

LANKA GUARDIAN

Vol. 12 No. 22 March 15, 1990
Price Rs. 7.50 Registered at the GPO,
Sri Lanka QD/79/NEWS/90

90 MINUTES WITH MAHATTAYA

— *Mervyn de Silva*



JAFFNA SCENE: *Peter Mares*

Dr. Pararasan Arulananthan

AGRICULTURE: A Non-debate in Local Research

— *Lalitha Gunawardena*

THONDAMAN: *Lakhan Lal Mehrotra*

David Gladstone

GUN CULTURE AND HUMAN RIGHTS



ENRICHING RURAL LIFESTYLE

Why there's sound of laughter in this rustic tobacco barn....

There is laughter and light banter amongst these rural damsels who are busy sorting out tobacco leaf in a barn. It is one of the hundreds of such barns spread out in the mid and upcountry intermediate zone where the arable land remains fallow during the off season.

Here, with careful nurturing, tobacco grows as a lucrative cash crop and the green leaves turn to gold... to the value of over Rs. 250 million or more annually, for perhaps 145,000 rural folk.

Tobacco is the industry that brings employment to the second highest number of people. And these people are the tobacco farm owners, the tobacco growers and those who work for them, on the land and in the barns.

For them, the tobacco leaf means meaningful work, a comfortable life and a secure future. A good enough reason for laughter.



Ceylon Tobacco Co. Ltd.

*Sharing and caring
for our land and her people.*



TRENDS

EMPLOYMENT FOR 4,000 GRADUATES

The Ministry of Higher Education hopes to find employment for 4,000 graduates who pass out this year, immediately on graduation. The ministry is now collecting information on available employment opportunities in the public and private sectors.

CALORY INSUFFICIENCY

With rice prices increasing, more Sri Lankan households had insufficient money to buy rice to meet calory requirements, an Agrarian Research and Training Institute (ARTI) report said.

According to ARTI calculations an increase in the price of wheat flour by 10 per cent sends the demand for rice up by one per cent. The price of wheat flour and bread had increased unprecenduntedly, pushing people more towards rice, but incomes were insufficient to buy more rice.

BRIEFLY . . .

● Mr Perumal's Citizens' Volunteer Force (CVF) is deserting police stations in the combined North East province leaving Tiger violence after the IPKF pull out, due to be completed by March 31. The CVF men were deployed at security posts alongside the Sri Lanka Police. But the Tigers (LTTE) have been violently opposed to the CVF from its inception.

The Tigers have branded them traitors.

● Families of Tamil militant groups opposed to the LTTE are fleeing to South India. About 3,000 men, women and children have already left the North and East for South India, informed sources said. The exodus began with the IPKF withdrawal.

● Winding up the eight hour debate on the motion to extend the Emergency by another month Foreign Minister and state Minister for Defence Ranjan Wijaratne told parliament that some trade unions and opposition parties were trying to instigate the people against the Government. Those who try to do so will come to grief, he warned.

Opposition members protested that the minister was threatening the Opposition. The Opposition's Vasudeva Nanayakkara (NLSSP) said that opposition parties were planning to mobilise the people to protest against the rising cost of living.

The minister said that the overall security situation in the country was fast improving and the Government hoped to lift the Emergency next month.

● Cozy bank jobs or other air-conditioned comforts were far from the thoughts and aspirations of Sri Lanka's youth, Professor G. L. Peiris, a member of the Presidential Commission on Youth Unrest, said during a lecture on "Preparing the Youth for the Twenty-First Century", sponsored by the Institute of Fundamental Studies.

"It is agricultural pursuits that fire their imagination. Small scale entrepreneurship interests them", the professor said.

If youth can be convinced that every encouragement would be given to them in their endeavours, the impetus to violence would be greatly reduced, he said. The professor also advocated a change in the Westminster system of government to provide for proportional representation for youth.

● A provincial council bid to wrest tourism from the control of the central government appears to have been scuttled following resistance

LANKA GUARDIAN

Vol. 12, No. 22 March 15, 1990

Price Rs. 7.50

Published fortnightly by
Lanka Guardian Publishing Co. Ltd.

No. 246, Union Place,
Colombo - 2.

Editor: Mervyn de Silva
Telephone: 547584

CONTENTS

News Background	2
Thondaman	9
The "boys" take over	11
Jaffna Revisited	13
Ethnic Identity - (3)	14
Class Relations in Agriculture	18
Manifesto for An	
Alternative Society - (2)	23
A Soviet Post In Colombo	24

Printed by Ananda Press
82/E, Wollendhal Street, Colombo 13.
Telephone: 435975

(Continued on page 1)

TIGERS — Waiting for peace, after their bitter 'Indian war'

NEWS
BACKGROUND

Mervyn de Silva

Excerpts from a 90 minute conversation with Gopala-swamy Mahendirajah better known as 'Mahattaya', the deputy leader of the LTTE, and a guerrilla commander regarded by IPKF top brass as a military 'target' quite as important as LTTE Supremo Velupillai Prabhakaran himself. Mahattaya was flanked by Dr. Anton Belasingham, the party ideologue, who did most of the interpretation for Mahattaya, and by (Yogarajnam) Dilip Yogi, General Secretary of the PFLT, the Tigers' political wing recently registered as a party.

As we went along, the formal interview became more and more a free and frank exchange.

Passages and comments which I understood to be confidences have been excluded, although only at one or two points in our discussion did Mahattaya himself say explicitly that the remarks were off the-record. However I have decided to keep out also some references to highly placed Indian and Sri Lankan personalities, references made in a lighter vein — and to 'facts' which can be regarded as sensitive from a security point of view, at the present time.

(Q) As I told you, my main interest is to take a look at the IPKF peace-keeping operation which is now being wound-up. Indian troops have been part of an international (UN) peace-keeping force in many countries (Korea, Gaza, Congo, Cyprus etc) but this is India's first exercise on this scale all on its own. I realise of course the complex nature of your armed struggle, in the sense that it is both political and military at the same time... but right now the focus of my interest is the Indian military intervention, albeit on the invitation of the Sri Lankan President and on the basis of a hurriedly drafted 'Accord', and how it has failed, and why.

(A) You are right, the totality of this problem, the political-military situation has to be studied. And let me say right away, it is only after this 'Indian war' that we have learnt the art of war, although our fighters did very well against the Sri Lankan army... you see we had to start all over again... the so-called "peace" didn't last too long, did it? So one day the word was spread that we were to begin fighting again, this time against the Indian army, and believe me, if you were there, you would have been amazed or amused. Suddenly somebody shouts 'the war' had started, and the 'boys' cycle away at a frantic speed or drop their bikes on the road and run... they go to the places where they had hidden their weapons. It really was

quite a shock to them, though we the leaders knew the Indian game... when I look back anyway and remember the sight of those lads 17 or 20 years old, getting off their bikes, screaming and shouting, and running in search of their hidden guns, I can laugh.

(Q) What did you mean when you said just now about knowing 'the Indian game'... that's the phrase you used...

(A) Well, we had information that R.A.W. was training several hundred, may be even a thousand or so, cadres of the ENDLF, which of course was against us, the LTTE... very much opposed to us... we had reports that large batches were being brought from South India and were moving into Vavuniya, Manner, Killinochchi, Batticaloa and so on. We were in the meantime talking to the Indians and handing over weapons... the ENDLF was of course formed in India by RAW.

(Q) I thought that the turning point was the suicide of some 15 'Tigers' who were in custody after being arrested for transporting illegal arms. President JR has recently said that his security advisers more or less compelled him to ask the Indians to hand them over to the Sri Lankan authorities...?

(A) As far as we were concerned they were in Indian custody, and at that stage Sri Lanka government could never have ordered India to do anything... In any case, R.A.W.'s operation showed India's real intentions... to put the 'quislings'

into place to represent the Tamil cause.

(Q) Why should India let you down... after all you were the first group to operate openly from Madras...?

(A) They could never completely rely on us... we were too independent... Prabhakaran and we, the LTTE fighters, would never compromise... the others

would play the Indian game... We were never opportunists nor self-seeking politicians.

(Q) May I return to my principal question... the war... what you called 'The Indian War'... you said it was after the IPKF came that you really learnt the art of war... could you please dwell on that since my main interest is the IPKF and

its evident military failure... though I am only an arm-chair expert I regard what you call your Indian war a topic of absorbing interest to any student of guerrilla warfare, ethnic insurgencies, the challenges to a conventional army, the problems that face interventionist armies and so on. In short, how did the world's fourth largest army fail?

VOICE OF TIGERS

PIRABAKARAN 'MAN OF THE DECADE'

The LATVICA GUARDIAN, the radical Sri Lanka's political journal, has paid over to Mr. Velupillai Prabhakaran the highest tribute by proclaiming him as 'THE MAN OF THE DECADE'. The journal, famous for its progressive views and its depth of analysis on the Tamil national question, has described Mr. Prabhakaran as the 'eye of the storm' and credited primary to the Tamil national liberation struggle since he led by the 'commanding personality' of the LTTE movement. The tribute paid to the LTTE leader is not a mere judgement but a compelling historical verdict, says the editor of the Guardian, Mr. Jeyaraj de Silva.

We give below extracts from the editorial commentary of the journal:

the Tamil armed revolt made its strongest Sri Lanka in the and ended. It ended, and

been an excellent leader as the island's army commander. Though a mere aside, it was no irrelevant jest.

praise of Prabhakaran as decade is no vain.

For the first time in Ceylon history, a separatist movement is trying to establish its capacity to act through the national arena.

The above item appeared on page 3 of the Feb. 1990 issue of the LTTE's official journal, as an introduction to several excerpts of a commentary on Prabhakaran, nominated the Man of the Decade, in the 1st. January 1990 number of the L. G. It was noticed in the MEDIA SCENE, a new column that made its appearance in the SUNDAY ISLAND 11/3.

(A) That last question can be answered rightaway. You will agree that their main target was Prabhakaran, to capture him, and along with that Jaffna. Well, you may not believe this story but I'll relate it anyway. Jaffna, which they expected to take in a few days, took the IPKF more than a month. In those weeks, we took some prisoners... we interrogated them... evidently the IPKF believed that Prabhakaran was still somewhere in Jaffna or thereabouts, in any case, the orders they were given were very interesting... Once they picked up some intelligence on Prabhakaran's whereabouts, they were to attack in force, accepting any number of casualties, kill the 25 'tigers' who guarded Prabhakaran, and take our leader prisoner. *They did not know that this was not possible... the whole world knew it... it is impossible to take Prabhakaran or any of us alive... because we have chosen death... death rather than capture... now if they didn't know that how can they fight us...?*

(Q) In other words, motivation....

