

**LANKA**

# **GUARDIAN**

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# THE COSTS OF WAR

Mervyn de Silva

The *SUNDAY TIMES* headline made a good point. STAGGERING 30% HIKE IN DEFENCE BUDGET announced the five-decker headline satisfied that it had a good story..... but it went on to make a sharper point in the two last two words: STAGGERING 30% HIKE IN DEFENCE BUDGET GOES UNNOTICED...

Yes, do the people care about the rising costs of our "little war"? Or do they think that the war has

to be won whatever the price, lives or rupees... often US dollars. Is it the sad story of President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga's 6-year Executive Presidency now well into the final third of her term. She left for India the other week. Delhi was her first destination on assuming office... and quite rightly too.

But can the Vajpayee alliance adopt anti-L.T.T.E. policies when his coalition has parties which disagree on many important issues. And on the war, it is TAMILNADU that counts. The DMK and the AIDMK, ancient enemies, compete with each other playing the "true champion" of the Sri Lankan Tamil cause - if not EELAM a sovereign state, then a modest little Tamilnadu in the island's north-and-east. All the major parties that compete for the right to form a government has to go through a rather complicated, campaign, if not cynical or unprincipled. In his book, *ASSIGNMENT COLOMBO*, former Indian High Commissioner in Colombo, and later Foreign Secretary of his country, spelled out the importance of the "nexus" between the two D.M.K.'s and the Eelam movement. Jayalalitha and the D.M.K. now fight but only to prove that it is the authentic champion of the Tamil people.

Hence President Chandrika's frequent trips to India, and the special effort to place the case against Prabhakaran, the man who is accused of giving the order to the woman accused

of assassinating the grandson of Pandit Nehru and the son of Indira Gandhi.

Junius Jayawardene was known to the entire post-independence leadership and elite in Delhi as "Yankee Dicky". And in the Cold War was pursuing a foreign policy that was openly pro-American and anti-Moscow.

In this new global-regional environment, it is clear that much closer understanding and Indo-Sri Lankan friendship is vital for Sri Lanka.

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# Comparison with Sri Lanka

Amartya Sen

Comparisons with Sri Lanka and China of the kind I have been making are sometimes challenged on the alleged ground that the achievements of these countries may not have been due to the public distribution and delivery of food and health care undertaken in these countries. In particular, it has been claimed that there may not have been much enhancement of life expectancy and quality of life in Sri Lanka *linked* with public distribution and social welfare efforts undertaken in that country, and that the high performance of Sri Lanka does not show the effectiveness of these policies. For example, in a well-known study by S. Bhalla that has been enormously influential and widely quoted, it is shown that if we look at the post-1960 experience of Sri Lanka, the enhancement of the indicators of quality of life, including life expectancy at birth, has been rather moderate<sup>9</sup>. Sri Lanka is not an "exceptional" performer in this comparative scale.

There are many technical problems with Bhalla's analysis<sup>10</sup>, but the biggest issue is the simple one of the choice of the time period. The decades following 1960 are the wrong period to look at to assess Sri Lanka's experience with expanding social welfare and public distribution and their impact on life expectancy and the quality of life. Public distribution of some free rice for all was introduced in Sri Lanka as early as 1942, and the great breakthrough in medical intervention and public health was carried out in the mid-1940s. The death rate per thousand in Sri Lanka, which was 20.6 in 1940, fell to 12.6 by 1950 and to 8.6 by 1960. By the time Bhalla's comparison of Sri Lanka with other countries begins, Sri Lanka's death

rate was within hitting distance of that achieved in many European countries. It is, therefore, not surprising that *further* enhancement of life expectancy in Sri Lanka beyond 1960 was moderate in comparison with that in many other countries.

Also, social welfare expenditure did not continue to expand very fast beyond the period of 1960, and in the decade of the 1970s, the proportionate share of social welfare expenditure in the gross national product of Sri Lanka *fell* rather than rose. If the thesis is that we reap in the public quality of life as we sow in public effort, then that view is supported rather than contradicted by the rapid enhancement of the quality of life in Sri Lanka during the 1940s and the 1950s, and its comparative sluggishness in the period of Bhalla's study<sup>11</sup>.

Indeed, being careful about the time periods is an extremely important part of doing demographic social analysis. Just as a point of reference, I might mention that if we look at the expansion of life expectancy at birth in England and Wales during the first six decades of this century, we find that in each decade the life expectancy at birth went up by a figure of between one and four years, with two exceptions of much more rapid increase. Life expectancy at birth rose by nearly seven years in the decade between 1911 and 1921, and also between 1941 and 1951<sup>12</sup>. These were, of course, the decades of the great wars, but – combined with the war efforts – these were also years of public intervention introduced in a large way in the distribution of food and health care (including the birth of the National Health Service during the 1940s), and expansion of public emplo-

yment. The fact that mortality declined very much faster in these decades – despite the disruption of the wars – is an indication of the effectiveness of public support of food, health care, and employment. Again, one sees here how public effort has directly translated into public achievement, but this is a picture that would be altogether missed if the analysis were careless about distinctions between dissimilar time periods (in particular, failed to note that some time periods have rapid expansion of public distribution while others don't).

## Comparison with China

In the contrast between India and China in terms of life expectancy movements, there are several interesting features. I have presented the two profiles of life expectancy from the 1940s to the early 1980s<sup>13</sup>. There are three rather interesting aspects of the Chinese record in comparison with India's. First, the trend rate of enhancement of life expectancy has been much faster in China than in India, as the two profiles bring out clearly enough. Second, while India's progress has been fairly steady (though slower), China had a sharp fall in life expectancy with a big jump in mortality during the period 1958-1961. At one stage, life expectancy fell in China to the middle twenties. This was during the Chinese famine that followed the failure of the Great Leap Forward, and I have discussed the phenomenon elsewhere<sup>14</sup>. The extra mortality from the famine has been estimated to be nearly 30 million<sup>15</sup>. There has been on famine in India since independence, despite occasional shortages and some periods of drastic decline in food output (including, most recently, in 1987).



Third feature to comment on is the slowdown – indeed turndown – of the progress of life expectancy in China in the period since the economic and social reforms beginning in 1979.

In the field of famine prevention, the contrast between India and China may have at least as much to do with politics as with economics. A big difference is made, I believe, by the pluralist nature of the Indian polity – particularly the presence of active Opposition parties eager to criticise the government for disasters and the operation of an alert news-distribution system, which provides early warning of developing famine conditions and makes it hard to hide government inaction. No government in India – whether at the State level or at the Centre – can get away with ignoring threats of starvation and famine and failing to take counteracting measures. The contrast with China in this respect is quite striking. Its gigantic famine in 1958-1961 raged on for three years with little change in basic policy and with hardly any official recognition of even the existence of a disaster (one that killed, as stated earlier, perhaps 30 million people). There is some evidence that the Chinese central government had difficulty getting all the facts from the fields (particularly about the extent of the failure of the Great Leap Forward) and much evidence that it was under no powerful Opposition pressure to change its policies (criticisms came many years later, after a change in leadership). The docility of the Chinese press contrasts sharply with the active role the Indian newspapers play in reporting early cases of starvation and providing both information and pressure on the governments at the State level and at the Centre<sup>16</sup>. The last famine in India of any magnitude was the Bengal famine of 1943, in which some 3 million people died. This was, of course, before independence, and while food output has often fallen quite dramatically in post-indepen-

dence India, counteracting measures have been taken fast enough to recreate lost entitlements (mainly through employment schemes, often paying cash wages) to avoid open starvation and famine (even though there has often been intensification of endemic under-nourishment in these years)<sup>17</sup>.

While India scores better than China in preventing famine, China has had a much faster trend in the expansion of life expectancy and much greater success in cutting down normal mortality and morbidity. When there is no political crisis or administrative confusion, the life of the average Chinese has tended to be much more secure than that of the average Indian. In fact, it is interesting to note that had China's lower mortality rates prevailed in India there would have been about 3.8 million fewer deaths in India a year around the middle 1980s. That indicates that every eight years or so more people in addition die in India – in comparison with Chinese mortality rates – than the total number that died in the gigantic Chinese famine (even though it was the biggest famine in the world in this century).

The protection that newspapers and Opposition parties offer against famines in India does not apply, it appears, to quiet and disciplined hunger and deprivation that kills slowly, without producing "newsworthy" stories and without moving Opposition parties to eloquent fury. Given the nature of the Indian polity, perhaps the solution to India's problems will have to be sought through the reorientation of politics and news coverage as a prelude to forcing the hands of the government in power – making endemic hunger embarrassing in the same way as starvation is for the ruling governments. Whether or when this will happen seems very far from clear.

In China, where the driving force has come from inside the state and

the party rather than from the Opposition or from independent newspapers, the basic commitment of the political leadership – not unrelated to Marxist ideology – to eradicate hunger and deprivation has certainly proved to be a major asset in eliminating systematic penury, even though it was not able to prevent the big famine, when a confused and dogmatic political leadership was unable to cope with a failure they did not expect and could not explain. The advantages and disadvantages of the different forms of political arrangements and commitments in China and India provide rich material for social comparison and contrast.

## Public Distribution and Market Reliance

The third most interesting feature in the Chinese profile of life expectancy is the dip in life expectancy in recent years<sup>18</sup>. It appears that the economic reforms of the 1970s, which have produced remarkable increases in agricultural output (including food output), have been accompanied by considerable increases in death rates. While the gross value of agricultural output doubled between 1979 and 1986, the death rate firmly rose after 1979, and by 1983 reached a peak of being 14 per cent higher than in 1979 (in rural areas, the increase was even sharper: 20 per cent). The death rates have come down somewhat since then, but they still remain higher than before the reforms were launched in 1979<sup>19</sup>.

The fact that the Chinese death rate had already become very low by 1979 has to be borne in mind in assessing this later information, and it is a matter of some significance that the Chinese had been able to cut down their death rate and raise their life expectancy so radically *before* the economic reforms, when their GNP per head was still quite low and the food output per head not a great deal higher than at the time of the revolution<sup>20</sup>. The means-using success of China in the pre-



reform period deserves recognition of a kind that it often does not any longer get, given the praise – well deserved in its context – that has been showered on the production increases since the reforms of 1979. The pre-reform achievement of China was based on excellent means use despite only moderate success in means enhancement. Since the reforms, the position seems to be almost the opposite, with great success in means enhancement (including doubling of agricultural output in less than a decade) but some slippage in means use, reflected particularly in an increased mortality rate and lowered life expectancy at birth.

