

LANKA

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V. PRABHAKARAN: MAN OF THE DECADE

WHY RAJIV SENT THE IPKF — J. N. Dixit

Beware, A Slump Ahead ? — Sumanasiri Liyanage

Delhi's Foreign Policy Priorities — Dilip Mukerjee

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FARE INCREASE

Granting an appeal by private bus owners the government has permitted a fare increase beginning January 1. The government has not announced the increase, itself though the decision to grant an increase was announced at a press conference. Other hikes are in the offing food too.

MORE ENGLISH

Mr. Lokubandara, the Minister for Education, Cultural Affairs and Information, wants more English. He has requested government pensioners proficient in English to come forward and teach English for a few hours at a school or pirivena near their homes.

Mr Lokubandara has told the pensioners in a letter sent along with their pension vouchers for December: "In keeping with our policy of affording equal opportunities in the field of education, teaching of English will receive an emphasis in all schools and pirivenas soon. I earnestly hope you will respond positively to this call and join us in this great national endeavour."

Stop Press —

'The Prophet Armed'

In your 'hurriedly penned out' in Lanka Guardian of Nov 15, 1988 on Mr. Rohana Wijeweera, you have in your haste omitted to make reference to his highest democratic achievement in that at the 1982 Presidential Election he was placed third to Mr. J. R. Jayawardena (UNP first) and Mr. H. Kobbekaduwa (SLFP — Second) beating the veteran Left Politician, Dr. Colvin R. de Silva (LSSP — 4th), Mr. Kumar Ponnambalam (ACTC — 5th) and Mr. Vasudeva Nanayakkara (NLSSP — 6th).

The voice of the youth, of the vote-starved members of the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna, was thereafter stifled, thrown out of the democratic process, when they were deprived of a contest at the General Election, in lieu of which a Referendum was held!

To add insult to injury the Party was proscribed, setting off the most wanton destruction of men, women, children, private and public property that Sri Lanka had ever known.

It was indeed an error of judgement that prevented Mr.

Wijeweera contesting the next General Elections, in spite of the understanding and generous invitation extended by Mr. R. Premadasa to Mr. Wijeweera and his party to return to the mainstream.

The tragedy of Mr. Wijeweera lies in the fact that he who set off to gain a place in the Medical Profession to save human lives, ended his life responsible for the death of hundreds of innocent men, women and children in "the killing fields" of Sri Lanka! How did he forget that as in Medicine also in politics, where there is life there is hope?

Col. Lyn Wickramasuriya
Colombo-6

University students should not be harmed

The practice of University students being abducted and killed should be stopped forthwith. This kind of practice will in no way help in the re-opening of the Universities. Instead it will be an obstacle to any move to re-open the Universities. It is noteworthy that the University Grants Commission Chairman Prof. Alack Aluwihare recently declared that the lives of undergraduates are priceless. It yet remains a mystery as to what has happened to the majority of undergraduates who were taken into custody on suspicion of being involved in acts of violence. In the event of the universities being re-opened, the Government should take positive and constructive measures to ensure that the students are able to continue their studies unhindered, if freedom of speech, and freedom of opinion are denied to students then there's a possibility that they might be misled once again.

E. Sivagnanam

President

University Students Union
University of Jaffna

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PRABHAKARAN: THE EYE OF THE STORM

NEWS
BACKGROUND

Mervyn de Silva

The question of Nationality and the National Question dominated discussion and debate in the pages of the *Lanka Guardian* in the early 80's just as the military threat posed by the separatist Tamil 'Tigers', the spearhead of the Tamil resistance, dul in the run-up to the India-Sri Lanka 'peace accord' of July 87. As a direct consequence, the crucial role of India, the implications of the UNP version and practice of non-alignment, in the context of geo-political realities, continued to be an important topic in these pages. This journal itself has been often described by commentators, both friendly and critical, local and foreign, as a small 'mirror' reflecting the main phases of the agonising Sri Lankan crisis, and its painful twists and turns.

It is the Tamil armed revolt that has made the strongest impact on Sri Lanka in the decade that has just ended. In the post 'Accord' period, and more dramatically in 1988-89, it is the threat to State power by the JVP-led insurgency which has made the Sri Lankan situation, especially after the Presidential and parliamentary polls, a crisis of the System. We do not believe that the military successes of the past few months have altered the nature of that threat, though there has been some change in the immediacy and intensity of the danger. In any event, we do not believe that the threat to the State would have assumed that particular form but for

the Tamil secessionist struggle and its direct political-diplomatic expression, the 1987 peace Accord and the presence on our soil of an Indian peace-keeping force larger than our own army.

Although we recognise many intrinsic, and distinctive causes, mainly socio-economic, for the JVP revolt, we do not think that its timing, its fury and most of all, its political-ideological complexion are unconnected with the Tamil rebellion. As we look back then to the 1980's, and study the decade as a whole, we are inclined to concede primacy to the Tamil threat to the unity, and indirectly, the sovereignty of Sri Lanka. In that struggle, there is one commanding personality, the LTTE supreme Velupillai Prabhakaran, regarded by many western experts as leader of one of the toughest guerrilla organisations in the world, and by military analysts as a 'genius' in the theory of unconventional warfare. At least one Sri Lankan politician, now at the pinnacle of power, is unreservedly saying that he might have been an excellent choice as the island's army commander. Though a mere aside, it was no frivolous jest.

Our choice of Prabhakaran as man of the decade is no value-judgment. It is a compelling historical verdict based on the turn of tumultuous events, and the cruel fate of a little Indian Ocean island, struggling help-

lessly to escape from the vicious grip of a multi-dimensional crisis.

How did we get to where we are?

DECISIVE DECADE

'SRI LANKA IN THE 70's', our cover story on Jan. 1 1980, had personal contributions on Sri Lankan politics, by Lalith Athulathmudali, A. Amirthalingam, Multripala Senanayake, Sarath Muttetuwegama, S. Thondaman, Vasudeva Nanayakkara, and on the Arts by Reggie Siriwardena (cinema) and A. J. Gunawardena (Theatre).

From divergent positions, Mr. Athulathmudali (UNP) and Mr. Sarath Muttetuwegama (CP) saw political change (Lalith) and 'crisis' (Sarath) as basically ideological and economic in origin. Mr. Athulathmudali wrote that the 'electorate has changed' with slogans no longer satisfying the voter. Catch phrases such as class struggle dictatorship of the proletariat, socialist democracy, 'democratic socialism' are no longer the most important things... The vital issues to them are: How are jobs found? How are incomes raised? How are more goods available?'

Mr. Muttetuwegama saw the UNP and the local bourgeoisie, confronted by the pressures of the capitalist crisis, recognising that Sri Lanka could 'no longer afford the luxury of liberal democracy'.

In their own way, each was right... or half right. The people voted for "open economy" and it did seem to work till the early 80's. Now the 'market economy' solution is widely identified as part of the problem. The referendum certainly closed the door on Sri Lanka's much-advertised welfarist democracy. With the anti-democratic measures and the pauperisation of large sections of the socially disadvantaged, did contribute much to the unfolding crisis but its origins lay in the rapid deterioration of the northern situation, and increasing use of armed force, by the State and the Tamil militants, meaning the LTTE. That is why, Mr. Amirthalingam's reading of the issues and conflicts of the 70's looks sharper. He identified three events: (1) the first attempt (JVP) at a violent overthrow of the established order (2) the scrapping of the Soulbury Constitution which had some built-in checks and balances to safeguard minority interests and (3) "from my point of view, the vital development" the unification of the Tamil political leadership and the surfacing of the demand for self-determination". He also noted that some frustrated and embittered Tamil youth were "resorting to violence". It is not Mr. Amirthalingam's first development but (2) and (3), combined that was soon to emerge as the main source of violent conflict in Sri Lanka. Again, Prabhakaran stands at the point of intersection of these different trends.

How well were we prepared for these changes and to understand the political process which was shaped by such changes?

Glancing through the back numbers of the *Lanka Guardian*, we have reason for some satisfaction over our own collective effort, thanks largely to the ICES and Dr. Neelan Tiruchel-

vam in particular to Dr. Kumari Jayawardene, Dr. Newton Gunasinghe and the SSA, to Professors K. Sivathamby and K. Kailasapathy, to Reggie Siriwardena, Dayan Jayatilaka, the Marga Institute, CRD etc.

Professors Kailasapathy and Sivathamby helped us understand the evolution of Tamil consciousness, the sense of distinctive identity, and the impact it had on Tamil politics, both bourgeois parliamentary and the youth militancy. While from the ranks of the Sinhalese, Dayan Jayatilaka argued the case for Tamil self-determination, his special contribution to the ongoing debate was on the armed struggle in relation to guerrilla movements elsewhere.

PRABHA'S WAR

All this would have been one-sided or incomplete but for the well-researched material we produced on Sinhala-Buddhist thinking, on the myths and 'official history' which had fashioned consciousness, on the political opportunism that thrived on chauvinism and on an educational system that perpetuated and fortified prejudice. On the latter, Reggie Siriwardena did some pioneering work to expose the outrageous conduct of our school text-book writers. As Sri Lanka advanced blindly, driven by the demons of racial superiority, deep-seated insecurity and a self-styled 'splendid isolation', to Vadammarachi and the 'Accord', the LG, perhaps a solitary voice in the media, continued to sound the alarm on the tragic price we may have to pay through a hopelessly vainglorious and inept foreign policy.

The JVP leadership has been decimated. Yet the JVP phenomenon will remain a major, and deeply worrying, challenge to regime and System. Right now, however, it is the LTTE once more that occupies centre

stage (*SSE: Different players, Same Act*).

For the first time in recent history, a separatist rebel movement is trying to maximise its capacity to achieve its goals through the use of both armed actions and negotiations, by exploiting as far as possible, an interstate conflict and the divergent interests of the two regimes. The question is not whether it will succeed. The question is what is its goal? Is it still *NEELAM*, or is it monopoly/hegemony in a strengthened north-east that is part of a united Sri Lanka? Could it be a sustainable trade-off, at least interim, for Eelam?

A folk hero in Tamilnadu, Prabhakaran's picture, *HINDU* editor N. Ram told me years ago, could be found in many a suburban home and remote hamlet in the South Indian state's rural areas. To the Indian newspaper reader too his is a familiar name. But his real claim to fame is that he got the world's fourth largest standing army bogged down in an increasingly futile war in Sri Lanka's north-east, threatening to convert a peace-keeping operation to India's Vietnam or Afghanistan. Or Lebanon vis-a-vis the Middle East major military power, Israel.

Prabhakaran's war will soon be a case-study in the Indian defence institutes. And as a senior Indian officer told me in late 1988, "we have to learn a lot, and are still learning... at least because your terrain, the jungles especially, are somewhat different to ours". In any event, the army top brass and the Indian strategy planners regard the Sri Lankan experience, whatever its human and material cost, as an extremely valuable 'exercise'.

Internationally, Prabhakaran's name has probably been as widely publicised as President JR's. So he is our choice as Lanka's man of the 80's.

JAFFNA — MADRAS — DELHI

New players, same Act

Mr. V. P. Singh's three-week old government won a vote of confidence. The Congress-I which taunted the 'minority' National Front administration as a party living on 'the mercy of the leftists' and 'the charity of the rightists', chose to abstain. The motion read, "this house expresses its confidence in the Council of Ministers." While deliberately restricting itself to a single sentence, the N. F. resolution met President Venkayya's requirement for a confidence vote. It also avoided all other issues advisedly. "There are many questions on which the N.F.'s main backers—the BJP and the Communists—violently disagree," Prime Minister V. P. Singh, a honest man, was honest enough to admit that this support was "issue-based" meaning conditional.

This open admission was also a clear recognition of the basic weakness of the government. Mr. Singh tried to make a virtue of this vulnerability by arguing that his "revolution" was issue-based rather than "personality-based", a jab at the Rajiv-dominated Congress government. But that's making a virtue out of an unwelcome necessity. The issue-based "working" coalition was "the best guarantee" that his government would be committed to "India's interests."

It is in the field of foreign policy that all governments, particularly popularly elected administrations, strive to achieve "national consensus"—an initial limitation on a government's freedom of action in shaping external relations.

Even a man of undoubted integrity and independent judgement thus finds his foreign policy choices circumscribed. If this is specially relevant right now, it is because the NF leader, before

assuming office declared that his two urgent priorities were controlling inflation and improving relations with neighbours. Sri Lanka and Nepal were named. It would now appear that one month is a long time in the life of a prime minister. In the prime minister's seat, he starts facing up to stark political realities. "I cannot wish away problems" he says, alluding to that which he has inherited from a Congress in office for a decade.

And so what do we have? Mr. Karunanidhi, the DMK boss and Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, goes to Delhi to brief the Indian Prime Minister on his talks with the LTTE representatives, Anton Halasingham and Vengaratnam Yogi in Madras. Nothing illustrates more strongly the "inter-ethnic" nature of the Tamil issue in terms of Indian politics than this Madras-Delhi trip following a Colombo-Madras journey. Only the personalities have changed—Mr. V. P. Singh for Mrs. Indira Gandhi or Rajiv; Mr. Karunanidhi for Mr. M. G. Ramachandran. But consider the posts they hold: the same Prime Minister of India, Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu. The Sri Lankan Tamil problem is both "international" (or external) as well as "domestic" for Indian policy makers, whatever the government.

Mr. Karunanidhi was M. G. R.'s bitter rival in Tamil Nadu—the names of their respective parties demonstrate the historical Tamil connection, D.M.K. (Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam) and A. I. D. M. K. Another difference may be noted. MGR's party, now under his 'leading lady' (on screen, and in real life) was an electoral ally of the Congress whereas DMK of the new Chief Minister, Mr. Karunanidhi, was a constituent member of V. P. Singh's National Front. Though

the DMK did not win a single Lok Sabha seat at the parliamentary polls, it was the Tamil Nadu chief minister who was invited for talks in Delhi. As the former Indian High Commissioner Mr. Dixit points out (SEE "WHAT TOOK THE INDIAN ARMY TO SRI LANKA") Tamil Nadu was the first state in independent India to raise a separatist banner.