(A) Yes but more than that... our resistance, our capacity to resist... the will of the 'Tigers'... and of course of the people...

(Q) Surely you cannot deny what we all saw... the people of Jaffna in the streets, cheering... smiling... greeting the IPKF...

(A) True... that's true... but for how long...? When they couldn't take effective control of Jaffna in the 3 or 4 days they had expected then the Indian attitude changed... getting more and more nasty... towards the people, who wouldn't cooperate, who wouldn't give them information, who wouldn't betray us... slowly, the people became hostile... the IPKF in turn turned hostile and brutal... What was the result... reprisals and atrocities... these things have been documented, not only by Tamil organisations but inter-

national agencies... the people saw no difference between the so-called saviours from India and the Sri Lankan forces... the people had an illusion... the illusion ended... the struggle against the 'occupying army' became a popular struggle... the links between the LTTE and the people were strengthened... now links were forged.

(Q) So, how would you sum up the mistakes of the IPKF from a purely military point of view?

(A) Before the 'Accord' you know very well that the only effective guerrilla group here was the LTTE. But the LTTE, those in Delhi knew, was NOT for India, not for following orders from India. So RAW built up other groups against the LTTE. Secondly, this became Indian policy the main plank of Indian policy, when the LTTE rejected the 'Accord'. The links between these 'quiescent' groups and the IPKF grew stronger and stronger; as these grew stronger, these pro-Indian 'stooge' groups were more and more alienated from the people, while the bonds between the LTTE and the people grew firmer, stronger.

From a military point of view, really from a political-military angle, the IPKF underestimated the resistance capacity and will of the LTTE, and its links with the people. In the 2½ year war, the unity of the people was strengthened and the bonds between the LTTE and the people were strengthened also... that is the achievement, shall I say, of the IPKF.

(Q) Considering the vast and varied experience of the Indian military and paramilitary or counter-insurgency units, it is difficult to understand such a psychology... any comments?

(A) May be because this was a 'foreign' people in a country not theirs...

(Q) Or big power complex....?

(A) That also... Big Army, Big country, small island, small guerrilla group, boys on bicycles...

(Q) Psychologically, India's Vietnam or Afghanistan...?

(A) There was no effort to win over the people. Jaffna was converted into a 'war zone'... the usual, army approach... military zone means everybody is an enemy. *The IPKF did not understand that war on LTTE meant war on the Tamil people.*

(Q) Didn't the IPKF attempt any 'Hearts and Minds' exercises?

(A) There was absolutely no attempt at what one may call propaganda... how could the IPKF? Even Amnesty International, I think, put civilian casualties at about 2,000 in the very first phase of the battle for Jaffna. The IPKF underestimated LTTE motivation, discipline, and mass base.

At this point, Yogi interrupted to add: *'And the Indians chose a bad ally, the EPRLF, which didn't have any popular appeal.'*

(Q) What finally would you say was the impact of this war, so tragic and costly in human, material terms?

(A) Their common suffering has united the people and strengthened the bonds between the LTTE and the masses. This will be vital in re-building our society. Also, caste-class barriers have broken down. This also will help in the reconstruction effort. All we need is peace.

(Q) In that case, you can allow free and fair polls and open multi-party politics.

(A) We are opposed to a one-party system. We are for pluralism.

(Q) Before I conclude, let me turn to politics in Colombo. You are negotiating very seriously with President Premadasa, Mr. Hameed etc, as well as the President's security advisers. Is the only basis for a convergence of interest, the mut-

ual desire to internalise the issue.

(A) We are both against foreign occupation armies. This is the common ground. We are both patriots. And this may have helped to build up the trust that has allowed us to negotiate seriously.

(Q) If you stand for a multi-party system, why did your men kill Amirthulingam and other TULF leaders.

(A) They were not killed because they held views different from the LTTE but probably because they were acting as agents of India, in short traitors, collaborators. In the battleground the LTTE kills those who betray the cause... in a national liberation struggle, the battle is everywhere, the traitor anywhere...

(Q) You say you'll permit free expression of political opinion, and your economic policy. If my impressions are correct, will be marked

by the austerity that accompanies reconstruction, scarce resources, mass hardship and suffering. I suppose you have anticipated my last question, the surrender of arms... what have you to say about that?

(A) Why do you use the word 'surrender'? The only question about arms is who uses it and for what purpose. We need arms just like your police here in the south need arms. There will have to be law and order, and of course security for the people.

I didn't expect any other answer because my own view, openly stated, was that I would think twice about it if I were in the position of a guerrilla leader. So I didn't ask them about the Carl Gustavs the LTTE seized from a bunch of nervous EPRF fighters who had received them as gifts from the IPKF. The LTTE knows that SL army today is not the army it fought in the early 80's.

The LTTE trio worked as a team - Mahattaya, the strong, silent type but quite relaxed; Anton Balasingham, whose fluency in Tamil surprised me, a very able interpreter in English, with just a trace of a deferential respect for Mahattaya, and Yogi the charming, convivial, talkative young man, the son one could meet in any disco in Colombo - of which there is not going to be any in Jaffna. I am afraid for a long time, discos or casinos or nightclubs.

I was delighted, professionally speaking, to accept an invitation to Jaffna but I somehow feel Mr. Velupillai Prabhakaran owes the *Island Guardian* a visit too. Not to mention 'India House'. It came as no surprise to me, by the way, that they were perfectly aware of my close relations with both High Commissioner Mani Dixit, and his First Secretary, Mr. Hardeep Puri who saw Prabhakaran in his hideout soon after the IPKF arrived.

N. VAITILINGAM & CO., LTD.

70, K. CYRIL C. PERERA MAWATHA,
COLOMBO 13.

DISTRIBUTORS OF "RIVER" BRAND GALVANISED SHEETS

**HARDWARE MERCHANTS & MANUFACTURERS OF
BARBED WIRE, WOODSCREWS & WIRENAILS.**

Office
Phones: Sales Department

33143-5, 27669, 28842

Exodus and moves in Trinco

To Orissa, not Tamilnadu, this time for new refugees, including EPRLF chief Minister Perumal, family and officials, and party boss K. Padmanabha, Trincomalee is being evacuated by key pro-Indian group cadres and hundreds of supporters, while the SL army has moved into the port, and 'Tigers' encircle the town.

A shipload of 3,000 TNA cadres have been refused entry at Madras on the orders of DMK Chief Minister of Tamilnadu, Mr. Karunanidhi, according to Foreign Minister Rajiv Wijeratne. That's not all. An EPRLF spokesman in Madras has telephoned the press in Delhi to protest against the action of the Madras authorities who refused 206 Tamil Children, 138 women and 352 men from Trinco to land in the Tamilnadu. The EPRLF spokesman "expressed surprise" at the stand taken by Mr. Karunanidhi, the AFP report said. The spokesman had added that the ship, the *Harshvardhana* belonged to the state-run Shipping Corporation of India. A second "refugee ship" of 550 Tamils also from Trinco had already left for Tamilnadu, the spokesman complained bitterly.

The UDI move by Chief Minister Vardaraja Perumal and the new 'exodus' have brought sharp divergent responses from the political parties and leading personalities in Tamilnadu, a significant change from the days of MGR as State boss, and Rajiv as prime minister.

According to Mr. Wijeratne, the 3000 TNA cadres included about 750 EPRLF members. Mr. Karunanidhi, said an obviously appreciative Mr. Wijeratne, had kept the word he had given in January when the Sri Lankan Minister had met him in Madras. The Indian High Commis-

sioner Mr. Mehrotra has met Mr. Karunanidhi, an obvious effort to coordinate Delhi-Madras policy. The DMK boss, however is open to attack for

his pro-LTTE policy from the AIDMK which did so well at the parliamentary polls. The AIDMK is an ally of the Congress (I).

HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD

A report presented to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights in Geneva by the Canada-Asia Group.

Following is the concluding paragraph.

"1989 has seen a drastic deterioration of civil conditions and a frightening increase in human rights abuses. Civil conflict and military activity have been extended to all parts of country. Wide-scale slaughter of political opponents, and the practice of arbitrary arrest, disappearances, extra-judicial killings have continued unabated, and reached unprecedented levels. 1989 has only seen a proliferation of those committing such abuses. Human rights workers have found themselves increasingly at risk from the range of militant organizations and the security forces. The State of Emergency, lifted in January 1989, was reimposed by mid-year. In an editorial comment, the *LANKA GUARDIAN* observed.

"The State of Emergency is no longer a law or a collection of restrictive regulations. It is no more a temporary measure or an aberration. It is the norm. Emergency is the permanent feature, a way of life, the national condition."

The fundamental conditions underlying the conflicts have not been addressed. Economic conditions have deteriorated and continue to give rise to serious discontent, particularly among youth. Democratic Institutions have lost the capacity to provide stability or exercise leadership. An all party conference convened in October 1989, called in response to mounting demands for the resignation of the President, failed to achieve any political consensus or prospect for resolution of the social crisis. Talks between the Sri Lankan authorities and the LTTE have yet to address all of the conflicts in the North. While the Indian Peace Keeping Force has been the source of numerous human rights violations and is scheduled to withdraw within the short term, their imminent departure has given rise to serious misgivings about renewed conflict among the militant Tamil organizations and with the Sri Lankan State.

Almost a decade of communal violence has produced physical and social wounds of terrible magnitude. In an appeal issue in July 1989, one Sri Lankan NGO described the situation as "a struggle for our survival."

Beat not the racial drum — leave the beaten track — Hameed

Mr. Vitharaja Perumal's so-called U.D.I. produced a national consensus bordering on an all-party accord and yet sundered Sinhala (opposition) unity. At the party's annual sessions, MPP leader hit out at the SLFP for 'sabotaging' MEP moves for a united Opposition by holding 'secret talks' with the EPRLF. Mr. Anura Bandaranaike, addressing a Rotary meeting admitted holding talks in the jungle, but with the LTTE, before the elections.

Mrs. Bandaranaike, SLFP and Opposition leader branded Mr. Perumal's as "a treasonous and outrageous act" and called on the government to prosecute the EPRLF leader and his supporters under Article 157 A of the Constitution.

The P.P.T., the newly created political wing of the LTTE, denounced it as "fraudulent, ludicrous and irresponsible" act by "quiescent groups" (EPRLF and ENDLF) which had been installed in office by the IPK, and in no way represented the Tamil people.

