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THE VALUE OF DISSENT



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KEN SARO-WIWA • ALFRED WEGENER •
NAGASENA & MILINDA • HANS CHRISTIAN
ANDERSEN • BRONOWSKI & MAZLISH •
VACLAV HAVEL • WEI JINGSHENG •
BRAM FISCHER •

A CRM PUBLICATION

ABOUT THIS SERIES

The theme of this series is that progress depends on the free exchange of conflicting ideas. Not merely good government, but the development of civilisation — cultural, scientific, economic — requires this.

Conceived of in response to a specific situation, it was found that the first in the series, which was distributed internationally, struck an important chord in many societies. The idea for this project originated in the context of the appalling violence which has disfigured Sri Lanka in recent years, accompanied by a terrifying rise of intolerance. In this background, CRM identified as a priority the need to promote understanding of not only the right to dissent, but also the intrinsic value of dissent. This simple truth has to be reaffirmed and illustrated. CRM is therefore compiling and translating a variety of material relevant to this theme, including: the writings of political scientists, philosophers and other thinkers; legal decisions; scientific case histories; literature and drama inspired by or depicting the conflict between individual conscience and established forces; and other interesting examples of individual dissent, including commentary on current issues.

Threats to the free exchange of ideas certainly do not come from governments alone. They can and do come from other sources too; from various social and political groups, from communal and individual attitudes, even from majority public opinion. Indeed, the suppression of opposing views by the state is often with the support of society at large; governments in many ways reflect society's prejudices. However — and this is the point of the series — intolerance from whatever source is dangerous to society, and must be identified and opposed.

Publication is in English, Sinhala and Tamil. The material is not now being brought out in any particular grouping or sequence; later it may be reorganized into a more orderly collection. Compilation is a continuing process and it is hoped that this publication will stimulate suggestions and contributions from readers.

A fuller description of this project is given in the introduction to *The Value of Dissent* No 1.

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THE VALUE OF DISSENT

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THE VALUE OF DISSENT

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CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT OF SRI LANKA

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ISBN 955-9277-04-9

Cover

Ken Saro-Wiwa, Bram Fischer

Published by

Bernadeen Silva, for and on behalf of

Civil Rights Movement of Sri Lanka

31 Charles Place, Colombo 3

December 2000

Printed by

Karunaratne & Sons Ltd.

67, UDA Industrial Estate

Katuwana Road

Hōmagama

Sri Lanka

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Ken Saro-Wiwa (1941-1995)

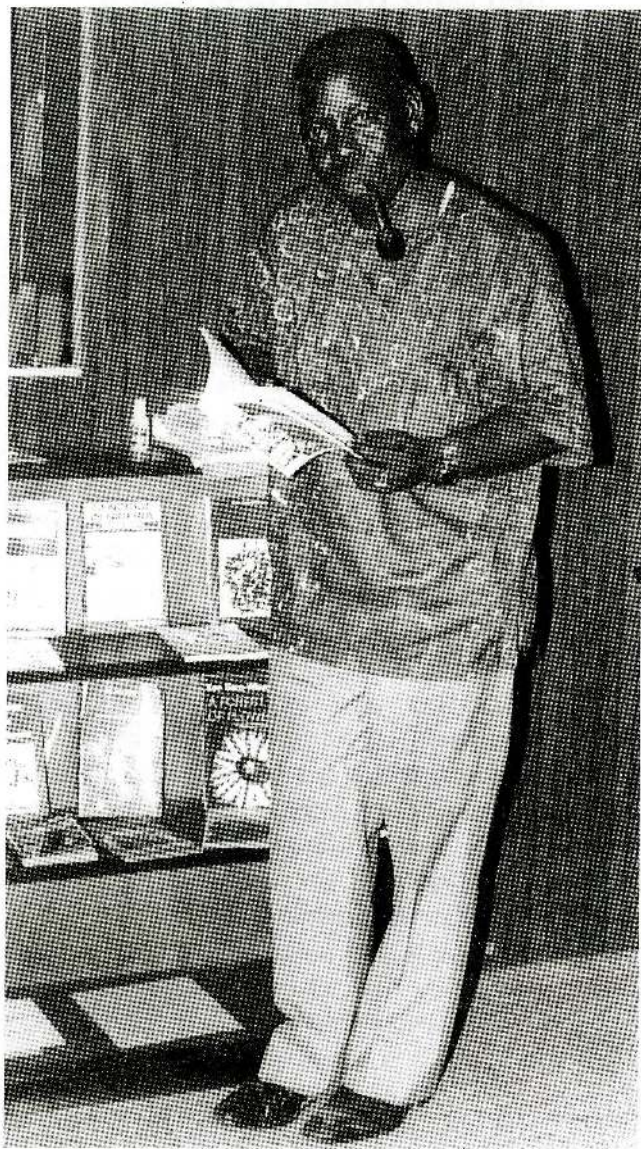
POEMS

*Ken Saro-Wiwa was a member of the Ogoni people, who number about 150,000. Ogoniland is situated in south-eastern Nigeria and was part of Biafra. Saro-Wiwa was a successful businessman but is more famous for his talent as a writer, whose novel *Sozaboy* won international acclaim. He scripted Nigeria's most popular soap opera, "Basi and Company."*

In 1990 Saro-Wiwa turned his attention to political activism. He became president of the Ethnic Minority Rights Organization of Africa and founded the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP), vigorously campaigning for minority rights in Nigeria. In 1992 Saro-Wiwa gave a speech to the United Nations Commission on Indigenous Peoples, cataloguing the abuses against the Ogoni people by the Nigerian federal government since the discovery of oil in 1958, and the activities of the multinational Shell.

For his tireless campaigning on behalf of Ogoniland, Ken Saro-Wiwa was targeted by the Nigerian authorities and spent several periods in detention. After a manifestly unfair trial Saro-Wiwa was hanged along with eight others in 1995 by the Abacha dictatorship. There was widespread international protest, including condemnation by the UN General Assembly and suspension from the Commonwealth.

At the time these poems were selected for inclusion in this publication, including the last poem "For Zina" which now has a special poignancy, Ken Saro-Wiwa was very much alive. It is with deep sorrow that we record his subsequent execution.



Ken Saro-Wiwa

THE LONE PROTESTER

*The lone protester is a voice
inconvenient to the gilded ears
of policy-makers in the rarified air
of marble rooms in London and Rotterdam
To be muzzled with money, guns or both
Or shut in prison where silence locks doors
And windows day and night and throws
Away the key into history's incinerator.*

THE TRUE PRISON

*It is not the leaking roof
Nor the singing mosquitoes
In the damp, wretched cell
It is not the clank of the key
As the warder locks you in
It is not the measly rations
Unfit for man or beast
Nor yet the emptiness of day
Dipping into the blankness of night
It is not
It is not
It is not.
It is the lies that have been drummed
Into your ears for one generation
It is the security agent running amok
Executing callous calamitous orders
In exchange for a wretched meal a day
The magistrate writing into her book
Punishment she knows is undeserved
The moral decrepitude
Mental ineptitude
The meat of dictators
Cowardice masking as obedience
Lurking in our denigrated souls
It is fear damping trousers
We dare not wash of our urine
It is this
It is this
It is this
Dear friend, turns our free world
Into a dreary prison.*

BABANGIDANCE (1)¹

*A little to the right
A little to the left
Watch your step shake your waist
Dance to time watch your tilt
Don't be slow don't be fast
Sing a song watch its lilt*

*A little to the left
A little to the right
A bit of that a bit of this
Bite a bait but don't be bit
Don't dare demand what it is
Makes Babangidance such a hit!*

1 The title of this poem is a reference to General Ibrahim Babangida, who, after a bloodless coup in 1985, became Nigeria's sixth and most powerful military ruler. Babangida, did not return the country to civilian rule as promised, but hung on to power. In 1993 he annulled elections, and then stepped aside for General Sani Abacha.