The increased mortality rates in China since the reforms of 1979 seem to be associated with several distinct changes. There has been a crisis in health financing partly connected with the decline of communal agriculture, which used to meet a good part of the cost of rural health services and which provided medical insurance for the workers. There has been a substantial contraction, particularly of innovative communal health services, which had played a major part in the Chinese health transformation through the 1970s. Female children seem to have largely borne the brunt of this decline. This tendency has been reinforced by the policy of the “one-child family” and other programmes of compulsory birth control also introduced with the reforms. While neither an overall contraction of communal health services, nor the one-child policy are in themselves anti-female, nevertheless, given the pro-male bias in the Chinese society, their effects seem to have included rather severe neglect of female children. It is also possible that a decline in old-age security arrangements after the reforms has strengthened “boy preference” in China<sup>21</sup>.

In recent years India and China have both moved a little more in the direction of reliance on the market mechanism.

For China, which had a great deal of state activity and collectivism in agricultural production, the move toward the market mechanism in that sphere seems to have brought in good results as far as output is concerned. In India agricultural production was less geared to state involvement anyway, and there has not been any radical change in any direction.

On the other hand, in the pre-reform period the Chinese had clearly reaped great benefit in reducing normal mortality and morbidity levels through public distribution and delivery of health and food. India had tried much less in that direction and correspondingly had achieved much less as well. The Chinese have now withdrawn quite a bit from their public delivery system – at least in terms of some of its more radical features – and the results do not seem to be as yet particularly encouraging, in fact quite the contrary. The relevance for Indian planning of the success of Chinese activism in public distribution of health, food, and education still remains great because of the past successes of China in these fields. In fact, the withdrawal has been only in comparison with a very extended system of public delivery in the pre-reform period (direct delivery is still much more extensive in China than in India), and the limited withdrawal has not produced much positive result, at least not yet (with Chinese mortality rates – much lower than India’s – being firmly higher every year since the reform than before it). The case for taking a leaf from China’s book on public distribution – appropriately adapted to the Indian conditions – still remains strong.

### Lessons and Non-Lessons

The main lesson of Indian planning is that we reap as we sow, and in particular we do not reap what we do not sow. In terms of the ultimate objectives of planning (including raising the quality of life of the population as

a whole), India’s successes have been in areas that have received direct attention (such as eliminating famines, expanding the coverage of higher education, and widening the use of modern technology), and the failures have been in fields that have not received priority (such as eliminating endemic undernourishment, eradicating illiteracy, and spreading public health).

Insofar as enhancement of living conditions has been attempted directly through public action (as it has been in shielding the population from famine through public work programmes and public distribution, in situations of drought or flood or other failures), there has been much success. Indian success in this field is particularly noteworthy in view of the fact that this elimination of famine has been achieved despite India’s food availability per head being no higher than that in sub-Saharan Africa, which is plagued by recurrent famine<sup>22</sup>. India’s record also compares well with China’s in this field, in view of the gigantic Chinese famine of 1958-1961, discussed earlier.

India’s success in this respect is at least as much political as economic. Much of the credit for the promptness of famine prevention in India should go to its relatively free and active news-distribution system, which informs as well as forces the hands of the government, and to its plural politics with Opposition parties ready to chastise the government for failure to deal rapidly with threatening famines. The contrast both with China at the time of its famines, and with sub-Saharan Africa, is quite sharp and significant.

The low priority given in India to public action aimed at eliminating endemic undernourishment, spreading public health care, and banishing illiteracy is clearly reflected in the low achievement in these fields. The last



census in 1981 revealed that only about a quarter of Indian women (above the age of five years) were literate and that in several Indian States (Rajasthan, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh) the proportion of female literacy was still well below 20 per cent. There seems to be little pressure generated by the Opposition parties or the newspapers against these astonishing failures, and those whose job it is to criticise (and inform) seem to be unduly concerned only with preventing the more visible failures (such as starvation and famine), ignoring the presence of quiet inequities.

The Chinese and Sri Lankan successes in spreading literacy, expanding longevity, and reducing morbidity and endemic diseases have not been based on a much higher gross national product per head than India's. Even within India, Kerala has been able to provide many of these services on a regular basis despite being one of the poorer Indian States, and it has been well rewarded for its public efforts to enhance the quality of life. Kerala has a long history of extensive public support in education, health care, and food distribution (covering the rural areas as well as the towns), and its achievements are quite remarkable even in comparison with China. It is estimated that by 1981 the life expectancy at birth in Kerala was 63.5 years for males and 67.6 years for females (the more recent figures are higher than these), compared with Banister's estimates of life expectancy in China in 1984 of 64.9 years for men and 64.1 years for women (the latter substantially lower than in Kerala)<sup>23</sup>. Even at low income levels, public action can be remarkably effective, at relatively little cost, in promoting the basic objectives of planning (enhancing the capability of the people to lead a decent life free of premature mortality, escapable morbidity, and debilitating illiteracy).

Recent criticisms of Indian planning strategies have concentrated on increasing outputs and incomes. They have raised some important questions but have often failed to note the main shortcoming of Indian planning, to wit, not aiming adequately at the ultimate objectives of planning. The logistic issues in income creation do, of course, deserve attention (though these issues are typically far more complex than they are often made out to be), but the main reasons for the failure of Indian planning to raise the quality of life lie elsewhere. Overconcentration on problems of means enhancement – neglecting the ends of planning – does not help to achieve those ends.

The goals of India's efforts for economic development were eloquently articulated by Jawaharlal Nehru right when economic planning began in India. If these goals have remained largely unfulfilled, it is because of the extraordinary neglect of these goals in choosing the directions of planning and public policy. In the limited areas in which the goals have received priority (for example, in famine prevention), there have indeed been successes, but outside these areas the ends of development seem to have been comprehensively neglected.

There is no mystery in explaining these failures. Nor indeed in seeing the kind of public effort that is needed and the nature of political activities that can generate the necessary pressure to build the process of political commitment. It has been said that the British empire was created in a fit of absent-mindedness. It is unlikely that a prosperous, happy, and just India can be built that way.

#### Notes:

9. S. Bhalla, "Is Sri Lanka an Exception: A Comparative Study of Living Standards", in T.N. Srinivasan and Pranab Bardhan, eds., *Rural Poverty in South Asia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987).

See also B. Bhalla and P. Glewwe, "Growth and Equity in Developing Countries: A Reinterpretation of Sri Lanka's Experience", *World Bank Economic Review* 1 (1986).

10. See Graham Pyatt and Paul Isenman, "Comment on Growth and Equity in Developing Countries: A Reinterpretation of the Sri Lankan Experience", *World Bank Economic Review* 1 (1987), and the response by Bhalla and Glewwe. See also the exchange between Bhalla and this author in Srinivasan and Bardhan, *Rural Poverty in South Asia*. See also the definitive analysis of this issue by Sudhir Anand and Ravi Kanbur, "Public Policy and Basic Needs Provision: Intervention and Achievement in Sri Lanka", working paper, World Institute for Development Economics Research, forthcoming in Jean Dreze and Amartya Sen, *The Political Economy of Hunger*, to be published by Clarendon Press, Oxford.
11. On this see my *Hunger and Entitlement: Research for Action* (Helsinki: WIDER, 1987), and "Food and Freedom", text of the Third Sir John Crawford Memorial Lecture at the World Bank, 1987, forthcoming in *World Development*.
12. See my *Hunger and Entitlement*, 29-30. Also see J.M. Winter's illuminating study of Britain's experience during the First World War, *The Great War and the British People* (London: Macmillan, 1986).
13. See my *Hunger and Entitlement*, 26.
14. "How is India Doing?", *New York Review of Books*, 21 (Christmas, 1982); reprinted in Basu and Sisson, eds., *Social and Economic Development in India: A Reassessment*; and "Development: Which Way Now?" *Economic Journal*, 93 (1983); reprinted in *Resources, Values and Development* (Oxford: Blackwell, and Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984).
15. See B. Ashton et al., "Famine in China, 1958-61", *Population and Development Review* 10 (1984).
16. See my "Development: Which Way Now?" and also N. Ram, "An Independent Press and Anti-Hunger Strategies – The Indian Experience", WIDER working paper; forthcoming in Jean Dreze and Amartya Sen, eds., *The Political Economy of Hunger*, to be published by Oxford University Press.
17. See my "Food, Economics and Entitlements", *Lloyds Book Review* 160 (April 1986); Jean Dreze, "Famine Prevention in India", WIDER working paper; forthcoming in Dreze and Sen, *The Political Economy of Hunger*. On the elementary aspects of entitlement analysis, see my *Poverty and Famines: An Essay on Entitlements and Deprivation* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1981).



18. The Chinese life expectancy data used in the chart come from Judith Banister, "An Analysis of Recent Data on the Population of China", *Population and Development Review* 10 (1984), covering up to 1982. For later mortality data, see Judith Banister, *China's Changing Population* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1987) and the recent editions of *Statistical Yearbook of China*. See also my "Food and Freedom". In their paper "On the Recent Increase in Death Rates in China" (to be published by the London School of Economics), Athar Hussain and Nicholas Stern have used the available evidence to decompose the increased overall mortality in China (showing *inter alia* that there is an increase even after taking note of the rising average age of the population). According to Judith Banister's estimates, the peak life expectancy that China has reached was in 1978 – the year *before* the reform.
19. See Banister, Table 4.12.
20. See Carl Riskin, "Feeding China", WIDER working paper, forthcoming in J. Dreze and A. Sen, eds., *The Political Economy of Hunger* (to be published by Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1990), and his *China's Political Economy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987).
21. Old-age security is indeed one of the main motivations underlying boy preference in many developing countries. It has been argued that another possible source of strengthening of pro-male bias in post-reform China can be a decline in the gainful employment of women outside the home, which was more common in communal agriculture than in the new "responsibility system", which's rather like a return to the more standard form of peasant farming. On this, see N. Aslanbeigui and G. Summerfield, "Impact of the Responsibility System on Women in Rural China: An Application of Sen's Theory of Entitlements", *World Development* 17 (March) (1989): 343.
22. On this see my "Africa and India: What Do We Have To Learn From Each Other?" in Kenneth J. Arrow, ed., *The Balance between Industry and Agriculture in Economic Development, Basic Issues*, Vol. 1 (London: Macmillan, 1988). The paper also discuss the extent of anti-female bias in wellbeing and survival in India – a field in which Africa's record is much superior to India's. If the same female-male ratio obtained in the population in India as it does in Africa, then – given the number of men in India – there would have been nearly 30 million more women in India than in the last census. The number of "missing women" (correspondingly estimated, with African "sex-ratio") in China would be 38 million. An anti-female bias in the division

of necessities and health care has been an old problem in India (and in China), and that problem is still unconquered (see my *Resources, Values and Development*, Essays 15, 16, and 20).

