

Saturday Review

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Sri Lankan perceptions of Indian Elections

The dates for the elections to the Indian Lower House of Parliament have now been announced. The elections will be held on the 24th. and 27th. of December, for 515 of the 542 seats in the Lok Sabha. There will be no elections for the 27 seats which are in the States of Punjab and Assam.

From the beginning of this year speculations about the timing and the outcome of the elections to the Lok Sabha in India have been a part of all discussions concerning the national question in Sri Lanka. Now that the dates of the elections have been formally announced, such speculations are likely to increase in the coming period. The fact that the forthcoming elections are to be held so soon after the tragic death of Mrs. Indira Gandhi will provide more political grist to the speculative mills.

Already the TULF leader, Mr. Amirthalingam, has criticised the month long postponement of the All Party Conference and expressed his feeling that the Sri Lankan Government would resort to procrastination until the Indian elections are concluded. Mr. Amirthalingam would appear to be implying that in the Government's consideration it could afford to assume a more intransigent posture once the Indian elections are over. In other

words, a new government in Delhi, soon after its victory, would be less inclined to yield to the pressures of the Tamil Nadu electorate to play an active role in the resolution of the ethnic conflict.

For their part the government spokesmen have tended to attribute the current spate of violence to a plan to create, on the eve of the Indian elections, chaos in the island and provoke communal violence to attract international attention and even foreign intervention. Further, Colombo circles seem to opine that the perpetrators of violence here have the support of the DMK, the main opposition party in Tamil Nadu, and that the latter is seeking to gain electoral mileage in India through political violence here.

But it is unlikely that the Sri Lankan problem will become an issue at the forthcoming elections to the Lok Sabha and the State Assembly in Tamil Nadu. It will be recalled that the DMK chose to avoid making the Sri Lankan problem an issue in the by-elections held earlier in the year. In the coming elections the party will be constrained by its alliance with the other national opposition parties to fight the Congress (I) - ADMK combination.

Tamil Nadu has always been a 'safe state' for Mrs.

Gandhi and the Congress (I) in the Lok Sabha elections whether in alliance with the DMK or in alliance with the ADMK. The Tamil Nadu voters show a preference to vote for the Congress (I) at the Centre and vote independently, irrespective of the alliance with Congress (I), either for the ADMK or DMK to form a government at the State. Since 1967 the Congress (I) has opted to refrain from vying for power in the State. In the coming elections the Congress (I) will field 26 candidates and ADMK 13 for the 39 seats in the Lok Sabha, while ADMK will be contesting 155 of the 234 seats in the State Assembly.

tend to concentrate on domestic issues.

Mr. Rajiv Gandhi has already declared in his address to the Nation that "Jawaharlal Nehru bequeathed to us a foreign policy which Indira Gandhi so creatively enriched. I shall carry it forward". In the same speech he expressed concern that India's "security environment has been vitiated. Sophisticated arms have been inducted on a large scale into (our) neighbourhood and into the Indian Ocean". A few days after his address to the nation, the new Prime Minister expressed grave concern at the developing situation in Nicaragua and said,

by our Political Correspondent

The Congress (I) which would be sailing through the elections on the wave of genuine popular sympathy for its slain leader, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, will have no compulsion to make the Sri Lankan problem a campaign issue. But it may come up during the course of the election campaign as part of a general foreign policy issue. The Congress (I) will endeavour to exploit to the fullest the legacy of Mrs. Indira Gandhi's successful foreign policy, while the opposition parties would

in his concurrent capacity as Chairman of the Non-aligned Movement, that "we hope for an early easing of tensions in the area and the resumption of a process of discussion and negotiation so that the understanding and accords can be worked out which would ensure that the countries of the region live in peace and decide their own future free from outside intervention and interference".

Even in regard to the Sri Lankan problem India has always expressed concern over inducting foreign assis-

tance to deal with a purely domestic problem. India offered to make its good offices available to bring the parties to the issue to the Conference Table only with the consent of the Sri Lankan Government. This was in August, 1983 when Indira Gandhi made clear indication of India's concern, in a speech in the Rajya Sabha "This is the fourth successive week that the sorrow and concern felt in our country over the tragic development in Sri Lanka have found expression in Parliament. The agony of our brothers and sisters in Tamil Nadu is the agony of the entire nation. The debate in this House today shows that it is not in any one part of the country or of the political spectrum that deep feelings have been aroused, but in our entire nation beyond party differences... We are closely watching the situation and hope that with the support of Parliament and the Indian people we shall be able to bring about an atmosphere more conducive to negotiations. This will be a first step to eliminate communal tension and lead to concrete measures which can ensure a political settlement."

The new Prime Minister Mr. Rajiv Gandhi has gone further and said that the problem of Sri Lankan Tamils "was relevant not only to Tamil Nadu, but also to

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APPRECIATION

Mr. V. Singaravelu

To everyone who knew Mr. V. Singaravelu the sad news of his untimely death came as a profound shock. A deeply religious man with unflinching belief in Lord Muruga, he breathed his last with 'Muruga' on his lips.

Mr. Singaravelu joined the clerical service in his early twenties, served in the Sri Lankan Embassy in Indonesia and later passed the Sri Lanka Administrative Service examination to become Assistant Government Agent, first at Chedikulam for a couple of years and later at the Mullaitivu District where he served until his death.

All aspects of his versatile character were reflected in an earthly, sensitive and humane personality. He mingled easily with his friends, colleagues and the

100 CIA CENTRES

The US Central intelligence Agency (CIA) has set up training centres in Pakistan for agents to subvert the Afghan and Indian governments, the Czechoslovak news agency *Ceteka* said recently.

In a report from Kabul, the agency said the CIA had plans to split up Afghanistan and India into smaller States and increase US influence in the region.

Ceteka has already suggested that CIA operations

lay behind the killing of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi.

The agency spoke of "the formation of a net of paramilitary centres for training subversive and terrorist units in the Eastern and Western border regions of Pakistan."

It said the U.S. press had characterised this as one of the most extensive covert CIA operations, but referred only to one publication the magazine *Counterspy*.

Ceteka quoted *Counterspy* as saying more than hundred

ed training centres had been set up in Baluchistan and North West Frontier Provinces and dozens more in Pakistani Punjab and Pakistan occupied Kashmir.

C. I. A. Man for V. O. A

Sri Lankans, whose current government has allowed the Voice of America to make our country its main propaganda base in the Indian Ocean region, should note that the new director of the VOA appointed recently by the Reagan administration is EUGENE PELL, a diehard crusader against the socialist and developing countries.

Mr. Pell is notorious for his long and close associations with the C.I.A.

A tool in the U.S. cold war, the V.O.A. has been used to interfere in the internal affairs of other countries, poison the international atmosphere by actively promoting tensions between states, spread disinformation and calumny, and promote destabilisation and subversion of governments of which the U.S. does not approve.

Mr. Pell's appointment will ensure greater co-ordination between the U.S. main propaganda arm (VOA) and subversive arm (CIA) in the international arena.

Better look at the Dis-similarities —Mrs. B.

Question: "President Jayewardene has drawn certain parallels between the events that took place in India after Mrs.

Gandhi's assassination and the events which followed the murders of 13 soldiers in Sri Lanka last year. Do you agree with the parallels drawn by the President?

Answer: What took place in India after Mrs. Gandhi's murder was not premeditated. I think it is more apt to look at the dis-similarities rather than the similarities. The newly-appointed Indian Premier, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi, went to the public immediately calling on the country to maintain calm and quiet. He even toured the affected areas even against security advice. In Sri Lanka it took nearly one week for the President to address the nation. Mr. Gandhi launched an immediate inquiry to ascertain whether party members were involved in the incidents which followed. The Chief Ministers from the states who had come to Delhi for the funeral were forthwith requested by Mr. Gandhi to get back to their states and take all necessary steps to bring the situation under control. That is real leadership.

Did we find that here? On the contrary in Sri Lanka, we are known to promote such people. Further Mr. Gandhi had immediately removed several high ranking security personnel for not taking appropriate action to bring the situation under control. Was any such action taken

NSSP ON THE BUDGET

Since 1977, though the UNP practised an open economic policy, they did not follow the World Bank, IMF instructions to the letter. However in this budget the Finance Minister has brought the UNP to 100% IMF line. Except for the devaluation of the rupee, which may still come in the next few weeks, he has implemented all suggestions made by the IMF. Passing the burden on poor masses, cutting state expenditure including reduction in state capital expenditure are the main items that have been included in this budget.

It was claimed by the Finance Minister that development will be directed to most under-developed areas by promoting investment in areas with higher unemployment. It is absurd to assume that the presence of large number of unemployed in an area is an indication of lower level of development. It is on this basis he claimed that Vavuniya is more developed than Gampaha or Kalutara. This kind of stupid thinking will only intensify the anger

among Tamil masses. In fact the whole argument may go the other way round. It may be that masses move into high investment areas in large numbers producing an increase in unemployment.

The Finance Minister finished by hoping that there will be no communal clashes and that poverty will be reduced. Unfortunately with this kind of policy making both these aggravate further. The above mentioned argument on developed and less developed will certainly push the Tamil youth to extreme actions. On the other hand trying to push the private sector for high level of investment on their own is like beating a dead horse. Thus giving them concessions at the expense of poor masses will not bring any development. Instead it will increase poverty and unemployment. Thus this budget will be a further step towards instability and social unrest.