Though the LTTE was MGR's pet, Karunanidhi spoke to its delegation. In Delhi, a formula was hammered out—the IPKF would withdraw once the security of Sri Lanka Tamils was guaranteed. It is the old formula.

What is new is that Mr. Karunanidhi did NOT meet the EPRLF delegation which rushed to Madras soon after the LTTE duo had reached the Tamil Nadu capital. The Chief Minister merely said "my role as negotiator is over... the ball is now in Delhi's court."

Asked whether he would try to resolve differences between militant groups, he told reporters "unity cannot be imposed on them... differences are natural in a democratic set up". The EPRLF was 'dismayed' by the turn of events. Mr. Yogi Sankari, EPRLF MP who was in Madras waiting for Mr. Karunanidhi told PTI that the DMK leader "should consult all Tamil groups." But the Chief Minister said he was ready to talk to all Tamil groups only 'after the Centre's response was clear.' Back in Colombo, the LTTE representatives met President Premadasa, Mr. Hammed, and Defence Secretary Gen. Sapala Attiyagalle.

(Our title is partly inspired by Dattatraya Pulle's Superintendent's "some of the players are different and many have changed but the game is the same".)

FLASH: With the death of Saman Piyasiri Fernando, Ragama Somay and Aravinda. The JVP "Super team" is "out" Mr. Wijeratne has announced.

Ranjan tells House of new JVP plot

Mr Ranjan Wijeratne, the minister of state for defence, told parliament of a new JVP plot unveiled "in the nick of time". Ingredients in the plot: to kidnap politicians of both sides and their families; kill those who have stood up for democracy; spread disinformation abroad to stop aid; infiltrate political parties and trade unions; display bodies of their victims on the roadside and blame the security forces for the killings, so as to frighten the people and re-introduce a reign of terror and give anti-government elements the opportunity to ex-

plot the the situation through the international media and human rights organisations.

The minister said that people who could never have been suspected of such crimes against the country were behind these new moves; they were being manipulated from within and outside the country.

Mr Wijeratne said that the Government's position has always been that democracy must be preserved through democratic means. As investigations proceed further more information will be revealed, he said.

Don't take in Strangers

The government has warned householders not to let rooms to strangers, because subversives were looking for safe houses. Mr Ranjan Wijeratne, the minister of state for defence, warned that the police had been ordered to raid houses for subversive boarders and if any were found the houses would be taken over under emergency regulations.

Protest over Speech

The Opposition in parliament has decided to boycott all public functions attended by President Premadasa, the opposition, alleges, attempted to ridicule members of parliament and indirectly ridiculed the Leader of the Opposition during a speech he made at the unveiling of a portrait of former parliamentarian M C Abdul Rahman.

Port Normal

Colombo port, one of the busiest in South Asia, is now normal according to the Ports Authority. The port was crippled for about three months earlier due to work stoppages at the height of JVP activity. Business is also expected to improve following a government announcement on December 1 that exporters could now use any shipping line. Earlier the state owned Ceylon Shipping Corporation had to be given preference.

20 year plan for tourism

A UNDP funded 20 year plan for tourist development was announced in Colombo. A blue print was brought by World Tourist Organisation consultant Robert Cleverdon, which recommends that tourism be recognised as a major industry. Most places in Sri Lanka are very peaceful, Mr Cleverdon told a media conference.

Power: demand won't be much

There won't be much of an increase in demand for electricity in the next decade, according to the Secretary to the ministry of Power and Energy. Professor K.K.V.W. Perera said so in his presidential address in the Sri Lanka Association for the Advancement of Science.

The growth of energy demand is closely linked to the growth rate of the country and this was tied up with the GDP growth rate, he said.

Stability, law and order and a conducive atmosphere are even more vital than energy for the growth of industry and commerce and the economy, the professor said.

The Young: In the midst of war

Our last report highlighted some of the problems faced by the young in this community. The young continue to be victims of cynical calculations, accompanying intrigues in high places, far beyond anything they could control or comprehend. To many of them the choices are limited. They could either be killed or tortured for information at will; or end up in the armed service of one faction or the other. This is evident from our reports. There is no semblance of law or acknowledgement of responsibility which guarantees their security. The right of appeal depends on the good sense of the person in authority.

One may hazard summarising the developments between March to the present in the following manner: Following challenge posed by the LTTE's assassination of two senior most civil administrators, (7th April and 1st May), the pro-IPKF party moved against the LTTE's student base in schools. This was mainly the remnant of the SALT, a student organisation founded by the LTTE. At least 4 school boys were victims of political killings over the period 10th May to 10th June. These student activists had functioned semi-openly up to November 1988. With the killings, many SALT members and their friends who could afford it went to Colombo.

The LTTE in turn responded by enforcing periodic boycotts of schools, called by notices issued in the name of 'Students' Associations. The shutdown was complete by the last quarter of June. Their demand was that teachers and principals must guarantee the safety of students. This put the former in an unenviable position. They did not have an organisation to protect even the dignity of teachers. The Principals' Association had not met for months. Unlike the university which had organ-

ised itself and up to a point had been respected by all parties, the principals had some thorny problems. Not having met for months, the Association was no longer the coherent organisation of bygone days, where the members were well known to each other and could formulate ideas and strategies in an atmosphere of trust. There were again serious problems posed by the LTTE itself, which had by then killed two teachers (Miss Chandradevi Chelliah & Mrs. Ratnasabapathy) for political reasons. Moreover there was a ban on making contact with the IPKF and groups involved in the provincial administration. If arrangements for the security of students were to be worked out, associations of teachers and principals would have to confront and negotiate with the IPKF and the EPRLF.

There was also the factor that when the two senior civil administrators were killed, the large number of people who felt strongly about it found themselves unable to protest through fear. Thus when the schoolboys were killed, besides the fear, the community as a whole felt itself bereft of a rationale to voice protest. Even feelings were confused and muted.

Several of the principals in the Jaffna town area were however in the habit of consulting each other informally, and a number of them did meet the IPKF, only to find the experience mostly unhelpful. The IPKF, denied all responsibility for the killings. Nor did it as the law enforcing authority acknowledge its obligation to seek out and punish or restrain the killers. (The shooting of the Kokuvil Hindu student was done by an Indian soldier in public view, deliberately and at close range with no provocation). The principals were lectur-

ed to keep their schools 'clean'. One concession made was that they would be informed in the event of a student of their school being detained. (Brigadier Kahlon, the former Town Commandant told the University in his farewell address that, he may appear to have broken his promise to keep them informed a number of times. He told them not to despair and to make some allowance for the speed of Indian Army bureaucracy).

Given the combination of circumstances, the teachers and principals found themselves cornered into inaction. This gave additional filip to propaganda chiding the teaching profession for its lack of effort and giving the young in general a heightened sense of insecurity, helped on by the conduct of the IPKF and its allies. The latter, by the manner in which they chose to respond to the adversary's thrust left behind much resentment.

Recruitment and Conscription

Disruption of education meant that there were more idle children, and with other unhelpful political developments, they were regarded with growing suspicion by the authorities. Where there was action the danger to children was very real. In Vadamaratchchi, recruitment by the LTTE became a minor flood. Every provocation brought out the IPKF's oppressive side with mechanical predictability.

To many, particularly amongst the impressionable young, the LTTE's cause appeared legitimate. The inducement to join the LTTE came from this as well as a variety of circumstances, particularly personal ones.

A common phenomenon in Vadamaratchchi, where by this time the LTTE was moving around freely, was for idle

children to follow the LTTE around. When dead militants are commemorated, these children would help in the coconut palm decorations of streets. The possibilities are not hard to imagine. When the LTTE leader Bhavon was killed, the story got around that a number of persons who had made contact with him were listed in his diary, now in the IPKF's hands. Such persons either fled to Colombo or joined in. At least in some IPKF camps until about March, a number of detainees testified to having been treated with reasonable care. Some under suspicion had been released on an undertaking by relatives that the detainee would be sent to Colombo or abroad. However in recent months little clemency was being exercised by either side. Unable to come up with an imaginative alternative to elemental vindictiveness, the IPKF partly found itself under increasing isolation in Vadamarachchi.

During the early part of June IPKF men in concealment apprehended two young boys in the early hours of one morning, carrying grenades and walking towards the IPKF camp at V. yapurimodai in Vadamarachchi. The boys were promptly killed. A few days later the LTTE came with weapons to the nearby Thambasiddy library and held a firing exhibition and allowed the young to handle the weapons. A mother who watched it said that several young persons were tempted to join.

A well-built slightly lame young man in Pt. Pedro, an utterly harmless sort was eking out a living doing mason's job and chores like fetching water. On three occasions he was beaten by angry IPKF soldiers, once very badly. He had now opted for what he presumably thought was the relative safety of doing sentry duty for the LTTE.

Recent recruitment by the LTTE has been mostly voluntary, with the qualification that such a term is dubious in

application to juveniles. There may have been exceptions. A teacher in Udappiddy had a son who had sat for his O.L's and was attending tuition classes. The son was one day missing with several of his friends. The father's efforts at tracing him failed. He later heard this story from another boy: "They used to be contacted at tuition classes and asked to come to different places for propaganda meetings. On the day in question they were riken and asked to get into a boat. The boy who returned with the story did so after strenuously pleading that he was asthmatic."

Panicked perhaps by the new wave of recruitment by the LTTE following the disruption of education, and by political moves by the Sri Lankan President, the IPKF and its allies hit upon the idea of press-ganging or conscription. (see reports). Its first effect was to further discredit the authority of the IPKF which was vested with enforcing the law. The conscription, although milder than it first appeared, was done without any sense of legal accountability. It put panic into parents and children alike, as children literally vanished from the streets. As far as we could make out, most school children were eventually released after the parents made contact. Further discredit fell on the IPKF when its leading officials denied that the IPKF has anything to do with it. It was well known that IPKF men were part of several press-ganging missions. The political fall out can be judged from the testimony of a senior journalist and trade unionist, now an NGO official residing in Killinochchi: "The local people were settling down to a balanced view of the situation. Not pro LTTE, not pro IPKF, but an independent viewpoint. What the conscription raids did was to swing opinion sharply in favour of the LTTE. A number of youth who were made angry by these raids decided to join the LTTE. One of my own sons was barely

restrained by the incidental presence of my brother in law".

Community Reactions

Once again leading members of the community found themselves confused in their response. Some felt that the militant groups allied to the IPKF had been cornered by the Sri Lankan President's moves and the LTTE's campaign. One senior educationist put it thus: "If you can turn a blind eye to one party taking in by unfair inducements, boys of 12 and 13 years who cannot know what they are doing, how can you blame the other side for taking in more mature boys by force?" The point that those vested with authority to maintain the law must act with imagination and restraint was generally forgotten.

These developments are closely linked to previous developments sketched out in earlier reports. India must bear a historical responsibility for its decision in 1983 to militarise young Tamils as a means of pressuring the Sri Lankan state. The community as a whole still remains largely insensitive to this immense tragedy which is ultimately rooted in its attitudes. When Indian officers with credentials from respectable institutes expatiate on the stages of insurgency and describe euphemistically the methods used in combatting them, sometimes slipping into terms like 'minimum terror'; they are being, perhaps unintentionally, callous and ignorant — shockingly ignorant of their own role in magnifying the problem and sustaining it at present levels.

The key word now is 'use'. Referring to pro-IPKF groups, senior Indian military officials talk glibly of using these gun-toting rascals and disarming them. Explaining the misuse they have made of their official authority, senior persons in these groups blame those whom they 'use'. On the other hand a senior ideologue talks about his 5000

cubs with parental fondness; while sympathetic intellectuals defend the recruitment of children in their early teens as being necessitated by the departure of many, adding that they are guided and 'used' without being allowed to make decisions.

Anyone who wishes this community well, and wishes to be remembered well in historical retrospect, must urgently address the matter of the decimation of our youth.

Militants: The unknown side

In spite of the yawning differences that exist between the various groups, we think it apt at this time to take up the subject under one heading. We have pointed out in nearly all our reports that these groups are made up of young men who were driven to carry arms by urges they little understood, and generally far beyond their control. Some of these young men in arms are just 12 years old. Perhaps the most hurtful element in their fate is the

insensitivity of men, of the community itself. In a real sense they were once used by the community as a means of putting pressure on the Sri Lankan state. But when they are defeated or unwanted, the natural tendency was to disown them as an external growth. It became quite acceptable in society to dismiss the fate of a militant with some sentiment as "He who lives by the sword," without asking what made him carry the sword. The relationship between the people and the militants has been one governed by mutual suspicion and opportunism in which the entire community has been the loser. Some beginning has to be made in seeing them as part of this community, as well as its victims. Questions of human rights are again closely linked to the attitudes to which their experience led them.

How do we see the militants today? In the case of the militants aligned with the IPKF, one often sees them as tired

and anxious young men carrying guns and manning sentry points. One young man was dog tired checking cars on the road and hardly had the strength to check another. When the next car came by he just gasped out, "Annai (big brother) if you are not a traitor you can go."

One night a motorcyclist was stopped at a sentry point. A young militant asked sulkily, "Please sir, where are you going?" It was evident that he had received a telling off from a superior on good public relations.

In Mannar, a group of diners returned home late. A little later there was a knock on the door. A militant identified himself as being from a nearby camp and told them, "We are nervous of being attacked and when we saw you walking we felt rather anxious. Annai, please avoid walking around in the night."