BABANGIDANCE (2)

*A little to the left
And nothing can be right
One step forward
And five backward
And stand at ease
Babangidance.*

*Is it a jive
A samba jam
A rhumba craze
A rowdy rock
Or just a joke?
Babangidance.*

*You are banned
Totally banned
Then unbanned
Giddy giddy ban
And bang bang bang
Babangidance.*

*Rawlings and co
Did a Doe²
Turned their coats
Burned their boats
And shot their feet
Babangidance.*

2 This is a reference to Flight Lieutenant Jerry Rawlings of Ghana and Master Sergeant Samuel Doe of Liberia, both of whom were low-ranking army officers who staged army coups in their countries.

*About turn!
Rapid fire!
Order legs!
Slope feet!
And as you were!
Babangidance.*

*Take a dash
Don't be dashed
Who can guess
Just what it is
Makes Babangidance
Oh, such a mess!*

FOR ZINA

*I have raised the questions, daughter
Which you and your kids must ponder
I feel guilty I did not sooner
In my lifetime urge them stronger
And now, ere I answers provide
I may in cold blood lie buried
Have I your futures compromised?*

Louise Spierer¹

WEGENER (1880-1930) AND THE THEORY OF THE EARTH'S MOVEMENTS

Alfred Wegener was a German scientist who was ridiculed by the scientific community for his revolutionary theory of continental drift. It was only decades after his death that Wegener was finally honoured for his persistent research in the face of hostility, and for his early discovery of land-mass movements as the origin of present continents.



In 1930, when Alfred Wegener died, apparently of a heart attack while trying to reach his home base on the Greenland ice cap, his Greenland guide buried him and then tried to return to the base, bringing Wegener's diaries which were filled with invaluable meteorological data. The guide disappeared somewhere in the trackless snow and the diaries were lost forever. But Wegener's most valuable scientific contribution, his theory of continental drift, was only "lost" until 1962, when scientists began to accept what had been heresy in Wegener's time.

*Dr. Alfred Wegener, Greenland,
November 1930*

1 Louise Spierer, co-author of *Data Analysis for Monitoring Human Rights*, lives in Connecticut, USA.

In 1912, when Wegener first proposed his revolutionary theory that the formation of the continents was the result of segments of two huge land masses moving apart and forming separate continents, his theory was greeted with disbelief and hostility. After all, his critics said, Wegener was a meteorologist, a "weather man," not a geologist, and to them, his theory of how the continents were formed was unproven and unprovable and wrong. Today, Wegener's "unprovable" theory of land movement is accepted by scientists, although they have determined that his explanation of how it happened is not accurate of continental drift.

Alfred Wegener was born in 1880 in Germany where he spent his life as a university lecturer and writer. Much of his meteorological research was done on the Greenland ice cap which he explored in order to collect data on weather conditions and geophysical formation. He was especially interested in ancient climates.

His speculations about continental drift began in 1912, when he looked closely at a world map and saw that if you joined the South American and African continents, they would fit together, like a jigsaw puzzle. His research had shown that, during a period about 300 million years ago, an ice cap had covered not only northern Europe and North America, but South America, southern Africa and Australia as well. How could such a thing have happened? Only if these now far-apart continents had once been joined. And



Wegener and Rasmus, about to start a journey in the Arctic, Greenland, November 1930.

this could also explain how so many species of animal and plant life and rock formations found in the two continents were so alike.

At the time, the explanation for this coincidence was that there had once been "land bridges" between the continents over which such life migrated back and forth. At some point, geologists speculated, the land bridges disappeared into the oceans. But Wegener could see, as probably most children who are adept at putting puzzles together today can see, that something else might have occurred. That something was continental drift.

Others before him had already speculated about this movement, but Wegener was the first to turn such speculation into an organized, well-documented theory. He assembled an impressive number of facts: that there was a correspondence between the Atlantic coastline of South America and Africa; that a large fraction of the Earth's crust is at two levels, indicating that the movement was not random; that plant and animal life had crossed the continents. From his Greenland investigations, he also knew that geodetic observations had shown that even in his day, Greenland was moving westward.

Nevertheless, the learned geologists and physicists of the day did not even try to check his theory; they ridiculed his work as "pseudoscience," and ignored it. They heaped scorn on him as a mere meteorologist who had no business meddling in geology. They proclaimed that his theories were too simple to explain a complex organism like the Earth. His theories were dismissed and, even though some geologists continued to examine his theories, the subject was soon dropped, not to be revived for many years.

Learning of the origins of our world is of prime importance, but this knowledge has great value beyond the historical. For example, theories relating to continental drift, such as plate tectonics, are an important means of learning about the origins of earthquakes and volcanic activities.

Today, Wegener's theory of continental drift is accepted, even if his explanation of how it happened has been discarded as new research has revealed other causes. In his lifetime, his revolutionary theory was greeted with hostility and disbelief. Honoured for his bravery in exploring the Greenland ice cap, he never found honour for one of the most important theories on the origins of our world. Today, however, Alfred Wegener is honoured for his revolutionary theory which is accepted by scientists worldwide.

FROM OUR READERS... (translated from Sinhala)

*I avow that these seeds sown today will blossom
and bear fruit in 10 years.*

- Reader from Kandy

*Clash of ideas and concepts in thinking as well as
tolerance is essential. In the name of humankind I
value this endeavour of the CRM.*

- Reader from Mudungoda

Nagasena Thera and King Milinda
(2nd Century BC)

MILINDA PRASNA

Milinda Prasna (Milinda Questions) is a Pali text from sometime between the 2nd century BC and 1st century AD. The compiler of these conversations between the Buddhist monk Nagasena and King Milinda is unknown and may be more than one author. King Milinda, known to the Greeks as Menander, was a Greek Bactrian King around 150 BC, whose military prowess in expanding to parts of India was matched by his philosophical aptitude. The monk Nagasena emerges as an able debater of great learning. This short extract is from the beginning of the dialogues.

The King said: "Bhante Nagasena, will you converse with me?"

"Sire, if you will converse with me after the fashion of the wise, I will. But if you converse with me as kings converse, I will not."

"How, Bhante Nagasena, do the wise converse?"

"Sire, when the wise converse, whether they become entangled in their opponent's arguments or extricate themselves, or whether they or their opponents are shown to be in error, and whether their own superiority or that of their opponents is proved, none of these things can make them angry."

"And how, Bhante, do kings converse?"

"Sire, when kings converse they put forward a proposition, and if any should oppose it they order his punishment, saying, 'Punish this fellow!'"

"Bhante, you are right. I will converse as the wise do, not as kings do. Let your reverence converse with me in all confidence. Let your reverence converse as unrestrainedly as if

with a Bhikkhu, a novice, a lay disciple or a keeper of the monastery grounds. Have no fear!"

FROM OUR READERS...

Your series are of great value and have changed part of my thinking together with those of my friends too.