23. Kerala's life expectancy figures relate in fact to 1976-1980 and are taken from *Sample Registration Survey Based Abridged Life Tables 1976-1980*, Census of India 1981, Occasional Paper 1 (New Delhi:

Office of the Registrar General of India, 1985). Banister's figures are from Table 4.12 of her *China's Changing Population*. Also, the adult female literacy rate in Kerala in 1981 was, according to the Census of India, 71 per cent – considerably higher than China's over-all figure of 56 per cent for 1985 [see UNICEF, *The State of the World's Children* 1988 (New York: UNICEF, 1988)]. There are of course regions within China that compare very well with Kerala.

## HIGH PRIEST

As priests, they confront more often  
Lives adversities. Being called  
To officiate when tragedy strikes  
Rather than when someone chooses to celebrate  
Some traditional cause for celebration  
Or even some inane frolic.  
The inanity on one hand and tragedy on the other  
Being different solutions to the same equation  
Indicating that the Universe is sometimes out of control  
Of the Formless Ones who thought it out on that  
Those who thought it out should adopt  
A new set of axioms, a new Mathematics.

This High Priest  
Has come to this same high hall  
For well nigh seven decades, going back  
To when he was an ordained adolescent,  
Envyng the young lay-folk  
Flirting over choice alms dishes which didn't tempt him  
So much as the world of titillation  
In their ballet of eyes.

Now High Priest and nearly ninety  
Calm, meditative, but observant of the human condition  
Envyng no more  
Those who twittered in this high hall  
He is no boy now, no young intellectual  
No mature preacher in the prime of life  
He is High Priest true, but an ald man  
Who has had his ringside seat for the show  
Seeing curly headed pages,  
Clowns, and make-believe princesses  
Make ktheir debut, in this high hall,  
Spront proud in the spring and spin down in the fall.  
Blind right through and now dreaming dreams  
On burrowed time,  
While he, withdrawn and watching from outside  
Decides that the Formless Ones' programmes  
Need new dimensions, a replayed Plan  
For dismantling of human ego, and sham.

U. Karunatilake



# A Reply to Sivaguru

Izeth Hussain

No one seems to know who on earth is this R. Sivaguru whose diatribe against me was published in the LG of November. Unless he manifests himself and shows that he is indeed the Sivaguru who perpetrated that maniacal diatribe, he will have to remain in limbo as pseudo-Siva, according to my suspicions the pseudonymous cover of someone who is cowardly and quite mad.

However, although no one knows him, he evidently knows me. Otherwise he could scarcely have conceived the murderous personal hatred shown in his article, a hatred so overwhelming that it has deranged his mental faculties, as will be shown in the course of this article.

For some odd reason he indulges in heavy irony over my use of the word "curious", which he says I used "often" in the opening paras of my article "Kadirgamar and Communalism" (LG of October). I used it twice. Any schoolboy will tell him that twice is not "often". Now there is nothing about that simple and serviceable word that is pretentious, that smacks in any way of gobbledygook. So why the heavy irony, behind which there is evidently a burning resentment over the way in which I handle the English language? Undoubtedly his mental faculties are not in proper working order.

In any case, he seems incapable of using words precisely, and has a cavalierway with quotations. In his second para he quotes me as writing "No other Cabinet Minister has been subject to so much attack in the last fifty years. "He inexcusably omitted the word "Perhaps" with which I began that sentence, thereby radically altering its meaning. The omitted word meant that I was not asserting something as definitely and finally established. However, in the fifth para he again quotes the sentence, this time beginning with "Perhaps". But in the very next sen-

tence he asks how I had come to the conclusion that "Kadirgamar has been the Minister subject to the most attacks in the past fifty years". This time he has forgotten the meaning of "Perhaps", and he has done it between one sentence and the next. He seems unable to grasp that every word has a meaning. This is further evidence of malfunctioning mental faculties.

I come now to matters of substance. It is surely nonsense to hold as he does that G.L. Peiris, S.B. Dissanayake, and the late T.B. Illangaratne have been attacked to anything like the same extent as Kadirgamar. He refers to "hundreds more" without giving any names, obviously because he knows that he is talking nonsense. Certainly Managala Moonesinghe has been attacked on an epic scale. But perhaps, nota bene perhaps, Kadirgamar has been attacked even more. I stand by my statement.

Unbelievable though it may seem, pseudo-Siva is in such a state of mind that he is actually trying to hold that Kadirgamar has never been attacked. He asks wherever did I read of the "virulent attacks on the Foreign Minister?" Why, like a great many others who were also shocked and appalled, in the newspapers and Hansard. The man seems to be suffering acutely from the "curious" amnesia he attributes to me. Later he writes the mind-boggling sentence, "In the first instance Kadirgamar has never been especially identified and attacked". In the next sentence he writes that the first so-called "attack" was over Tawakkal. In his mind there is evidently a distinction between "attack" and attack, with and without inverted commas, but he is in such a confused state of mind that even though it is of crucial importance to his argument he fails to tell us anything at all about what exactly is the distinction.

Anyone with a basic grasp of common English usage, and provided his

mental faculties are in good repair, will certainly agree that Kadirgamar has been attacked in the past and is continuing to be attacked in the present. I gave details in my article about the past attacks. Recently he has been attacked over his performance in South Africa, and his sincerity has been impugned over his work in connection with the LTTE child-soldiers, which also certainly amounts to an attack.

A fine example of a nasty, mean, venomous attack is provided in pseudo-Siva's article. He writes that "rumour" has it that Kadirgamar has taken out "insurance" in the form of a close personal friendship with opposition leader!! Immunity of Kadirgamar might be the result not of the "friendship" but of Wickramasinghe's wish to ensure that UNP members do not make asses of themselves, after the manner of pseudo-Siva. A shameless rumour-monger has, in effect, thrown dirt at Kadirgamar and attacked him.

It seems unbelievable that against the background of the earlier attacks pseudo-Siva actually wrote that mind-boggling sentence about Kadirgamar never having been "especially identified and attacked". Is the man mad? Yes, but not wholly, because there is a method in his madness. He knows that I will demolish his position that Kadirgamar has never been attacked on communal grounds. Therefore, he likes to believe, the best strategy would be to maintain that Kadirgamar has never been attacked at all, in which case of course the question of communalist motivation simply cannot arise.

That brings me to the core question of communalism. According to pseudo-Siva, Hussain writes that "the attacks against Kadirgamar have arisen out of the Jayantha Dhanapala affair". He truncates my sentence at mid-point. There really should be a law against this kind of blatant misquotation and misrepresentation of an argument. The full sentence, and the next sentence,



which together are crucial for my argument, read as follows, "The attacks against Kadirgamar have arisen out of the Jayantha Dhanapala affair, the supposed overweening ambitions of Kadirgamar to hold higher office abroad or in Sri Lanka, and his performance as Foreign Minister. An analysis of the attacks will show that the communalist motivations behind them is sometimes quite clear, though not always".

Pseudo-Siva does not dispute my point that Kadirgamar was attacked over the Dhanapala affair without a shred of evidence to convict him, and even after he had put himself absolutely in the clear he was still attacked for trying to shift the blame on to a lady! Something madly irrational and rabid was clearly afoot. The rabidity factor can be seen again in pseudo-Siva's hydrophobic foaming when he accuses me of "ghoulish" behaviour in exhuming, like "vultures" and "hyenas", something that happened a year ago and has, as he chooses to believe, been forgotten by everybody else.

Had I written an article exclusively on the Dhanapala affair of a year ago, a questioning of my motives would certainly have been legitimate. But I examined attacks on Kadirgamar on other grounds as well, as indicated in the paragraph quoted earlier, as part of my attempt to establish that we have reached a new phase in our ethnopolitics. In this field it is perfectly legitimate to examine what happened in 1983, in 1956, and go much further back across the millennia to what happened at the time of Dutugemunu. But we have from pseudo-Siva hydrophobic foaming and howls of execration about my being a ghoul, vulture, hyena, all because I examined what happened just one year ago. The man really is, to a serious extent, bonkers.

I never held that the attacks in connection with the Dhanapala affair were definitely motivated by communalism. I made the explicit point, in my second sentence quoted above, that the communalist motivation was only

sometimes clear, not always. It was absolutely clear that Kadirgamar had been convicted without a shred of evidence, and it was therefore certainly reasonable to say that one got the "impression" that Kadirgamar stood damned merely because he is a Tamil, and also the "impression" that the fury and the hysteria was because of the suspicion that a Tamil had dared to down a Sinhalese. I was speaking of "impression", not of definitive conclusions which followed ineluctably from the facts.

But, of course, the Dhanapala affair should be read only in the context of all the other attacks on Kadirgamar, the reference to which was deliberately suppressed by pseudo-Siva from the sentence I quoted earlier, obviously because he knew that it destroyed his case. The attacks on Kadirgamar's supposed overweening ambitions were shocking in their blatant display of communalism. Such attacks have to be seen in the total context of the grotesque discrimination against our minorities in the foreign relations sector, shown in the otherwise inexplicable fact that our so-called great diplomats have all been Sinhalese for fifty long years, with nary a Tamil among them, and also in Ambassador appointments about which I published an article some years ago. The total context in which the Dhanapala affair should be seen has been suppressed by pseudo-Siva, in his deliberately distorted presentation.

Instead, he gives enormous emphasis to the fact that Kadirgamar is the "darling of the Sinhalese", about which he says that I am unaware. In the article which has deranged his mind I wrote, "Furthermore, the Sinhalese as a whole are deeply grateful to him for speaking on their behalf." He cannot understand the plainest of plain English. How can he understand my arguments?

Sinhalese support for Kadirgamar is entirely beside the point. The fact that he is accepted as Foreign Minister does not necessarily make him acce-

ptable as our candidate for a top international post, more particularly as the preferred candidate over a Sinhalese. That has been unthinkable for many decades, as I pointed out in my article, and it is precisely the fact that it has suddenly become thinkable that has provoked rage against him. I must add that the fact that he is unacceptable to many Tamils is also irrelevant. A rose is a rose is a rose. For the Sinhala communalist, a Tamil is a Tamil is a Tamil.

Pseudo-Siva is not going to make any headway with his charges about my "Sinhala bashing", about my being an "arch-communalist" who regards the Sinhalese as "racist", unlike Kadirgamar. Long before the latter's statement that the Sinhalese are not "racist" I used to make the identical point at lectures and seminars. I referred in an article to the "traditional accommodativeness of the Sinhalese towards the minorities". It was re-published in the Daily News, which later made it the subject of a commendatory editorial.

In fact my recent LG article which has driven pseudo-Siva to hydrophobia concludes with the hope that the changes taking place among the people, Arthur Koestler's "great silent X" of history, will lead to a solution of the ethnic problem. It will interest him to know that the Sinhalese head of a Christian institution wants to translate that article and get it published in a Sinhala paper. I will not give the name, as he may become the subject of hydrophobic "attack". Obviously pseudo-Siva cannot understand what he reads. He should stop writing.