(University Teachers for Human Rights, Jaffna)

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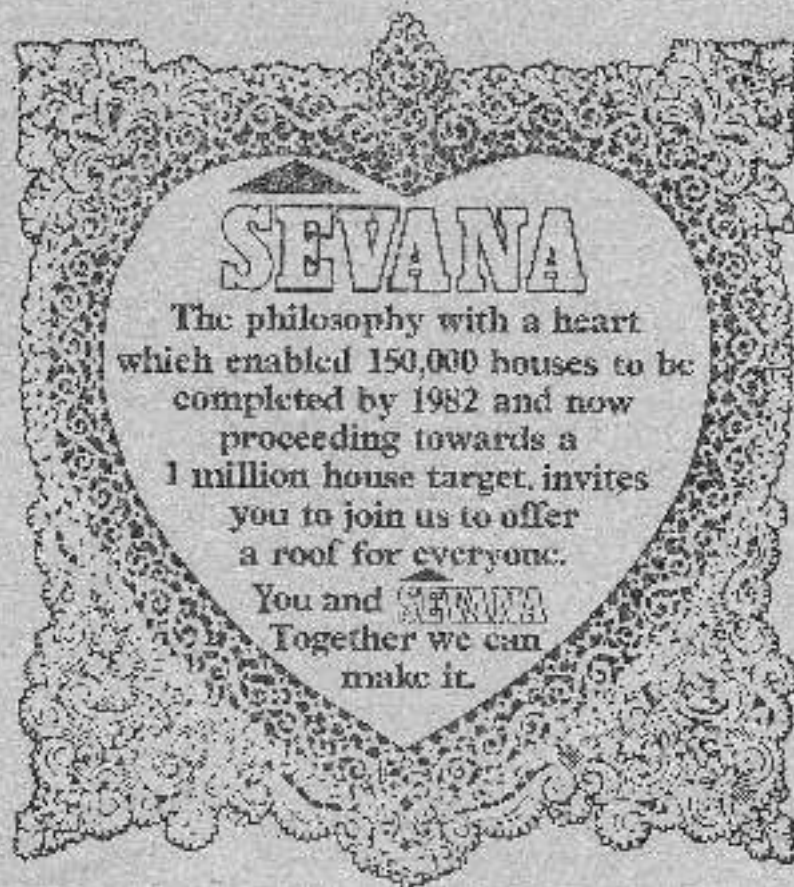


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What brought the IPKF here?

J. N. Dixit

I am slightly overawed by the audience because I see people sitting in front of me whom I viewed from the lower and middle levels of the bureaucracy like General Candeth and I see a number of colleagues with whom I have been associated during my assignment in Bangladesh and then Sri Lanka. I have not brought a written text but had I known that it would be such an august audience, I would have been prepared for a more structured presentation.

I would like to divide my presentation into four sections. The first section is why we went into Sri Lanka; what was the nature of our involvement in the Island and why. Secondly, what were the internal factors which necessitated our involvement? Thirdly, since I am speaking to the members of the United Services Institution, my perception of how the IPKF has performed in its very crucial role, perhaps, the first of this kind, entrusted to the Armed Forces by the people, and the Government of India; The fourth section of the presentation would be a prognosis on the basis of political developments in Sri Lanka over the last six to eight months after the elections.

To begin with, I presume that you know the history of the origins, causation of Tamil Militancy in Sri Lanka. I will just put it in one sentence the rise of Tamil militancy in Sri Lanka, was the result of a systematic, orchestrated and deliberate, discrimination against the minority in Sri Lankan society by its majority. You must not forget that Tamil speaking people of Sri Lanka constitute 18% of the population. They also have a higher literacy rate and a greater capacity for economic performance. These very factors which gave them advantageous position during British and Pre-British

Colonial regimes in Sri Lanka, resulted in a backlash from part of the majority against the Tamils and from 1948, when Sri Lanka became Independent, there was a consistent policy of discrimination against the Tamils which ultimately resulted in a (caste like) war situation. Every Tamil thought that there was no other way out except to resort to violence to fulfill their aspirations. It is in this context that we have to judge or assess how we got involved.

On the outset, I shall give a simple diagnosis; there are many facets, many nuances; we can discuss them when we have the time. But very simply, by 1978 the politically aware Tamils had come to the conclusion that their future lies only in the creation of a separate State, which can be carved out of Sri Lanka, where they can have Tamil as a language and Hinduism as a religion. Tamils have a linguistic identity on which they wanted to create a theory of a new-nation state, not so new to us, because, we went through the trauma of the same doctrine being applied to our country in 1945-46, as a result of which we were partitioned. Since, then our effort and experiment has been to build a society which rejected the theory that the territorial nation-state does not always have to depend on language and religion. That thesis we have rejected. We, in India, have been trying to build a polity based on terms of reference which say that despite its multi-lingual, multi-religious, multi ethnic nature, an integrated nation can be created; based on principles of secularism and rational precepts of political and social organisation and the creation of an infrastructure based on non-religious framework — this does not mean rejecting religion but separating religion from the process of politics.

So the first reason why we went into Sri Lanka was the

interest to preserve our own unity; to ensure the success of a very difficult experiment that we have been carrying out ourselves. We claim to be the largest functioning democracy in the world. Despite what people like Galbraith who say, that India was the largest functioning anarchy in the world, we have succeeded in some measure. And what the Tamils in Sri Lanka were being compelled to follow, in terms of their life, which would have affected our polity. Let us not forget that the first voice of secessionism in the Indian Republic was raised in Tamil Nadu in the mid-sixties. This was exactly the same principle of Tamil ethnicity, Tamil language. So in a manner, our interest in the Tamil issue in Sri Lanka, Tamil aspirations in Sri Lanka was based on maintaining our own unity, our own integrity, our own identity in the manner in which we have been trying to build our society.

The second reason, why we went in was to counter the Sri Lankan Government over its reactions to the rising Tamil militancy, since 1972. Most of us, look at the 1983 riots as a watershed; from then, some sort of explosion did come. Tamils resorted to violence from 1972 onward and it went on escalating, it became manifest after the 1983 riots, and when the Sinhalese dominated Central Government in Colombo realized that it cannot contain the Tamil militancy on the basis of the means available to it internally, and since they could not look to India for help; because our compulsions were respecting the sentiments of 50 million of our own Tamil sentiments which was quite legitimate from our own point of view. So the, Sri Lankan government, or I should be more accurate the Sinhalese Government therefore, started looking for external support to counter Tamil militancy, Tamil insurgency, which had security implications for us.

The writer who was High Commissioner in Sri Lanka up to early 1989 is now the Indian envoy to Pakistan. His lecture was given to an Indian Defence Institute.

SECURITY SUPPORT

In the period, between 1978 and 1986, the strength of the Sri Lankan Army was raised from approximately 12,000 to 35,000. The overall strength of the Sri Lankan Armed forces rose approximately from 15,000 to 13,000, if we include the homeguards and paramilitary units. Sri Lanka signed informal confidential agreements with the governments of United States and United Kingdom to bring their warships into Colombo, Trincomalee and the Gulf. The frequency of visits by the navies of these countries showed a quantum jump between 1982-83 and 1987. Sri Lanka invited British mercenaries (Keen Moon Services) into its Intelligence services. Sri Lanka invited Shin-beth and Mossad, the two most effective and influential intelligence agencies of Israel. Sri Lanka sought assistance from Pakistan to train its Home Guards, and its Navy. Sri Lanka offered broadcasting facilities to the Voice of America, which would have enabled the United States to install highly sophisticated monitoring equipment on Sri Lanka soil which could have affected our security in terms of their capacity to monitor our sensitive information for their own interests. Sri Lanka bought arms from countries with whom our relations have been difficult. So, the second reason, why we had to be actively involved in Sri Lanka was to counter, in the extent possible, this trend. The third reason, why we went into Sri Lanka was an important domestic political factor, and here I would preface what I am going to say by articulating a premise that while morality and absolute norms should govern politics, in actuality it is not so. It cannot so happen, because the human conditions remain imperfect. The Chemistry of power, the motivations which affect the interplay of power between societies are not governed by absolute morality.

TAMIL IDENTITY

Having said that, I would like

to elaborate that we have to respect the sentiments of the 50 million Tamil citizens of India. They felt that if we did not rise, in support of the Tamil cause in Sri Lanka, we are not standing by our own Tamils and if that is so, then in the Tamil psyche, Tamil sub-conscious the question arose, is there any relevance or validity of our being part of a large Indian political identity, if our very deeply felt sentiments are not respected? So, it was a compulsion. It was not a rationalized motivation, but it was a compulsion which could not be avoided by any elected Government in this country. So, that was a third reason.

So, in the first section of our presentation we have found, the need, in terms of our security interests, in terms of domestic politics, and over above, in terms of maintaining our own unity and integrity, to be involved in the crisis of Sri Lanka. Had Sri Lanka been 15,000 miles away with seas in between, like Fiji is, perhaps our involvement could have been less, but it is not. There is just 18 miles of water between us and that is also very shallow.

The second aspect of the presentation is how far Tamil aspirations would be fulfilled because of what we did, and I am only going to speak about the political aspects. The Tamils have four demands: that the Northern and Eastern provinces of Sri Lanka consisting of the districts of Jaffna peninsula, Vavuniya, Batticaloa, Ampara, Mannar, Trincomalee, these areas should be declared the traditional areas of habitation and homeland of Tamil people. Second, that these areas should be merged in one province; third that these areas should be governed by a Tamil Government with sufficient devolution of power and autonomy so that Tamils have a sense of security about their own future, in terms of development, culture and all that constitutes functioning of a government for the welfare of its people. The third demand

also included equal status for Tamil as a language with Sinhalese in Sri Lanka instead of being relegated to a nonexistent situation as it was after the 1936 Language Act. The fourth, they want significant subjects like finance, land and land settlement, law and order. The Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement signed on the 29th of July, 1987 meets all these basic aspirations. It provided for fulfilling these demands to the maximum extent possible. Secondly, with maximum possible speed, the Sri Lankan Government between September, 1987 and January 1988 passed all the basic legislation needed to transmute what is committed in the Agreement into Government policy and action in Sri Lanka.

Third, the package of concessions which is envisaged in the Agreement and which is being granted gradually is better than any package which the Tamils extracted from the Sri Lankan Sinhalese side over the last 50 years. There were three major agreements signed between the Tamil political parties and the Sri Lankan Government between 1948 and 1978. Each one of them was between the existing government of Sri Lanka and majority Tamil political party whether it was a provincial party of Tamils or TULF. Each time an agreement was signed it was scuttled. Whereas the difference this time is that the Agreement is guaranteed by us. The Agreement is underwritten by India, so that the fall-out of their internal chicanery may not be on us, and that guarantee along with a package of concessions which is better than any that they have got, is something which we should take note of. Tamil aspirations are in the process of getting fulfilled. As envisaged in the 13th Amendment of the Sri Lankan Constitution following the signing of the agreement, as envisaged in the Provincial Councils Act passed by the Sri Lankan Parliament in October/November 1987, as envisaged in

(Continued on page 14)

Tamils Flee — From Other Tamils

Many return to Sinhalese-dominated areas rather than be forced into Indian-backed militias

Sheila Tefft

In July 1983, after his father was killed by Sinhalese in anti-Tamil rioting in Colombo, Darshan sought safety in a Tamil enclave in eastern Sri Lanka.

Two years ago, the Tamil youth welcomed the Indian Peacekeeping Force (IPKF) in the north and east after India and Sri Lanka signed an accord aimed at ending the ethnic conflict between Sinhalese and Tamils.

Now, Darshan says he fled back to the capital last month in the face of a new threat. Refusing to give his last name for fear of retaliation, the student said he left the east to escape forced induction into a new Tamil militia supported by the Indian Army.

Hundreds of youths have been taken from their homes by Tamil groups controlling the new north-eastern government and are beaten if they refuse, he said.

"We thought the IPKF had come to help us as against the Sinhalese Army. But now they are helping (the Tamil militants) to catch and torture Tamils," Darshan said at a camp housing 1,300 Tamils.

"There is still great danger from the Sri Lankan Army if the IPKF goes," he continued. "But the threat we face now is worse than what we faced before."

Sri Lanka's Tamil minority, about one-fifth of the island's 16 million people, is bewildered. In 1987, they hoped the peace agreement and the arrival of Indian soldiers signaled the end of ethnic turmoil and discrimination.

Thousands of Tamils who had taken refuge in the nearby

south Indian state of Tamil Nadu, where 55 million of their kinfolk live, returned to Sri Lanka.

But the euphoria dimmed when the Tamil Tigers, the most powerful of the militant groups fighting for an independent Tamil homeland, refused to surrender under the accord. For two years, the extremists have battled Indian troops in the north and east, where more than 10,000 people have died since 1983.

Now, mounting pressure for a pullout of the 45,000 Indian soldiers has deeply splintered the mainly Hindu Tamils, once united against the Buddhist Sinhalese.

India withdrew 875 more soldiers Sunday, following 620 who left on July 29, but talks between India and Sri Lanka are now stalled, Sri Lankan President Ranasinghe Premadasa, who earlier this year opened peace talks with the Tamil Tigers, is pushing for a full pullout of the Indian forces. Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi says a pullout must be linked to more power to the Tamils, as called for by the accord.

While some Tamils say the Indian Army is needed as a buffer against the Sri Lankan military and government, others want the Indian forces out because of alleged brutality by the Indian and the Tamil groups they support.

"The disenchantment with the previously good relationship with India has led to a great bitterness among Tamils," says a Sri Lankan analyst in Colombo.

In the Tamil-dominated north, there is widespread opposition to the Indian presence because

support for the Tigers, regaled as Tamil heroes, remains strong. The Tigers have called for a separate Tamil homeland uniting the north with the east.

In the east where Tamils share the province with Sinhalese and Muslims, many Tamils feel the Indians are needed as a protection against Sri Lankan forces who have been confined to their barracks under the accord.

The newly elected Tamil government based in Trincomalee and comprised of Tamil groups rivaling the Tigers, would fall

without Indian support, triggering a new fighting among the Tamil groups, Tamil leaders predict.

"It will be a bloody war," predicts Varatharaja Perumal, the chief minister of the north and east. "There is no quick solution to this problem."

In the central hills of Sri Lanka, Tamils first brought from India a century ago to work in the tea plantations have long supported the Sri Lankan government and changed their position with the political winds blowing from Colombo.

In the last year, Sauvimiamothy Thondaman, a government minister and leader of the plantation Tamils, succeeded in winning Sri Lankan citizenship for thousands of workers, long a contentious issue with Colombo.