- Reader from Harare, Zimbabwe.

I want to congratulate you and your colleagues for the very important contribution you are making to the cause of human freedom through your superbly edited booklet:- "The Value of Dissent."

I have received your No. 2 edition and I heard from a friend the contents of your No. 1 issue. I think yours is an initiative to be commended by all lovers of human freedom and peace.

- Editor-in-Chief, Zimbabwe Inter-Africa News Agency, Harare, Zimbabwe.

Hans Christian Andersen (1805-1875)

THE EMPEROR'S NEW CLOTHES

Hans Christian Andersen, son of a Danish village shoemaker, is to this day the most famous man from Denmark. What brought him this honour was his gift of telling stories, mainly in the form of the fairy tale. In 1845, ten years after his first booklet of fairy tales appeared, he noted: "How much could be accomplished through the fairy tale became clearer and clearer to me as I learnt through the years of my own powers and limitations." Perhaps nothing in world literature is more memorable and perceptive on the timeless value of a dissenter, disclosing what is true and exposing what is falsely proclaimed as true by a conforming society, than Andersen's tale, based on a Spanish medieval story, of "The Emperor's New Clothes," printed below in its entirety.

Many, many years ago there was an emperor who was so terribly fond of beautiful new clothes that he spent all his money on his attire. He did not care about his soldiers, or attending the theatre, or even going for a drive in the park, unless it was to show off his new clothes. He had an outfit for every hour of the day. And just as we say, "The king is in his council chamber," his subjects used to say, "The emperor is in his clothes closet."

In the large town where the emperor's palace was, life was gay and happy; and every day new visitors arrived. One day two swindlers came. They told everybody that they were weavers and that they could weave the most marvellous cloth; not only were the colours and the patterns of their material extraordinarily beautiful, but the cloth had the strange quality of being invisible to anyone who was unfit for his office or unforgivably stupid.

"This is truly marvellous," thought the emperor. "Now if I had robes cut from that material, I should know which of my

councillors was unfit for his office, and I would be able to pick out my clever subjects myself. They must weave some material for me!" And he gave the swindlers a lot of money so they could start working at once.

They set up a loom and acted as if they were weaving, but the loom was empty. The fine silk and gold threads they demanded from the emperor they never used, but hid them in their own knapsacks. Late into the night they would sit before their empty loom, pretending to weave.

"I would like to know how they are getting along," thought the emperor; but his heart beat strangely when he remembered that those who were stupid or unfit for their office would not be able to see the material. Not that he was really worried that this would happen to him. Still, it might be better to send someone else the first time and see how he fared. Everybody in town had heard about the cloth's magic quality and most of them could hardly wait to find out how stupid or unworthy their neighbours were.

"I shall send my faithful prime minister over to see how the weavers are getting along," thought the emperor. "He will know how to judge the material, for he is both clever and fit for his office, if any man is."

The good-natured old man stepped into the room where the weavers were working and saw the empty loom. He closed his eyes, and opened them again. "God preserve me!" he thought, "I cannot see a thing!" But he didn't say it out loud.

The swindlers asked him to step a little closer to the loom so that he could admire the intricate patterns and marvellous colours of the material they were weaving. They both pointed to the empty loom, and the poor old prime minister opened his eyes as wide as he could, but it didn't help, he still couldn't see anything.

"Am I stupid?" he thought. "I can't believe it, but if it is so, it is best no one finds out about it. But maybe I am not fit for my office. No, that is worse, I'd better not admit that I can't see what they are weaving."

"Tell us what you think of it," demanded one of the swindlers.

"It is beautiful. It is very lovely," mumbled the old prime minister, adjusting his glasses. "What patterns! What colours! I shall tell the emperor that it pleases me ever so much."

"That is a compliment," both the weavers said. And now they described the patterns and told which shades of colour they had used. The prime minister listened attentively, so that he could repeat their words to the emperor; and that is exactly what he did.

The two swindlers demanded more money, and more silk and gold thread. They said they had to use it for their weaving, but their loom remained as empty as ever.

Soon the emperor sent another of his trusted councillors to see how the work was progressing. He looked and looked just as the prime minister had, but since there was nothing to be seen he didn't see anything.

"Isn't it a marvellous piece of material?" asked one of the swindlers. And they both began to describe the beauty of their cloth again.

"I am not stupid," thought the emperor's councillor. "I must be unfit for my office. That is strange, but I'd better not admit it to anyone." And he started to praise the material, which he could not see, for the loveliness of its patterns and colours.

"I think it is the most charming piece of material I have ever seen," declared the councillor to the emperor.

Everyone in town was talking about the marvellous cloth that the swindlers were weaving.

At last the emperor himself decided to see it before it was removed from the loom. Attended by the most important people in the empire, among them the prime minister and the councillor who had been there before, the emperor entered the room where the weavers were weaving furiously on their empty loom.

"Isn't it magnifique?" asked the prime minister.

"Your Majesty, look at the colours and the patterns," said the councillor.

And the two old gentlemen pointed to the empty loom, believing that all the rest of the company could see the cloth.

"What!" thought the emperor. "I can't see a thing! Why, this is a disaster! Am I stupid? Am I unfit to be emperor? Oh, it is too horrible!" Aloud he said, "It is very lovely. It has my approval," while he nodded his head and looked at the empty loom.

All the councillors, ministers, and men of great importance who had come with him stared and stared, but they saw no more than the emperor had seen, and they said the same thing that he had said, "It is lovely." And they advised him to have clothes cut and sewn, so that he could wear them in the procession at the next great celebration.

"It is magnificent! Beautiful! Excellent!" All of their mouths agreed, though none of their eyes had seen anything. The two swindlers were decorated and given the title "Royal Knight of the Loom."

The night before the procession, the two swindlers didn't sleep at all. They had sixteen candles lighting up the room where they worked. Everyone could see how busy they were, getting the emperor's new clothes finished. They pretended to take the cloth from the loom; they cut the air with their big scissors, and sewed with needles without thread. At last they announced: "The emperor's clothes are ready!"

Together with his courtiers, the emperor came. The swindlers lifted their arms as if they were holding something in their hands, and said: "These are the trousers. This is the robe, and here is the train. They are all as light as if they were made of spider webs! It will be as if Your Majesty had almost nothing on, but that is their special virtue.

"Oh yes," breathed all the courtiers, but they saw nothing, for there was nothing to be seen.

"Will Your Imperial Majesty be so gracious as to take off your clothes?" asked the swindlers. "Over there by the big

mirror, we shall help you put your new ones on."

The emperor did as he was told, and the swindlers acted as if they were dressing him in the clothes they should have made. Finally they tied around his waist the long train which two of his most noble courtiers were to carry.

The emperor stood in front of the mirror admiring the clothes he couldn't see.

"Oh, how they suit you! A perfect fit!" everyone exclaimed. "What colours! What patterns! The new clothes are magnificent!"

"The crimson canopy, under which Your Imperial Majesty is to walk, is waiting outside," said the imperial master of court ceremony.

"Well, I am dressed. Aren't my clothes becoming?" The emperor turned around once more in front of the mirror, pretending to study his finery.

The two gentlemen of the imperial bedchamber fumbled on the floor, trying to find the train which they were supposed to carry. They didn't dare admit that they didn't see anything, so they pretended to pick up the train and held their hands as if they were carrying it.