(Excerpted from a Press statement by Dr. Vickramabahu Karunaratne, General Secretary, Nava Sama Samaja Party.)

Lalith on Jackals

When Indira Gandhi was killed, certain people who criticised her strongly, praised her that she was one of the greatest democratic leaders of the world.

—From the speech of Mr. Lalith Athulathmudali at Godawanagoda.

in Sri Lanka? I think it is more appropriate to look at it from that point of view."

(From Mrs. Bandaranaike's interview with 'THE ISLAND')

(The Island, Sunday, 18th Nov. 1984)

Rudra Cheran

8 CONSECUTIVE BUDGETS

NO DAWN IN SIGHT!

by AMALI

The Finance Minister, Mr. Ronnie de Mel presented his budget speech with customary flourish. He was no doubt overwhelmed by the fact that he was presenting his eighth consecutive budget, a feat which may not have been possible but for the undemocratic imposition of a referendum in 1982.

The Minister might be congratulated for his personal achievement of long survival in office. For this he would have been drawing from his rich fund of experience as a Civil Servant in the art and practice of survival. Mr. Ronnie de Mel certainly appears to have made himself indispensable to the U.N.P. Even more importantly he seems to have made a good impression on our international lenders. Above all he is one finance Minister who does not have to worry about the people, given the constitutional capacity of the Government to deal with a hostile electorate. Beyond this, it would be unfair to expect to see in Mr. de Mel's budgets, a personal stamp, the stamp of his own commitment to the development of the economy and the welfare of the people, as one found for instance, in the case of the late Dr. N. M. Perera. One might, perhaps speak of the stamp of Mr. Felix Dias Bandaranaike, even if it be the stamp of notoriety.

There are three aspects of the budget which are of significance without regard to the budgetary proposals. Firstly, the Finance Minister, after seven years of consecutive budgeting, is unable to say that he has resurrected and revived the economy which he found to be at breaking point in 1977, and has brought it closer to the take-off stage. Secondly, the Minister admits not only the serious structural weaknesses in the economy, but more alarmingly, the threat of malnutrition facing a section of the population. Finally the budget has been presented amidst manifest realization of the impact of the exacerbating ethnic conflict on the deteriorating economic situation.

External Debt

The first U.N.P. Budget made a clear break with the past and adopted the

so-called 'outward looking' export-led strategy of economic development and introduced fundamental changes in the form of unification of exchange rates and the floating of the rupee (in other words devaluation pure and simple), the liberalisation of imports and allocation of expenditure for the development of a Free Trade Zone. The budget also provided for the launching of certain lead projects (Mahaweli Development and the Housing Projects) as a means of creating employment. The 'Exchange Reform' and 'Trade Liberalisation Programme' were backed by "Substantial assistance and support made available by the I.M.F., the other international financial institutions and friendly governments". That was the situation in 1977.

Seven years later the Finance Minister, while lamenting that "we have been living beyond our means" leaves no doubt that the worst is yet to come. In his own words "the trend in overseas earnings is that it may not be able by itself to continue to finance a liberal import policy, a high level of investment and an expanding government budget at the same time."

He cannot abandon these policies and continue as the U.N.P. Finance Minister. After all the current economic policies were not adopted for their theoretical or practical soundness or altruistic purposes. They are intended to serve the interests of contractors, commission agents and commercial capitalists.

Increasing reliance on foreign funding is, therefore, bound to become inevitable in the years to come. In typical 'Yes Minister' fashion, the former self of Mr. de Mel sounded a note of warning to his colleagues. He spoke of the rapidly increasing cost of debt servicing, even with the U.N.P.'s 'reasonable access to concessional lending. The external debt service ratio which stood at 19% in 1982 and 22% in 1983 is expected to be 44% in 1987. Naturally the Finance Minister does not want the country

to "imagine that the long night is over and the dawn has come", for he is well on the way to leading the country to the point of spending one half of its total export earnings on external debt service payments. In addition, the Minister fears that future borrowings may entail stringent requirements of the I.M.F.

Disappointing Exports

The present situation would have been disastrous but for the favourable prices our tea exports are currently enjoying, thanks to India's shrinking of its tea exports. And it is this "brief period of respite given by the favourable tea market", which the Finance Minister wants to use for introducing "a series of measures to improve our medium term balance of payments performance, while ensuring a reasonable level of welfare for the people of our country".

But the Minister owes it to the country to explain the failure of its exports. The volume of exports of the three primary products have declined during the past seven years. In the case of tea the quantum of production for the year 1983, namely 179.3 million KGS, is the lowest recorded since 1956.

The Free Trade Zone which was introduced to boost the country's foreign exchange earnings has a heavy concentration of garment industries where the domestic value added is relatively low. The same is true of the petroleum exports. Hence the Finance Minister's dirge: "When one takes into account the high import content in garments and petroleum exports, our export performance since 1977 has been generally disappointing".

It is ironical that the balance of payment crisis should become most acute at a time when the Minister claims that he would be stopping the import of rice, which before 1977, accounted for one eighth of the value of total imports. There has been a reduction in the import of flour after the commencement of the Prima Factory in Trinco-

malee. But is also worthwhile remembering that the country is losing valuable overseas earnings from the export of wheat bran which is the monopoly of Prima Ltd. The world market prices of sugar too have shown favourable trends in recent years unlike in the seventies.

The U.N.P. government's singular contribution to the import structure is to have made it 'oil-intensive'. According to the Central Bank Report, Petroleum products, as source of commercial energy increased their share from 66% in 1979 to 78% in 1983, contrary to the declining trend observed during the period 1972 - 1978. Besides, the share of thermal power in the total electric power supply rose from a mere 1.4% in 1978 to a phenomenal 42% in 1983. It is now being said that the hydrel power projects in the Mahaweli Scheme, when completed, will provide for import substitution in the energy sector. These hydrel projects were intended to meet a gradually increasing energy demand over a long period. The recent dependence on thermal power was brought about by the government's anarchic and abortive development (sic) efforts. The privatisation of transport and the lack of an energy saving transport policy have further contributed towards the increasing dependence of the economy on imported oil.

Dubious Achievements

According to the Finance Minister, in the period 1977 - 1982, the economic growth has trebled from 2.6% (in 1971 - 1976) to 6.2% of G.D.P.; unemployment has been reduced from 26% of the work force to 12%; and investment was doubled from 16% of G.D.P. to 30%.

But elsewhere in his speech the Minister draws attention to the fact that while the investment is 30% of G.D.P., our savings constitute only 14%. It is also known that one third of the total savings is from migrants' remittances. The latest World Bank Report has criticised that apart from the unaccept-

ably high level of spending there are also shortcomings in the composition of spending. The report further points out that the cuts made recently are far from desirable, for while the foreign aided projects were cut by 10% on average, the allocation for non-aided projects was increased by 9%, thereby increasing the immediate financial burden on the government. What is more, several of the increases in non-aided projects were directed towards non-productive sectors including defence.

Be that as it may, the Finance Minister's claim of reducing unemployment from 26% of the work force to 12% does not give a complete picture of the situation. Between 1977 and 1983 employment was given to only about 300,000 persons of which 235,000 were absorbed in the public sector, 37,000 in the private sector and 28,700 in the Free Trade Zone. Even if one takes into account employment creation in unorganised activities for which statistics are not available, there is no denying the fact that a major unemployment crisis would have occurred had the Middle East opening not been available. The indications are that a crisis situation will develop in the near future.

Malnutrition

The seemingly impressive rise in the growth rate from 2.6% to 6.2% cannot hide the true state of affairs, particularly in regard to the living conditions of the mass of the people. One is reminded of the brilliant aphorism, attributed to a former Brazilian President, that in Brazil the economy was doing fine (10% growth rate of dependent development) but not the people. True enough. In the case of Sri Lanka, we have the observation of Mr. James Grant, Executive Director of the UNICEF, that "despite the increase in national wealth that statistics show, malnutrition is substantially more than it was fifteen years ago, even five years ago." Indeed, the PQLI (Physical Quality of Life Index), now a more

(Continued on page 11)

Ethnicity, Prejudice and the Writing of History

Sri Lanka history is perhaps the social science discipline where Sri Lankan scholars have established the greatest dominance; a dominance that owes much to the dedication and labour of a generation of pioneering scholars such as Garret C. Mendis.

Yet, while we look back with pride on the achievements of our historians in the recent past, it is necessary to recognise that all is not well with the study of history in Sri Lanka today. The interest in history among University students was at its highest in 1967/68 when 5784 of them or 53 per cent of all undergraduate students in faculties teaching social sciences and humanities followed one course or the other in history. In 1984, just seventeen years later, less than 300 students study history in all our Universities. In 1983 the Department of History of the University of Peradeniya requested the University Grants Commission to provide for 'special admissions' to enable those who were committed to study history to enter the Universities with lower admission requirements. The request was a clear acknowledgement that history had become an "endangered discipline", at least in the Universities.

