form of the film made progressively more simple and conventional, the content too become mundane; the Director has not 'taken up the slack', so to speak, which inevitably occurs due to 'tension' leaking out of the film. The difference between the first twenty minutes and the rest is so marked that it feels as if they belong to two different films.

Some themes which would have generated a compensating 'tension' could have followed — (a) a deep and convincing examination of the existential predicament which ensnare Nanda and Priyatilleke; (b) the metamorphoses of their relationship; (c) the nature of their feelings for each other; (d) a deep and sensitive portrayal of Nanda's personality. Actually, while all these are — to some extent at least — touched upon by the film, I find their execution mundane, unconvincing and frankly quite disappointing given the promise of the first 20 minutes.

Lest I be misunderstood, let me stress that I'm not suggesting that the entire film should have been done in the same form as the first twenty minutes. As I have already explained, it would not be possible for an audience to watch, interpret, and enjoy such a film. However, the film maker makes a profound mistake in simplifying, linear-fashion, both form and content.

### Nanda's Characterisation

Another flaw — intimately linked to the above discussion — is Obeysekera's lack of defini-

tion and control over Nanda's characterisation. When reflecting upon it I feel that if Obeysekera had only given the necessary amount of attention to this aspect alone, the flaws mentioned above may have been eliminated — or atleast reduced in impact — from the film.

Consider the last sequences of the film. The film deliberately 'narrows down' to Nanda and her life situation. We see her drifting around the house, and we hear her thoughts. The film ends with her sad soliloquy. The question is, does the audience feel for Nanda? Do they cry for her, do they feel affected by what has happened to her?

Speaking for myself, the answer is an emphatic 'no' I found myself emotionally untouched, and discerned a false note in the whole scene. Of course, some may say that we were supposed to sense this false note. That this denoted the degree of her existential decay and bad faith. I cannot accept this needlessly tortuous interpretation. The false note is not due to Nanda's predicament per se, but to the mishandling of Nanda's characterisation and portrayal.

The middle of the film sags perceptibly, as we are given a needlessly elaborate conducted tour of 'The Rise of Entrepreneur Priyatilleke'. However, while all this is happening, Obeysekera is not able to keep Nanda at the centre of the audience's attention. Even when she does occupy centre stage, such sequences themselves don't add any depth to our understanding of Nanda. Of course, I grant that we do gain some knowledge of her. But nowhere near enough for us to really understand and empathise with that last soliloquy.

Consider, for example, the depth of personality in the main female characters in 'The French Lieutenant's Woman', 'Sophie's Choice', and 'An Unmarried Woman'. Such characterisation was not the result of monopolising screentime, but,

on the contrary, careful attention to the detail of these women's personalities. Those who would say that it is unfair of me to compare Obeysekera's works with such films are merely underestimating the Director's capabilities. He is undoubtedly capable of comparable work. And, in Swarna Mallawaarachchi he has an actor with a range comparable to Meryl Streep. To me it is a mystery as to why this glaring flaw occurred, considering the masterful way in which Obeysekera never lost sight of the main character in "Dhadayama".

### Discrepancies in real-time continuity

Towards the end of the film I began to notice a flaw which I think is evidence of negligence. This pertains to the real-time context of the last sequences of the film. One obvious clue is Nanda's daughter's age (this is the child whose father — intentionally left ambiguous — could have been either Dhana-ratne or Priyatilleke). This girl is born when Priyatilleke is still a private in the army. Taking our cues from the fears expressed by Priyatilleke's mother and Nanda about his deployment in Jaffna, the birth of the baby girl had to take place at least in 1983 or 1984, if not later. This is because, as is well known, the secessionist insurgency in the North did not warrant such fears before July 1983.