Under former Sri Lankan President Junius Jayewardene, who signed the accord with India, the plantation Tamils favored the Indian Army. But since Premadasa came to power, they have taken the middle ground and called for a phased pullout.

"There are fundamental differences among the Tamils,"

says a prominent Tamil leader. "In the north the IPKF is seen as an alien force that interferes with the ability of the people to run their own destiny. In the east, there is a serious fear that if the Indians leave, Tamils will not be able to live there.

"The plantation Tamils also are apprehensive that Sinhalese chauvinism will spill over again," he says, "but they have gotten some guarantees from the government, and they have a false sense of complacency."

Compounding the confusion are accusations of Indian abuses in the north and east. Recently reports by Amnesty International and a Sri Lankan group, the Jaffna University Teachers for Human Rights, claimed that hundreds of Tamil civilians have been detained and dozens have disappeared in Indian Army custody.

In recent months, the forced recruitment of Tamil youths for the Indian backed civilian volunteer force also has caused widespread fear among Tamils.

At the Colombo camp, Tamils complained of being pulled off buses and trains by Tamil militants connected to the government and assisted by Indian forces, having their heads and eyebrows shaved, and finally fleeing through the jungles to escape to the south.

An Indian official in Colombo dismissed the complaints saying they should go to the government in the northeastern province. "This is their elected government," he said. "What can the Indian Army do?"

"The Indian Army has made little difference to this internal fighting among the Tamils," said one Tamil college student. "If there had been no split we really could have gotten something from the Sri Lankan government. Now we are so divided and our hand is so weak we can't make a common stand."

— The Christian Science Monitor

HAMLIN TOWN

*The Century peters out
Walls fall*

*Clarion to the oldest calling
Cathay, Babylon, Gomorrah,
Neon started on the Rieperbahn.
Hark, the growl and roar,
Fall to the scream and screech,
Cold war over?*

*In the Common European home?
Or is this History's fatal breach
Mud wall, Great Wall.*

*And now Berlin, in concrete?
What pours in down the ages does not teach
The History lesson, nor does defeat
For the Old and wary, or the Tale
For the frolicking Young
Who swirl behind the Piper and are gone.*

U. Karunatilake

What brought...

(Continued from page 18)

the law passed by Sri Lankan Parliament in January 1989, all these four demands, about language, devolutions, merger, and homeland have been met. There is an elected Tamil Government existent in the North and eastern Tamil speaking areas. Because the power had to go to them we have to help them to get it out of the Central Government. Tamil Government exists in the north-eastern provinces for the first time in the contemporary history of Sri Lanka.

Secondly, there are between 23 and 25 Tamil members of Parliament who will be sitting in Parliament, or rather some of whom have already sat there day before yesterday. For the

first time, there is a substantive Tamil representation based on rising political groups. So both in the Central Government in Colombo and in the Tamil provinces, there is a Tamil presence. It is not perfect. A devolution which has been already sanctioned under law, has to be made a reality on the ground. Apart from that, the devolution needed by the Tamils, demanded by the Tamils, required by the Tamils has to be improved in the field of finance, law and order, control over land and land settlement and so on.

But the fact remains, that the terms of reference are in place, even the people are in place, and to that extent, I think, the Agreement, apart from resolving some of our concerns, has concentrated and eradicated the basic reason why this crisis came into being.

(To be continued)

PANAMA

UN condemns US invasion

The United States found itself virtually isolated at the United Nations on 21st December, 1989 as country after country criticised the US military invasion of Panama.

After a General Assembly session marked by obvious rapprochement between the United States and the Soviet Union, the Panama issue provoked an East-West as well as a North-South split.

Britain, Canada and El Salvador were the only nations to speak in favour of Washington's military action against Panama during two Security Council sessions on the issue. France

took a middle-of-the road position.

Almost all non-aligned nations, Arab states and specially Latin American countries felt, in the words of Finland, the military intervention was a "disproportional response to the recent incidents in Panama, reprehensible as they were".

Critics of the intervention, without defending Panamanian strongman Manuel Antonio Noriega, cut across ideological lines, with speeches condemning the invasion from Brazil, Peru, Nepal, Yugoslavia and Algeria as well as Cuba, Libya and Ethiopia.

Cuban Statement

"What peace and security can our peoples expect to have than the one that we, ourselves, may be able to conquer with our heroism"

That was the question that our Commander In Chief posed in his speech of December 7th at the funeral farwell in honour of the Cuban heroes who died in Angola and in other parts of the world.

The people of Panama are facing such a better reality on the evening of December 19th, George Bush, the President of the United States, gave the order of attack to the US troops, taking advantage of their emplacement in the bases that they occupy in that country supposedly for defending the canal.

The pretext that they have used was the wellknown one to which they have resorted in previous aggressions against other Latin American and Carribean peoples. As in the case of Santo Domingo in 1965, or of Granada in 1983, the US invasion was

launched for the purpose of "restoring democracy and order" and "protecting American lives".

On this occasion they add as an objective that of seizing General Manuel A. Noriega, The Chief of the Panama Defence Forces who was recently appointed head of the Government by jurisdiction assembly of Panama in reply to the continued acts of aggression by the US administration. Washington really wants to ignore its commitments with the 1977 treaty signed by President Carter and Torrijos which provide the return of the territory occupied by the US military bases in the Panama Canal and the transfer of the Canal, operations to Panama in the year 2000.

As the height of their cynicism the United States have proclaimed that they have ordered their troops to invade Panama to put General Noriega under arrest., Take him to the United States and try him in the courts.

This is new and unbelievable evidence of US contempt for international law.

FOREIGN NEWS

N.A.M. TO US:

Cease Operations

The Coordinating Bureau of Non-Aligned Countries, at its meeting held on 20 December, 1989 in New York, expressed its deep concern over the situation in Panama, caused by the military intervention of the United States armed forces. The coordinating bureau resolutely condemned this unacceptable act of intervention as a violation of the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Non-Aligned Panama.

The Coordinating Bureau reaffirmed the principled position of Non-Aligned countries on the unacceptability of the use of and threat of use of force, intervention and interference in internal affairs of other countries regardless of motives and pretexts and underlined that outstanding issues between independent and sovereign states cannot be solved by military but exclusively by political means.

The heads of state or government also urged the US to refrain from undertaking any measure or action that could prevent the full implementation of the Panama Canal Treaties of 1977.

The Coordinating Bureau also expressed its deep concern over serious negative consequences that this intervention may have for peace and security in the region and, in particular, on the ongoing efforts to bring about political solution to the situation in Central America.

The Coordinating Bureau called on the United States to cease immediately all military operations and the total and unconditional withdrawal of its troops and to solve outstanding issues with that country through dialogue and negotiations in the context of the broader efforts of the countries of the region aimed at consolidating peace and stability in that area.

Time of trial for a shy man

David Housago

It was characteristic of Mr. Vishwanath Pratap Singh that, after leading the opposition parties to victory in India's general election, he slipped back into Delhi unobtrusively one night last week. There was just a small crowd to meet him at the airport and television viewers only had a glimpse of him on film that went out after midnight.

Once back in the capital and until being named Prime Minister last night — he kept out of the limelight. He insisted that the National Front, the coalition of opposition groups that is now to form a minority administration, must first democratically elect its leader.

He deliberately refrained from pressing his own claims and even suggested that he might not be available. Only his evident pleasure when formally chosen by the party removed all pretence.

Opinions on VP, as he is commonly known, vary enormously. With his shy smile, some see him as indecisive, lacking in authority, stumbling in putting across his views, without the stamina to hold his own as Prime Minister and modest to the point of seeming to disappear from public gaze.

"He is a modest man who has a lot to be modest about," one of his colleagues says of him cruelly. Other increasingly admire him for his political skills in mapping out the opposition's strategy over the last two years and in preventing their divisions from tearing them asunder.

He is held by many industrialists to have been one of the best Finance Ministers since independence — he held the job for two years under the outgoing Prime Minister, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi.

He believes that political leadership consists in building consensus and compromise and that the failings of both Mr. Gandhi and of his mother Mrs. Indira Gandhi, stemmed from their isolation. "I want politics on my own terms," he once said, "issue politics, not party politics."

He will need all his powers of persuasion and conciliation if his government is not to fall apart in the coming months. The National Front has only 144 seats in parliament out of 525 contested at the election and all but three of those belong to the northern-based Janata Dal.

The Janata Dal is itself divided into factions whose members owe allegiance to other leaders like Mr. Devi Lal, Chief Minister of Haryana and lobbyist for the farmers, or Mr. Chandra Shekar, the main socialist in the National Front. Recently Mr. Chandra Shekar publicly voiced his "reservations" about Mr. Singh's taking control of the party.

As a minority administration, the National Front will have to depend for support on the militant Hindu BJP party on its right and the Marxists on its left. In opposition will be the Congress Party led by Mr. Rajiv Gandhi — the largest single party in the assembly.

Now 58, Mr. Singh has served under Congress administration as Commerce, Finance and Defence Minister. He quarrelled with Mr. Gandhi first over tax raids on industrialists while he was Minister of Finance and then over corruption and the Bofors pay-offs scandal. He was forced out of the Congress Party in 1987 when he began to build up an image as a crusader against corruption.

He comes from a feudal background and is often called "Rajah Sahib." He is the adopted son of the Raja of Mandla, a minor prince of Uttar Pradesh, and married into a princely family from Rajasthan. But he lives, works and travels more simply than most Indian leaders. Few can claim, as he can, to have campaigned on a bicycle and a motorcycle.

His view of the world is moulded by the populous Hindi-speaking plains of Uttar Pradesh — making him very much a leader from the north with a concern for agriculture, poverty and social injustice. Before joining central government he was Chief Minister in Uttar Pradesh — resigning to accept responsibility for the failure of a programme to combat crime.

The first test of Mr. Singh's authority as Prime Minister will be the formation of a new cabinet. He needs a strong Finance Minister to bring down inflation, which he listed recently as his "immediate preoccupation" and to resist demands from farmers' lobbies and others for more subsidies. He needs a strong Home Minister to hold out against the demands of Hindu and Moslem fundamentalists so as to prevent further violence between the communities.

He also needs to leave room for outsiders who can broaden the administration's base. The risk is that he will bow to pressures from within the Janata Dal to divide the spoils of office between the different factions in the party.

Mr. Singh's remarks recently show his awareness of the need for stringent measures to bring down inflation as well as to reduce widening budget and balance of payments deficits.

Bankers believe that the pace at which the foreign exchange reserves have been falling means

(Continued on page 18)

Indian Foreign Policy Agenda

Consensus Beyond The Rhetoric

Dilip Mukerjee

Since national interests do not change, the broad direction of a country's foreign policy remains unaltered regardless of which government is in power except when there is a clear break with the past as in the Soviet Union under Mr Gorbachev or Iran after the overthrow of the Shah. This is borne out by our own experience during the Janata interregnum with pre-election promises of change being quickly sidelined in deference to the compulsions of international realities.

There was, of course, a difference in rhetoric which is about all that distinguishes the manifestos now offered to the electorate by the major contenders. There is, if anything, even less differentiation than in 1977 over the central issues of India's relationship with super-powers and with neighbours though the messy situation in Sri Lanka offers a ready-made handle for taking government to task. As the Janata Dal poses the issue, it was because of Mr Gandhi's "blunder" that the IPKF was forced to wage war against the very people it had gone out to protect, incurring in the process the loss of "hundreds of lives" and "thousands of crores".

National Front

It is instructive however, to note that the National Front glosses over the issue in its manifesto, committing itself to a pledge "to secure the safety and security of Tamils in Sri Lanka" and to restore friendly relations with Colombo by withdrawing the IPKF. Not a word is said about the 1987 Gandhi-Jayewardene accord even though some Janata Dal leaders decide it in their campaigning. This gives added credibility to the report that, at the time when president Premadasa's call for

the precipitate withdrawal of the IPKF created severe tensions between New Delhi and Colombo, assurances were privately offered by both Mr V. P. Singh and Mr Karunanidhi that they will do nothing to undercut the government's firm stance.

Even though aspects of India's foreign policy have been consistently debated in recent months in a marked departure from the earlier preference of all parties to keep sensitive issues out of political debate, there is still a consensus both with regard to goals and the broad approach to be followed to achieve them. Thus, the electoral arguments over foreign policy are likely to count for little even with sophisticated middle-class voters.

Back in 1977, non-alignment was made an issue with Mr Morarji Desai as well as Mr Atal Bihari Vajpayee stridently denouncing Mrs Gandhi for having tilted Indian policies in favour of the Soviet Union with the signing of the Indo-Soviet treaty of 1971. Speaking immediately after the party's poll triumph, Mr Desai told a Madras audience that he would want the treaty to be reviewed.

Yet the Janata government quickly learned to recognise that a strong relationship with Moscow needed to be preserved, even though Mr Desai on this side and president Carter on the other were trying to undo the strains that had developed in Indo-U.S. relations following the Nixon tilt toward Pakistan in 1971. High level exchanges with the Soviet Union continued much as in the past with the eventual outcome being a \$ 1.2 billion arms deal—by far the largest till then. The

sudden collapse of the Janata government meant that it was formally signed only after Mrs Gandhi returned to power.

Mr Vajpayee's change of heart was even more remarkable than Mr Desai's because the former had, along with Lohia socialists and Swatantra stalwarts, been a virulent critic of successive Congress governments (of which Mr Desai was a prominent member) for alienating the West by what he saw as kowtowing to Moscow. In explaining the remarkable mutation in his views, he disarmingly told this writer in a conversation at the end of the 1977 that power had not only brought him responsibility but also an education.

Long established national prescriptions are, of course, equally important in setting foreign policy parameters. If it were otherwise, India would have signed the nonproliferation treaty because of Mr Desai's personal conviction in this regard. He went as far as dropping hints in a U.N. address which, as we now know authoritatively from Mr Sanjiva Reddy's memoirs, put him at odds with all his colleagues because of the abiding national consensus that India must not close its nuclear option.