A parallel decline in the study of history has occurred in senior secondary schools and because most history teachers in senior secondary schools are (or ought to be) persons with some University training, the swift decline in numbers of undergraduates reading history seems to preclude a revival of the study of history at the senior secondary level.

DECLINE IN THE STUDY OF HISTORY

This decline in the study of history is beginning to have important consequences on the writing of history. Sri Lanka, like

many of the smaller Third World countries, possesses only a very small group of relatively affluent scholars who might be classified as "amateur historians". The few "amateur historians" we have had have indeed made significant contributions to our understanding of the past but the bulk of our scholarly historical writing since independence has come from the professionals—some of them sociologists, political scientists and linguists but most of them members of the various departments of history in our Universities.

With the decline of the numbers of students reading history these departments have begun to dwindle in size. Fresh recruitment to the teaching staff ceased years ago. University historians are now an aging breed. Some of them are drifting into other disciplines and doing so with some ease, not least because studies paraded in Sri Lanka as works on political science, public administration, social anthropology, education and even economics are often merely thinly disguised forays into the past. However, while individual historians could well survive, and indeed thrive, there is a real possibility that if the current trends continue, there will not be a new generation of historians to take over from the old.

GROWING INTEREST IN THE PAST

Paradoxically, the decline in the study of history in our educational establishments has occurred at a time of sustained and perhaps even growing public interest in the past. This interest has been greatly stimulated by the growth of tension between Sinhalese and Tamil ethnic groups during the recent past.

Talcott Parsons once defined an ethnic group as, "a group, the members of

which have both with respect to their own sentiments and those of non-members, a distinctive identity which is rooted in some kind of a distinctive sense of its history."

He goes on to assert that "common culture is probably the most important general core but it is culture which has some features of temporal continuity, often reaching to an indefinite past."

Looking back to the past for a reaffirmation of one's ethnic identity becomes crucial in times of conflict when the very existence of the ethnic group seems

by

C. R. De Silva

The 1984 G. C. Mendis Memorial Lecture was delivered by Dr. Chandra Richard de Silva of the University of Peradeniya on "Ethnicity, Prejudice and the Writing of History", a subject of utmost relevance to the times in which we live. We publish excerpts from the lecture and would welcome readers' comments on matters raised in the lecture.

Dr. Neelan Tiruchelvam, former Member of Parliament for Vaddukoddai, who proposed the vote of thanks, spoke of protecting scholarship from bias and prejudice through "an intellectual tradition which is nurtured and sustained by a community of scholars who internalise the highest standards of methodological rigour and of intellectual excellence. Such a tradition must insulate scholars from the temptations and darker passions of the present. Above all, this tradition must be animated by a social and intellectual commitment which exalts critical and reflective inquiries and human values."

threatened. Among the Sinhalese the effort to reach back into history and assert the unique role of the Sinhalese as protectors of Buddhism seems to have received a definite impetus with the threat of the Christian missionary challenge to Buddhism in the late nineteenth century. Munidasa Cumararatunga's well-known efforts to prove that Helese or the pure Sinhalese language was older than English came at a time when Sinhalese was relegated to a secondary position in Sri Lanka.

Even the strident assertion that Sinhalese and Sinhalese alone should be the official language in the 1950s came at a time when considerable fears were aroused that the very existence of Sinhala would be threatened if the two language formula was adopted. The more likely the threat of separatism has appeared, the more strident has been the harking back to the history of a united Sri Lanka.

The same development can be seen in the case of the Tamils. It was only in the 1950s, when Tamils began to fear for their future in Sri Lanka that they them-

historical heritage was the easiest route to uniting the ethnic community. The new history was also to serve as the basis of the claims of the 'excluded' ethnic community against the dominant group.

With the widening of the chasm any writing of history by a historian which seemed to support the point of view or the claims of the "opposing" ethnic group came to be regarded as a repudiation of his own people. Conversely for a historian to reach a conclusion that seemed to favour the claims of his own ethnic community was to invite charges of ethnic prejudice and bias.

PROFESSIONAL HISTORIANS

In this context how did the professional historians in Sri Lanka measure up in resisting the pressures of ethnic prejudice? By and large they seem to have done so fairly successfully. To some extent this was due to the fine example set by some of our pioneer historians. Dr. G. C. Mendis himself writing in the 1930s on the origins of the Sinhalese emphasised how biologically mixed they were....

"...Another stock of people who helped to form the Sinhalese race was the Dravidians. There is no evidence to show when they first came to the island but they undoubtedly came from the earliest times onwards either as invaders or as peaceful immigrants. Most of them gradually adopted the Sinhalese language... and was merged in the Sinhalese population."

Senerath Paranavithana writing over twenty years later in the University History of Ceylon supported the view of biologically mixed groups when he claimed that both those who speak Sinhalese and

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Jesuits battle over NICARAGUA

An Intense struggle is going on in the Roman Catholic Church over its relationship to the Sandinista regime in Nicaragua. Peter Hebblethwaite reports.

The Nicaraguan revolution ended in the overthrow of the Somoza family in July 1979. For the first time in history, Christians were fully involved in a revolution. It was made with them, not against them.

This was a great gain for the Church, said Jesuit Fr. Fernando Cardenal, brother of Ernesto, the poet and Minister of Culture who was admonished by Pope John Paul at Managua airport.

'But', Fernando went on, 'it would be a terrible blow for the Church if one or other of us abandoned the revolution, for then the Church would no longer be present to bear witness to God. If the Church ordered Christians out of the revolution, the revolution would become atheistic'.

Fernando made these remarks a year ago when it was already clear that the Church, or at least the hierarchy, was indeed 'ordering Christians out of their revolution'. Worse, the events in Managua of 4th March 1983, when a disappointed crowd heckled Pope John Paul, marked the point at which the hierarchy moved over to active and systematic opposition.

Tremendous pressure has been put on Ernesto and Fernando Cardenal, and on Foreign Minister Fr. Miguel d' Escoto, to give up their political work. Since the summer of 1981, they have been suspended from the priestly ministry. Now another crunch point has arrived.

The new General of the Jesuits, Fr. Peter-Hans Kolvenbach has intimated that if Fernando accepts the post of Minister of Education that has been offered him, he may have to leave the Society of Jesus.

At the same time, Kolvenbach has said that the response of the Nicaraguan Jesuits to the Easter Pastoral of the Bishops 'did not respect the norms of dialogue

with the hierarchy' usual in the Society of Jesus. He then despatched Chilean Fr. Juan Ochagavia, one of his principal assistants, to try and sort out the mess.

It would be extremely ironical if Fernando were to be dismissed from the Jesuits, for he derives his commitment to the revolution directly from his Jesuit vocation. After studies in Bolivia and Mexico, he began his tertian-ship in Medellin, Columbia.

The tertian master, Fr. Miguel Elizondo, got his men out of an elegant five-storey building in a fashionable suburb and sent them off into the shanty-towns where they had neither electricity nor any public services.

Fernando, who came from one of the richest families in Nicaragua, had his eyes opened to poverty. He discovered his vocation. The people wanted him to stay among them in Medellin, but he felt he did not know enough about Columbia to work effectively there. But before leaving in July 1970, he vowed to them that he would spend his life for the liberation of the poor.

He returned to Nicaragua as a professor of philosophy. He points out that it would be hard to find a more 'secular' occupation for a priest than expounding Leibnitz and Kant. In 1973 he was invited to join the Sandinista Front.

He pondered the question according to the rules given by St. Ignatius for making a wise decision. He could not say "no" he decided, without offending God. The story of the Good Samaritan haunted him. He could not pass by on the other side of the road, like the priest and the levite.

The Gospel choice was simplified for him: 'Either we choose to be with those who are being massacred, or we join the assassins.'

So joining the revolution was not a modish caprice. Nor did it have anything to do with marxism. He knew it would mean risk and danger. But he saw it as a way of realising his Jesuit vocation. The priesthood was for service.

His decision was confirmed by his Jesuit community in Nicaragua and, though they have not always agreed with him they have stood by him ever since.

For a long time, too, he had the support or at least the acquiescence of Salesian Archbishop Miguel Obando y Bravo. There were never any complaints.

In 1977 Fernando went to the US to present Congress with lists of the murdered and disappeared. He found it natural to report to Obando y Bravo on his return.

The first pastoral letters after victory in 1977 welcomed the Sandinista revolution and detected in it a 'sign of the kingdom'. Fernando was given the task of spearheading the anti-illiteracy campaign. It had remarkable success in a country where just half the population could not read. To be illiterate is to be dependent and powerless. So this was the place to begin restoring powers to the people. From a priestly and Christian point of view, it was better than teaching philosophy to the bourgeoisie. And since it was young people who threw themselves into this work with enthusiasm, Fernando became a natural choice to lead the youth movement.

Change with Pope John Paul 11

But the mood was changing in the new pontificate. In 1981 the Bishops ordered the priests who were government ministers to give up their posts. They declined, and were suspended.

Though Fernando was not a minister at the time, he was suspended too. Since then he has not celebrated Mass. This causes him great suffering. But he put up with it, reminding himself of Charles de Foucauld in the desert, who did not say Mass for three years because canon law prescribed there must at least be a server present.