The emperor walked in the procession under his crimson canopy. And all the people of the town, who had lined the streets or were looking down from the windows, said that the emperor's clothes were beautiful. "What a magnificent robe! And the train! How well the emperor's clothes suit him!"

None of them were willing to admit that they hadn't seen a thing; for if anyone did, then he was either stupid or unfit for the job he held. Never before had the emperor's clothes been such a success.

"But he doesn't have anything on!" cried a little child.

"Listen to the innocent one," said the proud father. And the people whispered among each other and repeated what the child had said.

"He doesn't have anything on. There's a little child who says that he has nothing on."

"He has nothing on!" shouted all the people at last.

The emperor shivered, for he was certain that they were right, but he thought, "I must bear it until the procession is over." And he walked even more proudly, and the two gentlemen of the imperial bedchamber went on carrying the train that wasn't there.

FROM OUR READERS... (translated from Sinhala)

Continuing publication of books like this will undoubtedly contribute towards broadening and deepening mass knowledge. It is my belief that this will provide the background necessary to encourage people to think freely.

- Reader from Radolugama

The knowledge I have obtained from your literature is vast. Thank you for sending such publications to people like us living in remote areas.

- Reader from Nawa-Medagama

Jacob Bronowski and Bruce Mazlish

THE WESTERN INTELLECTUAL TRADITION

From The Western Intellectual Tradition by Jacob Bronowski and Bruce Mazlish (London, 1960). Dr Bronowski was best known for his very successful and widely praised television series about the history of science, called "The Ascent of Man"; Professor Mazlish is a distinguished American historian.

Their book is a study of the development of ideas which shaped the Western world "from Leonardo to Hegel." The authors attempt to trace the unifying patterns in history.

This passage comes from the concluding chapter, where the authors stress the crucial importance of the "right to dissent." They say: "In the five hundred years since Leonardo da Vinci, two ideals about man have been especially important. The first is the emphasis on the full development of the human personality. The individual is praised for himself. His creative powers are seen as the core of his being."

The second of the two grand formative ideas which this history displays is the idea of freedom. We see in fact that human fulfillment is unattainable without freedom, so that these two main ideas are linked together. There could be no development of the personality of individuals, no fulfillment of those gifts in which one man differs from another, without the freedom for each man to grow in his own direction.

What is true of individuals is true of human groups. A state or a society cannot change unless its members are given freedom to judge, to criticize, and to search for a new status for themselves. Therefore the pressure of ideas throughout the period of this book has been toward freedom as an expression of individuality. Sometimes men have tried to find freedom along quiet paths of change, as the humanists did on the eve of the Reformation, and as the dissenting manufacturers of the

eighteenth century did. At other times, the drive for freedom has been explosive: intellectually explosive in the Elizabethan age and the Scientific Revolution, economically explosive in the Industrial Revolution, and politically explosive in the other great revolutions of our period, from Puritan times to the age of Napoleon.

Yet our study shows that freedom is a supple and elusive idea, whose advocates can at times delude themselves that obedience to tyranny is a form of freedom. Such a delusion ensnared men as diverse as Luther and Rousseau, and Hegel and Marx. Philosophically, there is indeed no unlimited freedom. But we have seen that there is one freedom which can be defined without contradiction, and which can therefore be an end in itself. This is freedom of thought and speech. The right to dissent.

FROM OUR READERS...

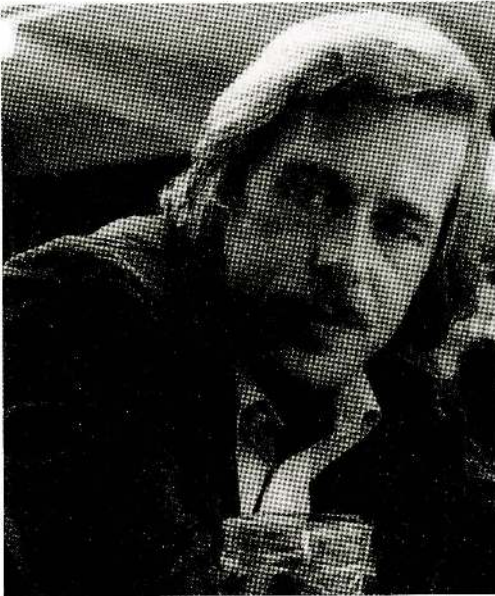
The articles in the *Value of Dissent* issues are interesting, informative, well researched and straight to the point. More grease to your elbow. As a freelance journalist and currently a postgraduate student, I hope to use and employ the information therein for the benefits of greater majority of the people of Nigeria and beyond, their education and those in authority. It might create a better world, hence, my undivided support for the defence and promotion of Human Rights, no matter where.

- Journalist and postgraduate
student from Nigeria

Vaclav Havel

JAILED FOR THE TRUTH

Czech playwright Vaclav Havel (1936-) was a co-founder of the human rights organization Charter 77, and a member of VONS (Committee for the Defence of the Unjustly Persecuted). In 1979 he was jailed for four and a half years for these activities, and his work banned. He was again imprisoned for four months in February 1989 for participating in a demonstration to commemorate the death of Czech martyr Jan Palach in 1969. Within a year, he then became president of Czechoslovakia. The following are excerpts from an interview with Havel in 1983, just after his release from almost four years in prison. This was translated by Index on Censorship from a French interview by Anthony Spire published in the newspaper Le Monde, France.



Vaclav Havel

For several years I was forced to live in an environment where every effort was made to break people, systematically to get them to inform on others and to act selfishly: in an atmosphere of fear and intrigue, of mindless discipline and arbitrary bullying, degradation and deliberate insult, being at the same time deprived of even the simplest positive

emotional, sensual or spiritual experience, like let us say a pretty picture, a kind word, or a sincere hand clasp. Again and again I became aware that prison was not intended merely to deprive a man of a few years of his life and make him suffer for that length of time: it was rather intended to mark him for life, destroy his personality, score his heart in such a way that it would never heal completely. Prison thus seems to me something like a futurological laboratory of totalitarianism.

I wasn't even allowed to have a notebook or paper, much less to make notes. I was once even punished when they found me in possession of some drafts of letters I had legally sent home. The one thing they did not — and could not — stop me doing was to write the officially permitted, naturally censored, letters to my wife. That was my legal right: one letter a week, four pages of standard writing paper, written in a legible hand and within the prescribed margins. There are some 165 of those letters lying here. Writing them was my greatest joy, it made some sense of my incarceration, and in them I tried — under circumstances so difficult that I can't adequately describe them to you — to develop wider themes, topics which I was often forced to think about in prison like the problem of man's identity and responsibility, of our horizon, and so on. This, too, they forbade for some time, many of my letters weren't allowed through since they were supposed to concern exclusively 'family matters' — but in the end they somehow came to accept it.

I am a writer, writing what I want to write and not what others might like me to, and if I get involved in any other way except by my writing, then it is only because I feel this to be my natural human and civic duty, as well as my duty as a writer. That is, my duty as a public figure on whom it is incumbent, just because he is known to the public, to express his views more loudly than those who are not so well known. Not because he is more clever or more important than anyone else but simply because he is, whether he likes it or not, in a different position and possessed of a different responsibility. Even though I naturally do have my own opinions on a variety of issues, I don't

hold with any particular ideology, doctrine or, even less, any political party or faction. I serve no one — much less any superpower. If I serve anything, then only my own conscience. I am neither a Communist nor an anti-Communist, and if I criticize my government, then it is not because it happens to be a Communist government, but because it is bad. I am not on the side of any establishment, nor am I a professional campaigner against any establishment — I merely take the side of truth against lies, the side of sense against nonsense, the side of justice against injustice.