The NSSP General Secretary, Dr. Vikramabahu Karunaratne said that though his (Trotskyist) party accepted the Tamil right to self-determination, the EPRLF's move "played into the hands of imperialism and neo-colonialism".

Meanwhile, the SLFP parliamentary group, reacting strongly to the MLP leader's onslaught, described it as "irresponsible".

It was left to Higher Education Minister Shaul Hameed, the government's top negotiator on the Tamil issue to place the question in the perspective of practical parliamentary politics. He reminded both parties, the UNP and SLFP, had at various times resorted to the communal cry, but in future no party

could govern the country unless it abandoned the communal war drum. It was time to

leave "the beaten track" of post-independence communal policies, he said.

J.V.P. : militarily dead, politically alive — top JVP'er in cell

A 39 year old JVP provincial leader, who was important enough for the party to organise a successful rescue operation to pull him out of a jail in the south, was interviewed in his cell at Kuliyaipitiya by Mohan Samarasingha of the 'Daily News'. Some excerpts:

He wasn't recruited to the JVP, nor was he swept up by the revolutionary illusions socio-political movements always promise. He seemed too intelligent for that.

"Believe me there definitely was a popular movement in this country towards a revolution. The right time did come and I, like hundreds of others, joined purely with the intention of making a difference for my people and my country," he said.

He is convinced on the issue that he, and his contemporary revolutionaries, had no personal objectives in this war that may have left many thousand men, women and children dead or missing.

"Ours was a struggle to achieve something for this country. At a time now we're talking about rehabilitation, the rehabilitation must take this factor into account. They must realise that our struggle, though destructive, was for change. In my opinion, a lot of the rehabilitation will have to do with changing ourselves, our attitudes, the way we do things and our social principles."

Is rehabilitation really taking place? I ask. "Yes, my living today alone is proof of rehabilitation taking place," he said.

He is of the opinion that the JVP was never a cohesive, united, well-oiled machine; for if it was, today's results would have been different.

"As a central committee member, we were the decision makers and we were also responsible for implementation. But with the creation of an armed, fighting unit within the party, the traditional leaders lost some of their authority. Things began to happen without our knowledge.

For example, he said he was not aware of and did not approve of the decision to attack the families of servicemen. According to him, the armed units had got corrupt and they were not listening to and taking orders from the party decision makers.

"Nothing has happened here that we can laugh about. But it hasn't been that bad that we need to cry either. Look, we succeeded in opening the nation's eyes, didn't we? We made the authorities come to grips with reality.

But you do regret some of it? I asked. "People who shared in my dreams, those who ate and slept with me... they are all dead. I regret that after some years of struggle, we had to end this way."

Has it all ended then? I asked. "At current rate of neutralising the JVP, the party is finished as an armed group. But politically, perhaps it can still pick up the pieces.

Gun Culture – State Dept on Sri Lanka

Ironically, it is Sri Lanka, with its strong tradition of popular government, that has seen its democratic institutions most severely tested in recent years. Tamil militants have battled the Sri Lankan and Indian armies for a separate state. A Sinhalese revolutionary group, the JVP, has tried to topple Sri Lanka's elected government by intimidation and murder. Both movements found support among disenfranchised and disadvantaged young people of both major ethnic groups.

Sri Lanka's twin insurgencies left over 8,500 dead in 1989 alone. Commerce ground to a halt. Schools closed. Violence became a fact of daily life. Sri Lankan security forces, the Indian army, Tamil separatists and the JVP all contributed to Sri Lanka's tragic cycle of human rights abuse. In short, Sri Lanka, once a model democracy, threatened descent into a "gun culture," where authority derived not from the people but from the barrel of automatic weapon.

The picture, however, is not entirely dark. There have been recent welcome developments. The major Tamil militant group — the Tigers — has formed a party and said it will participate in elections. The JVP, reeling under a government crack-down, poses a much diminished threat to public order. Indian troops are set to depart Sri Lanka, by the end of March, thus removing a major bone of Indo-Sri Lankan contention and a divisive domestic issue in Sri Lanka. Violence has declined nation-wide. Commerce is limping back to normal. Schools have reopened. The Sri Lankan Government, in concert with IMF and World Bank, has resumed critical economic reform,

Much, however, remains to be done. While the Sri Lankan Government recently lifted certain widely criticized parts of

its emergency regulations, human rights abuses continue — most notably killings by vigilante groups credibly linked to the security forces. We firmly believe that those charged with discharging the law have a special obligation to uphold it. We have therefore urged the Government to stop vigilante killings and bring their perpetrators to justice. Much work remains to be done, too, in resolving the country's lingering ethnic dispute by addressing legitimate minority grievances within the framework of a unified and sovereign Sri Lanka.

Plainly Sri Lanka's daunting problems must first be addressed by Sri Lankans themselves. A political solution could prove fragile without sustained economic growth and the opportunities it will provide for Sri Lankan youth of all communities. Here the United States and Sri Lanka's other friends can play an important role by generously supporting Sri Lankan economic development. Our own assistance program, for instance, stresses improving agricultural production and private sector development: key preconditions to economic growth and the generation of new jobs for young Sri Lankans. Our economic support — and that of other donors — will prove critical if Sri Lankan youth is not to repudiate their country's democratic tradition and resort, tragically, to the simpler but deadly solutions of a "gun culture."

"extra-judicial killings" here, and direct references to the unsolved murder of Richard de Zoysa. "There are a lot of people in this country and colleagues in Congress who are not aware of the situation in Sri Lanka. But if they were aware, they would be appalled," said Congressman Solarz.

"I hold no brief for the JVP. Obviously they are a bunch of Teutonskyite thugs so far as I can determine. But you can't deal with this problem by resorting to vigilantism. There comes a time when considerations of morality transcend the considerations of diplomacy," he said. Mr. Kelly advised against immediate suspension of aid when "we are attempting to use persuasion".

Asked whether the vigilantes were "organised, directed or controlled" by the government, Kelly said "I would certainly like to think and believe that they are not organised and instigated in any significant way by the government".

BRIEFLY . . .

(Continued from page 1)

by the Ministry of Tourism and the Tourist Board. The Western Province Council passed a statute to set up its own tourist board, but the total control of tourism in the Western Province asked for is not likely to be devolved on it.

According to Tourism Ministry sources the powers sought by the Provincial Council statute would have "nullified" the Ceylon Tourist Board.

US AID

SOLARZ LASHES OUT

The State Dept's Asst. Secretary for the region, Mr. John Kelly, advised the Congressional Committee from cutting off aid to Sri Lanka in response to a toughly worded statement by Chairman Stephen Solarz on

Man for All Seasons

Lakhan Lal Mehrotra

Mr. Thondaman's life, as you all know, has been dedicated in a very large measure to the welfare of thousands of people who had been uprooted from their homeland and had made Sri Lanka their home under the most adverse circumstances. Known as 'Indian Tamils', the saga of the story of their freedom is aptly titled as 'OUT OF BONDAGE'. Its release by His Excellency the High Commissioner for the United Kingdom is not only symptomatic of the odyssey of the Tamils of Sri Lanka from bondage into freedom but of Great Britain itself from the age of imperialism into the age of enlightenment.

Mr. Thondaman's life is, in a way, the distilled essence of contemporary Sri Lanka. Given its intricacies and complexities, recounting the story of the life of Mr. Thondaman is no easy task. I must compliment Mr. Sabaratnam, therefore, for his magnificent success in doing justice to a very difficult task.

As I look at the multi-faceted personality of Mr. Thondaman, I find him a man for all seasons. It is hard to focus on any one facet of his life to the exclusion of others. In his political incarnation, he is a trade unionist par excellence, indisputably the greatest leader of Indian Tamils in Sri Lanka, a key contributor in the political life of Tamils on the one hand and of Sri Lanka as a whole on the other and, therefore, verily a politician of national stature; quite aptly a senior Minister in the Government of Sri Lanka and an unflinching architect of Indo-Sri Lankan relations. But he is a rare politician, one so much of the Gandhian vintage, so that his idealism does not interfere with his realism, his down-to-earth approach as much to politics as to life itself.

In dealing with the story of his life, we are not dealing with a mere personality. We are dealing with a phenomenon.

It was half a century ago that Mr. Thondaman entered politics when he assumed charge of the Gampola District Committee of the Ceylon Indian Congress. Since then, Mr. Thondaman and Gampola have been synonymous with each other. It is the mark of the true leader in him that his constituency has travelled along with him every step of his political career. Under his leadership the Ceylon Workers Congress remains unrivalled in its struggle for the rights of plantation labour. The community which launched him into political life must indeed be proud of its leader. After decades of struggle in search of equality, dignity and justice in Sri Lanka, this community was finally rewarded with the Citizenship Act last November. The credit for that achievement must go to Mr. Thondaman as much as to the people whose cause he championed, and to the Government that made it possible.

In 1946, workers under Mr. Thondaman's leadership at the Knivesmere Estate decided not to vacate the land from which they were being displaced. As they could not put up a bail of Rs. 1000/- each, a considerable fortune, to escape imprisonment, Mr. Thondaman mortgaged his own estate to pay for them all. The noblest of traits in a leader is his capacity to sacrifice for his cause. By that standard alone Mr. Thondaman ranks indeed amongst the noblest of them.

Apart from the spirit of sacrifice, courage is the hallmark of a leader. It has never been found wanting in Mr. Thondaman. In 1984, lo and behold, Mr. Thondaman led a strike against his own Government. Only a man with the deepest

"Thondaman's role in this incident will go down in history. He not only helped Sri Lanka to avoid a war but had also proved that compromise and skillful negotiation are the basis of his character. That had been his forte: the secret of his success; the tool he employed effectively to win deliverance to his people." — T. Sabaratnam

courage of conviction could have done that. In 1985, when this island had been witness to some of the worst scenes of violence and conflict, Mr. Thondaman launched a prayer campaign as part of his political strategy. Verily, if Mahatma Gandhi were alive he would have felt proud of Mr. Thondaman's example.

Today the people of Sri Lanka look upon Mr. Thondaman not only as a leader of Indian Tamils but as an esteemed champion of the down-trodden, the exploited and the oppressed throughout the land. A stalwart in the cause of inter-ethnic harmony, he has been a Sinhala in the midst of Tamils and a Tamil in the midst of Sinhalese in Sri Lanka.

I have known Mr. Thondaman for less than a year now. During this short period I had numerous occasions to interact with him and to profit from his fathomless knowledge, experience, wisdom and wit. Last July, as his biography will tell you, when Indo-Sri Lankan relations were passing through a critical phase and when tempers were running high, Mr. Thondaman's was a voice of sanity and restraint and he made significant contributions to put them on an even keel once again. His contribution towards building bridges between India and Sri Lanka in recent times knows no parallels.