But the suspension was contested in a stormy meeting in the Vatican, presided over by Cardinal Sebastiano Baggio, President of the Pontifical Commission for Latin America.

At this meeting it became evident that there were two views of what was happening in Nicaragua. The Jesuits and Dominicans thought that it would be folly to abandon a revolution which, for all its faults, had a strong Christian inspiration. This point was put forcibly by Fr. Pedro Arrupe, then General of the Jesuits.

On the other side were Baggio and Archbishop (now Cardinal) Alfonso Lopez Trujillo. They argued that the Sandinistas were Marxists and as such irredeemable. Their view prevailed and influenced later events; the imposition of a 'personal delegate of the Holy Father' on the Jesuits, and the briefing for the papal visit to Nicaragua.

But still the priests remained at their posts. They felt they were understood by Cardinal Agostino Casaroli, Secretary of State. He maintained that whatever canon law said about priests in politics, there were 'emergency situations' in which exceptions were possible.

It was difficult to deny that Nicaragua was in an 'emergency situation', especially since it was at precisely this same time—the summer of 1981—that the 8,000 Contras began their systematic attacks from across the border. This was accompanied by a shameless propaganda campaign designed to portray the Sandinistas as the stooges of Cuba and the Soviet Union.

This background explains why the government ministers and Fernando stayed at their posts. They were 'disobedient' because they thought that their removal had become a political matter. The religious, pastoral and canonical charges that were made against them seemed like mere pretexts.

They were certainly not in heresy—the fantasy that they had wished to found a rival and anti hierarchical 'popular church' was soon exploded; nor did they wish to be in schism.

That was why the papal visit proved so disappointing; to deplore the excesses or errors of the Sandinistas was one thing and would have

been acceptable; to find nothing good to say about the revolution at all was a bitter blow.

And the way the Vatican appeared to be coming to the aid of President Ronald Reagan's Central American policies made them more than ever convinced that the motive was political rather than religious.

From this point of view, Cardinal Ratzinger's condemnation of liberation theology was seen as the Church equivalent of the mining of Nicaraguan waters. Reagan's Santa Fe speech against liberation theology could have come from Ratzinger's Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith.

Not unnaturally the Sandinistas feel that the whole world is conspiring against them. This feeling is powerfully reinforced when the General of the Jesuits in effect abandons them. He said early in July that he 'expressly disapproved' of the Nicaraguan Jesuits' comments on the Bishops' Easter pastoral.

He did not say that he disagreed with its content. He could hardly do that, since all the Jesuits said was that the Bishops' pastoral was inadequate because it completely left out of account the fact since the summer of 1981, Nicaragua has been under sustained military, diplomatic, economic and propaganda attack from the United States.

Kolvenbach has been forced into a position that his predecessor Arrupe managed to avoid: distinguishing between speaking out and upsetting the Pope.

John Paul, it is remoured, intends to go to the Dominican Republic in mid-October for a CELAM meeting. Everything has to be in order before he goes there.

Fernando's friends are risking no bets on what he will do. It seems that he is too committed to turn back now, but as he sees it, his commitment is a Jesuit commitment. A legalistic solution—let him have the office of minister without the title—might gain time.

But all signs are that a showdown is coming. Fernando could console himself with the thought of the French Dominican, Pere Clerissac, at the height of the anti-modernist campaign: 'It is easy to suffer for the Church; the really difficult thing is to suffer at its hands'. (Courtesy: NATIONAL OUTLOOK, an Australian Christian monthly September 1984)

Indira's Love Affair

DURING one of the many difficult periods in her life as Prime Minister Indira Gandhi once said to me: I have a job of work to do and I shall do it whatever it takes. Finally it took her life.

Only those who could not understand Indira Gandhi would ask whether she knew the stakes when she ordered the army into the Golden Temple. The cost did not matter; it just could not matter once it had become evident that the Akali extremists were threatening the unity and territorial integrity of the country and that there was no other way to cope with the menace.

Not to speak of opposition leaders and innumerable commentators, perhaps her own aides have advised her to reach a patchup with the Akalis. Perhaps it might have been advisable for her to go in for a patch-up even if it would not have lasted long. But that would have been uncharacteristic of Indira Gandhi. She just could not bring herself to do so in the face of the Anandpur Sahib resolution with its explicitly extremist and secessionist overtones. After Operation Bluestar she said as much.

Indira Gandhi's commitment to India's unity and security was unqualified. She just could not stand people whose bona fides in that regard she suspected, for good reasons or bad. This was the basis of her quarrel with Sheikh Abdullah and more recently with Farooq Abdullah. She knew the risks inherent in the removal of Farooq from the office of chief minister. But she was willing to run those risks once army commanders in Jammu and Kashmir had told her that their sources of information had dried up because their informants had been terrorised or driven out of the relevant border areas and anti-Indian elements had been encouraged.

This is not to endorse the specific action but to try and explain the psychology behind it. Indeed, it

may be in order to disclose that when in a private conversation I pressed my viewpoint regarding Farooq not being antinational, she told me in so many words: "He is neither national nor anti-national. He is just incompetent. I am not saying he has himself done all this. But he has not been able to prevent mischief by others. Though we drew his attention to the problem he still did not act."

Despite her almost obsessive concern over developments in Jammu and Kashmir and Punjab, not once even in confidential off-the-record conversations did she ever make an observation which could be stretched to imply a distrust of any Indian on grounds of religion.

Indira Gandhi's decisions to appoint Muslims as chief ministers at different

Yeats spoke of things falling apart because the centre could not hold. In our case things have been threatening to fall apart but have not because the centre held. That centre for almost two decades has been Indira Gandhi.

In a strange way, this was true even during the Janata period. Different parties came together in 1977 to form the Janata because they did not believe they could defeat her otherwise. Its constituents held together only so long as they remained keen to keep her out of office. They fell out as soon as some of the Janata leaders overcame their fear of her to be willing to come to terms with her.

For these two decades, especially since 1969 when she decided to risk a split in the Congress party, both our politics and political debates have centred on her. We have been either for her or against her. Either way we have been mesmerised by her. She has served as the loadstar with the help of which we have determined our course irrespective of whether we have wanted to move towards the East or the West.

How are we to explain this phenomenon? Indira Gandhi has by any yardstick been a remarkable person—so calm in the midst of adversity, so determined in the face of a challenge either to herself or to her country, so reticent in a private conversation, so concerned with the problems of these close to her, yet so aloof and Olympian in her personal life. And her hold on the Indian imagination has been equally remarkable. Her assassination has stirred the deepest chord in the Indian psyche, shaking the Indian personality as nothing else has at least since the martyrdom of Mahatma Gandhi.

Some explanations have been offered for Indira Gandhi's personal chemistry. As far as we know, none has been attempted seriously for her hold on the Indian mind. Right now it is obviously not the time to attempt one. One can only attempt a bird's-eye view of her career. Girilal Jain does that.

She then went into the history of the Sheikh family narrated her last conversation with Abdullah on the eve of his death and her own earlier reservations about Farooq. It is not particularly relevant to recall the details. Only an additional point may be made that she was keeping the situation in Jammu and Kashmir under close supervision and her principal concern was security.

times—Barkatullah in Rajasthan, Ghafoor in Bihar and Antulay in Maharashtra have invariably been interpreted as having been motivated by the political consideration of winning over the Muslim vote. She was a politician and it is natural that she should be influenced by political calculations. But these acts were expressions of two other traits in her psycho-

logical make-up. She was daring; her great father had not been able to appoint a Muslim as chief minister though he gave them largely ceremonial offices. And she did not discriminate on communal-religious or regional-linguistic grounds.

This was her inheritance and part of her mental-psychological make-up. This aspect of her personality expressed itself most eloquently in her insistence that the Sikh guards must not be shifted from duty at her residence as a matter of precaution even in the face of the continuing attempts by the Akalis and the head priests to whip up emotions. It just could not occur to her that in the final analysis any Indian would lay his hands on her. And it was precisely because she was so genuinely secular in the Indian sense of not discriminating against followers of any faith that she was such an authentic Hindu.

It has been widely known that in her youth Indira Gandhi saw herself as a Joan of Arc. The end vindicated this self-percep-

get almost anything out of her. She was very much of a mother: she loved even grown-up people leaning on her. She was anything but ruthless by nature. She drifted and drifted and acted only when she had been driven into a corner.

I am aware that this too does not do justice to Indiramma who remained a bit of a bride till the last day. She hated dowdiness; she was determined to remain not just fit but attractive looking. But she did not see any dowdiness or ungainliness in India. The book of pictures entitled *Eternal India* for which Indira Gandhi provided the brief text brings that out eloquently. Only an incurable romantic can engage in such a romance. She was born with it and I hope she died with it, for there was much to disillusion her even in circles close to her.

Indira Gandhi was a very proud person. She was proud of being Jawaharlal Nehru's daughter and Motilal Nehru's granddaughter. To be a Nehru meant a great deal to her. But she drew on a much

by **Girilal Jain,**
Editor-in-Chief, The Times of India.

tion. But I recall this point to make another which is that she was a romantic in the 19th century sense of the term. India for her was not a poor and weak country struggling to feed itself. It was a grand vision: a great civilization worthy of the highest respect, if not emulation by others.