He is not going to make any headway either by pretending that I am "paranoid" in complaining about discrimination. The leader of the SLMC, which emerged as the first ethnic Muslim party precisely because of widespread perceptions of anti-Muslim discrimination, used to be resoundingly vociferous about that discrimination. Is it pseudo-Siva's position that Ashraff and all the SLMC supporters



are paranoid, or is it only Hussain who is paranoid?

He seems to be unaware that nothing is more intellectually discreditable than *ad hominem* arguments. Obviously he resorts to personal scurrility because he cannot meet my argument. He thinks it possible that I have been "speaking to Parliamentarians on both sides of the House", that I am "playing some deadly game", and he believes that I am praising and "espousing the cause of Kadirgamar" to curry favour with him. After that he concludes his article by rising to a mad crescendo, bellowing like an agonized bull "Only time will show whether I am wrong".

More probably time will show that he is mad. After I returned from Moscow in April I dined with a Cabinet Minister whom I greatly esteem. Apart from that I have never spoken to any Parliamentarian, not even on the telephone. I have no time for politicians. As for Kadirgamar, it will interest pseudo-Siva to know that I have never had a face-to-face meeting with him, my conversations with him having been by fax, telephone, and letter, and of a strictly official order. After my return, I did not seek a meeting with him. Not quite the behaviour of someone trying to curry favour, is it?

Pseudo-Siva does not know all that. But he could have noticed the internal evidence provided by my article. So far from praising Kadirgamar, I faulted him. Regarding the Government's India policy and Kadirgamar's statements in connection with the testing of nuclear weapons, I was strongly critical in declaring that nothing could be said in justification or by way of extenuation. I declared that I could not exonerate him entirely over the malfunctioning of the Foreign Ministry. I wrote that the real problem about the continuing patronage system may be the "lack of moral fibre" required to change it. No one in his right mind will take that remark, which certainly applies to

Kadirgamar also (as a member of the Government) as anything but far from complimentary, and most certainly not what has to be expected from an "obvious sycophant". I declared that the PA Government is "certainly the least competent, of all our Governments since 1948". Now does pseudo-Siva really think that anyone will make that remark of a Government while currying favour with one of its Ministers in the expectation of benefits?

Pseudo-Siva will probably counter all that by arguing that I said that Kadirgamar "is among the very best" of all our Cabinet Ministers. I said nothing of the sort. I wrote that the consensus is that quite certainly he is among the better ones, "if not among the very best". That is a factually accurate statement about the existing consensus. My own assessment was that though the man may not be a Talleyrand, "he has indeed acquitted himself creditably enough". Is there anything sycophantic about that?

The basic problem with pseudo-Siva is that for some unknown reason he has chosen to read my article as "espousing the cause of Kadirgamar" against Dhanapala. He says that I exculpate Kadirgamar from all blame. Nothing of the sort, because I explicitly acknowledged the possibility that Kadirgamar could indeed have decisively influenced the decision against Dhanapala for various reasons, such as jealous hatred. My point was that he stood damned without any evidence at all.

I nowhere "espoused" Kadirgamar's cause. I noted that the Government could have wanted to back him rather than Dhanapala for a top international post, and if that was so it would be a way of making some amends for all the shocking discrimination against our minorities in the foreign relations sector. I did not argue that Kadirgamar should be our preferred candidate because of past discrimination against minorities. That argument would have

been completely out of place in an article exploring a new phase in our ethnopolitics.

In any case, it should be obvious that anyone who really believes that what Hussain writes is going to make the slightest difference to the Government's decision on whom to back for a top international post must be, beyond dispute, a stark, raving, certifiable lunatic. So sleep easy, pseudo, whoever you may be.

Before concluding I must briefly dispose of two matters on the level of personal scurrility. One is that I am supposed to have had a bee in my bonnet about Christians. Sheer nonsense which none of my Christian friends will believe for an instant. The other is a vague reference to a former Muslim Foreign Minister who can speak authoritatively on Hussain and discrimination. This is an innuendo, with no details being given, and is just the kind of thing to be expected of pseudo-Siva. But I can declare that J.R. Jayewardene did not approve of what happened, nor did Gamini Dissanayake, nor most emphatically did the present Opposition Leader who intervened indefatigably on my behalf. Obviously all UNP members are not anti-Muslim, but I hold on very good grounds that it is quintessentially an anti-Muslim Party. I will be administering condian punishment on the UNP over its anti-Muslim behaviour in a further article.

There is something to be said for polemics, provided the opponent is worthy of one's steel. It has even led to great literature, as in the cases of Pascal and Newman. The cut and thrust of argument can be both instructive and exhilarating. But what pseudo-Siva has produced is garbage, not argument, and in his present state of hydrophobic foaming he can only be expected to produce more garbage. So lay off, you cowardly hydrophobe.



# Stop Bombing Iraq

*By the time this commentary reaches you, the United States and its allies may have launched their military operation against Iraq. Or, the crisis might have been defused through diplomacy.*

*Whatever the end result, we have decided to publish the articles below for two important reasons. **One**, they embody the moral concerns of committed individuals and groups in different parts of the World which have not been highlighted in the mainstream international media. **Two**, they provide the sort of insight and in depth analysis into the conflict which the mainstream international media has studiously ignored.*

*The first article in the main commentary is from a group of scholars, journalists and activists, most of them from the US, with international and personal links to West Asia. It is a statement of great significance considering the international standing of some members of the group. The second piece in the main commentary is an equally powerful plea from some of the leading Catholic Bishops of the United States. It carries tremendous moral weight.*

**Editors,**  
Just Commentary

While the United States clearly has the military power to further devastate and prostrate Iraq, we strongly believe that the course the U.S. has chosen is not only grossly unjust, but also exceedingly hypocritical and duplicitous. We further believe that though the U.S. may be able to pursue its imperial policies without substantial opposition in the short term, the policies being pursued today, especially the new and massive military assault being prepared against Iraq, are likely to have tremendously negative historical ramifications.

As Middle East experts and scholars – many with close and personal ties to this long troubled and misunderstood region – we feel a political, a moral, and a historical responsibility to speak up in clear opposition at this critical time.

## Origins of Today's Imbroglia

Throughout this century Western countries, primarily the United States and Great Britain, have continually interfered in and manipulated events in the Middle East. The origins of the Iraq/Kuwait conflict can be found in the unilateral British decision during

the early years of this century to essentially cut off a piece of Iraq to suit British Empire desires of that now faded era.

Rather than agreeing to Arab self-termination at the end of World War I and the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, Western nations conspired to divide the Arab world into a number of artificial and barely viable entities; to install Arab "client regimes" throughout the region, to make these regimes dependent on Western economic and military power for survival; and then to impose an ongoing series of economic, cultural, and political arrangements seriously detrimental to the people of the area. This is the historical legacy that we live with today.

Throughout the 1930s and the 1940s the West further manipulated the affairs of the Middle East in order to control the resources of the region and then to create a Jewish homeland in an area long considered central to Arab nationalism and Muslim concerns. Playing off one regime against the other and one geopolitical interest against another became a major preoccupation for Western politicians and their closely associated business interests.

## Following World War II:

After World War II, and from these policy origins, the United States became the main Western power in the region, supplanting the key roles formerly played by Britain and France. In the 1960s, Gamel Abdel Nasser was the target of Western condemnation for his attempt to reintegrate the Arab world and to pursue independent "non-aligned" policies. By the 1970s the CIA had established close working relationships with key Arab client regimes from Morocco and Jordan to Saudi Arabia and Iran – regimes that even then were among the most repressive and undemocratic in the world – in order to further American domination and to secure an ever-growing supply of inexpensive oil and the resultant flow of petrodollars.

By the late 1970s the counter-reaction of the Iranian revolution was met with a Western build-up of the very same Iraqi regime that is so condemned today in a vain attempt to use Iraq to crush the new Iranian regime. The result was millions of deaths coming on top of the terrible devastation of Lebanon, itself a country that had been severed from Greater Syria



by Western intrigues, as had been the area of southern Syria, then known as Palestine. Additionally the Israelis were given the green light to invade Lebanon, further devastate the Palestinians, and install a puppet Lebanese government – an attempt which failed leading to an American and Israeli retreat but ongoing militarism to this day. Meanwhile, throughout all these years Western manipulation of oil supplies and pricing, coupled with arms sales policies, often seriously exacerbated tensions between countries in the region leading to the events of this decade.

### **The Gulf Conflict**

It was precisely such American manipulations and intrigues that led to the Gulf War in 1990. Indeed, we would be remiss if we did not note that there is already much historical evidence that the U.S. actually manoeuvred Iraq into the invasion of Kuwait, repeatedly suggesting to Iraq that it would become the pivotal military state of the area in coordination with the U.S.

Whether true or not the U.S. subsequently did everything in its power to prevent a peaceful resolution of the conflict and for the first time intervened with massive and overwhelming military force in the region creating today's dangerously unstable quagmire.

The initially stated American goal was only to protect Saudi Arabia. Then after the unprecedented military buildup the goal became to expel Iraq from Kuwait. Then the goal evolved to toppling the Iraqi government. And from there the Americans began to impose various limits on Iraqi sovereignty; took over much of Iraq air space; sent the CIA to repeatedly attempt to topple the Iraqi government; and placed a near-total embargo on Iraq that many – including a former Attorney General of the United States – have termed neargenocidal. The

overall result has been the subjugation and impoverishment of Iraq and the actual death of approximately 5% of the Iraqis as the direct result of American sanctions, plus the reallocation of oil quotes and petrodollars to American client-states.

With the Clinton Administration, the U.S. began to insist on the “dual containment” of both Iraq and Iran – both countries which just a few years ago the U.S. was working very closely with and providing considerable arms to. With few in the press able to remember from one year to the next, or to connect one historic event with another, somehow Washington has come to insist on Iraqi disarmament and Iranian strangulation. Furthermore, these policies are being pursued even while Israel and key Arab client states are receiving American weapons in ever larger amounts, with Israel's weapons of mass destruction making her forces 7 to 8 times stronger than all Arab armies combined. Furthermore still, the U.S. and Israeli strategic alliance has never been closer, the U.S. has repeatedly helped Israel defy the will of the international community and the United Nations, and the U.S. continues to champion a disingenuous Israeli “peace process” which in reality on the ground continues to dispossess the Palestinians and to corral them onto reservations in their own country!