While all this is very impressive, what draws me closer to Mr. Thondaman is the spiritual spark in him which speaks through all his work. Always rooted to the soil and a worshipper of *Davidrasaranyana*, the Lord of the down-trodden, he somehow recalls to my mind Bhagavad Gita's definition of *Sthitaprajna*:

[Continued on page 19.]

The British Connection

David Gladstone

I count it a rare privilege that I, as an Englishman, representative of the former colonial power, should be invited 42 years after Independence to release this biography of a man whose early impressions of life were formed during the period of British Rule.

As the biographer most eloquently recounts, much water has flowed under the bridge since those not so far off days. But I like to think, and this ceremony confirms, that the British connection remains at least one of the cornerstones of Sri Lanka's heritage.

This not in any way intended to distract attention from the more evident purpose of this occasion, which is to celebrate the Indian connection. In fact the Sri Lanka Indian Community Council made perhaps as more felicitous choice of guest this evening than they realised. Because I am not only British and a close friend of this country to which I am accredited, I happen also to be Indian-born and bred. And not just any old Indian, but a Bengali, from that land in which according to legend Prince Vijaya once lived.

Those who believe in re-birth should have no difficulty in believing that I might once have belonged to that select band that accompanied Prince Vijaya on his voyage of discovery to the shores of Lanka. Those who do not may still be prepared to accept that individuals may be fated to complete full circles or cycles within a single life time. Certainly I can perceive the hand of destiny in my own long and roundabout journey from Calcutta to Colombo.

In similar vein I can detect circular, or cyclical, motions in the development of nations.

History does not repeat itself exactly, but it is not shy of imposing similar situations on peoples or groups of peoples at widely spaced intervals in their evolution. The wider context changes but the underlying challenges have enough common features to make it worthwhile studying what happened last time round.

Ever since Sri Lanka and India arrived at their present resting places after their waltz across the Indian Ocean, their destinies have been closely intertwined. Separated by a stretch of water of just the same width as the English Channel, they have felt all the repulsions and attractions endemic in close neighbourliness. Like England and France they have loved and hated by turns; fought and made peace; traded goods both commercial and cultural; watched and learned from each other; inter-married and migrated.

As an Englishman used to looking across the Channel at the continental landmass of France, I find myself in instinctive sympathy with Sri Lankans facing the sub-Continent of India across the Palk Straits. My own response to the age-old challenge represented by our great neighbour has been to become partly French. All of us in both our countries are in the process of transmogrifying into a new human species, the European. I shall be surprised if, as time goes on, Indians, Sri Lankans and the other peoples of the sub-Continent do not begin to forge a new analogous identity. Anthropologists at some far-off date in the future will be vying for the honour of discovering the remains of the first SAARC man.

In the meantime Mr T Saharatnam has identified a proto-SAARC being to whom he has

given the name Thonda man. It is a fine specimen of the Trans-Palk breed he has unearthed from the great migratory periods of the mid-twentieth century. I am deeply indebted to Mr Saharatnam's study of this awe inspiring creature for some rare insights not only into the nature of the man but also into the turbulent conditions prevailing at the time he flourished. Truly, the scale of the challenges he faced, and the manner in which he met them, were heroic.

But Mr Saharatnam also manages to portray his subject as recognisably human. At one point he writes, and I quote: "Thondaman once said: 'I normally read the first section and the last section in any book. Then I know what is in the middle'." Well, I too have been known to do that. But in this case I was impelled to read the middle too, since I had no way of dividing its drift from the outer sections.

It is a fascinating and inspiring story and having read it I am the more conscious that it has been a privilege not just to be asked to release this book but, even more, to have known its subject.

It has also been pleasure and an inspiration. A pleasure not least because whenever I have called on Mr Thondaman he has offered me some of the produce of his rural industries, in particular yoghurt. An inspiration because of the quality his career exhibits above all, namely courage. It is a quality that is evidence on every page of his biography. It is a quality demanded of political leaders in all countries at all times, and Sri Lanka has been lucky indeed to have had this political leader helping to guide her people through the stresses and strains of the past 50 years.

The 'boys' take over

Peter Mares*

The road from the airbase is rutted and muddy. Brown puddles show last week's rain. This is the growing season in the harsh, dry north of Sri Lanka; plots of young, broad-leaved tobacco plants are interspersed with patches of beet-root, tomatoes, chilli.

After the tanks and checkpoints at the airbase, the villages give the first sign of seven years of fighting. Pockmarked walls and fallen roofs chart the course of two advancing armies; first the Sri Lankan and then the Indian Peace Keeping Force.

Peace is not what the IPKF brought to the Tamils of Jaffna. After negotiations with the LTTE broke down in October 1987, Indian troops moved to take the town.

"Hopes were high when the Indians first came" recalls a local doctor who has been through it all. With 50 million Tamils in the south Indian state of Tamil Nadu — the traditional source of weapons in the struggle for an independent Tamil Eelam — the people of Jaffna believed the IPKF would give them protection and an efficient administration. "Instead" says the doctor "they didn't even try to differentiate between the militants (the Tamil Tigers) and the general population. It was an army of occupation, not a peacekeeping force".

On the day after the IPKF took Jaffna town, a colleague from the hospital wanted to attend to his patients. Dressed in collar and tie, a stethoscope dangling around his neck, he approached the hospital entrance with his hands high. Indian troops shot him down.

It is hardly surprising that the people of Jaffna are genuinely relieved to have swapped

the IPKF for the 'boy soldiers' of the LTTE. Indian troops are now only at air and naval bases on the very tip of the Jaffna peninsula — and they are due to be gone from there by the end of March. This time, it seems, they are really going to leave.

I happen to be in Jaffna for Maha Sivarathri, the night when siya the soul, is united with Siya the almighty. It is a time for Hindus to stay awake all night, spending much of it in devotional prayers at the temple. Under the IPKF, celebrating Maha Sivarathri would have been difficult; most people were inside with the shutters down by six o'clock to stay clear of any fighting and to avoid abuse by the Indian soldiers. "Now things are getting back to normal" a school teacher tells me "People are out after 9 o'clock, and there's even buses arriving from out of town at 10 p.m." Every morning we used to find bodies by the roadside" says the doctor. "Since the Tigers took over, the killing has stopped."

Still Jaffna remains tense. The cheerful call of 'hello mister, where you from?' comes much less frequently than I expect after travelling in other parts of South Asia. The people happy to talk are those who ardently support the LTTE. They tend overwhelmingly, to be young men.

"Boys 13, 14, are leaving school to join with the 'Tigers'" says a local churchman. (No one I speak to in Jaffna wants to be quoted by name.) Why do they join? "For the adventure" he says. They are not forced to go? "No" he replies "not now".

At the crossroads, with road-blocks only recently pulled aside, Tamil Tiger guerrillas stand, or sit, or stent. Carrying their machine guns casually, and dressed in jungle fatigues, it is easy to see why they are known

as 'the boys'. Of the guerrillas I see in town (and their presence is low key), few are over 20. Many are clearly well under 18. I see some young women too, equally at ease with the weapons slung across their shoulders, the ammunition and grenades strapped to their chests.

The doctor tells me that with the Tigers, and with rival Tamil militant groups, it has become a case of "loyalty to the leader not loyalty to the cause".

"How can I be happy when I see these small boys fighting for our independence?" he asks. "Nevertheless" he adds "the dignity of our race — a dignity which was so beaten up and humiliated — that dignity has been restored to us by the violent conflict. It could not have been achieved by peaceful means."

Despite their youth, the LTTE cadres are well disciplined. "They are supremely confident" explains the doctor. "They know that they have the people's support. The IPKF (The Tiger's rivals who ruled the north-east province with the backing of the IPKF) couldn't control law and order. They were so nervous that they always had their finger on the trigger. The Tamil Tigers don't need to do that. They are polite, people can move about freely, and they take a serious view of law and order. There's no bad behaviour with girls and women."

Recently, the Tigers caught some young people using drugs. They shaved their heads and made them stand in the marketplace as an example to the rest of the town. The LTTE are the effective law enforcers. The Sri Lankan police only come to Jaffna to buy provisions otherwise they stay held up in the old Dutch fort in the heart of the city.

* Chief Commentator, Asian Affairs, Australian Broadcasting Corporation

"The Tigers know how to win the support of the common people" says the doctor. If they rob someone, it's a millionaire, not ordinary shop-keepers. And when they eliminate people, they do it quietly. They have finesse."

There are rumours that the LTTE are taxing the local population. It is hard to find out exact figures. An academic tells me how they appropriated a house belonging to his brother-in-law, who is overcast. They also commandeered vehicles as the need arises. "But they give them back, even if a little scratched or damaged". A relief worker tells me that the local business community is happy enough to pay the Tigers' taxes. "Their central concern is to have some stability and some peace" he says. "And anyway, before they were forced to pay two sets of taxes. One to the Tigers out in the jungles, and another to the cadres of the EPRLF and their allies, who were running the North-east Provincial Council. At least now there is only one militant group demanding money."

Set up under the Indo Sri Lankan accord of 1987, the provincial council still exists, but only in name. Its Chief Minister, Mr. Perumal, cannot set foot in the north. In fact he is not safe outside the eastern port town of Trincomalee, where with the aid of the IPKF, Mr. Perumal's EPRLF are still in control. When the Indians pull out of Trinco on or March 15th, Mr. Perumal will have to go with them.

In Colombo, the LTTE's theoretician and chief negotiator Mr. Anton Balasingham tells me: "If the Northeast Provincial Council is dissolved, then we can agree to a ceasefire with rival Tamil groups. In fresh elections to the council all groups will be able to campaign freely".

In Jaffna, the reality looks a little different. Says the churchman: "If elections are held

soon after the Indians complete their withdrawal, then it won't be a free and fair election. Unless the LTTE surrender their weapons, how can people feel free to speak their mind, to meet and to debate and discuss?"

Next: Weapons

Man for All...

(Continued from page 19)

Dukkheshevanduvighnomanasah
sukheshu vigataspruh

Vectarangabhasyakrodhab
sthitadhirmaniruchyate

By sorrows unruffled

In moments of joy of
desire free

Free too of attachment, fear
and anger

Of mind stable a sage is
called.

Such a muni, such a sage,
is Mr. Thondaman. I would
like, therefore, to have the privilege of calling him Mahamuni Thondaman.

National Tree

*The flowers of the ironwood
Last for a day.*

Opening at sunrise

They fall when the sun goes down.