FROM OUR READERS...

The Value of Dissent is well-presented, interesting and an eye-opener. A commendable attempt to enlighten even those in authority.

- Reader from Thambiluvil, Eastern Province

Wei Jingsheng

THE IMPORTANCE OF CRITICISM AND DISCUSSION

Wei Jingsheng was an electrician at Beijing Zoo when he became the editor of the Chinese journal Exploration. He soon rose to public prominence, becoming one of the leading campaigners in the "democracy movement" that started in late 1978.

He achieved international fame for his huge Dazibao (wall poster) entitled "Democracy: The Fifth Modernization," in which he argued that the government's official policy of "The Four Modernizations" — designed to introduce far-reaching economic changes — was doomed to failure without a fifth: political change.

In March 1979 he was arrested for counter-revolutionary activities and sentenced later that year to 15 years in prison. For most of that period he was reportedly held in solitary confinement. His health deteriorated dramatically. He was released by the Chinese government in 1997 to go for medical treatment in the US, where he now lives in exile.

At his trial, Wei gave a brilliant and courageous speech in his own defense, an illicit transcript of which was published in a Chinese dissident magazine April Fifth Forum. In the following extracts, Wei demonstrates how the suppression of dissent perverts the meaning of terms like "revolutionary" and "counter-revolutionary" and why open political debate is essential to the modernization of his country. He vociferously refuses to accept any political theory as immutable, openly invites criticism of his own theories, and warns that it is freely expressed popular criticism of the government which acts as a safeguard for wise reform.

The indictment states that I carried out counter-revolutionary propaganda and agitation, and describes my essays,

“Democracy: The Fifth Modernization,” etc., as reactionary articles. Likewise our publication *Exploration* is referred to as reactionary. In view of this, we must first make it clear what is meant by such terms as “reactionary,” “counter-revolutionary” and “revolutionary.”

As a result of the influence of all those years of cultural autocracy, and the obscurantist policy of keeping the people in a state of blind ignorance in the “Gang of Four” era, there are even now people whose outlook is that if one does things exactly in accordance with the will of the leadership currently in power, this is what is meant by being “revolutionary,” whereas to run counter to the will of those currently in power is counter-revolutionary. I cannot agree with such a vulgar debasement of the concept of revolution. The term “revolutionary” entails following a course of action whereby one moves with the current of historical development, and strives to remove all that is old and conservative blocking and impeding the onward flow of history. Revolution is the struggle of new phenomena against old phenomena. To attach the label of perpetual revolution to the will and ambition of those currently in power is tantamount to stifling all diversity of thought; “Power is Truth.” Such a vulgarization of the concept of revolution served as one of the most effective tools with which the “Gang of Four” suppressed anything remotely revolutionary and crushed the people into the ground for more than twenty years.

Now allow me to turn to the term “counter-revolutionary,” and its valid and proper frame of reference. Strictly speaking, the term implies a historical approach to the examination of the political concept to be applied to a given problem. In the realm of politics there is no immutable concept, and at different historical periods, because the revolutionary trends or currents are different, each conception of the word counter-revolutionary differs, as indeed do the phenomena to which the term is applied. If one particular conception of the term (valid for one particular period) is made the norm, the result can only be the arbitrary attaching of labels to the wrong people. Even in times

of revolution itself, because of the limits of the levels of understanding among the populace, there arise a number of conflicting interpretations of this one word counter-revolutionary. To use this term as immutable political concept for assessing the guilt of those charged with crimes is like using the willow catkins floating in the breeze as a device for assessing altitude. This is the reason behind the great number of injustices, wrongs, and misjudged cases which have arisen in this country over the past 30 years.

At this stage in the development of Chinese society, her population is confronted with the following problem: Unless there is a reform of the social system, accompanied by the eradication of the social origins of the dictatorial fascist autocracy, together with a thorough implementation of democracy and guarantee of the people's democratic rights, then Chinese society will be unable to advance and the socialist modernization of the country be incapable of achievement.

The central argument of those articles of mine, such as "Democracy: The Fifth Modernization," is that without democracy there will be no Four Modernizations; without the fifth modernization, or democracy, any talk of modernization will remain an empty lie. How does such an argument constitute counter-revolution? Surely it is those very people who oppose democracy who should be included in the counter-revolutionary category? Naturally I do not claim that the grounds of my argument and its thesis are always perfectly correct. They too must await the ultimate test of historical practice. They too must undergo all manner of criticism from every quarter, for only then can they be made more accurate.

I recognize nothing in this world as constantly immutable, nor any theory as absolutely correct. All ideological theory is relative, for within its existing context it contains elements of relative truth and, conversely, elements of relative absurdity. At one given time and in one given situation it may be a relatively accurate theory, whereas at another given time and situation it can be relatively preposterous. In the face of certain data it may

be a correct theory, while in the face of different data it may appear absurd.

There is no need for me to refute item by item in the list of charges in the indictment those places where the prosecution quotes me out of context. I would only point out two things. First, the constitution grants citizens the right to criticize their leaders, because these leaders are not gods. It is only through the people's criticism and supervision that those leaders will make fewer mistakes, and only in this way that the people will avoid the misfortune of having their lords and masters ride roughshod over them. Then, and only then, will the people be able to breathe freely. Secondly, if we wish to carry out the reform of our nation's socialist system we must base this on the entire population using the methods of criticism and discussion to find out the defects in the present system; otherwise reforms cannot be successfully carried out.

FROM OUR READERS... (translated from Sinhala)

I believe that illuminating publications like these perform a fruitful service by bringing about even a small change in the understanding and the beliefs of those who consider themselves intellectuals, but hold onto narrow attitudes and worthless beliefs.

- Reader from Kurunegala

Bram Fischer (1908-1975)

WHEN LAWS BECOME IMMORAL

Bram Fischer was a well-known white anti-apartheid activist in South Africa. He was the son of a leading Boer statesman, and a Rhodes scholar at Oxford. A top barrister, he was the main defence lawyer in many major political trials in South Africa, including the famous Rivonia trial of Nelson Mandela and others. By then, Fischer was himself a member of the banned South African Communist Party, for which he was arrested in 1964.

Granted bail, Fischer went underground to continue his political work until his recapture in November 1965. Given a life sentence, he spent nine years in prison where he underwent great suffering; a fractured thigh bone was not diagnosed for many days, and he developed cancer. Ultimately he was released to house arrest when his death was imminent.

The excerpts below are from Bram Fischer's 1966 speech from the dock at his own trial. At the end a background note is provided on South Africa's history, the resistance to apartheid, and the recent peace and reconciliation process.

I am on trial, my Lord, for my political beliefs and for the conduct which those beliefs drove me to. My Lord, whatever labels may have been attached to the fifteen charges brought against me, they all arise from my having been a member of the Communist Party



Joel Joffe (lawyer on defence team), Himie Bernadi (lawyer friend of Bram) and Bram Fischer on their way to consult with prisoners on Robben Island after the Rivonia Trial, 22 June 1964.

and from my activities as a member. I engaged upon those activities because I believed that, in the dangerous circumstances which have been created in South Africa, it was my duty to do so.