This proposition that Indira Gandhi had a lifelong love affair with the India of her imagination and dreams is apparently at odds with the popular view that she was a hard-headed pragmatist and a ruthless politician. But this is a superficial view of a very complex person.

Indira Gandhi was deeply emotional though for a variety of reasons she was afraid of showing it; anyone who cried before her could

deeper and bigger source—India, the India she so proudly put on display in the Festival of India in Britain in 1982 and was to repeat in the United States in 1985.

This pride found its eloquent expression in her dealings with the superpowers. India, as we know, faced a grave crisis in 1971 and urgently needed Soviet military supplies and assurance of political support. And yet when Indira Gandhi visited Moscow in September that year, she refused to open negotiations on the first day because Brezhnev had been unexpectedly held up in Budapest and she would not deal with Kosygin because he was not the top boss. Similarly, on a subsequent visit to Washington in connection with the same

With India

Bangladesh problem, she was so icily cold to Nixon that he almost froze. Such instances can be multiplied but that would not be necessary.

This pride, it has often been argued by her critics, cost the country a lot of money when she, for example, decided to host the Asian Games, the non-aligned summit and the Commonwealth conference. Indira Gandhi was genuinely shocked by such criticism. To her this meant that there were Indians who either out of their hatred for her or out of petty-mindedness did not wish to measure themselves up to the glory that India once was and would again be.

In any case, the pride had its obvious advantages too. No power, however great, could trifle with India when she was at the helm of its affairs. Indira Gandhi was worth several divisions. One common remark in Pakistan when Bhutto was rotting in jail with the hangman's noose tightening round his neck would illustrate the point. Any number of Pakistanis said that if Indira Gandhi had been in power (the Janata was in office in New Delhi then) she would have sent commandos to rescue him! She would, of course have done nothing of the kind. But the Pakistanis believed that she would have.

A recent incident, though bizarre, underlines the same point. When a U.S. satellite failed to spot two Indian Jaguar squadrons, the first, almost automatic, American reaction was that Indira Gandhi was planning to destroy Pakistani nuclear establishments. So instinctive and great was their fear of her that they did not even pause to pay heed to the fact that the Pakistani uranium enrichment plant is located in a hardened underground site which cannot be bombed out of existence and that too many Indian targets, including nuclear installations and oil rigs, are accessible to F-16s in Pakistan's possession for New Delhi to risk retaliation by

Pakistan. It is difficult to think of a bigger tribute, though an indirect and an unintended one, to a third world leader.

Implicit in her remark that she had a job of work to do and that she would do it whatever it took were three other propositions. That the task—the building of a powerful India which would demand and secure a place worthy of this once great civilization in the comity of nations—was worth the best effort, that the end would justify the means and that she was the instrument of India's destiny.

This was an unstable mix which could in certain circumstances get out of control as it did in June 1975 when instead of stepping down in obedience to an adverse high court judgment in an election petition against her, Indira Gandhi proclaimed an internal emergency. This was a mild exercise in authoritarianism; in retrospect at least no dispassionate person can dispute that it had a limited purpose and that it was intended to last for only a limited period of time; for Indira Gandhi called for an election when she was under no pressure to do so. But this sorry episode was to pursue her for her remaining years. It vitiated her relations with a substantial section of the country's intelligentsia for ever.

The mix had similarly got out of control first in 1969 and then in 1978 when Indira Gandhi regarded it necessary to split the Congress party in order to establish and retain her ascendancy in what remained of it with her.

In the deepest sense, however, there was a fatal inevitability about it—not about the emergency or the Congress party split, but about the unstable mix. Only individuals possessed by a sense of mission and destiny (the two invariably go together) pursue great objectives like the establishment and consolidation of nation states of the size and complexity of India.

The rest get discouraged too soon. And men and women possessed by such missions are as a rule not squeamish about means. Great nations and empires do not rest on the foundations of the Sermon on the Mount, whatever the pretence.

Essentially the problem is one of maintaining the

(Continued on page 11)



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DIRTY DOZEN — 6

With self-made rules their game goes well!

BY AND LARGE in a country where the percentage of illiteracy is so high the written word is treated with respect. In a country where excellence, capability and competence is generally judged by the number of degrees you hold there is little doubt the planner is on a very safe wicket. In this game of playing with figures the rules are framed by the planner. He takes many things for granted. If the system, as it is today, has to work and produce results of the intangible kind what needs to be taken for granted, first, is the need to keep a distance so that there are enough barriers to keep you away from reality.

It is taken for granted that the planner need not have practical experience: it is enough to sympathise and make up the rest with imagination and sensitivity.

It is not needed to have dirtied your fingernails and worked with marginal farmers and agricultural labourer; at the village level to understand their problems: being a district collector is enough. There is no need to experience what it is like to go without three square meals a day to be an expert on poverty and to contribute to the confusion over the debate on the infamous poverty line: it is enough to have acquired the competence to calculate economic levels and feign it. It is not the planners' business to spend time in mud huts or attempt to communicate with tribals or drink water from hand pumps or sleep in the open like millions of people in India. Degrees make them special, position makes them inaccessible and vision (however distorted) makes them feel secure.

The system make us immune to realities and we are not willing to shed our preconceived notions that we have picked up from the 1st and 2nd World's. We still look there for ideas and formulas. Very subtly but effectively we have been conditioned to show freedom and independence within limitations. We are still proud

that our planner has recently returned from the London School of Economics, the World Bank the UN and other similar grassroot organisations as if this is qualification enough to bring you closer to the poor. Obviously we have lost our self-respect to think independently, to see with our eyes open and to plan with our eyes and ears on the village instead of using it to get a cushy place in some university or international racket abroad. It is shameful how we use the problems of the rural poor for our own personal advancement, to write paper after paper and eventually be called an expert while the condition of that impoverished family in the village remains the same.

I have seen far too many of these frauds without having done a stroke of honest work in their lives posing as grassroot workers, speaking on their behalf, planning in the air and desperately looking for recognition in their middle age. It is pathetic and sad but that sums up the profile of a planner today.

It is fashionable to plan for the rural poor. It is necessary to play games with 'models' and flow charts and speculate on how people would respond to typical situations—as if it is the easiest exercise in the world to predict precisely how an illiterate impoverished peasant and his family would react to schemes for his own welfare.

In 15 years in the villages we have not managed to do that. We have not managed to plan one month ahead let alone one year but presumably planners have other mysterious skills village level workers do not have or powers like seeing in the dark. Ask a District Collector whether he has even managed to keep his schedule as he has planned it one day ahead and see what he says.

It is virtually impossible with the pressures and with the demands of the community along with calls from the State capitals and visitors dropping in without notice but wanting to be noticed to

plan one week ahead. Well multiply that one hundred times without the luxury of regular meals, without security and never free from fear or harassment or humiliation from the very people the government pays to do just the opposite and then visualise the man we are planning for: The planning process has decreed the colossal delivery systems designed to 'provide Minimum Needs to more than 300 million people living below the poverty line and yet all we have to show after 3 decades is a commentary that clearly testifies to the collective failure of the refined minds of educated men.

We have been trying so hard to ram Western alien models, management techniques and urban ideas down everybody's throat in the name of rural development and the planning process that it is time we woke up to the

people called planners who cannot see beyond their nose? This could not be a deliberate policy. There must be a mistake somewhere and it is within us. He comes from a different background. He comes from a different culture. The only thing that makes him Indian is his colour. He admires the West and feels sorry for this country. He is dazzled by technology, impressed by systems that convert a human being into a statistic and a district into a dot. He believes in the Constitution but more than half the people in this country have never seen it let alone read it. He believes in human rights and social justice and equality but does not see anything wrong in planning projects that do not take these issues into account, may even violate it in some cases. He expresses horror at the exploitation that is evident between castes, between clas-

and lower government functionaries is it the planner's fault?

If the reasonability of certain schemes and their viability are based on outdated figures and it is impossible to change it is it the planner's fault? If certain strategies thought of in the corridors of power in Delhi prove to be counter-productive is it the planner's fault?

If there is a growing communication and credibility gap between the planner and the implementer who is to blame? What makes the planner superior? Why must he have the last word? What game is he playing?

Surely the roles need to be reversed. Surely the man who implements programmes at the village level need to be given a hearing. In actual fact he suffers from neglect. His channels of communication with the planners are effectively blocked on grounds that 'it must go through proper channels' which, in effect, means you might as well forget it. This, to my mind is the great tragedy in Indian planning: means of communication have been strangled which means reliable and valuable information is not allowed to reach the right quarters. One does not need a degree from a foreign university to come up with a solution at the village level. The planner has this great gift of making simple solutions look complicated. The district and village level functionaries have the ability to de-mystify processes and adapt them to be understood by the beneficiaries themselves but such skills are not appreciated.

(To be Continued)

by

Bunker Roy

(Consultant, Planning Commission of India)

fact that it is not going to work. We have to try indigenous alternatives, more Indian, more rural and we must be able to develop it without calling moronic and mediocre experts from outside who are clueless about rural conditions. Do we have it in us to stop playing games?