### **The Future**

In a future statement we will move on to the crucial subject of what alternative policies the United States should be pursuing. But at this critical moment we are compelled to come forward and urgently condemn the policies now being pursued by the United States and regional ally Israel. We call for an immediate cessation of the economic embargo against Iraq, an end to U.S.-imposed restrictions on Iraqi sovereignty and airspace, and most of all immediately suspension of all plans to attack Iraq using the

overwhelming technological and military instruments available to the U.S.

If the U.S. continues to pursue its current policies then we conclude and predict it will not be unreasonable for many in the world to brand the U.S. itself as an arrogant and imperialist state, and if that becomes the historical paradigm it will be both understandable and justifiable if others pursue whatever means are available to them to oppose American domination and militarism. Such developments could quite possibly lead to still more decades of conflict, warfare, and terrorism throughout the region and beyond.

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## U.S. Bishops' Moral Concern

President William Clinton  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President

We, Bishop Members of Pax Christi-USA and other bishops, are writing to you to express our profound moral concerns about the U.S.-led sanctions against the people of Iraq. In conscience, we urge you to call for the immediate lifting of the sanctions by the U.N. Security Council, to end all U.S. support for these sanctions, and to refrain from any military action in the current dispute.

In 1993, on the 10th anniversary of our pastoral letter, "The Challenge of Peace", we U.S. Catholic Bishops issued "The Harvest of Justice is Sown in Peace". In this document, we acknowledged that "in the aftermath of the Cold War, economic sanctions have become a more common form of international pressure as a means of combating aggression short of military intervention.... In each case [in which they have been applied] we have consulted closely with the church in the country affected and have been guided by its judgement".

In our document, we have enunciated four criteria for the assessment of the morality of the use of sanctions:

- *Concerns about the limited effectiveness of sanctions and the harms caused to civilian populations require that comprehensive sanctions be considered only in response to aggression or grave and ongoing injustice after less coercive measures have been tried and with clear and reasonable conditions set for their removal.*
- *The harm caused by sanctions should be proportionate to the good likely to be achieved; sanctions should avoid grave and irreversible harm to the civilian population. Therefore, sanctions should be targeted as much as possible against those directly responsible for the injustice, distinguishing between the govern-*

*ment and the people. Embargoes, when employed, must make provisions for the fundamental human needs of the civilian population. The denial of basic needs may not be used as a weapon.*

- *The consent to sanctions by substantial portions of the affected population is morally relevant...*
- *Sanctions should always be part of a broader process of diplomacy aimed at finding an effective solution to the injustice.*

We find that after seven years, the sanctions against Iraq violate these criteria.

Sanctions have taken the lives of well over one million persons, 60% of whom are children under five years of age. The 1991 bombing campaign destroyed electric, water and sewage plants as well as agricultural, food and medical production facilities. All of these structures continue to be inoperative, or function at sub-minimal levels, because the sanctions have made it impossible to buy spare parts for their repair.

This bombing campaign, together with the total embargo in place since August 1990 was, and is, an attack against the civilian population of Iraq. Such counter-population warfare has been unequivocally condemned by the most authoritative teaching body of the Catholic Church, The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965).

Independent agencies continue to document the devastating impact sanctions are having on the civilian population. These include the United Nation's own World Health Organization (WHO) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). In 1996, UNICEF reported that 4,500 children were dying monthly. Leaders of the church in Iraq tell us that sanctions must end. For example, Archbishop Gabriel Kassab, of the southern region of Iraq, stated: "Epidemics rage, taking away infants and the sick by the thousands. Those children who survive disease succumb to malnutrition, which stunts their physical and mental

*(Continued on page 15)*

Hashemi - Ottawa, Canada; Professor M. Hassouna - Georgia; Professor Clement Henry - University of Texas (Austin); Professor Herbert Hill - University of Wisconsin (Madison); Professor Asaf Hussein - U.K.; Yudit Ilany - Jerusalem; Professor George Irani - Lebanese American University (Beirut); Tahir Jaffer - Nairobi, Kenya; David Jones - Editor, New Dawn Magazine, Australia; Professor Elie Katz - Sonoma State University, CA; Professor George Kent - University of Hawaii; Professor Ted Keller - San Francisco State University, Emeritus; John F. Kennedy - Attorney at Law, Washington; Samaneh Khader - Graduate Student in Theology, University of Helsinki; Professor Ebrahim Khoda - University of Western Australia; Guida Leicester, San Francisco; Jeremy Levin - Former CNN Beirut Bureau Chief (Portland); Professor Seymour Meiman - Columbia University (New York); Dr. Avi Melzer - Frankfurt; Professor Alan Meyers - Boston University; Professor Michael Mills - Vista College (Berkeley, CA); Kamram Mofrad - Idaho; Shahab Mushtaq - Knox College; Professor Minerva Nasser - Eddine - University of Adelaide (Australia); Professor Peter Pellett - University of Massachusetts (Amherst); Professor Max Pepper, M.D. - University of Massachusetts (Amherst); Professor Rund Peters - Universiteit van Amsterdam; Professor Glenn Perry - Indiana State University; Professor Tanya Reinhart - Tel Aviv University; Professor Shalom Raz - Technion (Haifa); Professor Knut Rognes - Stavanger College (Norway); Masud Salimian - Morgan State University (Baltimore); Professor Mohamed Salmassi - University of Massachusetts; Qais Saleh - Graduate Student, International University (Japan); Ali Saidi - J.D. Candidate in International Law (Berkeley, CA); Dr. Eyad Sarraj - Gaza, Occupied Palestine; Henry Schwarzschild - New York (Original Cofounder - Deceased); Professor Herbert Schiller - University of California (San Diego); Peter Shaw-Smith - Journalist, London; David Shomar - New York; Dr. Manjra Shuaib - Cape Town (South Africa); Robert Silverman - Montreal; Professor J. David Singer - University of Michigan (Ann Arbor); Professor Majid Tehranian - Director Toda Institute for Global Peace and Policy (University of Hawaii); Dr. Marlyn Tadros - Deputy Director, Legal Research and Resource Center for Human Rights (Cairo); Professor John Williams - College of William and Mary; Ismail Zayid, M.D.-Dalhousi University (Canada)

\* Member of the International Advisory Panel of the International Movement for a Just World.



# IMF's Lost Chance to Rein in Hedge Funds

Martin Khor

*The International Monetary Fund missed a chance to rein in hedge funds when it failed to draw lessons from Asia's experience with hedge funds and to take initiatives to curb manipulation, for example by proposing measures to curb the funds' high leverage.*

After the bailout of Long Term Capital Management (LTCM), there are news and rumours that several other hedge funds could now be in trouble and that this may pose a risk to global financial stability.

More than a year ago, Malaysia had raised the alarm and requested the International Monetary Fund to review the role of hedge funds in the Asian crisis.

Due to the agency's bias for a financial free market, however, the IMF chief defended speculation in December 1997 and the IMF secretariat in April 1998 produced a weak report largely exonerating hedge funds.

It was a wasted opportunity to limit the funds' powers. As a result of non-action, the hedge funds have been able to continue their operations without any tighter regulations, and they are now implicated not only in the original Asian crisis but also speculation in Hong Kong, Russia and now in the recent volatile turnaround in dollar-yen rates.

The LTCM debacle brought to light many central realities at the heart of the global financial crisis.

One of these realities is that some hedge funds are very influential in swaying financial markets, as they specialise in intense speculation in various markets (in equity, bonds, currencies).

Their awesome power is derived from their ability to command very high leverage by borrowing up to 20 or 40 times more than the value of their

equity. For example, with capital of less than US \$ 5 billion, LTCM was able to borrow up to US \$ 200 billion.

Their command over huge financial resources enables hedge funds to have a tremendous advantage and sway over the markets. For example, they can attack currencies and stocks and cause them to depreciate sharply, more sharply than can be justified by economic fundamentals.

Indeed, hedge funds have the power to trigger financial crises that cause recession and depression of whole economies in the developing world.

Another reality is that the crash of even one highly-leveraged hedge fund has the potential to cause a meltdown of a financial system as large as that of the United States.

Finally, since hedge funds are owned by very rich and powerful individuals and institutions, their activities are guarded and defended by governments in their home countries. After all, the profits of the hedge funds' adventures in emerging markets have benefited the rich countries (or at least the top crust of their elites).

And when these funds themselves suffer huge losses, these governments will rush to the rescue by organising massive bailouts. Even though the same governments preach to others that bailouts of a collapsed company must be avoided at all costs, as a cardinal market principle.

For some time already, attempts to highlight the damaging role of hedge funds had been made by a few developing countries that became victims of hedge funds and other speculative institutions.

Malaysia was first off the mark as early as August 1997, when its premier Dr Mahathir Mohamad bluntly attacked hedge funds (in particular those related to George Soros) for triggering the currency collapses in Asia.

A few months ago, the Hong Kong authorities joined in, blaming hedge funds for manipulating the local currency and stock markets, and intervened massively to beat the speculators off. Hong Kong has now joined Malaysia in campaigning to rein in and regulate the hedge funds.

But the shouts of the victim Asian countries have been ignored, even ridiculed and dismissed as figments of the imagination of leaders seeking to blame foreigners for their countries' plight and thus deflect blame from themselves.

Today, in the wake of the LTCM debacle and mounting losses in other funds, the laughter and derision have come back full circle to haunt the hedge funds, their investors and creditors, and most of all the financial authorities of the US and other rich nations.

Hedge funds are a leading component of financial institutions that have speculated on the currencies of many countries. One of their main methods is to 'short' a currency. Using its high leverage, the fund borrows many billions of dollars' worth of a local currency and then sells this local currency continuously in a bid to get the currency to fall drastically.

The central bank concerned, trying desperately to maintain its currency's level, usually has far fewer resources than a single well-leveraged hedge fund. It buys up its own currency that is being flooded in the market by the

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*Martin Khor is Director of the Third World Network.*



speculators and sells off its limited supply of US dollars and other foreign currencies.

Soon enough, its foreign reserves dwindle to danger levels. When the central bank is no longer able to support the local currency, it devalues sharply. The hedge fund now needs far less US dollars to repay the local currency it had borrowed, and thus it pockets a large amount in profit.

The Northern financial authorities and the IMF have denied the power and manipulative practices of hedge funds and their role in the Asian crisis.

When Dr Mahathir blamed currency speculators and hedge funds for sparking the crisis, he was derided for not understanding how financial markets work.

Malaysia persisted, and called on the IMF to do a review of the role of hedge funds in the crisis.

The IMF thus had to undertake a study. It could have taken this opportunity to draw lessons from Asia's experience with hedge funds and to take initiatives to curb manipulation, for example by proposing measures to curb the funds' high leverage.

Unfortunately the IMF was quite clearly biased from the start, choosing to defend the role of speculators and to blame local banking practices instead for the crisis.