Formulations

The formulations offered in manifestos on a policy towards China also reflect the national mood as it has changed over the years. The Congress predictably claims that Mr Gandhi's visit last December heralds "a new era of peace and cooperation", while the National Front endorses "normalisation and promises efforts to improve relations 'without sacrificing national interest'". The BJP adds, however, the rider that there will

have to be "due safeguards for Tibet", a view expounded much more stridently by Mr George Fernandes at an international conference he organised in the Capital with the support of his Western friends. A discomfited Mr V.P. Singh, however, made it clear at that time that Mr Fernandes's personal views did not have his party's endorsement. It is, therefore, safe to assume that, no matter who is in power, the effort at rapprochement will continue.

The same holds true with regard to Pakistan. While the National Front has left its position undefined, offering only to ease visa restrictions and promote bilateral commerce, the BJP asks for "a comprehensive package" to settle all outstanding matters and a widening of people-to-people relations. This is a more circumspect version of the stand articulated by Mr Vajpayee, then party's chief spokesman on foreign policy. Returning from Pakistan after participating in Gen Zia-ul-Haq's funeral last August, he urged "the utmost restraint" in dealing with this neighbour. "Even if there are some pinpricks from the Pakistani side, we should ignore them". In contrast, the Congress manifesto, while holding forth on such issues as apartheid and world environment, has chosen to sidestep Pakistan. All that it does is to welcome democracy and promises "to be ever vigilant in Siachen and other sensitive areas"

Good Relations

Nepal figures in several manifestos, with the BJP promising restoration of "harmonious relations" and the National Front offering negotiations on all issues in contention "to find an amicable solution." The Congress takes the offensive in this

case by blaming present difficulties of the Janata mistake in conceding the Nepali demand for two separate treaties for transit and trade. The assertion that Mr Desai did this in dis-

regard of the views of his foreign minister and other colleagues has been made presumably to make the point that it was yet another personal aberration in violation of the national consensus. While this contention is valid, the fact remains that the present government was quite willing to continue with two treaties if Nepal stopped undermining the political relationship.

As many observers have pointed out, one major reason why Nepal has chosen to drag its feet on negotiations is the hope that a new government in New Delhi may be more indulgent. There was indeed a time when organisations like the RSS had a specially soft spot for Nepali royalty but this is obviously no longer a part of the BJP ethos. The stand formally taken by the opposition parties, as distinct from occasional campaign sniping, makes it very unlikely that there will be any shift from the present insistence that Nepal should not take India's goodwill for granted.

In dealing with relations with the two superpowers, the only party that still uses the U.S. as a punching bag is the CPM, gratuitously accusing the BJP of tilting towards it. If anything, the BJP comes out more strongly in favour of "the time-proven concept of non-alignment" than ever before. In the only reference of superpowers, it rejects their bid to dominate South Asia and the Indian region. Since the U.S. is much more active in this part of the world than the Soviet Union, the BJP's position is far more in keeping with that of the national mainstream than the CPM's.

In sum, it is as true of India as of the U.S. that partisan conflict stops at the shore although this truth is being obscured at the moment by the no-holds-barred campaigning in which both sides are indulging in vicious invective and innuendo.

Time of ...

(Continued from page 16)

that India cannot long avoid further borrowing from the International Monetary Fund. But Mr. Singh's announcement that the new government will redeem its pledge to annul farmers debts of up to Rs. 10,000 (£383) and will allocate half government resources to agriculture shows the power of populist pressure.

The new government must also cope with a difficult religious controversy. Hindu fundamentalists have announced that they will meet on January 29 to take the next steps towards the construction of a temple at Ayodhya, on a site revered by Moslems. To take a tough line with the fundamentalists will risk losing the support of the BJP which has 88 seats in the new parliament. But appeasing them — and this does not seem to be Mr. Singh's intention — would lose him the backing of the Moslems and the left.

Two years ago, as he set out on the journey of opposition to Mr. Gandhi which has led him to power, he summed up the political implications of India's pervasive communal tensions. In elections, parties think first of which class, or caste or community candidates come from and where they will win. When the routes to power are based on such things, it is like building and nurturing a hedge which you then find you cannot trim sufficiently to keep it under control."

If Mr. Singh can clear his immediate hurdles, his longer-term hopes of putting his government on a more stable base rest on a political realignment. He would like to form a new centrist administration, drawing in elements from Mr. Gandhi's Congress Party — but that depends on Congress splitting.

The emergence of the National Security State

The ethnic minorities have been struggling against the Bangladesh state in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. The crisis is rooted in history; it emanated partly from the British policy of divide and rule and partly due to the building of Kaptai dam in 1962 to support the industrialization of East Pakistan. The construction of the Kaptai dam uprooted more than 10,000 ethnic families, namely the Chakmas. Thus Bangladesh inherited the problem with its independence. The problem was aggravated by Premier Minister Mujib's declaration in 1972 that all tribals should embrace the Bengali identity. The ethnic minorities saw this as a threat as well as an insult to their own ethnic-cultural identity; they have considered themselves as a "nation" not a tribe, ethnic or Adibashi. The tribal politicians protested in parliament but in vain. As the choices for tribal elites narrowed down, they decided to go for armed struggle against the Bangladesh state.

Later, in 1975, the military government of Zia encouraged Bengali landless people to settle in the Chittagong Hill tracts. This policy invited violent reaction from the tribals against the settlers. The tribals organized, attacked and killed the Bengali settlers, besides attacking the well-equipped Bangladesh army. In retaliation the Bengalis resorted to what may be termed as ethnocide. In this confrontation, the tribals were the losers, having to face both the Bengali settlers and the Bangladesh army.

The ruling army government, nevertheless, gradually realized the need for a political solution and offered the tribal insurgents self-rule and autonomy. This method of reconciliation and attempt at ethnic integration are perhaps the first instance of its kind in South Asia and may be seen as unique.

This session addressed two theoretical issues which are critical in understanding the emerging regional situation. First, can regional generalizations be made regarding socio-political issues? Second, how is theoretical status of "ethnicity" located in the framework of historical materialism?

Regarding the question of generalizations, the participants felt that four dimensions needed to be considered in this context.

- (1) Is there a convergence between capitalist and non-capitalist states in the region?
- (2) The question of authoritarianism versus democracy or peoples versus oppressor: on the one hand, democracy has taken tremendous leaps forward while, on the other, there have been heightened tensions within the democratic process.
- (3) The dimension of ethnicity: resolution of the question of identity versus pluralism should open the way for a democratic settlement of ethnicity. The current situation however has been one of pessimism.
- (4) The emerging supra-regional phenomenon: the role of Indian dominance and a new regional balance of power; and the role of China and the extent to which Japanese and Korean financial capital would affect state formations in the region.

With the above considerations setting the discussion off, the issues debated (conclusively or inconclusively) included:

1. The question of mode of production in capitalist and

non-capitalist states as well as that of contradiction between socialism and capitalism, which was thought to be in recession as long as the dialogue between the superpowers remained in progress.

2. South Asia as a bridge between East Asia and West Asia and recent developments have added to the region's geo-strategic importance. It is the only region in the world where both nuclear and conventional war may erupt (ie. in the conflict between India and Pakistan). The Iranian revolution with its anti-imperialist ideology was identified by the participants as a major development in the region after the Bolshevik revolution with far-reaching impact, particularly on a billion Muslims of the world. The Afghanistan situation with the superpower involvement, the US presence in the Gulf, two major insurgencies in the sub-continent — Sikh and Tamil, a low-intensity war in Siachen, and an upsurge of movements for democracy in Pakistan and Bangladesh were all examined.

3. With the Indian regional role and the development of the Indian state, there was a contention on whether India could be defined as a sub-imperialist state. As India's economic stakes or interests in the region are minimal (the trade with Nepal amounts to only 1.5% of its total trade), it was felt that India played a hegemonistic based on force and power rather than sub-imperial and imperial role. India has used force to im-

pose its political will on its neighbours: Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Maldives, Sikkim and Bhutan. The Indian state was regarded as having emerged stronger and more powerful with a huge middle class, military and para-military forces and command over finance and capital. The internal dualism of the Indian state was also pointed out, i.e. there has been internal management of the problem situations and external use of power (Maldives, Sri Lanka). Furthermore, major shifts are also indicated as certain sections of society have been viewed as dispensable by the state and thus new westward looking elites have emerged. The mode of behaviour and response of the latter have been different from the old elites.

4. The democratic process in Pakistan has brought a consensus in its favour. A culture of resistance, evolved under Zia's dictatorship, has generated new self-confidence in the people and encouraged the educated professionals and others to return to the country.
5. The situation of Bangladesh as a post-colonial state is that the military bureaucratic oligarchy's ascendancy into power has given direction to the emergence of the indigenous bourgeoisie in the country. The evolution of the state was reviewed historically beginning with 1947 when BD was part of Pakistan, to the rise of Bengali nationalism and the creation of Bengali bourgeoisie in the fifties, to the assertion of BD in 1971. In the latter process India played a crucial role. Firstly, India had placed the nationalist party Awami League in power and secondly, the Indian army, by sheer physical strength and presence, had helped keep the Awami League in power. The Awami

League leaders were small town professionals belonging to surplus and middle class farming families. They came into conflict with representatives, managers, administrators and business executives of the state who had strong urban social origins. The new regime denied the flourishing of the old bourgeoisie (by-product of Pakistani colonialism) and the fledgling military bureaucratic oligarchy, and favoured the urban middle class and the rich peasantry. Since local conditions were not favorable for capital accumulation, a process was opened up through which metropolitan capital could take over the class formation and generate the development of dependent capitalism. The initial unstable alliances and balance between the class forces contending for state power began to take a new form. The military bureaucratic oligarchy re-organized and made an alliance with elements of the old bourgeoisie and the rising new bourgeoisie. This coalition contributed to the violent downfall of the Mujib regime in 1975 and heralded the ascendancy of the military-bureaucratic oligarchy.

6. The national security state has emerged in South Asia, while India may be seen as a secular, federal and pluralistic state, there is the fact of its militarisation and the propensity to use the military to promote political interests. This was reflected in the Indian military moves in 1986, "Exercise Brasstacks," along Pakistan's border. Nuclear capability as a factor in India/Pakistan relations may lead to a situation of "balance of terror" with implications for the region as a whole.
7. Foreign policy in South Asian countries is determined by domestic political

imperatives despite the best intentions of the leaders.

8. Sub-national problems spill over national boundaries and impinge upon inter-state relations.
9. The global trend of resolution of regional conflicts has not appeared in South Asia nor is the non-use of force for achieving political objectives visible in the region.

Attempts made to characterize each state in the region did not lead to a consensus. It is however possible to distinguish between secular states such as India and ethno-religious states such as in Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. Several suggestions were made, i.e. Sri Lanka as a defective state, Bangladesh as a military bureaucratic one, etc. There was a feeling among the scholars, however, that external factors in determining the nature of the South Asian states have not been fully discussed nor the changing social base of the contemporary state examined.

On the second theoretical question of "ethnicity" within the textbook definition of historical imperialism, it was suggested that ethnicity belonged in the broad category in the base of the superstructure construct. Here, the combination of relations and forces of production as well as the unit of production spoke of a more complex level.

Several questions were raised: are conflicts really ethnic or are they economic? Is class struggle a victim of ethnicity-based conflicts? Is class struggle the motor of history? Why is there a difference between ethnic assertions in the Philippines and Sri Lanka, where in the case of latter there is a majoritarian backlash?

The discussions regarding ethnicity ended with a pessimistic note with no method to resolve the questions in sight.

The Liberal approach to conflict

Chanaka Amaratunga

In the Liberal view of politics, conflict exists, in terms of problems to be solved. The hidden assumption is that conflict does not, or need not run very deep, that it can be managed by the exercise of reason and goodwill, and a readiness to compromise and agree. On this view, politics is not civil war by other means but a constant process of bargaining and accommodation, on the basis of accepted procedures, and between parties who have decided as a preliminary that they could and wanted to live together more or less harmoniously. Not only is this sort of conflict not injurious to society it has positive advantages. It is not only civilised, but also civilising. It is not only a means of resolving problems in a peaceful way, but also of producing new ideas, ensuring progress, achieving ever greater harmony and so on. Conflict is functional, a stabilising rather than a disruptive force.

The Marxist approach to conflict is very different. It is not a matter of problems to be solved but a state of domination and subjection to be ended by a total transformation of the conditions which give rise to it. No doubt conflict may be minimised but only because the ruling class is able by one means or another — coercion, concessions or persuasion — to prevent the subordinate classes from seeking emancipation. Ultimately, the antagonists are irreconcilable and the notion of genuine harmony is a deception or a delusion, or least in relation to class societies.

What of the other ideology that in the Third World is too often erroneously regarded as progressive, nationalism? To the Liberal this is perhaps the more regressive ideology than Marxism or full-blooded socialism because its conception of man is not only collectivist but also more ruthless in its complete indifference to the aspirations of those outside its

charmed circle of interest. The nationalist's devotion is to a particular people or to a race and both of these are impossible of transition. It is therefore the secular variant of the worst excess of Calvinism and believes in an elect, a chosen people who because of historical, racial or cultural affinities have the right to a special political inheritance. Nationalism is more fully repugnant to Liberalism than is Marxism because it is devoid of any of the characteristics I ascribed to Liberalism. Not only is nationalism oblivious to the status and rights of the individual who is nothing outside the special community be it a nation, a race, a religious group, that is deemed worthy of approbation, it is inequitarian both the liberal and the conventional sense. It is anti-universalist by its fundamental nature and of course by ascribing moral status to a community it is denying the prospect of the improvability of mankind and therefore is not meliorist.

If neither Marxism nor Nationalism are radical or progressive and if Conservatism while more acceptable to Liberals, is by its own admission not so, what makes Liberalism both a radical and progressive ideology? An answer to that would profit considerably by a consideration of one of John Gray's assertions which while being put forth with a great deal of intellectual strength is nevertheless one in which I find his view unacceptable. I refer to the distinction John Gray makes between classical and revisionist Liberalism.