In all fairness we should not blame the planner for his impotence. He has been loosely educated in the West but he has been brought up to believe what is right for the country because it has been proved in the 1st and 2nd Worlds so why not in India? Yes indeed if Japan can do it why not India? We can go on asking these questions endlessly but I keep thinking of the Block Development Officers in my life where the buck stops who everyone has taken for granted and how we have successfully managed to devalue and destroy this crucial link irrevocably by the planning process.

Why do we have such narrow-minded and short-sighted

ses and communities but more often than not he is not willing to take a stand and take action on such issues. He is strongest on economic issues and most comfortable when it comes to calculating 'viability' of schemes. It matters little if it is not possible to implement it but it must look tidy and neat and at least on paper there must not be any loose ends. Figures are so real to him that it becomes the last word.

Mahatma Gandhi talked of the importance of mixing intellect with labour. Too much of intellect and virtually no manual labour has made our planner what he is—impractical but at the same time supremely confident that he is right. He has Western logic to back him and Indian hierarchy to protect him.

If the project is successful he gets the credit: if it is a disaster the lower government functionaries are to blame.

If a formidable and intimidating document is not understood by district level officials

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Ethnicity, Prejudice...

(Continued from page 4)

those who speak Tamil in the present day were probably descended from the people known to us as the yakkas and nagas. During a series of lectures on the history of Sri Lanka delivered to undergraduates in the 1950s and 1960s Professor Lakshman S. Perera challenged the traditional interpretation based on the Mahavamsa that the contest between Duttage Munu and Elara was a Sinhalese-Tamil ethnic conflict. Lakshman Perera's arguments have been elaborated by subsequent historians, sometimes without acknowledgment.

Among the varied contributions made by academics to the subject of ethnicity and history I would like to draw your attention to three works in particular. The first is an essay by Professor K. N. O. Dharmadasa, a socio-linguist who has occasionally turned historian. His short essay entitled, "Place-names and ethnic interests: The case of Tirukonamalai", was provoked by a comment by historian S. Gunasingham that the persistence of the Tamil name Tirukonamalai "over a period stretching for nearly a thousand years is strongly indicative of a remarkable continuity in the Tamil connection with Trincomalee". Gunasingham went on to argue that the continuity of the name in its unaltered form might be indicative of "the stability of the Tamil population in Trincomalee".

The purpose of Prof. Dharmadasa's article was to show the dangers of this type of argument. Drawing examples from many countries, he showed that a place-name was by no means a reliable indicator of what group of people lived in a particular spot. For example, the retention of the name "Massachusetts" does not indicate a continued Red Indian settlement in New England. Nor does the retention of the Tamil name "Nalluruwa", for a village near Panadura up to the present day, indicate the continued settlement of Tamils there.

Some place names in Jaffna are of Sinhala origin but are totally inhabited by Tamils. The danger of this argument was driven home further when Prof. Dharmadasa demonstrated that "Tirukonamalai" itself was not a Tamil name in origin. It was simply the old Sinhalese name for the port Gona (Gokanna in Pali) with the Tamil prefix Tiru (from Sri in Sanskrit) and Tamil suffix malai (meaning hill). It was a salutary warning to those who regarded history as an independent source of rights.

The second example I would like to draw your attention to is the published text of a talk delivered by Prof. K. Indrapala of the University of Jaffna before the Royal Asiatic Society of Sri Lanka on 3rd May 1969 on the subject of early Tamil settlements in Sri Lanka.

The subject has been one of considerable controversy because of the extraordinary belief that evidence of the prior settlement of the island by one community would somehow give it extra rights in contemporary Sri Lanka. Indrapala points out that in the absence of comprehensive archaeological research and detailed investigations into physical anthropology, historical geography and historical linguistics any conclusions on the question must necessarily be tentative.

However, on the basis of some archaeological evidence and nearly a hundred Tamil inscriptions as well as evidence from Sinhalese and Pali chronicles he concluded that while the Pomparippu urn-burials suggested that there were early Tamil settlements in Sri Lanka perhaps as early as the second century BC and there were references to many groups of Tamil mercenaries arriving in Sri Lanka in the seventh century AD, there was no definite evidence of Tamil settlements till the tenth century AD.

He argues that Tamil settlements up to the

twelfth century were largely in the north-eastern and north-western coasts and that it was only with the rule of Magha in the thirteenth century that Jaffna became a Tamil-majority region. Indrapala's conclusions might well be disproved by fresh evidence but his work is a good example of historical investigation free from ethnic prejudice.

The third example which I would like you to focus attention on is an article written by Peradeniya historian R. A. L. H. Gunawardane entitled, "The people of the lion: The Sinhalese identity and ideology in history and historiography". The themes dealt with in the article are complex and are difficult to summarise but he does suggest some important historical revisions. One of Gunawardane's contentions is that "Sinhala" was a term originally used to denote a social group and that this group did not necessarily include all those who spoke the Sinhala language. He argues that there is no evidence that the "service castes" were included in the Sinhala identity till the twelfth century and that even after that "Sinhala" consciousness (if it existed) could not prevent the rise to power of kings who were not members of the Sinhala group.

He also pointed out that Tamils began to be regarded as foes of the Buddhists only after militant Hindu states developed in South India around the seventh century A.D. Before that, the Buddhist identity linked the Buddhists of Sri Lanka with their co-religionists in India. Thus it is concluded that even though there was a "close association" between the Sinhala and Buddhist identities "at no period do they appear to have coincided exactly to denote the self-same group of people". The modern Sinhala-Buddhist identity he argues arose in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as a product of socio-economic changes under British rule and the impact of the "Aryan theory

developed around this time in the West."

THE PROPAGANDISTS

If ethnic consciousness is a malleable concept—at least within limits—there is immense room for the propagandist and myth-maker in moulding ethnic identity and this is a factor which has had immense implications on the writing of history and in the wake of recent ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka some of the propagandists have had a ready reception.

Let us first look at the work of Satchi Ponnambalam. In a book entitled, "Sri Lanka: The National Question and the Tamil Liberation Struggle" published in 1983, he flatly asserted that the early rulers of Sri Lanka were all Tamils.

At the time of the introduction of Buddhism (3rd century BC), Tamil kingly rule was centred in Anuradhapura, the ancient capital which Tamil kings founded.

"Devanampiya Theesan" the Tamil Hindu king of Lanka at that time, accepted the missionaries from Asoka and became converted to Buddhism. With the spread of Buddhism and the growth of the Prakritic Sinhalese language there occurred a religio-linguistic division of the people, those who remained Hindu-Tamil and the emergent Buddhists speaking the Sinhalese language.

"The Sinhalese then, in terms of their origin are not an Aryan people as popularly claimed, but Tamil people who adopted a language developed from Pali, an Aryan dialect."

Ponnambalam breezily ignores the work of numerous historians who preceded him. This practice of ignoring any evidence that contradicts his conclusions is continued when Satchi Ponnambalam goes on to denigrate the achievements of the Sinhalese.

This tendency to belittle the achievements of the other ethnic community is

certainly not confined to the Tamils though it is difficult to find a recent Sinhalese writer as openly partisan as Satchi Ponnambalam. Nevertheless, numerous instances of distortions of history can be found among Sinhalese writers as well.

I have selected a recent article by Gamini Iriyagolle—an article which argues against the theory of the traditional homelands of the Tamils. Iriyagolle writes: "Although for most of its duration as a political unit the 'kingdom' or principality of Jaffna was de jure part of the dominions of the Sinhalese kings whether ruling at Gampola, Kotte, Sitawaka or Kandy during the course of its existence from the end of the 13th century to the beginning of the 17th century, there were periods in which the chieftain of this remote province asserted his independence of the Sinhalese overlord. At the beginning he was a feudatory of the South India Vijayanagara Empire. At other times the incumbent chieftain acknowledged the suzerainty of the king of Portugal."

It is possible that every statement made by Iriyagolle in the above paragraph is true. Certainly in the sixteenth century Jaffna was a small and weak kingdom. However, what Iriyagolle does not mention is that in the mid-fourteenth century 'the chieftain of this remote province' was powerful enough to control the western coast of Sri Lanka almost up to the Kelani river and to force Vikramabahu 111 (1357-1374), King of Gampola, to accept his tax-collectors in the Sinhalese King's domains. Kotte was originally founded not as a capital city but as a frontier fort to defend the South against inroads from the North. If the ruler of the North was merely a chieftain at least from 1357 to the early 1370s, this chieftain probably enjoyed suzerainty over the King of Gampola. The problem in the evaluation of historical writing of this sort is that the truth of all statement

(Continued on page 11)

IR's Statement : FALSE ANALOGY and on WRONG PREMISES

The Editor,
SATURDAY REVIEW

To say the least, I was amused to read of the analogy that the President has sought to draw between the recent unhappy events in India that followed the assassination of Indira Gandhi and those events that took place in Sri Lanka in July 1983.

To draw a parallel between the feelings aroused as a result of the assassination of a popular Prime Minister like Indira Gandhi with those aroused in Sri Lanka by the killing of 13 soldiers in a popular guerilla struggle against a government which has, for years, been using the army to harass and kill innocent Tamils is simply preposterous.