This bias was clear in December 1997 during a seminar in Kuala Lumpur organised by the ASEAN Business Council on 'Financial Initiatives for the 21st Century', held in conjunction with the ASEAN Finance Ministers' meeting.

The IMF Managing Director Michel Camdessus gave a morning lecture on the Asian crisis, calling on Asian countries to be more transparent and market-friendly, and to further liberalise financially by making their capital accounts fully convertible.

At question time, a participant asked

why the IMF seemed to be denying that the crisis was caused by Asian countries having liberalised their financial system and currency trade too rapidly (under the IMF's advice), which had allowed speculators to take advantage by making profit by forcing sharp devaluations onto the Asian currencies.

The questioner commented that the IMF should change its policies that asked Asian countries to have unregulated financial markets, fully open to inflows and outflows of funds and thus to speculation.

In reply, Camdessus said that in finding a balance between regulation and freedom, it was important to have the right analysis.

'This is why I was happy to be asked to study the role of hedge funds. This study will say that you must be careful in using heavily loaded words like speculation and speculators. Speculation is often only good management and prudence in using our savings'.

He warned that when a government undertakes the wrong policies, 'it should not complain about speculators. What is needed is not to curb your market but to have policies that are not exposed to speculation'.

Speculators, he added, are there to make money, and if a country had sound policies it would not be affected.

From this response, it could be clearly anticipated that the IMF study would largely exonerate hedge funds from any major contribution to the Asian crisis.

True enough, the IMF study released in April 1998 and entitled 'Hedge Funds and Financial Market Dynamics' downplayed the role of hedge funds, or the risks they posed.

A main conclusion was that while hedge funds are large in absolute terms, they are dwarfed by other institutional investors (banks, pension funds, mutual funds) that engage in many of the same activities.

'This points against the conclusion that hedge funds play a singular role in precipitating crises'.

This is one of the report's main points, that the capital of hedge funds is 'small relative to the resources at the command of other institutional investors' and thus these hedge funds cannot have a major role in crises.

This conclusion of course downplays the most important point, that some hedge funds have extremely high leverage, as exposed by the LTCM episode, which gives them tremendous resources far beyond their capital.

The report says hedge funds did have large positions against the Thai baht in mid-1997, but so did other investors, and most hedge funds were late to take those positions. There is also scant evidence that hedge funds had equally large positions against other Asian currencies.

As the report points out, it is true that other institutions (commercial banks, investment banks, domestic investors) also played a significant role in the crisis.

However, the role and profits of hedge funds were also very significant. According to a *Business Week* report of August 1997, in the first half of 1997 the hedge funds performed poorly.

But in July (the month when the Thai baht went into crisis and when other currencies began to come under attack) they 'rebounded with a vengeance' and most types of funds posted 'sharp gains'.

The magazine says that a key contributing factor for the hedge funds' excellent July performance was 'the funds' speculative plays on the Thai baht and other struggling Asian currencies, such as the Malaysian ringgit and the Philippine peso'.

As a whole, the hedge funds made only 10.3% net profits (after fees) on average for the period January to June 1997. But their average profit rate



jumped to 19.1% for January-July 1997.

The IMF report also says regulation of investment funds can be justified on three grounds: consumer protection, systemic risk and market integrity. It says 'few regulators see a need for stricter regulation on the first two grounds'.

However, as hedge funds can manipulate particular markets, 'limited measures to strengthen supervision, regulation and transparency might be considered'. To do this, it suggests that the reporting mechanisms in the US can be replicated in other countries to make hedge funds more transparent.

In the light of the LTCM debacle, these conclusions can be criticised as inadequate and misleading.

The threatened fall of one hedge fund alone, LTCM, had the potential to disrupt the US and global financial system, thus necessitating a Fed-organised bailout. Contrary to the report's conclusion, there is thus a dire need for regulation because of the risk posed by hedge funds of a financial-system collapse.

As for the US regulations to ensure market integrity being adequate and worthy of replications, the LTCM debacle has also clarified that the existing US laws and practice are inadequate, and thus hedge fund crises have developed. There are now more strident calls for tighter regulation of hedge funds.

This episode shows that international financial institutions and Western

financial authorities have been in a 'denial syndrome' over hedge funds and their power via leverage, their manipulative role, and their potential for causing systemic damage.

Countries that have become their victims, like Malaysia and Hong Kong, have called for dismantling the power of these funds and limiting their capacity for mischief.

Even as public disillusionment grows on the once-revered hedge funds, it is still too early to tell whether the Western financial authorities will move to clip the wings of these funds, or whether they will still be allowed to operate in and plunder the resources of countries around the world

— T. W. N. Features

## Stop Bombing...

*(Continued from page 12)*

development. Our situation is unbearable! We appeal to people of conscience to work to end the blockade of Iraq.... Let it be known that Resolution 986 (the so-called 'oil-for-food' resolution) has served to divert world attention from the tragedy, while in some respects aggravating it".

In fact, only 53% of money received for the sale of oil is available to Iraq. Thirty percent of the money realized from the oil revenues is paid to Kuwait, and a sizable amount covers various costs of the U.N. expenses in Iraq. The food and medicine for Iraqi children, and the rest of the civilian population, from Resolution 986, are constantly delayed, largely because of the extraordinary complexity of the procedures for the implementation of the resolution.

Mr. President, whatever the intent of these sanctions, we are compelled by this assessment to judge them to be a violation of moral teaching, specifically as articulated within the Catholic tradition. In fact, the sanctions

are not only in violation of the teaching of the Catholic Church, but they violate the human rights of Iraqi people, because they deprive innocent people from food and medicine, basic elements for normal life. We call for the immediate cessation of sanctions against Iraq.

We sincerely hope you will give careful consideration to the moral issues we have raised. We are willing to work with you in trying to find a truly just path to peace in the Middle East.

Sincerely yours,

Juan A. Arzube, Former Auxiliary Bishop of Los Angeles, CA; Victor H. Blake, Bishop of Crookston, MN; Joseph M. Breitenbeck, Former Bishop of Grand Rapids, MI; Kevin M. Britt, Auxiliary Bishop of Detroit, MI; Charles A. Buswell, Former Bishop of Pueblo, CO; Charles J. Chaput, OFM Cap, Bishop of Denver, CO; John G. Chedid, Eparch of Our Lady of Lebanon of Los Angeles, CA; Matthew H. Clark, Bishop of Rochester, NY; Patrick R. Cooney, Bishop of Gaylord, MI; Thomas J. Costello, Auxiliary Bishop of Syracuse, NY; Nicholas N.D' Antonio, Auxiliary Bishop of New Orleans, LA; Joseph P. Delaney, Bishop of Fort Worth, TX; Robert W. Donnelly, Auxiliary Bishop of Toledo, OH; Joseph A. Ferrario, Former Bishop of Honolulu, HI; John J. Fitzpatrick, Former Bishop of Brownsville, Patrick F. Flores, Archbishop of San Antonio, TX; Thomas

Gunbleton, Auxiliary Bishop of Detroit, MI; Richard C. Hanifen, Bishop of Colorado Springs, CO; Joseph L. Howze, Bishop of Biloxi, MS; William L. Higi, Bishop of Lafayette, IN; James Hoffman, Bishop of Toledo, OH; Howard J. Hubbard, Bishop of Albany, NY; Raymond G. Hunthausen, Former Archbishop of Seattle, WA; William A. Hughes, Former Bishop of Covington, KY; Ibrahim Ibrahim, Bishop Eparch to St. Thomas the Apostle, MI; Joseph L. Imesch, Bishop of Joliet, IL; Raymond A. Lucker, Bishop of New Ulm, MN; Leroy T. Matthiesen, Former Bishop of Amarillo, TX; John E. McCarthy, Bishop of Austin, TX; Lawrence J. McNamara, Bishop of Grand Island, NB; John J. McRaith, Bishop of Owensboro, KY; Dale J. Melczek, Bishop of Gary, IN; Donald W. Montrose, Bishop of Stockton, CA; Francis P. Murphy, Auxiliary Bishop of Baltimore, MD; Michael J. Murphy, Former Bishop of Erie, PA; James D. Niederges, Former Bishop of Nashville, TN; William C. Newman, Auxiliary Bishop of Baltimore, MD; Gerald F. O'Keefe, Former Bishop of Davenport, IA; Albert H. Ottenweller, Former Bishop of Steubenville, OH; Michael Pfeifer, OMI, Bishop of San Angelo, TX; Kenneth J. Povish, Former Bishop of Lansing, MI; Francis A. Quinn, Former Bishop of Sacramento, CA; James A. Quinn, Auxiliary Bishop of Cleveland, OH; Peter A. Rosazza, Auxiliary Bishop of Hartford, CT; Walter J. Schoenherr, Former Auxiliary Bishop of Detroit, MI; Richard J. Skiba, Auxiliary Bishop of Milwaukee, WI; John J. Snyder, Bishop of St. Augustine, FL; Joseph M. Sullivan, Auxiliary Bishop of Brooklyn, NY; Walter F. Sullivan, Bishop of Richmond, VA; Kenneth E. Untener, Bishop of Saginaw, MI; Rene A. Valero, Auxiliary Bishop of Brooklyn, NY; Daniel F. Walsh, Bishop of Las Vegas, NV; J. Kendrick Williams, Bishop of Lexington, KY; Gavaino Zavala, Auxiliary Bishop of Los Angeles.



# A Year Later

Chandra Muzaffar

A year after the crisis, it is only too apparent that those who control the global economy are reluctant to check the trigger that set off the financial turmoil in our part of Asia: volatile, short-term capital moving in and out of markets in search of huge, quick profits.

Their lukewarm response is typified in the approach adopted by the United States Secretary of the Treasury, Robert Rubin. He has proposed 'a new architecture' for the international financial system which pays scant attention to the global dimension of the crisis. The volatility of short-term, speculative capital (or hot money in common parlance) which has now become a global phenomenon with a global impact is not a major issue in Rubin's agenda. Instead, he has chosen to focus upon weaknesses within national economies – some of which are real and require urgent redressal – and how local banking and financial systems should be restructured to handle hot money.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) whose original mandate was to ensure stability in the world's financial markets, is also unwilling to tackle the forces behind short-term, speculative capital, namely, the currency traders, the fund managers, and the money manipulators. Like the US government, the IMF also emphasises remedies within the domestic domain.

## American Interest

Why is the US government, in particular, not prepared to deal with those forces which have wreaked havoc upon the economies of South-

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*Professor Chandra Muzaffar is President of the International Movement for a Just World.*

east and Northeast Asia? Part of the reason is that these same forces are responsible to a great extent for the booming buoyancy of the US economy today. So great is the euphoria generated by the ever appreciating dollar and soaring stocks and shares, that Alan Greenspan, Chairman of the US Federal Reserve System thinks that the US economy has gone 'beyond history' – shades of Francis Fukuyama's 'The end of History and the Last Man', which proclaimed with astounding naivete the ultimate triumph of liberal democracy. Perhaps we should all join hands with Greenspan in celebrating the final victory of American capitalism by declaring that the US has gone 'beyond history and the last currency speculator'!