Two central principles form the bedrock of Classical Liberalism — the conception of the limited state and of the free market. These classical Liberal attitudes have been revived,

apart from in John Gray's own work, most notably in the writings of Hayek, Milton Friedman and in an extreme form (now called Libertarianism) in those of Robert Nozick (*Anarchy, State and Utopia*). A central assertion of Gray's *Liberalism* is that Liberalism was subjected to a major rupture when John Stuart Mill developed what Gray calls its 'Revisionist' form.

With Gray's characterisation of what has hitherto been described as 'modern Liberalism' (e.g. Sir Isaiah Berlin in *Four Essays on Liberty*, particularly John Stuart Mill and the ends of Liberty) as 'revisionist' I have no particular disagreement. It is his view that 'Revisionist' Liberalism contains attitudes and features which are illiberal and that both past and present Classical Liberals are more truly Liberal than I cannot accept.

To whatever school they may belong Liberals accept that freedom (or liberty) is their primary value. But there are many principles which spring from that primary value and which are essential precepts of Liberalism. The relative merits of Classical as opposed to Revisionist Liberalism are derived from the varying importance ascribed by different thinkers to these precepts which though all of them are necessary to make up Liberalism, are not equally central to its core idea.

It should be made clear at once that it is not a simple divide between the relative moral claims of positive and negative liberty that concerns me here. What has been powerfully implicit in the writings of Tocqueville, Constant, Mill and Lord Acton has been made explicit in our times in the writings of Isaiah Berlin and after the publi-

cution of his brilliant *The Concepts of Liberty* there is no excuse for not recognizing that it is precisely the differences between positive and negative liberty that distinguish the Liberal from the Socialist. No Liberal can believe in the positive form of liberty 'freedom to' as being more fundamentally necessary than the negative form 'freedom from' which is that freedom that protects the individual from external interference. The freedom of the individual in which Liberals believe is primarily a freedom that permits each individual to follow his own values and to pursue his own path towards self-realisation. It is Mill who most passionately and convincingly asserted the centrality of individual liberty and most effectively set out the dangers of populist democracy, untrammelled rule by the numerical majority and the tyranny of social conformism. The weakness of some, particularly the modern exponents, of Classical Liberalism is that they have subscribed to a selective and in my view partial and inadequate conception of negative liberty which has led them to elevate limited government and the free market which in a general sense are vitally necessary means to the achievement of individual freedom and self-realisation to the status of absolute liberal principles.

It would be an exaggeration to portray Mill as anything more than the mildest of interventionists. Most of his works, and particularly *On Liberty* and *Consideration on Representative Government* make clear his staunch support for limited government and in several speeches and essays he has supported the market economy. Equally his passion against conformity, social pressure and the blind adherence to tradition indicate the fullness of his commitment to freedom.

Gray's assertion that by weakening the commitment to limited

government by contemplating a larger role for the state particularly in socio-economic issues and thereby anticipating the modern welfare state, by contemplating limitations, however small these may be in comparison to the prescriptions of socialists, on the freedom of the market and by his attack on custom and tradition, Mill displayed illiberal tendencies which embarked Liberalism on a dangerous flirtation with collectivist ideas. I think based upon an undoubtedly powerful understanding of Liberalism which nevertheless devalues if not disregards its essence. In finding the exponents of the Scottish Enlightenment more congenial than Mill, John Gray like Hayek, Friedman, Paul Johnson and so many others approaches Liberalism not by asserting the primacy of freedom for the individual and opposing any institutions or policies or attitudes that restrict it, but by believing that limited government and a free market are sufficient conditions of individual liberty and by then making a further erroneous assumption that non-intervention principally in the economic sphere constitutes limited government. Hayek and Gray are genuine Liberals who have contributed much to the development of Liberal ideas. But Hayek's belief in order and tradition as values that may contribute to liberty with which Gray concurs, while not entirely untrue is nevertheless less expressive of the Liberal point of view than Mill's assertion of individuality, and freedom both political and social. The Classical Liberals, Hayek and his disciples and even Gray, also define Liberalism too much in terms of its economic principles. Certainly it is the case that a market economy is an important component of Liberalism but the market economy is a means to an end not an end in itself. Hayek and Gray, of course recognise this but *Liberalism* and Hayek's many writings, particularly *Law, Legislation and Liberty* which is subtitled 'A

new statement of the liberal principles of justice and political economy' over emphasise economic and structural arrangements and under emphasise individual and political freedom.

My own view of Liberalism has always been that it is an ideology that is not very concerned with economics except in so far as economic arrangements help or hinder liberty. It is values other than the material values which goes to the essence of the personality that are the first concern of the Liberal. Mill set forth his creed every word of which I fully believe to convey not only the idea but also the tone of true Liberalism, as follows:-

It comprises, first, the inward domain of consciousness, demanding liberty of conscience in the most comprehensive sense; liberty of thought and feeling; absolute freedom of opinion and sentiment on all subjects, practical or speculative, scientific, moral or theological. The liberty of expressing and publishing opinions . . . Secondly the principle requires liberty of tastes and pursuits, of framing the plan of life to suit our own character, without impediment from our fellow creatures, so long as what we do does not harm them, even though they should think our conduct foolish, perverse or wrong. Thirdly from this liberty of each individual follows the liberty, within the same limits, of combination among individuals, freedom to combine for any purpose not involving harm to others.

Mill defined his use of the term 'harm to others' as being the restriction of a like liberty from any person. This comprehensive conception of Liberalism led Mill to avoid the error made by Hayek, by John Gray and of course by the new right who are not Liberals but for the most part Conservatives or former Socialists of seeing the 19th century (and the pre 1914 20th century) as the unalloyed golden era of Liberalism.

While it is true that in parts of Europe and in particular in Britain, in many respects there were then fewer constraints on

what a person might do there were three important respects in which the period cannot be described as a golden era of Liberalism. The first was the existence of illiberal social attitudes, greater pressure towards conformity, a greater power of intolerant religion and the existence of a stringent penal code that violated that personal independence that Mill so passionately championed. Thus a Victorian Briton could travel abroad without a passport but he could not write a strong pamphlet against the Church of England or against Christianity in general, he could buy goods from abroad on the same terms he bought them at home but if he were a homosexual he risked imprisonment as well as public disgrace, he would face harsh punishment if found guilty of a crime, would be liable to be hanged for a variety of offences and if she were a female would be denied any political rights at all.

The second was that the absence of the welfare state made poverty so serious that a good many people apart from being denied the franchise, could not effectively exercise their liberty. One does not have to believe in the primacy of positive liberty to recognise that a society in which more people can truly exercise individual liberty is a more Liberal society than in which the exercise of liberty is inhibited even by restraints as unconscious as social deprivation.

The third was, of course the existence of colonialism and the many illiberal attitudes connected with it. While I believe very strongly indeed that for many post-colonial countries the period of colonialism was an experience closer to the Liberal idea of freedom than a spurious independence which has meant the right of indigenous dictators to brutalise their people, it nevertheless remains impossible that a truly Liberal state and society can exist in which people are denied political rights and sub-

jected to various forms of discrimination, sometimes including those based on race.

Mill and the school of Revisionist Liberalism saw all this. His essay on *Liberty* which has remained the finest Liberal statement ever, was written as a passionate statement against the illiberalism of what Hayek and Gray have hailed as the 'Liberal Era'. To the true Liberal, there has been no 'Liberal Era' for what the 19th century looked in social and political freedom and has been obtained often at a tremendous price in the 20th century, has been offset by the great advance of statism and economic collectivism. The danger that the world faces is that a relatively free market will be restored only at the price of social attitudes that involve mendacity, racism, censorship and enormous state power. The Liberal wants a free market but he also wants individual liberty in the widest sense.

Mill is triumphantly vindicated as the incomparable Liberal thinker because he anticipated all the concerns of the modern lover of freedom. It seems indeed one of the most optimistic, the most exalted moments of man, that Mill writing in the 19th century could set out the distinction between individual liberty and democracy, the tyranny of the majority, the case for proportional representation, the dangers of excessive state power, the case for equality for women, the dangers of social conformism and the evils of racism. Where even a great and deeply sincere Liberal like Lord Acton could do what for us seems inconceivable and support the American South in the Civil War, asserting the principle of states rights and ignoring what for us seems the unignorable issue of slavery and where many other Classical Liberals remained oblivious to the real tragedy of repression in the colonies or to poverty at home, John Stuart Mill never fails the modern Liberal. By asserting the centrality of liberty and then

applying it with a refinement and consistency that is breathtaking both in its intellectual brilliance and in its nobility of spirit, Mill helped create a Liberalism for all seasons. In the 20th century Isaiah Berlin has closely followed him in a tradition that believes that Liberalism is not about material things or even ultimately about constitutional relationships but about the real freedom of real individuals. The classical Liberal critique of this tradition clearly articulated by John Gray is not one I find convincing.

An essential consequence of the Liberal belief in the primacy of the individual has been the recognition that totalitarianism and intolerance is not only the product of individual dictators and of unpopular regimes but are equally the characteristics of majorities. The writings of Mill, de Tocqueville, Benjamin Constant, and in this century of Ortega Y Gasset are informed with this danger of which we in the Sri Lanka of today are only too aware.

Mill asserted:

Protection, therefore, against the tyranny of the magistrate is not enough: there needs protection also against the tyranny of the prevailing opinion and feeling against the tendency of society to impose, by other means than civil penalties, its own ideas and practices as rules of conduct on those dissent from them; to fetter the development and, if possible, prevent the formation of any individuality not in harmony with its ways and customs; all characters to fashion themselves upon the model of its own. (22)

The dangerous pressures towards conformity and the evil posed by mass psychology was acutely recognised by the French Liberal Benjamin Constant's comments on the role of the crowd in the French Revolution:

The crowd, corrupted by both the danger and example, tremulously repeated the slogan required of them, and took flight at the sound of their own voice. Everyone formed part of the multitude and was afraid of the multitude he had

(Continued on page 27)

Will There be a Slump?

Sumenasiri Liyanage

Commenting upon the future developments in the international economy, Andre Gündut Frank wrote:

The official economic optimism and claims of economic recovery by the Reagan Administration and its Western allies rest on the slinkiest of foundations. In fact the cyclical recovery since 1985 is now ending. . . . (The next — that is the little recession in the current world economic crisis — is expected to become a major worldwide deflationary depression with aggravated trade wars or even renewed blue tendencies, reminiscent of the 1930s American "Good Neighbour" policy in Latin America, the Japanese "Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere", and the German "Lebensraum" and (LJRPB 1987: 277)

This perspective is shared not only by marxist and radical writers but also by bourgeois commentators as well. As the financial editor of the *Wall Street Journal* commented, "the message here is that the hurricane can't be stopped, that we can only try to make things less nasty when it hits".

In this short essay, I argue that the world capitalist system will not face a "major world-wide deflationary depression" in an immediate future as Frank has predicted. Moreover, I hold the view that the present deceleration of economic growth in the international economy in general and in the major OECD countries in particular is only a temporary and transitory phenomenon. Three new variables are (1) the new technologies (2) signs of an emerging new regime of accumulation and (3) current developments in Eastern Europe. This essay will be confined to the first two variables since the third demands more detailed analysis of complex socio-economic factors.

(The Worker is a leading Sri Lanka socialist)

The new technologies

Contrary to the view held by the majority in the mode of production debate, Cohen (1978) believes that the productive forces are more important and dominant than the relation of production in the ensemble of mode of production. The new revolutionary innovations have enormously developed the productive forces and will lead not only to the emergence of new leading branches of the economy and a whole range of new product groups but also to transform the entire methods of their production and their input-cost structure. This revolution has been proceeding in four main spheres, namely (1) information technology, (2) new materials, (3) biotechnology and (4) nuclear technology and the developments in the first sphere have already reached the point where their macro economic impact is great enough to carry the economy forward in the next decade or two. Let me briefly list some of these developments. (i) The advent and proliferation of micro-processors have enormously increased the human computing power. Starting with 8 bit machines, it has today advanced to 32 bit machines, which could handle more than four billion memory addresses at one time. (ii) The deployment of fibre-based light wave and sophisticated mobile radio systems has revolutionized the transmission of information. A group of scientists at the AT&T Bell Laboratories were able to transmit light wave signal carrying 400 million bits of information per second through a length of glass-fibre longitude two hundred kilometers long, without amplification of any kind.

(iii) The use of numerical control (NC) and especially

digital numerical control (DNC) machine tools in the production process. (iv) The growing role of industrial manipulators, better known as Robots, to move materials, parts, tools and to perform certain functions. The *Time* magazine once reported, that today almost all the functions of motor car manufacturing could be handled by robots.

(v) The use of computer aided design (CAD) and computer aided manufacturing (CAM) has greatly advanced the flexibility of production. Now a machine can perform various functions and shift from one function to another merely by reprogramming. The result is the emergence of Flexible Manufacturing System (FMS) which is qualitatively different from the fixed automation used in the car manufacturing plants in Detroit.

(vi) A growing number of new materials such as engineering ceramic and polymers, composites, super semi-conductors, opto-electronic materials and amorphous alloys, have been developed. The use of these materials in place of conventional material, and also in new areas is now in progress.

A new regime of accumulation

The second variable is a new regime of accumulation which has been growing in significance and in my opinion, gradually replacing the old Fordist regime of accumulation as a "form of social transformation that increases relative surplus-value under the stable constraints of the most [general] norms that define absolute surplus-value" (1979:68). The main characteristics of the Fordist production strategy may be summarized as follows:

a) products were standardised; this meant that each part and each task could also be standardised. . . .

b) if tasks are the same, then some can be mechanised; thus mass production plants developed specially purpose machinery for each model, much of which could not be switched from product to product.

c) those tasks which remained were subject to scientific management or Taylorism, whereby any task was broken down into its component parts, redesigned by work study specialists on time and motion principles, who then instructed manual workers on how the job should be done.

d) flowline replaced nodal assembly, so that instead of workers moving to and from the product flowed past the workers. (Murray 1988:2)

As Murray points out, the impact of Fordist production strategy is not confined to the economy, but is also felt in politics and culture. Mass production led the way for big corporations and through the national wage bargaining system, for big unions. As profitability depends on the increasing volume, mass production presupposes mass consumption of standardised products. The best example is Ford's Model T motor car. The Ford production plant is founded on a fiercely hierarchical structure and an extremely centralized decision making mechanism. Plant designing has strictly followed in minute detail the massive construction manual drawn up in Detroit.