At the end of the film we see this girl, now a sophisticated young woman, delivering a devastating critique of her father and mother (to the effect that her father kills with heroin, and her mother kills with acid). She has to be at least 17 years old when she says this. All this means that the last sequences of the film take place around the year 2000! If this were intentionally meant to be so, then I have no quarrel with the filmmaker. However, we are given no reason to think this. On the contrary, we see Nanda go

(Continued on page 28)



# THE SINHALA PRESS

## Peace Talks

**P** 'Peace Talks with the Tigers' was the heading — and the theme — of the feature entitled *කොටු කතා* or 'The Week's Dialogue' in the 'Lankadipa' of Sunday 7th April. While the government position is set out in the form of excerpts of an interview with Minister Ranjan Wijeratne, summaries of views expressed by leading personalities of other political parties and ex-minister Gamani Jayasuriya, appeared alongside providing a fair coverage of the different viewpoints. Translations of some selected excerpts:

Minister Ranjan Wijeratne,

Asked whether he believes that it would be possible to find a solution to the ethnic problem on the basis of discussions with the LTTE alone, he said: "The L.T.T.E. is the largest organisation which has taken up arms and continued to fight in the North and remain outside the democratic framework. All other organisations have now entered democratic politics. It is imperative, therefore, that we have discussions with the L.T.T.E. if we want a solution to the Northern ethnic problem. That is why we are holding discussions with them."

(On the poor response to the cease fire) "We declared a ceasefire to enable (members of) these organisations to give themselves up to the custody of the government. Even though the L.T.T.E. did not surrender their arms, they came for talks without laying down any pre-conditions. If the L.T.T.E. which has an international standing can come for talks, there is no reason why other organisations cannot do so. If they do not we will have to enforce the law."

"The President has re-iterated his call for talks. It is up to the J.V.P. to come forward or not. I say that it is still not too late. If they do not come we will have to enforce the

law. We will in that case be acting under the normal laws."

"It was the J.V.P. which originally insisted on the holding of the Presidential and General Elections. Accordingly we held both elections and the the majority of the people gave the U.N.P. a mandate to rule the country for another six years. If so how can JVP now say that the Presidential and General Elections be cancelled. The government is not prepared to dance to their tune and work according to their dictates. If the L.T.T.E. which fought to break up the country can come for talks without laying down conditions, why cannot the JVP do likewise? If they come for talks without conditions the government is ready to discuss any question"

Ex-Minister Gamani Jayasuriya, speaking in his capacity as the President of the Mahabodhi Society re-iterates his opposition to the North-East merger and any deal which would serve to perpetuate the main provisions of the Indo-Lanka Agreement. He says:

"I gave up my positions as Minister of Agriculture and Member of Parliament because I was opposed to the Agreement which provided for a merger of the North and East. My stand is the same even today. This Agreement will lead to the division of the country with the separation of one-third of the land mass and two-thirds of the coast line"

(Referring to the threats to resume the armed struggle if the Referendum is held) he says: "It is clear from this that they have not given up their resolve to consolidate their special position and carve out a traditional homeland later, even if they cannot do so now. Therefore, one can say that these peace talks can succeed only if it is possible to reach an agreement whereby the North-East merger is done

away with, and the concepts of traditional homeland and separatist ideas are given up. Otherwise there cannot be any positive results from any Friendship Treaties and discussions. The outcome will be most unfortunate for the Sinhala Buddhists"

(On the JVP peace proposals) "According to what we have come to know from news papers, it is difficult to agree with the course of action taken by the JVP. It is not possible, however, to oppose the five or six peace proposals of the JVP which appeared in the Sunday Times and Lankadipa last week. When I sought the views of several lay people as well as the clergy in regard to what the JVP had put forward through the news paper, their reply was that they could not oppose these."

C. V. Goonaratne, M.P. (SLFP) Colombo District expressed his concerns in the following terms:

"The S.L.F.P. will always support any honest effort, whether by government or any other group to bring about peace which is the burning national question of the day. But it has to be something that will materialise. Any peace talks conducted in an insincere manner with something else in mind will never bear fruit"

"If these peace talks, which started all of a sudden, can bring about peace in the North and East everyone in the country will be happy. But who can believe that such a thing will come to pass?"

"To bring about peace in the country the government must enter into fruitful discussions with all armed groups in the North as well as the South. It is impossible to believe that there could be a complete peace as a result of holding talks with only the LTTE without talking to the JVP who has a powerful armed group in the South."

"By no means can one say that the armed groups of the North or the South repose any trust in this government.