Their little white flags

With yellow hearts

Flutter in a state

Of carnival and terror.

Yesterday's petals

Lie beheaded on the ground.

There are buds in hiding:

Tomorrow these will explode.

Above the low scrub jungle

Seething in hot air

The young leaves turn

Transparently blood-red.

A king cobra demon

Stays hoodwinking on top.

The ironwood grows high

Exuding festivity.

— Richard Murphy

Written in Kandy after a visit to Sam Popham's
arboretum near Dambulla in January 1989.

'Freedom of Expression is a Luxury'

Dr. Pararasan Arulanantham

A conspiracy of fear surrounds anyone intending to visit Jaffna. 'Why do you want to go to Jaffna?' enquired a surprised friend sipping whisky at a Tamil get-together in England. 'You will be heart-broken when you see the place' warned my brother. Yet the emotional need to visit one's homeland is strong. Attachment to the soil has been the basis of the freedom struggle. Three days before departure a telephone call from Colombo warned me that it may not be possible to proceed to Jaffna. Two days before flying, a BBC World Service report described Sri Lanka as the new 'killing fields'. There was an 18 hour delay at Gatwick and uncertainty prevailed right up to my arrival in Colombo.

I was able to reach Jaffna within a day of my arrival in Colombo. The flight by Helitours, operated by the Sri Lanka Air Force, was courteous and efficient, at a cost of Rs 1250. Signs in English and Hindi at the Palaly Airport announced the New Order. Hiring cars, mostly the old familiar Austins, charged Rs 350 for transport to Jaffna as there was a petrol shortage. The cars had to wind through lanes with large puddles of water as the main road had been blocked off by the army in the interest of defence. The Indian presence everywhere added a new dimension to the landscape. Yet it was great to be in Jaffna, and to feel a part of the place — a wonderful sense of belonging which had eluded me for the past six years.

'Change and decay in all around I see' were words from a familiar hymn which came recurrently to my mind as I went around. Added to the decay and neglect seen in Colombo, destruction was evident in Jaffna. The old familiar sites such as the Town Hall

and Veerasingham Hall were all gone. Buildings had been destroyed, roads damaged and there were multiple road blocks and sentry points. There was general insecurity of life which the people have accepted with courage or fatalism. Yet there was also a sense of hope that the conflict would cease and peace return.

Conditions of life were very basic. There were no telephones working except the internal lines of Jaffna Hospital. The few links with Colombo were out of order during my stay. Messages were carried very rapidly by word of mouth. There were long and frequent power cuts and one night in two was spent in darkness. There was an unofficial curfew in operation, imposed by one of the groups apparently to prevent thefts by another group. Petrol was in short supply and sold at Rs 30 per bottle. Gallons are a thing of the past! People with cars use them sparingly or not at all. Bicycles were the most popular means of transport for everyone — boys, girls, men and even women in sarees. The trains ran for a day but the service was interrupted, believed to be due to sabotage by competing bus operators. The TV was a popular source of entertainment when electricity was on. Both Sri Lankan and Indian programmes could be picked up — a battle for the minds! Many of the poorer people looked undernourished reflecting the high cost of living. The middle-class have sent their children abroad and some feel proud about it. There was still some fear that children may be abducted and forced to join the Tamil National Army. Despite the many difficulties, the resilience of the ordinary man is remarkable. He has learned to adapt to all the limitations.

I visited Jaffna Hospital where I once worked. The hospital was one place which looked better than it did some years ago. The damaged wards have been repaired and decorated. The floor has been replaced by terrazzo flooring. There is a new multi-storey building under construction. There are staff shortages but the dedication of the staff is commendable. I paused for a few minutes at the site where 21 hospital employees and 50 others were gunned down inside the hospital by the 'Peace Keepers' in October 1987. Not a single militant was killed. This massacre, so cleverly concealed from the world at large, is unpardonable even in a war. Even Hanuman and his warriors would have hidden their heads in shame at this act of inhumanity.

I had a taste of danger during a visit to Kilinochchi. I was at Karuna Nilayam, a home for orphans and destitute children, when a group of militants, collaborating with the Indians, opened machine gun fire only a few yards away from us. It went on for two minutes, there was a pause, and then a second round of firing. It was very frightening but others in the area had got used to it. The Warden of the institution stepped out and appealed to the militants to stop shooting as the children were terrified. Some of them had been orphaned by the conflict. I salute those who work amidst dangers. On the way back there was a dead body on the road. Then a convoy of Indian Army vehicles rolled on, obviously unconcerned about the shooting or killing.

People were afraid to talk openly. 'Words cannot describe the 1987 IPKF operations. Shells were falling everywhere. Food and basic provisions were in

(Continued on page 16)

Tamils and Tamilnadu:

Izeth Hussain

It is not sufficiently known that the Sri Lankan Tamils played what has been called "a revival role" in the cultural revival that began in South India in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Arumugam Navalar (1822-1897) spent several years in Madras writing, lecturing, and publishing, while C. W. Panickeram Pillai (1855-1906) and several others spent long periods in Madras. They also commuted between Madras and Jaffna, in promoting educational and cultural activities. It has been written that "Such close links between Madras and Jaffna was something new". It appears that the "Jaffna school" of writers dominated the literary scene in Madras. Two important Tamil journals which flourished during the period 1854-1923 had notable contributions from Sri Lankan Tamil scholars including Arunachalam and Ponnumbalam. Panickeram Pillai was a leading member of the South Indian Tamil Association formed in 1899 and the Dravidian Languages Association formed in 1899.

It appears that the Tamil cultural revival was inspired by the Indian Cultural Renaissance which began in Bengal in the early decades of the nineteenth century and lost momentum around 1918, as apparently did the Tamil revival, a detail worth noting as it seems to illustrate the "unity in diversity" of India. But there was a notable difference between the two movements in south and north India. In the north "modernizers" such as Mahasudhan Dutta, who became a Christian, Raja Ram-mohan Roy and later Tagore, as well as the so-called "traditionalists" like the great Bengali novelist Bankim Chandra Chatterjee and Vivekananda, challenged Hindu orthodoxy and even dared the prospect of social and religious ostracism. In the south the cultural revival

was rather elitist and traditional. Bharata Natyam and Carnatic music were regarded as "ancient and divine arts", and the very notion of innovation was anathema. Consequently the cultural revival in the south, as well as in Jaffna, represented basically a recovery of pride to Tamil identity, and did not have the political impact that the cultural renaissance had in the north.

The politicalisation of Tamil culture came later, a forerunner of what was to follow being provided by the Jaffna Youth Congress which was active in the 1920's and 1930's advocating, among other things, education in the mother tongue. Eminent South Indian Scholars participated in the activities of the Jaffna Youth Congress. Later there was the figure of Rev N. S. Thaninayagam who internationalized the Tamil cultural movement, the political implications of which were to be seen in the 1974 Jaffna meeting of the International Association of Tamil Research when nine Tamils were accidentally electrocuted. This paper will not go into further details about the mix of Tamil culture and politics. What has to be noted particularly is the significance of the cultural symbiosis between Jaffna and Madras during the time of Arumugam Navalar and afterwards. It is appropriate to regard the Tamil Nadu and Sri Lankan Tamils as distinct ethnic groups, but they do share a solid cultural substratum and it is to be expected that because of the communications revolution of our time the cultural linkages between the two groups will endure and sometimes have political implications in the future.

After the formation of the D.M.K., a political nexus was established between Madras and Jaffna. The Federal Party was formed in 1949, and claimed

not long afterwards that the Sri Lankan Tamils constituted a nation by themselves. The Tamil United Liberation Front was formed in 1972, and in 1976 came to adopt the Vad-damaruchi resolution advocating a separate state of Eelam. The overt political contacts between the FP, TULF and the D.M.K. are too well known to require detailed treatment here. The remaining part of the present section of this paper will deal with the interaction between the Tamil militants and Tamil Nadu, but something must be said before proceeding further about covert political contacts. Superintendent of Police, R. Sunderalingam, reported to the Inspector General of Police in 1970 that after the coming to power of the D.M.K. in 1967 there had been a free flow of publications through the smuggling centre of Valvettiturai to Jaffna, advocating Tamil Nadu political ideals. The name of the smuggler, Thangavaliyal, had in the previous week been made available for the Tamil Unity Conference. Sunderalingam reported further that TULF Leader Amirthalingam had gone to Tamil Nadu to participate in D.M.K. election meetings. The political contacts therefore were more extensive than meetings and courtesies between high-level politicians.

The point of importance in trying to understand the Tamil militants' interaction with people in Tamil Nadu is that they are ethnically distinct. It is noteworthy that even the Tamil plantation workers, regarded as Indians in Sri Lanka though technically stateless, have been regarded as aliens in Tamil Nadu, not as long-lost sons who should be re-absorbed into the motherland. It is known that the repatriates under the Sirima-Shastri Pact of 1964 have been given rather shabby treatment. Some months after the July 1983 riots, one of them is reported to have said "It is better to die in Sri Lanka than starve in India". More recently the leader of plan-

tation workers. Cabinet Minister S. Thondaman, said that the repatriates "have now been reduced to destitution."

It is hardly to be expected that two ethnic groups will have an identity of interest all the time. There certainly is a commitment to the Sri Lankan Tamils, but there are limits to that commitment as shown by notably ambivalent attitudes to the militants. It might appear, after the Tamil Nadu uproar about the 1983 riots and periodic outbursts thereafter, that the commitment is total. It might even appear that the Tamil militants are regarded as above the law. In May 1982 Prabhakaran of the LTTE shot at his political antagonist, PLOTE leader Umma Maheswaran, at Pondicherry in Madras. The Sri Lankan Government sent an emissary to have him extradited over the murder of former Jaffna Mayor Alfred Duraiappah, but without avail no action was taken against him. Even more shocking was the Meenambakkam bomb explosion which in August 1984 demolished the Madras airport lounge, killing 29 of whom 24 were Sri Lankans. Several suspects were arrested but were released on bail, to conveniently disappear thereafter and no-one was brought to book. Apparently the Tamil Nadu authorities could not have gone further in showing their commitment to the militants.

But a series of incidents showed that the Tamil Nadu public was far from content over the lawlessness of the militants. After a clash between the LTTE and PLOTE in 1982, militants fired on a crowd in Madras when an attempt was made to apprehend Maheswaran. On the same day PLOTE members misbehaved in a village, until they were rounded up by the police.