This regime of accumulation faced a crisis in the mid- or late 1960s. However, as in itself, it did not threaten the international capitalist system, a further capital restructuring has

become possible under a new regime of accumulation for which most of the conditions were present at the time.

What are the salient features of the new accumulation regime? First the FMSs based on reprogrammable machines have been replacing the old system of fixed automation based on special-purpose machines. The reprogrammable machines can switch easily between different functions. Murray reports:

In the car industry, whereas General Motors took nine hours to change the dies on its presses in the early 80s, Toyota have lowered the time to two minutes, and have cut the average lot size of body parts from 5000 to 500 in the process. (1988: 11)

The deployment of general purpose machines in place of special purpose machines enable manufacturing plants to easily change their product designs in accordance with the consumption needs of various social segments. Thus, the second feature of the new regime is the replacement of standardised products by custom products. The mass market gave way to market niching.

Third, the just in-time system of ordering has overcome the Fordist problem of stocks.

Toyota, the founder of Toyota inspired by a visit to an American supermarket, applied the just in-time system to his component suppliers, ordering on the basis of his daily production plans, and getting the components delivered right beside the line. Most of Toyota's components are still produced on the same day as they are assembled. (Murray 1988:11)

Fourth, the new regime is based on a new system of labour control and management. The second rank managers are given more power and authority in the organization of production and their innovative abilities are recognised and appreciated. Taylorist conception of a worker as a part of the machine has been rejected as an unworkable system.

Next: World Scenario

The Liberal . . .

(Continued from page 33)

helped to enlarge. It was then that there spread over France, the unconquerable light headedness which has been called the reign of terror. (23)

Of all these characteristics, those which confer upon Liberalism its greatest moral worth are its individualism, the centrality accorded in it to liberty and its universality. In a Sri Lanka torn by sectarianism and intolerance of various kinds, I conclude therefore, with the words of D.J. Manning:-

The liberal concept of citizenship is to be applied to men regardless of their pedigree. It is not an identity restricted to members of a religion, a nation, a class or a race. Calvin's Institutes, von Trotschke's Politics, Marx's Communist Manifesto and Hitler's Mein Kampf are each addressed to an exclusive group. They are not intended to inspire Catholics, Protestants, Capitalists and Jews only Protestants, Germans.

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Germany — No road to socialism ?

Frank Kurschner-Pelkmann*

It seems that the capitalist West Germany won a total victory over the socialist East Germany. Thousands of East Germans have crossed the Hungarian border to reach the golden West, hundreds of thousands have protested in the streets against the status quo and millions have no confidence in the political leadership in East Berlin. Whereas the Red Star is sinking, the Mercedes star is shining over Germany as companies like Mercedes buy more and more smaller companies. Has socialism failed in the country of Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels and Rosa Luxemburg? To understand the dynamics of socialist ideas and approaches in Germany one has to go back to the beginning of this century. At that time the main socialist movement was the Social Democratic Party (Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands—SPD). It united those who believed in the ballot paper as the key to a socialist future and those who were convinced that only a revolution could end the dominance of the capitalist class. The movement split during the first World War, when the reformist forces in the SPD favoured a patriotic stand of the party, whereas the more radical minority was not willing to vote in favour of war loans.

The split became even more obvious, when the emperor fled from Germany after losing the war and the SPD got a chance to rule the country. The SPD leadership decided to transform Germany in very small steps into a socialist country accepting coalitions with liberal and conservative parties. The SPD even helped to make a well-known general of the imperial time the president of the country (only to learn later on that this general chose Hitler as the chancellor of Germany in 1933).

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The more radical socialist groups tried to overthrow the reformist government and to establish a socialist republic following the example of Lenin. They failed because of the strong resistance from the SPD and the conservative parties, not to forget the fear of most Germans of fundamental changes and unrest. Lenin had predicted that the Germans would buy flatiron tickets before they would storm a railway station.

When a revolutionary change in Germany had failed, the communist party tried to compete with the SPD for the votes of the working class. This split in the socialist movement helped the conservative parties to gain more political influence and helped the Nazis to take over power in 1933 with the promise to restore law and order and to overcome the economic crisis of the country. It was in resisting the Nazi dictatorship that a number of social democrats and communists worked together. But it was only a small number of socialists who were actively involved in the resistance and given the passive or supportive attitude of most Germans to the new rulers it was not surprising that thousands of members of the resistance movement were sooner or later exposed by the police and killed in the concentration camps. Therefore the experience of a joint resistance against the dictatorship did not really become a decisive factor in the post-war political development.

On the contrary, the political climate after the war was not at all favourable for a joint effort of social democrats and communists towards a truly socialist development in Germany. The Soviet dominance in East Germany resulted in a merger of SPD and communist party dominated by political leaders in line with Stalin. In West Germany

a strong anti-communist stand of both the American government and large proportions of the population (including millions of refugees from the East) left no room for the lonely voices of those who favoured a joint effort towards socialism. The "restauration" of a conservative society and an unlimited economic growth were the political targets of those days. The social democrats did all they could to convince the Germans that their socialism had nothing to do with the socialism on the other side of the border. That way the social democrats in the West became more and more part of the establishment whereas the communists in the east turned to an orthodox socialism concentrating on ensuring the stability of their system.

The economic boom in the West left the conservative parties in a comfortable position of confidence in the own system shared by the vast majority of the population. "No experiments!" was popular slogan of the conservative movement. Nor was the East German government interested in experiments, but this was more a sign of instability and lack of confidence. The East German government had to live with the passive resistance of millions of citizens against a socialism that was seen as a forced import from Moscow. Millions left East Germany for the West to enjoy the tasteful fruits of capitalism. Internationally the East German government was not recognized by most governments of the world and the West German government used all its economic and political power to prevent such a recognition. This was part of an intensive ideological war between the two German states.

Such a situation did not allow the growth of democratic socia-

lism in East or West Germany, whereas it allowed the hardliners in both states to denounce fundamental opposition either as "imperialistic" (in the East) or "communist" (in the West). Antagonistic as they were, both political leaderships need one another. The mere existence of the enemy helped to suppress alternatives to the status quo. Definitely the West German system being economically more successful and offering more individual freedom was much stable than the East German system. It is not easy to convince doctors to accept a lower income in order to help to create an egalitarian society. It is even more difficult to do so when these doctors just have to cross the border to get a far higher income plus more individual freedom. In addition, the East Germans were frustrated by the privileges of the political leadership and by the authoritarian and bureaucratic style of this leadership. Therefore it was not surprising that millions left East Germany and that the government did not see an alternative to the closure of the border. In 1961 it built the wall in Berlin and similar barriers at the border to West Germany to prevent its citizens to flee to the West. On the one hand this bold step did lead to a remarkable economic recovery of East Germany raising the per-capita-income to one of the highest in the world. Still it remained far below the West German level. The closure of the border meant on the other hand that the East German government admitted that it had lost the economic and political competition with the West, at least for the time being. Furthermore, millions of East Germans felt that they were imprisoned in their own country and were threatened to be killed, by the army of their own country if they tried to cross the border. It was not expected that this frustration would contribute to any enthusiasm to build a socialist Germany.

Nevertheless socialism was not dead in Germany. The stu-

dents in the West revolted against an establishment in the universities and in the society that was only interested in preserving the status quo. From 1968 on, students and youth started to read Marx again and spend their time in night-long debates in pubs how the working class could be convinced to get involved in a revolutionary process that would end capitalism and would lead to a truly socialist society. Most of the students were not too much attracted by the East German style of socialism and if they accepted any existing form of socialism as an example for Germany it was China.

So it was debated how Marx and Mao could lead the German working class on the road to socialism. The working class was not really interested in this type of revolution and the frustration of the students about the lack of revolutionary consciousness of the Germans contributed to a split of the socialist movement in various small parties and groups.

A number of students joined the SPD trying to change the system from within. The SPD managed to achieve substantial social changes as well a more open foreign policy when it ruled Germany together with the liberal party in the 70s. What was not achieved was a change of the economic politics in the direction of a socialist development. The pragmatic groups in the SPD and the liberal party prevented any socialist politics. Only in the rhetorical attacks of the conservative opposition could one get the impression that socialism was knocking at the door of West Germany.

The conservatives won elections with the slogan "freedom or socialism" and were able to take over the government power again in a coalition with the liberal party. Socialist ideas were restricted to minority groups in the SPD, to the tiny

communist party and to groups within the newly formed Green Party that threatened the established parties in the eighties by demanding radical changes in the ecological and economic politics of West Germany.

They won about 8—10% in various elections and became an influential factor in German politics without being able to form a joint government with the SPD on a regional or national level (actually there were strong reservations in both parties against coalition). This left West Germany with a conservative government, a divided opposition and small socialist groups within and outside of SPD and Green Party.

Up to 1988 the East German system had also reached a considerable level of stability and the government was concentrating on the administration of the status quo. Political debate did not play a major role in East German politics and the government was very reluctant to acknowledge the fundamental changes that were going on in the Soviet Union and neighbouring European countries. Compared to a country like Poland the economic situation in East Germany was far advanced and the debts over against the West were relatively low. In order to preserve the political stability the East German government even banned some publications from the Soviet Union advocating political and economic changes.

The whole situation changed dramatically when the Hungarian government opened the border to the West allowing its visitors from East Germany to use Hungary as a transit country to the West. Thousands of East Germans used this opportunity to go to West Germany. The East German government had to acknowledge that it was no longer in a position to keep the population under control

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Development: Entrenching Patriarchal Authority

Asoka Bandarage

Women are integrated into every sector of the Sri Lankan economy, and in the leading sectors like tea production, labor export to the Middle East, and the Free Trade Zone, women are the predominant labor force and the primary foreign exchange earners. As in other Asian and Third World countries pursuing a similar path of development, in Sri Lanka the economy has been planned and built on the cheap labor of women. If women's domestic labor, which is nowhere calculated or remunerated, is also included, it could be argued that women's contribution to the economy surpasses that of men. However, official figures commonly underestimate women's labor, and according to one set of calculations, the percentage of women in the total "employed" population in Sri Lanka has dropped from 22.2 percent to 20.7 percent between 1971 and 1981.

In every sector, from the plantations to the Mahaweli, from the Free Trade Zone to the Middle East, from tourism to advertising, women are incorporated into jobs deemed specifically female. Not only are these jobs less valued financially and socially, but even in the cases where women do the exact same tasks as men, they are still quite often paid less. On top of wage discrimination, women are also sexually exploited in almost all sectors. Sectors such as tourism and female labor export are built specifically upon the exploitation of women's sexuality, and in the case of baby exports, upon the exploitation of women's reproductive power as well. When child-bearing is commoditized, women receive next to nothing; and when women employees are pregnant, in many sectors they are laid off, and in other

sectors they receive minimum maternity benefits. Following years of agitation by women's groups, the Sri Lankan government has extended paid maternity leave from six weeks to three months as stipulated by the ILO. However, this change is yet to be fully implemented. The assumption that women are primarily wives and mothers and only supplementary wage earners is relied upon to justify gender discrimination even where social realities starkly belie this assumption.

Approximately one-third of households in the world today are headed by women. Increasing number of women are sole breadwinners and heads of households in all sectors and regions of Sri Lanka as well. According to government statistics, 17.4 percent of all households in 1981 were headed by women, and in districts such as Galle and Matara in the South and Jaffna in the North female-headed households exceed 20 percent. In her survey of two southern villages, Rohini Weerasinghe found that "...having a male head pushes family incomes over the subsistence level, albeit marginally." There is little doubt that poverty and female-headed households have been further increased by war, migration, and other social dislocations of the last decade. As elsewhere, a large percentage of the thousands of refugees in the island are women and children.

Subordination of women is a historical feature of capitalist development. Yet the nature and effects of integration into capitalism vary widely across different categories of women. For some, like the FTZ worker, the migrant housemaid, or even the prostitute, it may bring certain freedoms from family and community control and a modicum of indepen-

dence and adventure. For others, like the Mahaweli settler woman or the tourist bride, however, it may mean tighter male control and subservience within the household. Still, the overwhelming effect or integration into capitalist economy and culture for all of these women is one of exploitation, not liberation.

For most poor women, there are few guarantees in the workplace or the home. The tea plucker knows not when she and her family may be deported back to India or angry mobs may attack in the heat of ethnic violence. The young woman in the Mahaweli settlement may never get a paying job in spite of all the certificates she has diligently earned. The Free Trade Zone may suddenly close when transnationals decide to seek safer environments. The Middle East bonanza may end due to economic downturns or political upheavals in the Persian Gulf. Tourism has almost disappeared, and the government has banned the export of babies abroad. In such a context, wage slavery becomes a privilege; the tragedy is not to be waged at all!

As already noted, for all the Sri Lankan women who gained wage work in new sectors during the last decade, many more lost previously held jobs due to the demise of local handicrafts, weaving and so on. As Hema Gunatilleke has shown, the women's income-generation projects undertaken during the 1975-85 United Nations Women's Decade have at the most placed 25,000 women in self-employment ventures, and the gap created by the loss of women's traditional manufacturing job has not been completely filled. The previously mentioned official statistics show a drop in total female employment from 22.2 percent to 20.7 percent between 1971 and 1981.

The unemployment rate among Sri Lankan women rose more than 200 percent between 1971 and 1981. In the 1970s the unemployment rate for women was double the rate for men. In every region and at every level there is greater unemployment among women, with especially sharp disparities in the higher echelons. In 1981 the unemployment rates for men and women were 13.2 percent and 31.8 percent respectively. If these trends continue, more and more women will be forced into the informal sector and will have to sell whatever they can — their land, their culture, their bodies, or their babies.