As an aside, there are many who believe, though, that the triumphant mood of American capitalism will not last very long. The doyen of American economic philosophers, John Kenneth Galbraith, for instance, is of the view that "the speculative splurge on Wall Street" must lead to a crash or what he describes as "a major adjustment". When the American bubble bursts there could well be a global recession. In the meantime, however, the party goes on.

It is not just the euphoria of a buoyant economy. Speculative capital has become so deeply embedded in the US economic system, that its functionaries have become almost invincible. Woe betide the man who tries to take on the currency trader or the fund manager. For he commands not billions but trillions of dollars which dominate financial markets everywhere. Protecting his interests is synonymous with protecting the interests of the American nation.

In a sense, the interests of currency

traders and fund managers and others of their ilk are intimately linked to the interests of millions and millions of ordinary Americans. For it is their savings kept in pension funds and countless investment funds which provide the resources that enable money managers to move billions of dollars around the globe at lightning speed for instant profits. It has been estimated that "America's mutual funds alone control 8000 billion dollars in savings and pension reserves, making them the largest source of the erratic and neverending flow of capital". Translated in human terms, this mammoth amount represents a huge proportion of American men and women.

## Burned by hot money

For these reasons, the US government will not adopt any measure which seeks to control currency speculation or even to make currency trading more accountable and more transparent, as demanded by various quarters. On the contrary, it can be expected to continue its global drive to coax national governments to open up their economies to volatile, speculative capital. In the name of liberalisation, governments are being asked to remove all barriers to the unregulated, unhindered flow of capital which, as the intellectual-activist, David Korten points out in his *When Corporations Rule the World*, has benefitted only a small segment of humankind.

In this regard, it is because short-term, speculative capital has become so central to the Japanese economy that it is in deep trouble today. From the mid-eighties onwards, a 'bubble' developed around real estate and stocks and shares in what was once a highly productive, dynamic economy. At one point, speculative activities had sent property prices soaring so high in Tokyo that the total real estate value



of the city exceeded the total in the whole of the US. It is partly because the bubble has now burst – and not because of state intervention in the economy – that the Japanese economy is so lethargic.

Likewise, it is mainly because South Korea had liberalised its financial sector and had allowed hot money to pour into the economy in the nineties that it became so vulnerable to currency speculators. Thailand, Indonesia, the Philippines and almost all the countries of Southeast Asia also had no hesitation about embracing the credo of liberalisation. By the mid-nineties these countries had eased almost all regulations on capital movements and opened their capital accounts. Opening capital accounts meant that foreigners could withdraw their investments “without having to obtain permission from authorities to convert their local currencies into foreign

exchange”. This encouraged “investments in short-term domestic assets, such as foreign currency deposits and domestic bonds, and in the local stock market”. As Manuel Montes of the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore argues, it “set the stage for the 1997 currency crisis”.

Malaysia is an example of a Southeast Asian country which in the nineties relied heavily on short-term, volatile capital of this sort to boost its share market. It is reported that “in January 1994 alone Malaysia had to manage 30 billion (US dollars) in external capital buying into its stock and bond markets”. What this means is that Malaysia’s much touted growth, especially in the nineties, was, to an extent, due to the inflow of speculative capital. It is the outflow of this capital since July 1997 which is partly responsible for the fall of the ringgit and the sharp decline of the share market.

## Slower but steadier

Given the Malaysian experience and the experience of other Asian countries hit by the crisis, one wonders whether we should depend so much on short-term, speculative capital for our growth and development. Of course, it is capital we cannot avoid since we are totally assimilated into the international financial system which, as we have seen, is dominated by speculative transactions. Nonetheless, we should be cautious about hot money and plan our economic recovery in such a way that we are not held hostage to currency speculators and fund managers. This may well result in slower growth rates. But it will be a surer, steadier path to progress. Besides, it would be an approach to development – Which, since it eschews speculative capital – will be less estranged from those ethical principles that lie at the heart of all our religious and moral philosophies.

## DOCUMENT

# Asian – African Encounters

1. ICES and CODESRIA will draw on the existing network of scholars and cooperating institutions to identify and develop research themes on which comparative and complementary research projects may be undertaken. These themes to include gender and ethnicity, state policies and practices, community level coexistence, state violence and collective violence, globalisation and culture, ethnicity and the wider project on the transformation of the state, society and democratic practices. These themes would be developed by commissioning working papers by an African and Asian scholar familiar with the literature.

2. It has been further proposed that in-house training workshops on the discursive practices of ethnicity and nationalism be held at least twice every year (alternating between Asia and Africa). These workshops should not be limited to scholars, but should also include journalists, concerned policy makers, social and political activists. The

Workshops should be utilised to strengthen understanding by Asians of the African experience and vice-versa and further facilitate personnel and institutional linkages.

3. ICES proposes that a conference be held in the last quarter of 1999 or the first quarter of 2000 on the contribution made by South Asian scholars to an understanding of ethnicity, the politics of identity, gender, globalisation and the state, and civil society. It is intended to invite up to ten African scholars to this conference and CODESRIA’s cooperation will be requested to identify the African participants.

4. ICES and CODESRIA should explore possibilities of undertaking joint missions to countries which are experiencing widespread violence and dislocation as a result of ethnic conflict and confrontation with the purpose of assessing the role of the social science community in responding to such a crisis and recommending a research agenda directly relating to understanding and

responding to such crises.

5. ICES and CODESRIA should consider the feasibility of starting a News letter which includes abstracts of social science articles, social news features, book reviews, and other information of interest in the social science community.

6. In addition, Asian scholars should be encouraged to publish in African academic journals and vice versa.

7. ICES and CODESRIA reiterated that the project should not be limited to academic studies but also involve the sharing of experiences and insights on intellectual engagement with issues of policy and the process of value formation including tolerance, accommodation and respect for diversity.

8. A steering committee on the Africa-Asia project on ethnicity and the politics of identity was established with the distinguished Nigerian social scientist Professor Okwadike Nnoli as the Chairperson.



# A Review of Human Rights

Ambika Satkunanathan

The Human Rights Film Festival to mark the 50th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, organised by the Law & Society Trust and held on the 11th and 12th of December at the Sri Lanka Television Training Institute was both inspiring and disappointing. Inspiring because the films shown illustrated the pathetic state of human rights in many countries and portrayed brave individuals who spoke out against the atrocities. It was disappointing due to the public's response, or should it be said the lack of public response.

Of the films shown, some were documentaries and others fictional stories based on the ethnic conflicts and wars going on around the world. If there was one message they all carried, it was the call not to ignore human rights abuses around the world and not to be complacent till it is in one's own backyard. A few films stand out in memory for their poignant portrayal of individuals who fought and survived the violation of their basic rights.

*Calling the Ghosts: A Story about Rape, War and Women* was about two Yugoslavian women who were of the few women detained at the concentration camp in Omarska. It vividly portrays the fear and confusion of women who were being tortured and abused by their friends and neighbours. The women state that they realised that the only reason for their abuse, torture and rape was that they were Muslims. The credits do not roll at the release of the women, instead this film goes beyond and examines the way the women deal with their trauma and how they release the immense hatred and anger they possess. One of the women states that as she went around the country gathering evidence about the murders and violations of human rights to be utilised as evidence at the Criminal Court she began to feel the hatred disappearing

and sensed the bigger purpose. This lead them both to actively take part in the gathering and submitting of evidence to the Special Tribunal for Yugoslavia set up at the Hague, and to set up a woman's group to help female victims of human rights violations get back on their feet. This film is a lesson to all to take an interest in the violations of human rights all over the world and to not be under the illusion that it will never happen to them. As one of the women herself says, "we never thought it would happen here".

*The Death & the Maiden* is another film which explores the dilemmas and questions surrounding the human rights issue. It is set in a South American country after the fall of the dictatorship, and is about a woman who was abused, tortured and raped during the regime who now realises that her torturer is the man who gave her husband a lift home. In the kangaroo court that Paulina conducts for Dr Miranda she raises age old questions such as how responsible should an individual who merely obeyed the orders of a superior be?, how reliable is the testimony of a supposed victims? etc.

One is also confronted with the malleable nature of human beings as Dr Miranda states, that although he fought the urge to torture and rape in the interrogation centre the environment, the guards and the immense power he felt he had over the victims finally made him lose control. It is particularly chilling when he says that he was actually beginning to enjoy it and was sad when it ended.

The other films shown were, *In Cold Blood: Massacre in East Timor*, *Before the Rain* – a film on the conflict between the Albanians and the Macedonians, *In the Name of the Father* – the true story of a man made to confess to a crime he did not commit in Northern Ireland (Guilford four), *Behind the Walls of*

*Castlereagh-harsh* and abusive interview mechanisms at the Castlereagh interrogation centre, *Testimony* – a Tibetan monk's testimony of torture at a camp for 30 years. All these films were extremely informative and dared to ask the difficult and controversial questions which confront each and everyone in relation to human rights.

The only disappointment was the lack of public response to the film festival. The number of attendees on the first day was low but could have been excused due to the traffic or to the fact that it was a weekday. The attendance on the second day, Saturday was better but one feels that many more could have benefited from such informative and inspirational films. A few attendees felt that more publicity should have been given to the Film Festival. It was discouraging to note that although many schools had been invited no school children took this opportunity to expand their knowledge and awareness. One attendee felt that the films should have been taken to the schools and shown to the students as he felt that the young should be made aware of such important issues. Why didn't the schools take this opportunity to encourage their students to attend?. If they did why didn't any students turn up?. Why wasn't the general public present? Is it because society is apathetic and interested only in the "here and now" and not in the bigger picture? Or is it because they feel that they are helpless? There is an answer to the final question – "an individual can make a difference". This was illustrated in the film *Testimony* where Tibetan monk Palden Gyatso says that the authorities at the prison began treating him differently, with more care and kindness due to the letters sent by members of Amnesty International, as they knew that there were people outside who cared about what happened to him and were willing to fight to free him.



## BOOKS

### Dakar Declaration on Africa – Asia Co-operation on Social Science Research issued at Dhakar, Senegal on December 20th 1998

Whereas the International Centre for Ethnic Studies (ICES), Colombo, Sri Lanka and the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) Dakar, Senegal held a Consultation on the 16 and 17 of May 1998 in Cochin, India to explore the problems and challenges of intellectual collaboration between Asian and African scholars on issues relating to ethnicity and whereas a further Consultation was held in Dakar, Senegal between ICES and CODESRIA on the more practical and institutional issues relating to intellectual cooperation between the respective institutions, the following principles and plan of action are hereby adopted;

The participants at both Consultations acknowledging the growing rele-

vance of ethnicity and the politics of identity to an understanding of the crisis of the nation state, the process of state formation and nation building in Asia and Africa.