While the President holds one view about the JVP and the Tigers, the Minister of State for Defence, Ranjan Wijeratne takes another view. When the President says he is willing to go to any lengths for the sake of peace, Mr. Wijeratne says that there has to be certain limits to it".

"What should be done, in the first place, is to establish credibility with the JVP and the Tigers. That is something that can be accomplished only through deeds and not mere words."

Dinesh Gunawardene, M.P. Col. Dist. and Leader of the M.E.P. set out his stand as follows:

Our view has always been that a ceasefire effective throughout the island, including the North and East, should be declared and a political dialogue entered into during this period. We do not think it will be possible to enter a political path which can lead to a resolution of the crisis without doing that."

"Everyone recognises the need for a national consensus for resolving this question. There should not be any external intervention or pressure in finding a solution to this problem which is an internal matter concerning this country. We should resolve the crisis by ourselves, through a national consensus."

K. P. Silva, General Secretary of the C.P. of Sri Lanka outlining his party's position in the matter, states:

"During the early phase when the ethnic problem arose, as well as the later phase during which it developed into a war, our Party has consistently held the view that this crisis must be resolved through discussion. We have made that clear to the armed groups as well as the government."

".....If a solution can be found through discussions that are being held between the government and the LTTE, we would appreciate that. The question that arises here is to what extent are they sincere in

entering into these discussions. This question arises inevitably in the face of the past actions of both sides. Starting discussions with other objectives or dilly dallying could divert the question in a different direction. There is one matter we should emphasise here. And that is no action should be taken on the basis that the LTTE are the only sole representatives of the Tamil people, ignoring the other Tamil militant groups who have entered the democratic processes under the Provincial Councils which were conceived of as a solution to the ethnic Question, and also other Tamil democratic organisations. Otherwise the problem could take a more dangerous turn than what prevailed at the start."

Dr. Gamini Wejeseckara, General Secretary of the E.L.J.P. while welcoming the decision to find a solution through discussion goes on to state:

"It is of special significance that it has been possible to launch discussions directly between the government and representatives of the LTTE, devoid of external forces and pressures..... Since it is the objective of the ELJP to muster all forces which are opposed to the (presence of) the Indian Army and Indian expansionism, we believe that the discussions between the government and the Tigers might pave the way for this .. These talks, we feel, would be more fruitful if they are conducted more openly so that the public as well as political parties will be aware of the details under discussion."

Vasudeva Nanayakkara, Leader of the N. S. S. P. expressing some reservations on the matter outlines his position as follows:

"We have some doubt as to whether the concealed objective or meaning of the Talks between the government and the LTTE is a conspiracy to undermine the strength of the EPRLF which is a Tamil leftist leadership that has always

stood for the unity of Tamils and Sinhalese, and peasants and workers. However, if the mobilised power of the North and East can be organised under a Provincial Council in which the LTTE is also represented, it will be an important step towards a resolution of their problems.

It is necessary also to take specific decisions to safeguard the rights of the Sinhala and Muslim people who have lived in the North and East for generations.

While there should not be a racist Sinhala government in the South, similarly there should not be a racist Provincial Council in the North. Any decisions taken should not hamper the efforts of the EPRLF in that regard".

— Amarawansa

## Vasantha's...

(Continued from page 26)

into her son's room and switch off the video which is running a 'Rambo' film. If it were meant to be the year 2000, what would her son be doing watching a 20 year old film on the video?

The sole reason for the daughter's entrance in the last scenes of the film is to deliver this terrible indictment of her parents, which in turn creates the 'emotional space' for Nanda's soliloquy. Surely, some other way to deliver this indictment could have been thought of. Or, even a younger girl could have delivered it. My guess is that these aspects too were, somehow, overlooked, and as a result these flaws crept into the film.

This film leaves me with mixed feelings. It is a hugely ambitious work, and Obeysekera must be given due credit for this. Its importance should be gauged within the context of contemporary Sinhala Cinema, and the interminable Teledrama scene. A great big flawed experimental monster of a work of art, only the passage of time will reveal its enduring contribution to the development of Sinhala Cinema.





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