Later there was a fracas in which the EPRLF opened fire on a crowd killing one person. In December 1985 a LTTE jeep injured a man, leading to a fracas in which 15 were injured including 3 policemen, and telegrams were sent to Rajiv

Gandhi and M. G. R. asking for protection against the LTTE. U. P. Chintar of the C. P. I. (M) wrote of an incident in which Tamil militants raided a village with automatic weapons and the Hindu and other publications raised their voices in protest.

In the 1986 exasperation with the militants led to "Operation Tiger" in which Police Chief K. Mohandas arrested militants by the hundred, seized weapons and radio equipment, and finger-printed Prabhakaran like a common criminal, a spectacular demonstration of the limits of Tamil Nadu commitment to the militants. The radio equipment was subsequently returned, probably because it was impolitic to incapacitate the militants altogether, but the demonstration of a limited commitment was convincing all the same.

"Operation Tiger" led to the return of Prabhakaran to Jaffna in late 1986, and the waning importance of Tamil Nadu rear-base for the militants. It is possible that Prabhakaran's return was motivated by a desire to break free of Indian Government pressure, which could conceivably lead to capture, and also because he did not want too close an involvement with any Tamil Nadu political party. According to one assessment "There was serious concern about the wisdom of having come to India in the first place and about the disproportionate importance of the rear base among some quarters. The extent to which the war was becoming dependent on Tamil Nadu did not go without criticism." It appears that Tamil Nadu, so far from being of decisive importance for struggle of the militants, could in fact handicap them.

This paper has already dealt with the Tamil Nadu reactions to the IPKF-LTTE fighting. It must be mentioned that in spite of IPKF outrages against unarmed civilians, Tamil Nadu public opinion was decisively in favour of the IPKF intervention as

shown by more than one opinion poll. The national average in favour was 72%, whereas in Tamil Nadu it was 73% & (7).

It is argued in this paper only that there is an ambivalence in Tamil Nadu attitudes, not that there has been anything like a rejection of the militants, a point that was demonstrated in April 1987 when M.G.R. made an award of \$2.2 million to the LTTE and other militants. This award, which evidently arose out of the Indian Government's belief that the Jaffna population was starving and could soon start dying of hunger, reveals something about the nature of the Tamil Nadu commitment. A Biafran type solution, assuming that the Sri Lankan Government could want such a thing, in which separatist Thos were starved into submission in Nigeria, is not a viable option as Tamil Nadu would force Delhi to intervene.

DELHI AND SRI LANKA

It might seem that if there were not 50 million or more in Tamil Nadu, Delhi would simply not bother about what happens in Sri Lanka. It would be just as little bothered by charges about human rights violations and genocide as any other Third World country. Actually Delhi has its own priorities about Sri Lanka which have nothing to do with Tamil Nadu. India conceives of itself as the predominant or pre-eminent power in South Asia, in other words a regional super power, and the corollary of that conception is that Delhi will react against the activities of any extra-regional power in any neighbouring country should they seem prejudicial to what Delhi regards as India's legitimate interests.

After the Jayewardene Government came to power in 1977, its pro-Western policies obviously caused anxieties to Delhi. As former Indian High Commissioner Dixit put it, "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 (Krent-Meenec Services) into its intelligence services. Sri Lanka invited Shin-bet 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 Lankan soil which could have affected our security in terms of their capacity to monitor our sensitive information for their 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 to the extent possible, this trend. And hence evidently the exchange of letters about 'Income-tax etc. which accompanied the 1987 Peace Agreement.

The probable reason for U.S. over-activity in Sri Lanka probably derives from the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan which gave the impression of an Indo-Soviet Axis in South Asia. In any case, the situation in so far as Sri Lanka is concerned seemed to change after Rajiv Gandhi's visit to the U.S. in 1985, and in 1987 the U.S. was willing to back the Peace Agreement, virtually acknowledging India's role as the regional great power.

The LTTE's response to the Peace Agreement was that the Sri Lankan Tamils were being sold down the river because of India's other priorities. It is clear Tamil Nadu is far from being the sole determinant of Indo-Sri Lankan relations.

CONCLUSIONS

The Tamil Nadu and Sri Lankan Tamils are distinct ethnic groups. At the same time they do share a cultural substratum, and that means an enduring linkage between them. But the ethnic distinctiveness

means that their interests do not coincide all the time, and hence the notable ambivalence in Tamil Nadu attitudes towards their Sri Lankan brethren. There is a Tamil Nadu commitment to the Sri Lankan Tamils, but that commitment seem to have its limits. Should the Tamil rebellion revive, and there are massacres raising suspicions of a genocidal programme, or attempts to starve the Tamils into submission as happened to the Ibos in Nigeria, or to take Jaffna militarily with the inevitable mass killings, we can expect Tamil Nadu to force Delhi's hand to intervene and even break up the country or set up another Cyprus. But the commitment up to now, notwithstanding all the posturings of the opposition parties, has stopped short of support for Eelam.

Tamil Nadu does not seem to be an Indian state just like any other, as shown by the restiveness over Hindi. For that and other reasons Delhi has to be responsive to Tamil Nadu sentiments. Delhi has to give a special place to Tamil Nadu in its calculations about the Sri Lankan Tamil problem. That was shown, for instance, when Delhi condoned, or more probably inspired, M.G.R.'s unusual assertion of autonomy in donating money to the LTTE and others. It is shown also in the special position now given to Karunanidhi over the Tamil problem. While however Delhi may sometimes have to give in to Tamil Nadu sentiments, there is usually an excellent rapport between Delhi and Madras and there does not seem to have been any fundamental disagreement over Sri Lanka.

For the time being at least the irritant of over-activity by extra-regional powers has been removed, and it would appear on the analysis made in this paper that the final determinant of what happens in Sri Lanka is to be found not in Tamil Nadu or in Delhi but in Colombo.

Freedom...

(Continued from page 99)

short supply. We were forced to go into schools and church-

es where there was no provision for basic needs. There was curfew for 35 days', said a friend of mine describing the horror of those days. I met several people who had lost loved ones. 'My 19 year old son was killed by JPKE and I was told it was a mistake' said my former barber. 'My daughter was shot by the JPKE and Tigers were blamed for it' said a former neighbour. Sadness and bereavement were common.

Freedom of expression is a luxury and is dangerous is the message spell out by the murder of Rajani Thirunaguma. There was widespread revulsion about the killing and there were posters to the effect everywhere. The saddest event during my stay was the news on New Year's Day that a brilliant student from St. John's College, Jaffna was killed by a pro-Indian group for alleged sympathies with the Tigers. That killings of this nature should be carried out for a matter of belief is very tragic.

For me as a Christian, the visit to Sri Lanka was a spiritual experience.

Having opted out of the consumerism of British Christmas, I spent in austere Christmas with my people in Sri Lanka. The sound of fire crackers, permitted for the first time this year, announced the festive season—a welcome change from the sound of guns. On Christmas Day I attended the morning service at the church in Nullar where my father had worshipped and his father before him. 'The Word became flesh and dwelt among us' was the essence of the reading from the Bible. It was a statement of God's identification with an oppressed people in a remote corner of the Roman Empire—a situation which has many parallels with that of Jaffna today. I was happy to be in Jaffna and share in a small way the joys and sufferings of my people.

—Tamil Times
15/02/90



SAARC ESSAY COMPETITION

in **Sinhala, Tamil, and English**
organised with a grant from the
Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Colombo.

Subject: "SAARC — PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS"

Prizes: First Prize — Rs. 3,000 for the
Best Essay in each Medium.

Second Prize — Rs. 2,000 for the
Second Best Essay in each Medium

Third Prize — Rs. 1,000 for the
Third Best Essay in each Medium

M. B. Prize Winners will be awarded
scholarships for the Diploma Course
of the BCIS.

- Rules:**
- (1) This competition is open to Advanced Level students and Under-Graduates.
 - (2) Entries should be submitted through Principals of Schools and Heads of Faculties/Departments of Universities respectively.
 - (3) Entries should not exceed 2500 words and should be typed and submitted in duplicate.
 - (4) Entries should reach the Director/Bandaranaike Centre for International Cooperation (BCIS), BMICH, Baudhaloka Mawatha, Colombo 7, on or before **Saturday 24 March 1990.**

Class Relations in Agriculture

Lalitha Gunawardena

Introduction

Unlike in India where a lively debate has continued for the past fifteen years on the character of agriculture — the theme of the mode of production debate — Sri Lankan scholars for curious reasons have only recently begun to research on that fascinating subject of the complex means by which capitalism becomes the dominant mode in agriculture. This question is crucial to developing countries since it is upon its solution and the manner in which it is solved, that the entire social and political trajectory of these countries depends. While theses have dealt with the impact of plantation economy on agrarian relations in the country (R. Piers, I. Vanden Driessen, L. Jayawardena) the first notable published work on the subject of agrarian relations was by the late Newton Gunasinghe who analysed the agrarian relations in the Kandyan countryside. Accordingly to him, while capitalist relations had emerged in the Kandyan social formation, they were not pervasive in transforming the pre-capitalist relations of production. This had been thwarted by the "reactivation of archaic relations of production for the benefit of capital in the periphery". These were identified as share-cropping (produce rent), labour rent (*pujakeriya*) while the surplus was not re-invested except in the form of inputs in the production process. This work was followed by Shanmugaratnam who studied crop production within the dry zone, results of which were published in a number of articles. He found economic differentiation and the formation of classes: an emerging peasant bourgeoisie, middle farmers, landless tenants and agricultural wage labourers. However, agriculture had not been transformed into capitalist

relations of production. Similar research into this subject culminated in a series of studies, more rigorously analysed, in *Capital and the Peasantry, Studies in the Continuity and Discontinuity of Agrarian Structure in Sri Lanka* edited by C. Abeysekera. All these studies have taken a specific orientation, in that they are all located in the problematique of the persistence and predominance of small peasant production in the country. In particular *Capital and the Peasantry* examined the non transformation of the peasant economy in any substantial measure. It concluded that in the four villages examined (which did not conform to a uniform peasant economy), change proceeded to travel on different trajectories due to their specific internal dynamics. S. Sathyanathan's paper on the agrarian question in Sri Lanka and K. K. Kumara's review of writings on this subject form a part of the major Sri Lankan contributions to an understanding of agrarian change. Jayantha Perera (JP) in November 1989 in an article carried in the Lanka Guardian (LG — 1st November 1989, 15th November, 1st December and 15th January 1990) entitled *Social Change and Class formation in Post Independent Sri Lanka* has made an attempt to understand class relations in agriculture from field studies in the dry and wet zones. These articles are typically in the genre of the AR & TI: neo positivist; in that it is devoid of any theory, descriptive rather than analytical, using a methodology which does not grapple or confront the deeper problems of structure and the underlying reality which lies embedded below the surface of empirical data. The author's lack of awareness of the writings on the agrarian question in Sri Lanka seems to be evident from the references cited by him in the concluding part of his essay

(LG 15th January 1990). Research into the question of agrarian relations and change anywhere would need an acquaintance with the classics: *The Development of Capitalism in Russia* by V. I. Lenin, the *Eighteenth Brumaire* by K. Marx *Capital* volumes 1-3, K. Kautsky's *Agri-fuge* or a *Class Analysis of the Peasantry* by M. I. Tugan-Barbarov, a great deal could be learnt from the Indian debate and those in the forefront were, Utsa Patnaik, Avuk Rudra, Krishna Bharadwaj, and D. and A. Thorner.