My Lord, when a man is on trial for his political beliefs and actions, two courses are open to him. He can either confess to his transgressions and plead for mercy, or he can justify his beliefs and explain why he has acted as he did. Were I to ask for forgiveness today, I would betray my cause. That course, my Lord, is not open to me. I believe that what I did was right, and I must therefore explain to your Lordship what my motives were; why I hold the beliefs that I do, and why I was compelled to act in accordance with them.

My belief, moreover, my Lord, is one reason why I have pleaded not guilty to all the charges brought against me. Though I shall deny a number of important allegations, this Court is aware of the fact that there is much in the State case which has not been contested. Yet, if I am to explain my motives and actions as clearly as I am able, then this Court was entitled to have had before it the witnesses who testified in chief and in cross-examination against me. Some of these, my Lord, I believe were fine and loyal persons who have now turned traitor to their cause, and to their country, because of the methods used against them by the State. Their evidence, my Lord, therefore may in important respects be very unreliable.

My Lord, there is another reason, and a more compelling reason for my plea and why even now I persist in it. I accept, my Lord, the general rule that for the protection of a society laws should be obeyed. But when the laws themselves become immoral, and require the citizen to take part in an organized system of oppression — if only by his silence and apathy — then I believe that a higher duty arises. This compels one to refuse to recognize such laws.

The law, my Lord, under which I have been prosecuted, was enacted by a wholly unrepresentative body, a body in which three-quarters of the people of this country have no voice

whatever. This and other laws were enacted not to prevent the spread of Communism, but, my Lord, for the purpose of silencing the opposition of the large majority of our citizens to a government intent upon depriving them, solely on account of their colour, of the most elementary human rights: of the right to freedom and happiness, the right to live together with their families wherever they might choose, to earn their livelihoods to the best of their abilities, and to rear and educate their children in a civilized fashion; to take part in the administration of their country and to obtain a fair share of the wealth they produce; in short, my Lord, to live as human beings.

My conscience, my Lord, does not permit me to afford these laws such recognition as even a plea of guilty would involve. Hence, though I shall be convicted by this Court, I cannot plead guilty. I believe that the future may well say that I acted correctly.

Later on, Fischer speaks of the price individuals have paid in solitary confinement, including three suicides. He continues:

My Lord, these are the facts all should know. They bring shame to this country. Few whites recognize them. Most accept the application of the 180-day rule like the 90-day rule¹, as if it were normal. But the facts remain, my Lord, and they have resulted in a distortion of the administration of justice. In these circumstances it changes its character, ceases to have integrity, it becomes an inquisition. It leads to the total extinction of freedom. It adds immeasurably to race hatred.

Fischer was certain that change would come; to him the sole question was whether it could be brought about peacefully without bloodshed. Fischer's passionate concern was the danger of impending violence in the country and how to avoid it. South Africa was set on the path of civil war; whatever the outcome, the consequence would be "horrificing and permanent." He said:

¹ In 1962 a law provided for 12 days detention without trial at the discretion of the police. The next year this became 90 days, and later 6 months.

Clearly it is imperative that an alternative solution be found, for in truth, civil war is no solution at all.

Bram Fischer explained why he had broken the terms of his bail and gone underground. He pointed out that, had he wished, he could easily have stayed in England, where he had been allowed to go to appear in a Privy Council case. But he came back, believing that as an Afrikaner he had a particular responsibility to speak out clearly against all the evils and humiliations of apartheid.

Surely, my Lord, in these circumstances there was an additional duty cast upon me, that at least one Afrikaner should make this protest actively and positively... My Lord, it was to keep faith with all those dispossessed by apartheid that I broke my undertaking to the Court, that I separated myself from my family, pretended that I was someone else, and accepted the life of a fugitive. I owed it to the political prisoners, to the banished, to the silenced, and to those under house arrest not to remain a spectator, but to act.

The end of his speech is a supreme example of individual courage, and the expression of hope in an apparently hopeless situation. Events many years later proved Bram Fischer's hope justified, but sadly he did not live to see how truly prophetic his words proved. He said:

All the conduct, my Lord, with which I have been charged, has been directed towards maintaining contact and understanding between the races of this country. If one day it may help to establish a bridge across which white leaders and the real leaders of the non-whites can meet to settle the destinies of all of us by negotiation, and not by force of arms, I shall be able to bear with fortitude any sentence which this Court may impose on me. It will be a fortitude, my Lord, strengthened by this knowledge at least, that for the past twenty-five years I have taken no part, not even by passive acceptance, in that hideous system of discrimination which we have erected in this country, and which has become a by-word in the civilized world.

My Lord, in prophetic words, in February 1881 one of the great Afrikaner leaders addressed the President and the Volksraad of the Free State.

His words are inscribed on the base of the statue of President Kruger in the square in front of this Court. After great agony and suffering, after two wars, they were eventually fulfilled without violence. President Kruger's words were:

Met vertrouwen leggen wy onze zaak open voor de geheele wereld. Het zy wy overwinnen, het zy wy sterven: de vryheid zal in Afrika ryzen als de zon uit de morewolken.

[With confidence we lay our case open before the whole world. Whether we conquer or whether we die: freedom shall rise in Africa like the sun from the morning clouds.]

In the meaning which those words bear in the context today, they are as truly prophetic as they were in 1881. My motive in all that I have done has been to prevent a repetition of that unnecessary and futile anguish which has already been suffered in one struggle for freedom.

Bram Fischer's biographer² comments:

Bram ended as quietly as he had begun... The South African newspapers, given the right of judicial access, summarized and excerpted his speech at some length. Yet as soon as the trial was over his words became restricted by virtue of his banning, as deeply illicit as any in South Africa. His address from the dock became unavailable, left resonating only in the silence. Yet one day there would be a bridge across which white leaders and the leaders of the South African majority would meet to settle the destinies of all by negotiation and not force of arms. Though Bram would not be there to see it, perhaps his life and affirmation of solidarity here had helped fashion that bridge.

2 Stephen Clingman, *Bram Fischer: Afrikaner Revolutionary*, 1998, Capetown: David Philip; Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press.

THE STRUGGLE FOR PEACE AND FREEDOM IN SOUTH AFRICA

- a background note

South Africa, like Sri Lanka, was colonized by the Portuguese, the Dutch and the British in turn. The form that colonization took, however, was very different. European colonization in South Africa was settler colonialism (like in Australia and the Americas) where the Europeans settled permanently in the country, which they considered their home, developing over time their own separate identity. The Europeans of Dutch descent who settled in South Africa became known as Boers (Dutch for 'farmers'). They called themselves 'Afrikaner.' They developed their own Dutch-based language called Afrikaans, not to be confused with the indigenous languages of which there are many in South Africa.

The Dutch first came to South Africa in 1652, just seven years before they replaced the Portuguese in Sri Lanka. The British entered South Africa in 1795, the same year they took over from the Dutch in Sri Lanka. South Africa was a country rich in natural resources. Tensions then grew between the British and the Boer/Afrikaner settlers, fuelled by the discovery of gold in 1886.

Afrikaner nationalism and British imperialism clashed at the turn of the nineteenth century; the resulting Boer War lasted three years, with Britain the victor. This was a cruel war for the Afrikaner and British fighters, and the indigenous black South Africans, used by both sides, suffered even more.