What happened in India after the assassination of Indira Gandhi was entirely spontaneous. Nobody could have anticipated the assassination. On the contrary, the July events in Sri Lanka were entirely pre-meditated and pre-planned. Even the government admitted that it was organised. The leaders behind the mobs had electoral lists showing where the Tamils lived. Just as in 1982, the killing of an Israeli diplomat in London was the excuse for the pre-planned Israeli invasion of Lebanon, so also the killing of 13 soldiers in Jaffna on July 23 was simply an excuse for the planned pogrom unleashed on the Tamils.

In Sri Lanka, the armed forces either looked the other way or participated in the communal violence against the Tamils. No such thing happened in India.

In Sri Lanka, when the President appeared on TV after four days, he did not utter a word of condemnation of the communal violence against the Tamils nor did he call a halt of the anti-Tamil terror. Instead, he justified the action of the Sinhala mobs as a "natural reaction" and went on to placate them by promising legislation against parties and organisations that advocated separate state. On the other hand, the New

Indian Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi immediately went on the air and on TV to call upon the Hindus "to stop this madness" and went on to recall the part played by the Sikhs in the Indian independence movement.

It is wrong to suggest that the victim in India was a Hindu. Indira Gandhi was not shot because she was a Hindu, but because she was the Prime Minister who ordered the troops in to the Holy Shrine of the Sikhs. In the same way the soldiers who were killed in Jaffna on July 23 were not killed because they were Buddhist but, because they were soldiers who had gone there to kill.

The President seems to complain of foreign assistance. Is that not true of most other similar movements? Does not Sri Lanka recognise the PLO whose openly declared aim is to liberate Palestine by armed struggle? Is it not true that the bulk of the money and the arms of the IRA are sent to them by Irish-Americans?

Why does the President not place before the people of Sri Lanka the better example of Great Britain where, despite the assassination of the Queen's uncle, Lord Louis Mountbatten and the near-successful attempt at assassinating almost the entire British Cabinet (in which two ministers died) there was no anti-Irish pogrom in Britain?

The demand for Kalistan by the Sikhs in India is a religious demand. The Sikhs are not a race. They belong to one religion. But, they are all Punjabis who have a separate state in fact, two states. It is the same illogical demand, in terms of modern political thinking, as that which led to the creation of Pakistan and Israel. But, the demand for Eelam—irrespective of whether we agree with it or not—is a secular demand for a separate state for the Tamils who are a race.

N. Sanmugathasan.
Colombo

His Excellency J. R. Jayewardene,

The President,
Colombo.

Your message to the Nation on 9th November drawing an analogy between the Sikh terrorists and Tamil Liberation Fighters of Sri Lanka has come to the Tamils as a big surprise! We trust you will pardon us for pointing out that the analogy has proceeded on wrong premises. A clarification is necessary to clear misunderstanding.

1. The Sikhs and Tamils do not have the same political status. The Punjab of Sikhs is already an autonomous state, they have their Chief Minister and a Council of Ministers. They have their state police and the right to determine the type of education their state needs. In fact their freedom is substantial. This being so, the demand for a separate state by the Sikh terrorists is far from being reasonable.

2. You had stated that the Central Government of India and Sri Lanka have to fight terrorism. In respect of India there is a Central Government that is fighting real terrorism by means of disciplined army and police. It is not correct to say that Lanka has a Central Government. When power is decentralised in the form of creating federal, provincial or state governments the reference to a central government is relevant. We are unable to believe that Your Excellency does not know this.

3. You had stated Lanka Government will help India in solving issues common to both. In this the Council of Public Affairs feels that if you and your government had co-operated with Mrs. Indira Gandhi the Tamil problem could have been solved. She had made ceaseless efforts in this direction. It is rather curious why such an offer of co-operation has been made after her demise! Nor has India invited such help!

the patient. The cause of the temperature must be diagnosed; violence cannot be cured by violence. The causes that led to "terrorism" must be cured by violence. The causes that led to "terrorism" must be diagnosed. Then the solution becomes easy.

The Sub-Committee of the U.N.O. on Human Rights has held that there is violation of human rights in respect of Tamils in Sri Lanka. This finding found an echo in the utterances expressed by the British and Australian M.Ps who has visited this country.

6. Your Excellency had expressed the view that all peace-loving people must unite in eradicating terrorism. Here we have racial riots, shooting and killing of innocent Tamils who are votaries of peace and non-violence. Time and again, they have asked for the withdrawal of the army from Jaffna, but without any response. In India when Sikhs asked for the army withdrawal, the Indian Government withdrew the army on two occasions.

When riots broke out in India on the assassination of Mrs. Indira Gandhi, the Indian Government controlled the rioting in two days. When in 1977 and 1983 riots broke out in Lanka, the government allowed the rioting to go on for nearly two weeks and Tamils were being killed in thousands. Even today the army has a free hand in the North and Tamils are without any protection! They live amidst terror every moment. Almost every day there is shooting and killing of Tamil Civilians. The destruction and burning of houses, business establishments, farms, deprivation of household goods, jewellery and cash is incalculable. The ruins serve as a monument of evidence of state terrorism in the North. Tamils have complained to the Jaffna Government Agent that they have been deprived of their goods, jewellery and cash and they are unable to procure their daily needs. Suddenly they have been reduced to abject poverty. They state

(Continued on page 11)

LETTERS

But the plight of the Lankan Tamils is deplorable! They are denied regional autonomy; it is thought generally that the Lankan government is drawing red herrings viz, district development councils, second chamber, the bogey of separation, etc., to fight shy of giving regional autonomy. On the occasion of your last visit to America, the US President Mr. Ronald Reagan exhorted you to solve the minority problem offering the minorities human rights. Mrs. Indira Gandhi, Shri C. Rajagopalachari and others had advised that regional autonomy be given to the Tamils. Despite this exhortation and peaceful negotiations, the Lankan Government had stood obdurate and unyielding.

Charity begins at home; it is fitting that Lanka solves her problem first—the Tamil problem.

4. Sikh terrorism is not similar to the so-called "terrorism" in Lanka as you stated. In dealing with the Sikh terrorism the Indian armed forces do not shoot at innocent people but in Lanka the armed forces, instead of dealing with the so-called "terrorists", shoot and kill innocent Tamils who do not raise a hand against them!

5. Your Government is speaking of eradicating terrorism first. The disease must be treated radically. If one has temperature, it is not a proper treatment to pour hot water over the head of

ETHNICITY ...

(Continued from page 9)

in a historical narrative does not guarantee the truth of the whole story.

TRADITIONAL HOMELANDS

I would now like to turn briefly to the concept of the "traditional homelands"—a concept which stimulated Gamini Iriyagolle's article from which I quoted. This concept was advanced originally by the Federal Party in 1951 and at that time what it implied was that the Sinhalese and Tamil-speaking peoples had lived for long periods of history in different parts of the island and that the state should not take measures that would change the ethnic composition of the traditional Tamil homelands. In time the doctrine has grown to include the view that each ethnic group has enjoyed its own distinct history and had its own cultural, social and political institutions. In its extreme form the "traditional homeland" theory is used as a justification for secession.

The early version of the "traditional homelands" theory has some support from history. There is a little doubt that the Jaffna peninsula and most of the present Northern Province has been a Tamil majority area since the thirteenth century. Moreover, there is evidence of largescale Tamil settlements on the eastern coast about the same period and subsequently. There is, therefore, a region where Tamils have predominated for a number of centuries. However, there is also considerable evidence that parts of the Eastern Province were continuously inhabited by the Sinhalese up to modern times and Sinhalese apologists could well argue that if six centuries of occupation had made the north and the east a "traditional homeland", the Sinhalese themselves had occupied this very same area for a much longer time during an earlier period of history. Substantiation for the more extreme views of the "traditional homeland theory" is much more difficult. One would have to be extraordinarily

inventive to create a history of a Tamil nation 'enjoying sovereign rights' since prehistoric times and indeed this political imperative explains the distortions of history in the writings of authors such as Satchi Ponnambalam.

UNITARY STATE

Distortions come with Sinhalese political imperatives too. Politicians in Sri Lanka have been emphasising the existence of a unitary state in Sri Lanka for two thousand five hundred years. There were, it is true, long periods when Sri Lanka was ruled by a single ruler but historical records also indicate lengthy periods of disunity, civil war and chaos.

Moreover, even when a single ruler wielded power

from his capital, the poor state of communications in ancient Sri Lanka, the relatively undeveloped bureaucracy and the power of the landowning nobility ensured a good deal of autonomy to the outlying provinces—an autonomy that does not exist today.

The efforts to justify current policies through appeals to the past distort history and the distortion of history in turn exacerbates ethnic tension. It also leads to a prejudice against the study of history itself. After a prolonged debate in the Sinhalese newspaper on the subject of the unity of the country from ancient times and the evidence for and against the existence of an independent Tamil kingdom in the North, several correspondents complained that going back to the past was a waste of time as we would never be able to find out what had really happened.

Indira's ...

(Continued from page 7)

balance between the three constituents. Indira Gandhi could not always do it. I do not personally believe anyone else could have fared better in this period of our history when we are witnessing the dawn of mass politics and the replacement of an essentially agricultural socio-economic order with its inbuilt stability in all respects, including the moral one, by a commercial-industrial order with its inbuilt instabilities. After all, Morarji Desai could not last as Prime Minister for even 30 months. Indeed one wonders whether he commanded the necessary authority for a single day.