The participants also viewed with concern that protracted and intensive ethnic conflict in several parts of Asia and Africa have contributed to gross and persistent violation of human rights, mass displacements, fratricidal violence, posing a threat to peace, stability and democratic processes.

The participants also noted that the existing intellectual paradigms and conceptual categories have not adequately taken into account the fluidity of identities and the need to develop new discursive practices which are

capable of transcending these limitations.

The participants also felt that the politics of ethnic identity in Asia and Africa should not be studied in isolation and should be linked to the politics of transformation and the process of reimagining democracy and state in both the regions.

The participants also recognised the importance of sharing experiences and engaging in comparative study which would result in new insights and approaches to the understanding of ethnicity and facilitate more effective engagement with the process of policy formulation and implementation in our respective societies.

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## The Forgotten People

Chapters in an Anthropography of Violence: *Sri Lankans, Sinhals, and Tamils* by E. Valentine Daniel. (OUP), pp. 264, Rs. 395/-

This is a different sort of book about the Sri Lankan conflict, written in the post-colonial cultural idiom of the modern anthropologist, and also resonant of the methodology of subaltern studies. True to these schools, the study quite clearly privileges the views of one of the most marginalised of ethnic subgroups in Sri Lanka, the Estate Tamils. Indeed, the book's strength lies largely in its sympathetic portrayal of the plight of Estate Tamils; it is a moving account of their pain, exploitation and suffering as indentured labourers in tea estates; a powerful

catalogue of the travails of a people who have borne the treble brunt of discrimination from the Sinhala majority, the Jaffna Tamils, as well as from the people of Tamilnadu on their return to India as refugees. It is a narrative that needed to be told to a wider audience and none could have done it better than Valentine Daniel. Together with similar experiences of Indian (and other colonial) indentured labourers in different parts of the world like Fiji, South Africa, Malaya, etc., this is one of several which were part of the world-wide development of indu-

strial capitalism and colonialism, and resonates in similiar accounts of the indentured miners in Africa and the tribal labourers forced to work in the tea plantations of Assam, et al.

The book's second major strength lies in the perceptive analysis of the cultural dichotomies between the Sinhals and the Tamils. The construction of Sri Lankan and Tamil identities, based on their history and heritage respectively, is a clear and logical exposition of the deep-seated cultural roots of ethnic antagonisms. Yet, the



author acknowledges that the conflict itself is of recent origin, a product of the modern nationstate and the emergence of new enmities arising from new identity constructions. One only wishes that these really interesting ideas, so relevant to contemporary nationalisms and their aberrations, could have been investigated at greater length.

or India, the book is a reminder of the several shameful chapters in our history that are little known and even less discussed: India's sordid treatment of returned Estate Tamils in Kodaikanal, Mandapam and other places is an indictment on the state and central governments, bureaucrats and even journalists. Yet another shameful chapter is the so-called 'Peace Keeping Force' which was hastily despatched to the Tamil areas of Sri Lanka: the despicable behaviour of the Indian soldiers towards the Tamils in areas where they were to bring 'peace' is a sordid tale; and if Daniel's sources are to be believed, the Indian government acted in the most duplicitous way towards its own forces in Sri Lanka by maintaining contact with the LTTE and exchanging intelligence with them during the entire period. The people of India have a right to know the extent of this skullduggery, and what actually transpired at the time. Perhaps this is an issue that could be taken up for investigation by scholars interested in India's foreign policy making.

The chapter on torture and victims of torture is powerful, though depressing. The author explains the sad paradox of the torture victims being unable to speak of their own suffering, which in a world of petitions and paper, leaves their tale largely unarticulated.

This made one recall a verse written by a survivor of Pol Pot's genocide:

'God, why didn't you make me a bush, a tree, a boulder,  
So that I could have escaped man's inhumanity towards man'.

The author's observation that the creative and poetic spirit of the Jaffna Tamils, in a sense, began to emerge only as a result of the civil war, is a bit circumspect, although it reminded me of a comment I once heard from an observer that some of the most inspiring songs to emerge from Northern Ireland have been from the IRA.

To the extent the author purports to examine the 'anthropography of violence' in Sri Lanka, I am not wholly certain that it has been achieved. However, that does not take anything away from the book which is an important work, magnificently written and passionately argued, and invokes a range of sociological theories to make sense of the violence endemic in Sri Lanka since the mid-1980s. The criticism I have of this study is the same that Ayesha Jalal has of the subaltern studies on violence: it delves quite deep into the causes of violence as such than of the conflict itself. No doubt the socio-psychological-cultural factors underpinning ethnic violence need to be studied and understood, and to that extent, this book is an important contribution. Yet, there is an undercurrent in the approach that disturbs me – I am sure that was not the express intention of the author, nevertheless, one gets the feeling on reading the book that the violence between the majority Sinhala and the minority Tamil communities was some-

how inevitable, given the kind of identities that prevailed in Sri Lanka. Consider this line from page 67:

.... collective violence of the sort found in Sri Lanka in recent years results when the discordance that obtains between epistemic and ontological discursive practices leads to a quest and a plea for recognition of the new identities constituted by these practices.

I just happen to be one of those who believe that there was nothing inevitable about the conflict: that the Sinhala elites and the Sri Lankan state simply caved in to aggressive and exclusivist Sinhala-Buddhist nationalism. Had they, like the enormously more complex and multiethnic states of Indonesia and India (notwithstanding their own ethnic conflicts) pursued policies that were more inclusive and enlightened, this crisis could have been averted.

A couple of chapters do not sit quite well with the main focus of the book, especially the one on Tamil immigrants in Britain. Although well-written and perceptive in its own way, it would have served its purpose in a book of another kind.

Readers need not be put off by the academic discourses which the author invokes to draw some general conclusions from the Sri Lankan experience. There are several translations of folk and popular poems of the Estate Tamils which add a certain poignancy to the analysis.

**Dr. Chitra Sudarshan**

*teaches modern Asia at the Swinburne University of Technology, Melbourne.*



# Beggars can be boozers

**TAMBIMUTTU: Bridge Between Two Worlds** edited by Jane Williams *Peter Owen*

Reviewed by **Andrew Sinclair**

Tambimuttu was a catalyst of chaos. He was the improbable go-between in a time of fragmentation. In this *festschrift* of contributions from more than 50 people there are celebrations which are exaggerated and unreal, not inappropriately, as their subject is Tambimuttu.

Tambimuttu is still revered in India and his native Sri Lanka as the one expatriate who acquired power in literary London and became a leading poetry editor in the 1940s. The period suited the young Tamil poet, who had the gift of magnetic acquaintance. With his long blue-black hair, liquid eyes and writhing fingers, he fascinated even those who disapproved of him.

His chief conquest was the fastidious T S Eliot, who encouraged him and supported his endeavours without ever joining him in his bohemian raffishness. For Tambimuttu took to the pub life of Soho as to the bitter born. He even claimed to have invented the word "Fitzrovia" (based on the Fitzroy Tavern, although the tavern and the terms for that artistic rendezvous west of Bloomsbury pre dated his arrival there). He launched his famous magazine, Poetry London, on £ 10 and he kept all the submitted manuscripts in a large chamberpot under his bed. (He is said to have used it after drinking too much and to have rescued floating masterpieces from the excesses.) The Swiss and the French pubs and the Hog in the Pound were frequently his offices, although he also used the public baths in Russell Street, even if the steam room tended to dissolve the work of his contributors.

Yet new and serious publishers backed him and his peculiar discrimination. He had fine and catholic tastes,

*Andrew Sinclair's War Like a Wasp: The Lost Decade of the Forties* was published recently by Hamilton.

publishing neo-romantic and Georgian poets alongside experimental verse and the laconic messages of war that returned to London. He employed Henry Moore and Graham Sutherland to design his covers and decorate his books. His marriage of word and significant illustration was almost as artful as on a medieval illuminated manuscript.

Wherever he drifted, there was a persistent eddy of artistic excitement. During the war, a soldier, a sailor or an airman with a poem in his pocket could always find Tambimuttu in a pub, drinking through the Blitz, and in that unsafe haven he could proffer his poem or his sketch of the fighting. What John Lehmann missed at Penguin New Writing and Cyril Connolly at Horizon, Tambimuttu snapped up, the most available editor of a briefly democratic and besieged culture. He was the first to value and edit Keith Douglas's *Alamein to Zem Zem*; he also published Henry Moore's *Shelter Sketchbook*.

Yet the chaos of the war, which gave him his opportunity, also destroyed him. For he had no head for money. As he once protested, he did not have luck; he had vision and faith. If he went out with a beggingbowl to pay for his books and magazines, his justification was his belief that he made poetry happen. He inspired it and published it in a time when it was even popular.

But the coming of peace and its disciplines did not suit him. His publishers changed hands and he was dismissed. He married in India, spent a decade in America, and then returned to die in England, the relict of his own reputation. In his last years, he lived on beer and wine and women. He was always the Tamil bohemian who liked to call himself a prince, although

he was truly only a prince in Fitzrovia.

The tributes to Tambimuttu in this book are moving and evocative, particularly those by Nicholas Moore and Kathleen Raine. But none of them answers the question posed by a Sinhalese compatriot – how could an obscure Tamil from Jaffna become a leading literary editor in wartime London?

There are many answers – the collapse of the marxist literary elite of the 1930s, the destruction of most of the warehouses full of new books in the Blitz, the access of Poetry London to large stocks of scarce paper, the focus of the artists in the armed forces on Fitzrovia during their leaves, the high profile of Tambimuttu (and everyone knew where to find him), the sprouting of little magazines that satisfied the short attention span available for those who were serving or on duty.

Yet an explanation remains elusive – as elusive as Tambimuttu himself. This book suggests that he had an inner strength, a vision of the world as a whole. He saw no contradiction between begging, boozing and sleeping with girls and the purity of his poetic insight.

It was not a philosophy that convinced everyone. Timothy Leary loved Tambimuttu's elegant dignity and benign aloofness when the poet stayed at his LSD college, but another New York writer called Tambimuttu "a crazy drunken con-artist full of spiritual baloney". In his sad years, Tambimuttu kept his faith, but he ran out of luck. At his memorial service in London the priest referred to "the passing of our dearly beloved Mary James". Tambimuttu's name was actually Meary James, but his life was never quite right or real, and his death could hardly be so.



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