Black South Africans were allowed no part in the founding of the Union of South Africa in 1910, nor in its transition to an independent republic in 1961. In 1909 black South Africans unsuccessfully petitioned the British Parliament against approving the constitution for the Union as long as it excluded non-whites from participation in governance.

The Boers, many of whom were left destitute by the Boer War, continued to organize politically within the Union through the National Party. This party won the 1948 election, in which only the minority whites voted, and it shaped the structure and politics of South Africa until the New South Africa of the 1990s.

The National Party set about the construction and imposition of the infamous apartheid system. It sought to separate Whites, 'Coloureds' (mixed race), Asians, and Blacks, in all spheres of life and activity, and reserve the sphere of power and governance, and most privileges, for "Whites only." Not only was public interaction between races prevented, e.g. segregated restaurants and cinemas — private life was regulated, with intermarriage outlawed. The worst restrictions for the 'non-whites' of South Africa came from the "Group Areas Act," which resulted in hundreds of thousands being forcibly evicted from their homes and moved to designated areas, and the hated "Pass Laws." The Pass Laws controlled movement in and out of urban areas, for Blacks, though not allowed to reside in, had to work at low wages to clean and service these areas for the Whites. This meant long, arduous daily journeys, and constant harassment by white security forces — with millions arrested, detained and mistreated under these laws over a period of almost thirty years.

African decolonization in the 1950s and '60s, along with solidarity movements, resulted in growing international pressure on the white government of South Africa. However, in response apartheid was only deepened by the creation of ostensibly 'independent homelands' or *bantustans* for the different indigenous

communities. Families were again forcibly moved, to even worse land, and denied citizenship of South Africa. These 'homelands' had puppet governments controlled by the South African government. Thus most men lived in miserable shantytown lodges outside cities, while their family were hundreds of miles away, isolated and impoverished.

The African National Congress (ANC), the largest opposition party from 1912, along with other groups organized continual agitation campaigns against these unjust laws. The ANC had a programme of civil disobedience (like that of Gandhi in India), organizing mass strikes and stay-at-homes. By 1956 the ANC, in a broad multi-racial alliance, united diverse opposition behind the "Freedom Charter," the famous anti-apartheid declaration. State banning orders made membership and support for certain organizations illegal, and restricted banned individuals to particular areas and activities. In 1956, 156 leaders of the Freedom Charter groups were arrested for High Treason, and through strong legal defence eventually acquitted. But as resistance mounted among Black communities, state repression further increased.

The next thirty years saw a bloody internal conflict in South Africa. In March 1960 the world was shocked when South African security forces opened fire on an unarmed crowd in Sharpeville, killing 67 Africans and wounding 186.

Nelson Mandela, President of the banned ANC, went underground after the Treason trial. In 1961 the ANC executive, which had always embraced non-violence principles, after much debate inaugurated a military wing headed by Mandela, though civilian non-violent protest would remain primary. In the significant 1963 Rivonia trial, all the accused were sentenced to life imprisonment. It was an achievement of the defence that the death penalty was not imposed. Nelson Mandela and his black colleagues were sent to the notorious Robben Island Prison, where they remained until the extraordinary South African peace process brought their freedom and Robben Island was turned into a Reconciliation Centre and Museum.

"Free Mandela!" was chanted and sung outside South African embassies throughout the world during the 1980s, and international pressure on the apartheid regime increased. The ANC had called upon the people to make South Africa ungovernable and they did. The government made several conditional offers of freedom to Mandela, but he rejected them, maintaining that he would not be free until ALL South Africans were free. These overtures gave Mandela the chance to secretly begin exploring the possibility of negotiation with the government, since it was clear to him that neither side could win the intensifying conflict. Thus the man who had initiated the ANC's military wing became the architect of peace. During these secret talks about talks between the National Party and the ANC, violence was at its height. After four years of secret talks and a change of President in South Africa, Mandela was free in 1990.

Mandela joined an ANC leadership that was in danger of being divided between those who feared and those who welcomed his openings with the South African Government. The mass of ANC supporters also had to be convinced that negotiations with the Nationalist government could mean a new future and not a sell-out. It was two years from Mandela's release until the start of the public negotiations process. The process was a compromise between the all-party convention the Nationalists wanted and the one-person-one-vote assembly which the ANC desired.

April 1994 saw the first election under universal suffrage, with Nelson Mandela becoming the first President. While Mandela and the leader of the white

Nationalist Party, De Klerk, jointly received the Nobel peace prize, thousands of people contributed to the creation of the new South Africa, many with their lives. Without the struggle for justice, in all its manifestations, it is unlikely that Nelson Mandela could have negotiated successfully. It is a measure of him and the leadership of the ANC that they recognized and seized the moment to move towards negotiation. Similarly the National leadership rejected the bunker mentality and responded, and both camps maintained a commitment to peace that overcame the considerable obstacles between them, even when it looked rather hopeless. The peace process was delivered by an army of peaceworkers and committed South Africans.

The new government took office but not in triumphalism. They celebrated in a spirit of reconciliation which worked hard to bring together all the communities of South Africa. Nor did they ask individuals to forget the personal injustices and loss they had suffered. A controversial Truth and Reconciliation Commission heard cases in public so that the truth might be recorded, even if the perpetrators of injustice and death were not sentenced. This gave succour to some whilst others felt that it simply opened old wounds to salt and hurt.

The South African peace process is seen as one of the most successful of recent years. Though the end of apartheid enfranchised all citizens of South Africa, it could not be expected to provide answers to all of the country's problems. Six years later violence is rife and poverty is still endemic in the black community despite the efforts of the ANC government. Peace is not a panacea — it merely enables communities to begin tackling problems together. But at least peace has enabled the communities to start this task, and given space for dissent and freedom to flower.

Charles Abeysekera 1926-1998

IN MEMORIAM

It is with deep sorrow that we record the death of Charles Abeysekera, one of the initiators of *The Value of Dissent*, and a member of the editorial board.

A dedicated member of the Civil Rights Movement of Sri Lanka, Charles also served on its Working Committee. Some of his outstanding characteristics were his wide knowledge, versatility, and wise judgment. He was, in particular, a defender of the rights of the nonconformist in



society; this is, no doubt, why the concept of CRM's Value of Dissent project appealed to him so much. It was no surprise to the other editors when Charles insisted that "On Individuality" HAD to be the first piece of John Stuart Mill's writings used (see Issue 2 of *The Value of Dissent*) in preference to other better-known passages.

Charles Abeysekera was passionately committed to freedom of thought and expression, and to the value of tolerance. Often we genuinely believe in certain values but in our conduct fall short when it comes to putting them into practice. It is not uncommon for the most eloquent exponents of freedom of speech and conscience to become impatient, and even scornful, of those who think differently to them on some subject or other. But in the case of Charles Abeysekera, his

beliefs were always reflected in his very manner and approach to his fellow human beings. He would participate in the most difficult of discussions, on the most controversial of issues, and always remain not merely calm and collected, but also with foremost respect for the inherent right to hold other viewpoints. This meant that when he did intervene in a discussion, his interventions had a particular effectiveness and value: based on his wide experience and deep and varied knowledge, reflecting the special wisdom with which he was blessed, and always imbued with a genuine respect for the right of others to differ.