The accelerated capitalist development of the last decade has begun to restructure and reinforce patriarchal authority in new and different ways. The locus and the dynamic of male supremacy are shifting. The Free Trade Zone worker, the migrant housemaid, the prostitute, or the exported bride may no longer be under the direct control of her father, husband, or other male relatives. Now she is under more impersonal or alien male authorities — the factory supervisor, the employment agent, the government bureaucrat, the Western tourist, the Arab employer, or the Japanese farmer.

Yet Sri Lankan families and communities are seldom sensitive to the changing realities and needs of their daughters, wives, and sisters exploited outside the home. Instead many are quick to criticize, ridicule, and even physically assault women for deviating from the subservient image of the "good Sri Lankan woman." The media, and religious and state authorities, too, are harsh in their treatment of women. There seems to be a male backlash directed especially against women playing new and "deviant" roles. The Free Trade Zone worker leaving the night shift or even the mendicant Buddhist nun on the street (many older women

become nuns due to destitution) tread with fear of verbal and physical abuse from men. Women become easy victims of the anger and hatred of men taught to kill in a militaristic society. As a group without male protection, women heads-of-households and their children are particularly targeted for attack by men and other women. Women themselves do not choose to head households; more often than not they are thrust into that situation when a man dies or deserts."

The loosening of family and community life and changes wrought in women's roles have increased rather than decreased women's anxieties about employment, social acceptance, and marriage. The average age of marriage among Sri Lankan women has steadily increased over the last few decades. In 1975 it was 25.7 years, and it may have further increased over the last ten years. However as Dr. Anula Nikopata points out, in a culture where "marriage is considered the most acceptable and primary aim and goal of women," most unmarried women live with tremendous fear of spinsterhood, which is seen as the ultimate personal failure. The unusually high rates of depression and suicide among young Sri Lankan women are, at least partly, the consequences of rapid social transformation (the high suicide rate among young men, too, needs greater investigation).

Yet by no means are all Sri Lankan women complete victims of capitalist or patriarchal oppression. Even the Indian Tamil women on the estates, the group that is considered the most oppressed, have participated in militant strikes in the past and more frequently during the last decade. As Kumari Jayawardene has argued, many women have been involved in the anti-imperialist and left movements, and feminism is not an entirely new concept in either Sri Lanka

or other parts of Asia. In a more individual vein, many lower caste/class Sinhalese women have learned to adapt precolonial traditions of female social and sexual independence to survive within the modern world. At least a few women, especially those no longer dependent on male incomes, are daring to assert themselves. Beneath the veneer of subservience and docility most Sri Lankan women are tremendously resourceful. They embody a fighting spirit.

While changes in women's consciousness and individual initiative are prerequisites for liberation, women's lives cannot be improved without structural transformations of the society. In Sri Lanka, the path of capitalist development has been taken to logical extreme. All human relations are being commoditized and women are "superexploited" in their capacity as economic producers and reproducers of human life. Population control, which is a major plank of the Western capitalist model of development for the Third World, has not been dealt with in this analysis. It should be mentioned, that contraceptives like Depo-Provera are often used in ways that violate poor women's rights to information and to control over their own bodies.

Some conservatives, and even orthodox Marxists would argue that the exploitation of Sri Lankan women depicted here is the inevitable cost of transition from a traditional peasant society to a modern industrial one. They would say that the Third World and its women will eventually catch up with the developed West. But this argument ignores several important facts: that the dependent capitalist societies are not traversing the historical trajectory of the advanced capitalist societies; that monopoly capitalism is turning the majority of the world's people into a surplus population; that the subordination of women and the "feminization

of poverty" are structural features of both dependent and advanced capitalism. Clearly feminist analysis of the dialectic between capitalism and patriarchy needs to be developed much further.

In Sri Lanka the government promised to build a *Dharmashila* society, a society based on the Buddhist precepts of compassion and equanimity. Instead a self-destructive society has come into being—a society rife with millionaires and beggars, pimps and prostitutes, soldiers and refugees, the tortured and the disappeared. Urgently needed is a humane model of development, a model that puts the basic needs of life and survival of all the people before military victory, quantitative growth, capitalist profitability, and luxury consumption of the few. It is necessary to create a model of individual and social development that gives women alternatives to plucking tea, assembling clothes, and delivering babies and raising daughters all for export. A model that allows women, men, and children to live on their land with peace and dignity must be created now.

Among those recognizing this urgency is the small but vibrant feminist community in Sri Lanka. Spearheaded by the *Voice of Women* and other organizations such as the Progressive Women's Front, this community has been fighting for changes on every major issue that concerns women. However, as Sri Lankan feminist activists know only too well, the struggle for women's rights has not been an easy one. Feminism and the women's movement are ridiculed and attacked by religious fundamentalists and nationalists as a foreign import, by liberals as a passing fad, and by the Left as a bourgeois deviation. Women's groups, such as the Kanthabbiwardana Samitiya, which are not explicitly identified as feminist, are also in the forefront in dealing with issues affecting women

and youth. As elsewhere, the women's movement in Sri Lanka is divided along ideological and political party lines. These contradictions and the familiar tactics of divide and conquer become most apparent during the annual 8 March International Women's day celebrations. As Sumila Abeyskere reports, on the one hand government officials pontificate on the virtues of motherhood and the importance of being feminine while participating in development; on the other hand, they get policemen and women to "baton charge, tear gas, assault and arrest other women from non-governmental organisations who are likewise celebrating Women's Day."

Around the world, women have been outsiders and victims of the dominant capitalist and patriarchal model of development. In spite of the outstanding educational and professional achievements of many upper- and middle-class women, and the tenure of the world's first woman prime minister, Sirimavo Bandaranaike, during the 1960s and 1970s, few Sri Lankan women are in high administrative and decision-making positions today. In 1979, 7.6 percent of the administrative service workers were women, with only 1.3 percent at the top levels. (In 1978 the government withdrew the rule that limited women to 25 percent of the government's administrative, accounting, and clerical jobs.) The civil war in the North, the equally tragic war escalating in the South, and the occupation of the island by 100,000 Indian troops (a rumored estimate, no reliable figures available) have been planned and conducted by men; they are largely the wars of men.

Women have at various times supported armed struggle and a few have engaged in it themselves. But it must be emphasized that as a group, women opt predominantly for

nonviolent struggle and often-times they are the only peace-makers. Women in North of Sri Lanka organized a Mother's Front demanding the return of their disappeared sons. Feminist groups in the South coalesced into a Women for Peace Campaign circulating a petition calling for a ceasefire and a negotiated settlement to the ethnic conflict. While other oppressed groups take up arms, women are fighting for their rights nonviolently. This has traditionally been seen as a sign of weakness, when, in fact, it is a sign of strength. The Sri Lankan case has shown that violence only fosters more violence. Ultimately, even the bitterest of social conflicts must be fought with a vision and spirit of peace and unity. In this respect, strategies of consciousness-raising and nonviolent confrontation need to be developed far more, and strengthened nationally and internationally. Women must become leaders in this effort. ●

Germany...

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and that it had to take initiatives in order to convince the population to stay in East Germany. Not only the government but also the internal opposition reacted immediately in this new development. They were alarmed by the fact that a lot of critical people who could have played a role in the struggle for a democratic socialism left the country. Whereas the East German government seemed to be irresolute as to what to do, the opposition mobilized thousands of people all over the country to demand fundamental changes in East Germany. Only at the beginning the establishment tried to protect its interests by using the police against demonstrators; then, suddenly it gave up and took some unexpected steps to change the politics of the country.

(To be Continued)

The Job path

Jayantha Perera

Migration on seasonal and long-term basis appears to be fairly common among rural people. For the wet zone villages, where population pressure on land and other resources is considerably high, this proportion is 29%. These villages are located in the economically and commercially more effective south-western part of the country. One of the reasons for the higher rate of out-migration among the landed compared with that of the land poor, is the former have more access to wealth and higher education and therefore are able to find more regular employment in the public sector. For instance, in the selected sample of 114 landed households, there were 70 (62%) members living away for employment and educational purpose while only 105 members from 394 land poor households (26%) stayed away for similar purposes.

Over 86% of those who migrate are sons and daughters and more than 70% of them are in the young age groups (15 - 30 years). Marriage and employment are the two major causes for leaving the household. Sixty two percent of landless migrants left their households for seasonal employments. Such seasonal migration especially from the wet zone to the dry zone irrigation schemes is fairly common. Many land poor people migrate during peak periods to the dry zone areas in order to take up casual wage work in agricultural farms. Most migrants prefer to go to the same area and to the same employers with whom they have established work contacts over many years. Although seasonal migration is not so common among the dry zone land poor households, they too participate in such seasonal wage work in

major irrigation schemes. The landless who migrate to take up non-seasonal work are generally employed in construction sites, road construction and maintenance, restaurants and bakeries and as housemaids.

The majority of the land poor migrants (63%) leaves for other rural areas within and outside the region, and only a one-third of them finds work in the urban sector. A major character of the land poor households is the multitude of economic activities undertaken and the complex division of household labour among different activities. This situation has arisen due to inadequate amount of productive resources, particularly land, owned by households and the absence of skills and employment opportunities for their members. They are forced to take up marginal and under-productive activities which give low returns to labour.

On the other hand, the destinations of migrants from the landed households appear to be mostly towards the urban centres (50%) with relatively smaller proportion (40%) leaving for other rural areas. This can be expected as many of them are employed in the public sector.

Another feature that has emerged in recent years is the migration to Near Eastern countries, mostly as housemaids. In 1983, the export of labour to the Middle East countries became second in importance to that of tea. Gross embarkations reached nearly 70,000 or well over half of the annual increase in the labour force. Because of the slow down in economic growth and activity in the Middle East, the main destinations of migrants, embarkations have come down

and are estimated to stand at present around 40,000. In the study-villages, the proportion of middle East migrants is relatively higher among the landed households (6%) than among the landless (3%). This is partly due to the former's ability to raise money to meet the initial expenses of migrating abroad.

Broad Trends in Employment Structure in Rural Sri Lanka

The general trends in employment have been of mixed type. The opening of the Mahaweli Development Project and other large-scale irrigation-cum-settlement systems during the last three decades has helped to reduce the unemployment to some extent in the dry zone. The survey clearly showed that 60% of the respondents in the dry zone study villages felt that work was easier to find and 92% of them considered it to be in agriculture.

In the wet zone villages, the landed households with better educational and skill training were able to enter into the service sector. However members of the land poor households experienced extreme difficulties in finding work in the agriculture sector and therefore, had to look for non-agricultural occupations and self employment. Thus over 75% of the landless respondents in these villages felt that work was more difficult to find. However the increasing demand for manual labour in construction, transport and commercial activities during the last decade in Sri Lanka has, to some extent, eased this pressure. Furthermore, it enabled them to find casual employment and to migrate as seasonal workers to other regions.

In spite of many positive changes in rural development the overall situation, as perceived by the land poor, indicates more difficulties of finding employment opportunities. Such

opportunities will have to be found outside agriculture in the wet zone and within agriculture in the dry zone. Unless the non agricultural sector of the economy expands rapidly and large-scale resettlement of the land poor in irrigation systems take place in the near future, the problems of unemployment and under employment would become very acute.

Political Patronage

One important process that has taken place during the last three decades is the rapid politicization of state activities in rural areas such as social welfare and rural development. This has led to the emergence of political patrons in villages. Who through their links with the political network in the area, could do personal favours such as securing employment, expediting land transactions etc. At present, rural political patrons are agents between the members of Parliament (MP) and the villagers. Unlike land based patrons, they cannot give direct benefits, but have to depend on their higher patrons to do so. For this, they have to act as vote banks in general elections. Since no general election was held in Sri Lanka after 1977, the Political leaders who act as brokers of both higher-level politicians and villagers have acquired their autonomy and new skills of toughness and manipulative ability. The characteristics of representative politics, for example, the dependence of the MP's on vote banks (village political leaders) for winning election and getting support for their activities made the village leaders very powerful.

The intervention of the state in peasant agriculture and the revision of its agrarian policies in favour of the small holder sector have changed the peasant economy in two significant ways. First, direct control of the allocation of benefits at the dis-

posal of the state has passed from the hands of civil servants to elected politicians who controlled local organizations through their agents. Second, an increasing proportion of these spoils benefited individuals rather than groups or communities. Politicians channel these benefits to reward their followers and thereby build their votes banks. These processes radically affected political development within village communities and eventually led to the emergence of a new dimension of social stratification in rural Sri Lanka: control over rural organizations and party political links.

The political appointment of office bearers of rural organizations, the nomination of such organizations as the sole channels for distributing scarce resources such as fertilizer, agro chemicals, agriculture equipment and credit, and the increasingly open use of political loyalty as a criterion for allocating benefits through these rural organizations as new power basis in rural areas."

A recent phenomenon in rural areas, particularly in the wet zone, is the rapid politicisation of rural organizations and informal groups. In some villages, for example, main caste groups identify themselves with national political parties, that is, United National Party and Sri Lanka Freedom Party (see Perera, 1985 and Perera & Tilakaratne, 1988). At another level, village formal organizations such as Gramodaya Manulayaya are being led by political patrons of the village. One advantage of such political patronage is that villagers could go be-


yond their village boundaries and obtain services and goods through political channels. Since the Sri Lankan bureaucracy is well politicized, often villagers have to depend on their political patrons to have access to state resources and services.

Socio-Political Mobilization and Rural Organizations

As discussed earlier, political power is emerging as the most important factor which determines the rank of groups and individuals in village and regional socio-economic hierarchies. Political power now does not concentrate in the hands of one particular group as it did in the past, but often cut across the main lines of group divisions in the village. Thus, individuals of different groups, for example, the land poor and landed groups, come together to make *ad hoc* political groups around one or two individuals who possess political power or, more precisely, who direct and close links with the regional and national political machine. But this is not to deny the continuing importance of the role of land-based patrons who still tend to dominate many spheres of the village community life.

In the wet zone and dry zone villages, leaders and patrons are still the members of the landed households who still keep their power and control over the land poor by recruiting them as tenants and wage workers. However, there are instances where land poor individuals have also become political leaders in their villages through their numerical dominance, educational attainments and popularity as social workers.

(To be continued)

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