All comparisons are inept but sometimes they are useful. Thus if Gandhiji's greatest hour came after independence when he struggled to quell the communal frenzy on the sheer strength of his willingness to die by starvation if necessary, Indira Gandhi's came after Operation Bluestar when she too demonstrated her willingness to die in the

service of her goddess—mother India. It is no accident that both the great son and the great daughter of that mother should die at the hands of assassins. It could not be otherwise. The price had to be paid—in blood and the blood of the tallest devotee.

Nathu Ram Godse was determined to frustrate one dream and Satwant Singh and Beant Singh another. In fact, the two are two facets of the same dream—the dream to build and sustain an Indian nation state. Indira Gandhi is as much a martyr to that cause as the Mahatma. Bangladesh was a minor episode in the drama of Indira Gandhi's life just as the fight against the British was a relatively simple affair in Gandhiji's life. For both the true test of their greatness was their readiness to confront the disruptive urges of their own people at the risk of their own lives.

Indira Gandhi is dead, long live Indira Gandhi. (Courtesy, The Times of India)

JR's Statement...

(Continued from page 10)

that they fear army terrorism more than any other form of alleged violence in the North. As democratic citizens, we ask! Is this situation rife with such devastation peaceful? What are the lovers of peace doing? These acts of devastation are ungodly. Those who are responsible to these acts do not seem to be aware that "The evil that man do lives after them". They cannot escape the punishment.

Earlier too, this Council of Public Affairs pointed out to Your Excellency that complete dependance on the army was not conducive to peace and progress. A week thereafter even the Brigadier Mr. Nalin Seneviratne through the 'Island' indicated that depending wholly on the army for a military solution was not enough and that an early political solution must be found.

If the government wishes to avoid a further deterior-

ation of relations between Tamils and Government, we earnestly ask your government to repeal the Prevention of Terrorism Act, revoke the state of emergency and withdraw forthwith the army from Jaffna and other Tamil areas and that the Tamil problems be solved with all possible speed by granting regional autonomy to the Tamil people.

It is not for one group to determine whether another group should or should not enjoy their fundamental human rights which are their inalienable birth-right. The preamble to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights invites humanity to recognise "the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family".

S. Ponniah

Hony. Secretary of the Council of Public Affairs of Jaffna.

8 Consecutive Budgets

(Continued from page 3)

accepted indicator of economic development than the growth rate, which has been generally high in relation to the per capita GNP, has been showing a downward trend during recent years. Even the Finance Minister could not help admitting this in the course of his budget speech, when he stated "there are some signs that those at the lower end of the income scale have seen their position erode in recent years. ... indicators such as malnutrition appear to suggest that there is a risk that a section of the population could fall below minimum acceptable nutritional levels."

The Minister of Health, Mr. Ranjit Attappattu, did not know that he was passing a severe indictment on the Finance Minister and the UNP Government, when during the budget debate he chose to compliment his colleague for

being the first Finance Minister to mention malnutrition in a budget speech. The UNP showed that it has no commitment to protect the basic welfare standards of the people, when it abandoned the food subsidies in 1978. The removal of subsidies, more than anything else, is the cause of malnutrition. The Finance Minister cannot quibble away this guilt by arguing that with one half of the population declaring (40% of them dishonestly, according to the government) themselves to be earning less than Rs. 300 per month in 1979, the government is unable to upvalue the foodstamps by 65% to help the genuinely deserving one third of the population. By the government's own admission, there has not been any reduction, between 1979 and 1984, in the one third of the population genuinely deserving food subsidies.

(To be Continued)

Saturday Review

SRI LANKA

Amir Questions Need to Put off APC

The TULF Secretary-General, Mr. A. Amirthalingam, was questioned the need for postponing the all-party conference on the ethnic problem, scheduled to be held on November 15 and said the long postponement made him suspect whether the Sri Lanka Government was awaiting the outcome of the Indian elections.

He however, expressed the confidence that India's interest in the Sri Lanka Tamils issue would continue and there would be no change in the policy of the Government of India even after the elections.

Informal talks: Mr. Amirthalingam told THE HINDU that as he had

Jaffna's Chief Station Master Retires

Mr. S. I. K. Arnold, Chief Station Master of Jaffna, retired on 1st November 1984 after 39 years service in the Railway Department due to ill-health.

He had served in most of the major stations in the island before being posted to Jaffna.

As Chief Station Master in Jaffna, he was one of the most harassed public servants with commuters bombarding his office daily with requests for seats while accommodation was limited. This was particularly so after the train services between Colombo and Jaffna were curtailed and the Inter-City was introduced. But he met everyone with a smile and did the best possible under very difficult circumstances.

Well-known for his efficiency, integrity and loyalty, he was in addition a very likeable person.

Commuters between Colombo and Jaffna will miss him badly.

expected, the President, Mr. Jayewardene, had postponed the all-party conference by more than a month and there was no certainty the draft legislation for solving the ethnic problem would be available even by that time. There was, however, an indication in the announcement that the President would be having informal talks with all parties, in the meantime. But, the TULF leader said, the President had been doing it for the last one year, and as far as he could gauge there was no change in the attitude in any of the groups in the all-party conference.

If only the President can get his party to agree to whatever ideas he may have for a solution of the problem, I am sure he can carry it through. Mr. Amirthalingam said. For, the President had more than five sixths majority in Parliament and if the recent by-election results were any indication, he could claim to have the backing of the people as well. So, it was high time Mr. Jayewardene took a firm decision on his own and introduced the necessary legislation and amendments to the Constitution, he said.

Suspicion: "But the long postponement for the conference makes one suspect whether they are awaiting the outcome of the Indian elections. Whatever it may be, we are confident that India's interest in the solution of the ethnic problem will continue and the Sri Lanka Government cannot expect any change in the attitude of India after the elections. I am also confident that the Indian Government will continue the policy that Mrs. Gandhi followed in respect of the Sri Lanka Tamils problem" Mr. Amirthalingam said. (The Hindu, Saturday 10th Nov.)

Colonel Killed in Ambush; Chaya. Police Station Attacked

Colonel Ariyapperuma—posthumously appointed Brigadier—who was killed in a land-mine explosion at Varuthalai Vilan, Tellipalai on Monday, 19th November was the highest ranking officer to be killed in action.

Brigadier Ariyapperuma was the Commanding Officer in charge of the Northern Command.

A product of the Peradeniya University, he excelled in Shotput and Javelin Throw and was also a successful boxer.

After joining the Army, he underwent training at the Military Staff College, Australia.

His last rites were held at Kanatte, Borella, with full

Sri Lankan....

(Continued from page 1)

the whole of India, South Asia and a much wider field. Our position has not changed and we will continue the same initiative and work to achieve some sort of a settlement acceptable to the Tamils in Sri Lanka".

It is, therefore, clear that India's good offices will continue to be available to the Sri Lankan Government to find a lasting solution to an otherwise seemingly intractable problem. But the fact remains that the void created by the death of Mrs. Indira Gandhi will be felt by all concerned. Many Sri Lankans trusted her assurances that the sovereignty and the integrity of Sri Lanka will not be endangered. The Tamils felt that by her death they had lost their best friend. As Mr. Amirthalingam has said, "her understanding of their problem was complete and thorough.. It would take anyone else several months to get that knowledge."

But what would be missed most is the stature that the late Prime Minister enjoyed in the international arena. It will not be useful to speculate to what lengths Mrs. Gandhi would have gone in persuading the contending parties to agree on a political settlement.

military honours. The large gathering at the Cemetery included several ministers.

Following the explosion in which the Brigadier was killed and other members of the Security Forces injured, the area was cordoned off and a massive combing-out operation was launched by Security Forces. During this operation, many houses were reportedly set on fire and people were forced to evacuate their homes.

Attack on Police Station

The Chavakachcheri Police Station, which was first attacked in 1982, was attacked once again on the afternoon of 20th November by a group of youths some of them in army uniform. The youths, who attacked the station with bombs and machine guns, are said to have come in a hi-jacked Telecommunication Dept. vehicle and mini-vans.

The attack left 27 persons killed including police and civilians, according to official sources.

The building had collapsed after the attackers had

activated explosives which they had planted inside the building at the end of the attack.

The Security Forces who had rushed to the scene on hearing of the attack were unable to proceed beyond Kaithady as bombs were detonated when their vehicles approached the area. 6 Army personnel were reportedly injured during this incident.

ALL-ISLAND CURFEW

The Government clamped down an All-Island curfew from 6 a.m. on 22nd Thursday till 6 a.m. on Friday to prevent a backlash in the South, following certain incidents in the North. The curfew was also in force from 6 p.m. Friday till 6 a.m. Saturday.

The Government also declared Thursday and Friday, Public Holidays.

Flash: Subsequently curfew was lifted in all districts except in the North. Curfew continues daily from 4 p.m. to 7 a.m. in the districts of Jaffna, Mullaitivu and Kilinochchi, and from 6 p.m. to 7 a.m. in the districts of Mannar and Vavuniya.

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