Moreover, JP has not defined the term "class" which would permit a more rigorous analysis of change in the forces and relations of production or a close understanding for the reader, of the framework within which he makes his observations. We need also to define clearly what is meant by capitalism, which we characterise as a stage where surplus is realised through exchange, where such surplus is reinvested resulting in an ever expanding accumulation of capital where the production process would reflect an increasing substitution of human labour by machines.

In this essay the term class is used to refer to social groups who are subject to contradictions of interests, arising from the manner in which they are related to the means of production. Class relations are relations of production, but of course not all relations of production define classes. For instance, men who enter into social production would form social groups.

We would like to begin by outlining the major contributions made on this subject in the nineteenth century. Lenin (who identified two paths) as well as Kautsky specified laws

according to which capitalism would develop in agriculture. For instance, the sale of products for the market and not merely for self consumption, economic differentiation and the rise of a class of wage labourers whose sole means of livelihood is the sale of labour power. However, we have seen that in countries outside Europe there are no such immanent laws that operate rigidly. As these writers observed a means of production very different from others, and its transformation and a long drawn out process, sometimes taking centuries. Its quantity cannot be increased at will, its quality varies from one place to another. In industry on the other hand, the means of production can be multiplied on an extended scale and accumulation proceeds independently of centralisation. However, there seems to be no unique form of the development of capitalism in agriculture. Moreover, the nature of agriculture and the lack of congruence between production time and labour time so peculiar to crop production, is crucial to an understanding of this problem. Marx observed this: "This interruption in the production phase already signifies that agriculture can never be the sphere in which capital starts, the sphere in which it takes up its original residence. This contradicts the primary fundamental conditions of industrial labour. Hence agriculture is claimed for capital and becomes industrial only retroactively". This process was reformulated in an outstanding work on plantation agriculture thus: "The slow growth of capitalism in agriculture has much to do with the difficulty of rationalising the use of labour in conditions when work conforms to a specific sequential pattern governed by the natural crop cycle in contrast to a machine centered operation where a simultaneity of operations enables a fuller and planned utilisation of a given labour force... This difficulty is aggra-

vated in the case of paddy cultivation by the nature of the discontinuities of labour demand both inter seasonally and intra seasonally."

Issues

I. P. goes on to describe multitudinous relationships between tenants and landlords, types of work contracts, the problem of wage labour in the dry and wet zones, without any significant comment on what these observations signify for class formation and agrarian relations on which the author purports to write. We shall take up the more important observations the author has made.

1. The important characteristic of agrarian development, was the intervention of the state since the 1940s. One important policy was the distribution of crown land among the landless.
2. Landlessness has increased in the wet and dry zone villages studied. At the same time increasingly, tenancy is giving way to leasehold arrangements.
3. Investment on state settlement schemes had a far reaching influence on the small holders control over their production units.
4. Emergence of new production relations in settlement schemes "hidden tenancies"

There is no doubt that the state for the past four decades or more has intervened in the production process in agriculture. Since British times, the state has extended petty production and this policy has continued on a much wider scale after independence. Of course there were reasons for this apart from the need to expand food production locally rather than rely on imports of rice, particularly after the experience of the second world war. But what was the class character of the state? Why did an attempt to increase the productive forces, take a form within the framework of petty production?

The increased state intervention in agriculture has led to an advancement of technology

and an expansion in are cultivated, resulting in increased yields per unit of cultivation. This in turn lead to a rapid increase in economic differentiation of the peasantry and the emergence simultaneously of a layer of merchants and money lenders who formed a powerful class among a mass of impoverished peasants, trends which have implications for understanding the class relations in agriculture. In order to be precise about these changes, we would have to know the nature of the investment of surplus of merchants, whether they are productive or unproductive. Merchant capital and the predominance of money lending and usury in the countryside, may mean that there are no productive investments, (by which is meant investments which increase output) which would act as a fetter to the transformation towards capitalist relations of production, to the extent that they are not lending for investment in production for the purchase (or instance of tractors, and other technology for increased production. The author however, has not pursued this question in depth nor has he drawn any conclusions or seen the deeper significance of the empirical facts as he has stated them.

If state intervention has meant an expansion of petty production, amply attested by the innumerable settlement schemes since 1948 (and even during British colonial rule) we could draw the conclusion that the dynamics of change produced peasantisation of agriculture while also promoting simultaneously technological advance in the form of HYV technology, tractors, sprayers and feeders. We have ourselves noted that within the Mahaweli scheme while powerful class of traders has emerged, unconcerned in the long term with the advancement of the productive forces, there are also a minority of rich peasants investing in technological advances for cash crop production. Further, we have noticed the emergence of *atom* labour as characteristic of wet

zone conditions, which means that poor peasants short of cash find this a more convenient means of cultivating their allotments and does not necessarily imply a reactivation of archaic practices.

An increase in tenancy, however, is not necessarily a pre-capitalist phenomenon, and is quite compatible with capitalist relations. It simply could be that some peasants are getting marginalised and unable to provide production capital for themselves, while others are capable of investing in production and extending their unit of cultivation by leasing-in land. If the contract is between two equal partners, such a relationship is perfectly compatible with capitalist relations of production.

Moreover, if landlords prefer wage labour, what does this signify for relations of production? The presence of wage labour while being a necessary condition, however, is not a sufficient condition for the existence of capitalist relations of production as many writers have pointed out. What is far more important is whether labour here has been divorced from the means of production, whether a proletariat has emerged, whether rich farmers invest in production for profit and so advance the forces of production on an extended scale.

Landlessness is said to have increased in the villages under study. But the question is, are such peasants who are thrown off the land dispossessed due to increased centralisation of landholdings, due to increasing commercialisation of agriculture? Of course, leasehold arrangements cultivated with wage labour would mean that it is in the interests of landlords with increasing commercialisation to extract surplus through rent, rather than enter risk sharing arrangements such as *anale*. In other words, leasehold would imply that there is little risk in cultivation for the landlord.

Within settlement schemes particularly in the Mahaweli Scheme

SSAL Siriwardena drew attention to leasing which appeared soon after settlement which he termed "hidden tenancies" as they were outside the terms of the Land Development Ordinance (LDO) under which they were alienated. The LDO prescribed that leasing, renting or fragmenting were not permitted. The author sees in them "new production relations". But this sort of relation has gone on in all settlement schemes and even outside them and is not new and is a normal process which is accompanied by differentiation. But this does not mean that such lessees have been divorced from their land.

Moreover, the very existence of economic differentiation means that the small holder has no control over his allotment and we do not think that settlement schemes gave the opportunity for small holders to control their holding.

When absentee landlords rent out land what is relevant to find out is what this signifies. Would it mean that commercialisation is muted in the types of crops cultivated?

What is of general relevance for those of us concerned with these problems is this. Is capital and in what ways is capital taking hold of agriculture, revolutionising it, smashing old forms of production and of poverty and establishing new forms which must succeed? Yet this cannot be done in agriculture alone, we need to analyse the situation in industry since the two are inextricably linked.

Finally, we would like to take serious objection to the author's statement in Section 3 of his essay (LG 1st December 1989) where he outlines the categories of the working population. "... The remaining majority is housewives and those who can be regarded as unemployed". For decades feminists in many parts of the world have challenged such sexist concepts and today it is generally accepted that those in unpaid housework are described as unpaid household workers.

While we agree that there is an overlap of roles among the peasants; they could be wage workers, owners of land and hiers of wage labour, this situation is a reflection of the lack of development of antagonistic classes as we have defined them.

Conclusion

What is evident from Jayantha Perera's essay and other Sri Lankan writers is that while capital has penetrated agriculture, capitalist class relations have emerged only in a muted form in certain restricted areas, in certain types of crops. There has been no complete development of capitalist class relations in agriculture. The desperate clinging to land as a basis for survival in the absence of alternative means of livelihood, perpetuates petty production and retards productive accumulation. Nor does the presence of migrant labour transform a peasant into a wage labourer in the classic sense of the term. Migrant labour has existed for centuries, where labour moves in order to maximise earnings where there is demand. While state intervention has promoted the advance of the productive forces while extending petty production, it has strengthened merchant capital. It is the preponderance of petty production incapable of undertaking productive investment has shaped the process of accumulation in the countryside.

References

- De Silva S B D 1985 *The Political Economy of Underdevelopment*.
- Godunovskiy N 1979 'Agrarian Relations in the Kandyan Countryside' *Social Science Review* vol 1.
- Kautsky K 1981 'Agrarian' Translated by J Ganaji *Economy and Society* vol 3 No 1.
- Kumar G A K K 1983 Capital and the Peasantry in Sri Lanka Economists Association.
- Lenin V I *The Development of Capitalism in Russia*.
- Marx K 1934 *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* Capital vols 1-3, 1973 *Grundrisse*.
- Sathuranathan S 1988 'Towards the Agrarian Question in Sri Lanka' *Association of Economists*.

Play Lotto and be a winner !

*Choose the winning combination to crack the jackpot.
There's lots of money to be won every week in this
exciting, internationally famous numbers game.
And remember it's not just luck — use your brains to
choose the numbers.*

Prizes

1st Division prize	—	all 6 numbers correct
2nd Division prize	—	any 5 numbers correct
3rd Division prize	—	any 4 numbers correct

**See your numbers win every Friday at 9.25 p.m.
on Rupavahini.**

Play

Lotto

there's a lotto' money in it !