Charles Abeysekera's name continues to feature as a member of the editorial board of this and the next issue of *The Value of Dissent*, as the main work on them, including selection of texts, was done earlier with his participation. CRM is pleased to think that his spirit lives on through these booklets.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Ken Saro-Wiwa poems had not been published elsewhere when we first received them through Mandy Garner of the PEN Writers in Prison Committee, London, via Index on Censorship. Copyright is now with the Executors of the Estate of the late Ken Saro-Wiwa, whose permission to reproduce was obtained.

The excerpt from Milinda Prasna is reprinted with permission from *The Buddhist Outlook-Collected Writings*, Vol. 1, by Francis Story (The Anagarika Sugatananda), Kandy, Sri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society, 1993. "The Emperor's New Clothes" is from *Complete Fairy Tales and Stories* by Hans Christian Andersen, copyright 1974 by Erik Haugaard, and used by permission of Doubleday, a division of Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, Inc.

The excerpt by Bronowski and Mazlish from *The Western Intellectual Tradition* is published by arrangement with HarperCollins Publishers Inc., 10 East 53rd Street, New York, New York 10022. Wei Jingsheng's speech is reprinted with permission from: *The Democracy Reader*, edited by Diane Ravitch and Abigail Thernstrom, published in 1992 by HarperCollins Publishers.

Thanks to *Conscience Be My Guide* editor Geoffrey Bould of Zed Books, London, for Vaclav Havel's article (extracted from *INDEX on Censorship*, 6/1983). The extracts from Bram Fischer's speech are from Stephen Clingman's biography, *Bram Fischer: Afrikaner Revolutionary* (published by: University of Massachusetts Press, Amherst; David Philip, Cape Town; and Mayibuye Books, University of the Western Cape, Belville), and from the trial record. The accompanying photographs (Cape Times, and Eli Weinberg) are from the same book and are reproduced with the kind permission of the author and publisher.

Most of the other photographs in this issue were from *INDEX on Censorship*; Ken Saro-Wiwa's full-length photo was

taken by Mac Davis Ajibade in May 1993, and the photographer for Havel was Ivan Kyncl. Thanks to Louise Spierer for contributing the Wegener article and obtaining permission for the photographs (by Dr J. Georgi) of Wegener from the Royal Geographical Society, London. Special thanks to Stephen Clingman, author of the biography *Bram Fischer: Afrikaner Revolutionary*, for all his extra assistance with the excerpts from Bram Fischer's speech from the dock.

May Yee copy-edited and helped with numerous other editorial tasks in finalizing this issue for publication.

The CRM logo on the back cover is by Richard Gabriel.

CRM is once again indebted to Index on Censorship for its encouragement and practical support.

DO YOU HAVE THE EARLIER 4 ISSUES OF THE VALUE OF DISSENT?

Featured in *The Value of Dissent 1* are the 19th-century physician Dr Snow whose research halted the spread of cholera, the humble servant in Shakespeare's *King Lear* who spoke out against evil, and Gautama Buddha's wise counsel on the importance of thinking for oneself. There are extracts from E.M. Forster on democracy (1939), Judge Louis Brandeis on freedom of speech (1927), and Adam Michnik's "Letters from Prison (1983)." Writing for this publication in 1992, Stephen Spender shares with us his concern for the future of democracy in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. There is also an introduction by CRM which describes the aims of the series.

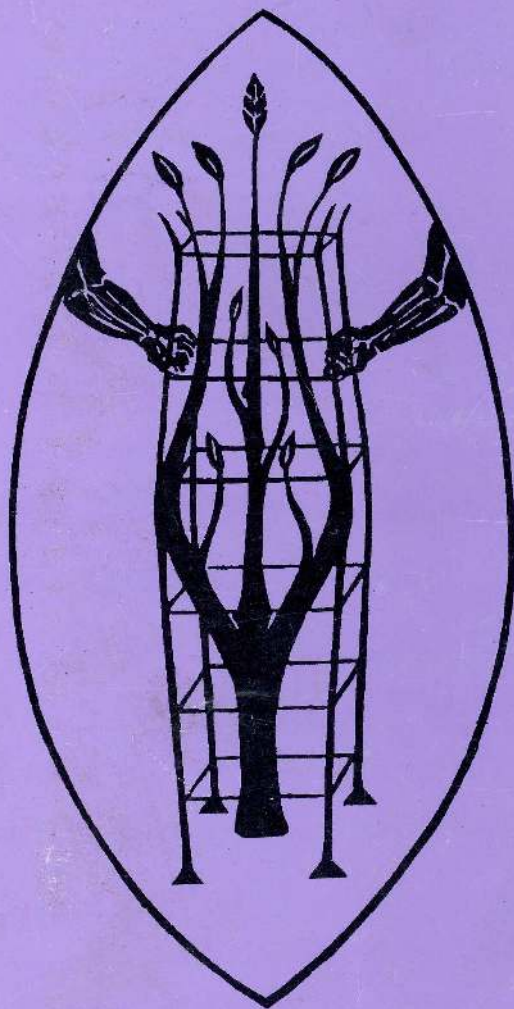
The Value of Dissent 2 describes how Galileo Galilei's 17th-century theory, that the sun and not the earth was the centre of the universe, set him on a course of conflict with the Catholic Church which was not officially ended until 1992. It quotes former Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru on the meaning of civil liberty, and the thoughts of radical 19th-century philosopher John Stuart Mill on individuality. The issue also features the most brilliant woman in the Marxist movement, Rosa Luxemburg, on what constitutes freedom, the contemporary thoughts of Robert E. Mutch on political tolerance, and a moving statement against slavery by Mark Twain in the immortal adventures of Huckleberry Finn.

In *The Value of Dissent 3* extracts from the White Rose leaflets relate how a small group of activists refused to share their fellow citizens' passivity towards the Nazi regime and paid for it with their lives, and a background note sketches how Hitler and his Nazi party came to power in pre-World War II Germany. Bertrand Russell considers some obstacles to free thought; then Aung San Suu Kyi discusses Burmese society in terms of the corrupting effect of fear, in contrast with democracy which acknowledges the right to differ. Chinese scientist Fang Lizhi is quoted on political reform, science, and democracy; while Raymond Williams points to the need for many voices as a condition for cultural health in any society. Excerpts from speeches of the zealous 19th-century reformer and anti-slavery

campaigner Wendell Phillips complete this issue. The introduction by CRM shows how these ideas are as relevant in Asia as in any other part of the world.

Don't miss *The Value of Dissent 4*, in which Stephen C. Neff emphasizes the importance of upholding the rule of law in states of emergencies; while CRM co-founder S. Nadesan QC tells a humorous story of the value of tolerance and free exchange of conflicting ideas in an imaginary constitutional debate. The popular US 'dissident' Noam Chomsky reflects on the success and failure of US anti-war protests; and Soli J. Sorabjee, a former Attorney-General of India, writes that tolerance is the basis of a democratic and pluralist society and reminds us that the heresy of one age has often become the orthodoxy of the next. Marianne Semmel, a distinguished virologist, attests to the value of non-conformism in science, citing examples of scientists who differed or went along with official dogma. The Polish poet Czeslaw Milosz, accepting the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1980, spoke of the obligation poetry has to reality and language over political loyalty; and David Boulton uncovers a forgotten Czech leader in Dr Frantisek Kriegel, a Communist veteran who refused to sign the protocol that led to the reversal of reforms and the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968.

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Rs. 20. Mail order: 31 Charles Place, Colombo 3.



ISBN 955-9277-04-9

Digitized by Noolaham Foundation.
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Printed by Karunaratne & Sons Ltd.