National Lotteries Board

111/1 Sir Chittampalam A. Gardiner Mawatha
Colombo 2

**S. S. A.
SOCIAL SCIENTISTS ASSOCIATION**

129/61, Nawala Road, Narahenpita,
Colombo 5

AVAILABLE IN APRIL

Newton Gunasinghe's PhD thesis on

**Changing Socio-Economic Agrarian Relations in the
Kandyan Countryside**

and in SINHALA

Romila Thapar, Bipan Chandra and Harbans Mukhia

Communalism and the Writing of Indian History

Publications	Price
The Alternatives — SOCIALISM or BARBARISM Collected Writings of G. V. S. de Silva	Rs. 250
A MEDITATION ON CONSCIENCE by Gananath Obeyesekere	Rs. 100
CAPITAL AND PEASANT PRODUCTION Studies in the Continuity and Discontinuity of Agrarian Structures in Sri Lanka	Rs. 200
ESSAYS ON THE SRI LANKAN ECONOMY 1977-1983	Rs. 250
ETHNICITY AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN SRI LANKA (Also in Sinhala and Tamil)	Rs. 100
FACETS OF ETHNICITY IN SRI LANKA	Rs. 200

AVAILABLE AT LAKE HOUSE BOOKSHOP OR WRITE TO THE SSA

Manifesto for an alternative Society – II

Richard de Soysa

Culture

Dr. Amarasekera comes a little closer to the truth when he talks of a homogeneous culture that has come into being as a result of the way of life of an agricultural community". He adds, immediately after, "...based on a long hydraulic civilisation and under a humane bening religion. Even leaving in the humane benign religion," Dr. Amarasekera's definition applies equally well to practically any of the rice-growing societies of South, Southeast and East Asia, all of which came under the influence of Buddhism which has left a more or less permanent impact on all of them. But what is more important is that, take away Buddhism and you are left with a definition of agrarian societies anywhere in the world.

There are cultural similarities among all of them, because their economic life is similar. The specific elements that make up a culture — language and dress, rites and rituals — can differ in their physical details. But the compound of all these creates a way of life, and that compound owes its nature to the kind of economic activity the community indulges in. It is this that could eventually create a "transcendent culture", if such a thing is possible. One has only to examine the swiftness with which capitalist industrial production has, in a matter of two centuries, created a fairly homogenous urban culture, which can be divided more easily horizontally, on economic/ class lines, but less easily along ethnic lines, to realise this.

And this is where Reggie Siriwardene, I fear, fails (in his passionate cry for "tolerance, openness, pluralism — towards the cultural traditions of various ethnic groups in our society as well as towards international cultures" to understand the nature of the dynamic that drives ethnic groups towards schism.

Referring to discussions he has had with Soviet intellectuals and scholars, he quotes them as saying that "in the past it was too easily assumed that ethnic identities could be erased by being absorbed in a larger entity... the more realistic course would be to live with these identities but to try to contain them in such a way that they would not express themselves in antagonistic and destructive forms."

Balance

Now the word 'containment' is harsh, and it is surprising to find it lurking among the liberal sentiments articulated by Siriwardena. But its very presence indicates that he — or at any rate his Soviet interlocutors — are aware of certain political realities within the framework of a modern nation-state. That if the centre allows the identities at the periphery to assume too much importance within the whole, the balance of the state gets lost. Most modern nation-states are federations of different tribal, ethnic, or national identities. How long those states will survive will depend on the nature of the relationship between their centres and peripheries. This in turn is generally determined by the success or otherwise of governments of building a national economic base which supports an infrastructure which draws the peripheries towards the centre.

Minorities

This is the flaw in the argument in favour of tolerance, openness and pluralism, in the absence of strong national — and I mean national, not multinational — economic structures which will help convince minorities that they are a component part of national production. Reggie is quite right, it is all wrong to start to teaching all languages to all children unless you are going to continue doing so. But it is even worse to teach both national

languages to Sri Lankan children if they are not going to be used in national economic life. From that point of view, Dr. Amarasekera's individual... who is an amalgamation of multi-cultural bits' — a polished polyglot and nothing else (and if this was meant to be Reggie, then the good Doctor errs) — is to be avoided because he or she of little use to anyone. While the political reality that the Jathika Chithanayas' produce can be intolerant and bigoted, well-meant pluralism can be hijacked by anyone who patches together the lowest common denominators of all cultural forms and comes up with a cosmetic mix that only hides the hopelessly ravaged face of the society that lies underneath. This is what is happening in this country at the moment in the name of the 'popular culture' that some parts of the ruling establishment have seized with such glee. Medicant men of God, travelling circuses and politicians masquerading as poets are not the stuff of which stable, pluralistic nations can be built.

The answer is surely a secular state — truly secular, with no icons except the institutions of the state itself, and guided by the principals sound economic management within an ideological framework which does not carry within itself the seeds of either the extremism of the Jathika Chintanaya or the potential anarchy of cultural populism. I suggest that Marxism-Leninism in its original form does provide the theoretical basis for such a state but with the rider that this is a theoretical basis, which must be flexible enough to accommodate the strains that arise along the way. It is neither weakened nor cynical to declare that politics is the art of the possible, as long as one does not equate 'possible' with 'any thing goes.'

(Continued on page 24)

A Soviet Poet in Colombo

Sergei Strokan

“White, Yellow, Black. This blood of all of us is just as red. Stop the tests”. It is no accident that, translated into the languages of many peoples of the world, this call by Soviet Poet Vyacheslav Kupriyanov has found an echo also in Sri Lanka. A collection of verse by V. Kupriyanov recently came out in Colombo in Tamil translated by K. Ganesh, veteran of the movement of progressive Sri Lankan writers. For the Soviet poet who is sufficiently well known both in the USSR and in the West, this was the first book of verse that came out in an Asian language.

Vyacheslav Kupriyanov, who turned 50 two months ago, is a man of unusual and creative life which is an organic blend of his activity as poet, translator and literary critic. His road in literature was not strewn with roses. After graduating from school he worked as a stenographer and concrete, then he finished at a higher naval school in Leningrad. Then, realizing that the career of a military man was not what he wanted and that he had a strong desire to write verse, he joined the computer translations and mathematical linguistics department of the Maurice Thorez Institute of Foreign Languages in Moscow, the Soviet Union's leading educational establishment training high-class translators and experts in European languages. Having mastered German, French and English, while still a student, Kupriyanov began to translate poems by foreign authors, including those by Rainer Maria Rilke, a classical German poet, and in 1967 defended his graduation paper on the subject "The Mystical Figure Seven and Its Connection with Man's Active Memory."

After graduating from the institute, Kupriyanov took up writing. He received spiritual support from such prominent Soviet writers of the older generation as Mikhail Zenkevich,

Kupriyanov is winner of the prestigious International festival of poetry in Italy (1986), and he took part in international poetry festivals held in Cambridge (England, 1985), and in Rotterdam (Holland, 1988). Last year he received another international award — the George Trakl literary prize.

"I am anxiously looking forward to a meeting in Sri Lanka, which I know from books, articles and Soviet TV programmes only", said Kupriyanov in a NOVOSTI interview on the eve of his departure for Colombo. The cultural ties between our countries are rooted in the distant past. Sri Lanka has always been attracting Russian writers, travellers and scholars. It was visited by such prominent Russian writers as Andrei Chukov, Ivan Bunin and Konstantin Balmont. I would like to make my contribution to the development of these ties, so I'm going to Sri Lanka to collect an anthology of modern Sri Lankan poetry to be translated into Russian and published in the USSR."

Arseny Tarkovsky, Yevgeny Vinokurov and Lev Ginzburg. Along with publishing his own poems and translations, Kupriyanov wrote many articles on problems of the modern literary process. Unwilling to follow in the footsteps of the Soviet "class poetry" of the 60's, of which Yevgeny Yevlushenko and Andrei Voznesensky were the most prominent representatives, Kupriyanov looked for his own road. Together with poet and poetry critic Vladimir Burich he worked out a theory of the Russian verse libre — free verse. It was largely thanks to their efforts that verse libre, only quite recently hardly known in the USSR, today is swiftly acquiring popularity among Soviet people.

Kupriyanov's verse libre are not poems in the usual sense of the word. As can be seen from the poem "appeal" in the beginning of this article, they have neither rhyme nor rhythm, and are small, often consisting of several lines only. At the same time, the meaning expressed in every word is much stronger than in a traditional poem. Using the minimum of means, the poet achieves the maximum of expression. In this sense verse

libre constitutes a kind of universal formula derived from mankind's spiritual experience and equally understood everywhere, in any part of the world. That is why the decline in the readers' interest in poetry which is observed in many countries of the world today, has not affected the verse libre poets, as is seen from Kupriyanov's books. The four collections of his works which have come out in the USSR and more than ten of his books published in the FRG, West Berlin, the Netherlands, Yugoslavia, the GDR, Poland and Bulgaria were sold out within a very short time. "Vyacheslav Kupriyanov is rapidly becoming recognised, both within and outside his country's borders, as one of the most skilful and stimulating of contemporary Russian poets" writes prominent English translator Francis Jones in the preface to V. Kupriyanov's book. "His verse can be drily ironic or unashamedly lyrical, but through it all shines his love of life and this earth and his fears for its survival, his impassioned belief in human values and strivings, and his hatred for those who try to stifle the individual and his word of truth."

Manifesto . . .

(Continued from page 83)

On the other hand, bashing Stalin today because it is fashionable to do so is not good enough. In fairness to Reggie, he has been doing so for several years. But it is still well worth arguing whether the tactical decision Stalin took to weld together a bulwark against US power in Europe in the 1940's should have been reviewed in the 1950's, 60's or 70's. The nationalisms sweeping Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union are a clear repudiation of an extended form of Jathika Chintunaya — the idea of a "Greater Russia" — not a failure of Communism. And if all that liberation brings the people of Romania is Coca Cola and blue-jeans — the flagbearers of "thuppahi" culture anywhere in the world then I cannot agree with Reggie either.

The author was a Soviet diplomat in Colombo.

THE PREMIER PORT IN SOUTH ASIA

A massive Port Expansion Project has transformed Colombo into a modern Container Handling Port and Transshipment Centre qualifying for "Base Port" status with the following additional facilities to the Industrial and Commercial Port Users:

- Bulk-Handling facilities for Grain, Fertilizer and Cement.
- Rebagging and Reprocessing facilities.
- A Streamlined Bonding Service.

Any special requirements could be arranged for on request.

Enquiries:



SRI LANKA PORTS AUTHORITY

19, Church Street, P. O. Box 595,
Colombo, Sri Lanka.

Telephone: 2 5 5 5 9

Telex: 21805 PORTS CE

*Over a quarter
Century ago
We chartered a course
To inculcate the banking
Habit among our
Rural masses
Our efforts have paid dividends
Since today we account
For the highest Savings
Deposits among those of
All commercial banks in
Sri Lanka put together*



People's Bank

Banker to the Millions

Service is Our First Objective