

# GUARDIAN



## SIRIMA UNDER SIEGE

### Rukmani Devi

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- Myth and reality

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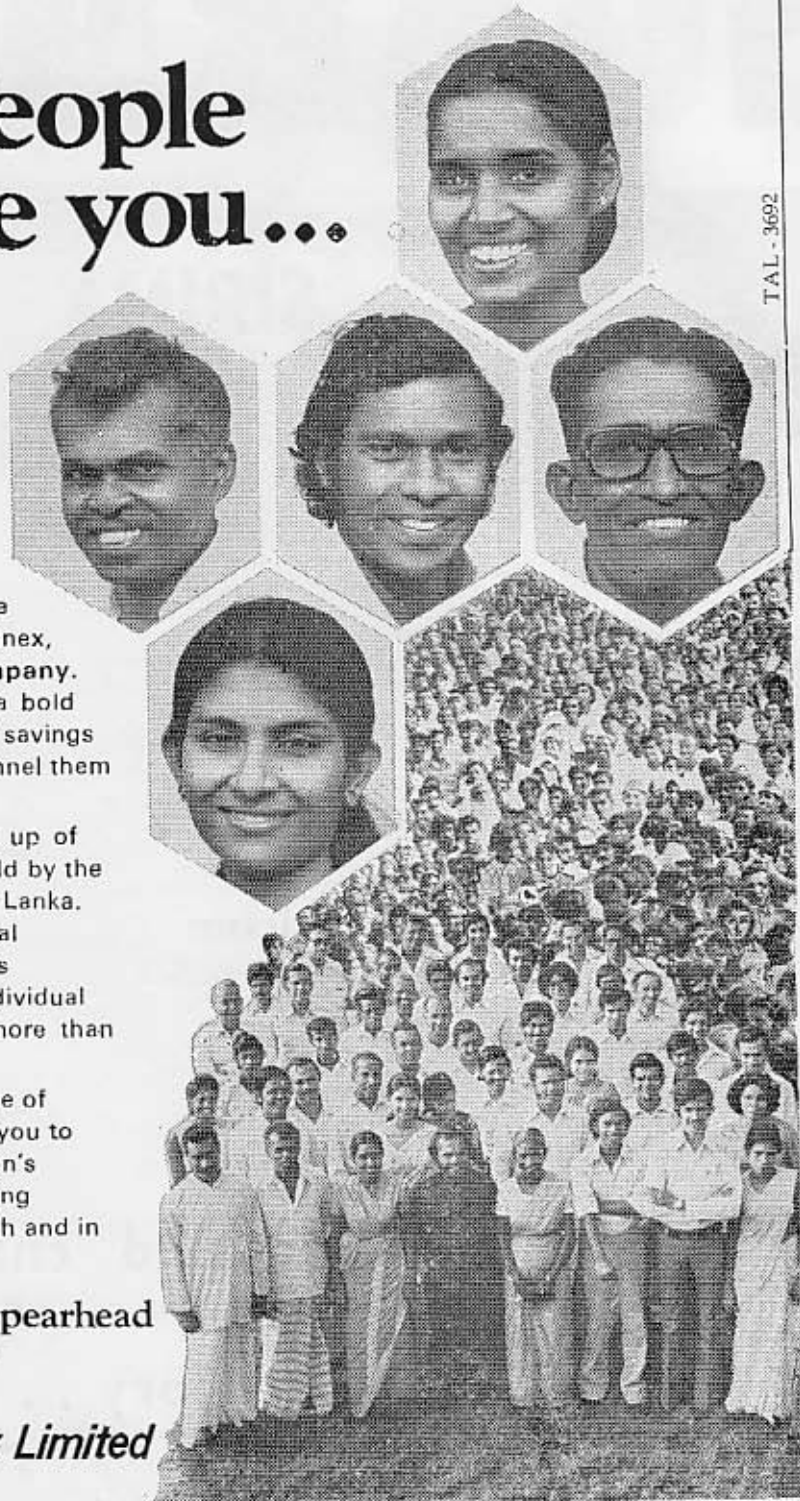
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# LANKA GUARDIAN

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## Trends

### Musical chairs

140 votes do give an impression of elephantine strength and self-assurance. But the unity of the United National Party was never monolithic. In office, fissures begin to appear. Behind personality clashes squabbles over appointments are power-blocs, coteries, shifting alliances, tribal conflicts and ambitious individuals with competitive claims on the future.

\*\*\* The Colombo campus opens late because two aspirants to the Vice Chancellor's job had two political backers, and the final decision came after a fight that lasted seven rounds!

\*\*\*\* The press spoke of a new GCEC (Trade Zone) but so far there has been no re-shuffle nor a complete overhaul. With the contenders equally matched in political patronage is it a draw or only a fragile truce?

### The long wait

There is 'radio silence' also on another front page announcement made several months ago in the official press. Mr. Tyrone Fernando, Moratuwa MP, one-time president of

the Gaitskell Club at Oxford and more recently known as the producer of "Puran Appu" was to be elevated to the rank of Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs after Mr. Ranil Wickremasinghe joined the Cabinet.

Down the coastline from Ratmalana to Panadura, well-wishers eagerly waiting to fete Mr. Fernando are wondering whether the boat has somehow sprung a leak.

### Church militant

Do politicians and bureaucrats rush in where even angels fear to tread? Stalin, it is true, did ask how many divisions the Pope had. But in these times nobody takes on the Church, certainly not the Church Militant!

The Church had to move at the highest level to counter a blocking move aimed by the Foreign Ministry at the Asian Theologians' Conference. Moving both heaven and earth, the Church obtained the necessary blessings from higher up.

A bright young Catholic cleric who will probably become a bishop soon remarked "The Church is one ministry that no Ministry can play games with...."!

## Letters

### Those allegations

A Minister of the President's government and 3 members of the academic staff of the University have at a press conference made startling statements which in the past were merely whispered by certain interested persons. I have never taken these whisperings seriously but when a Minister and 3 Professors lend their authority, the country cannot ignore them.

It is most unfortunate that a Minister and 3 Professors should have used a press conference for this purpose, when it was admittedly within the power of the Cabinet Minister concerned to have persuaded his colleague, the Minister of Education, to appoint a Commission of 3 eminent men, preferably of retired Supreme Court Judges, to report on these allegations and other malpractices. Now that they have made these allegations, their own honour requires that they submit their allegations to a body of independent men for report. I hope they will join in the demand for such a Commission.

V. Karalasingham

### Pre-planned performance

If, as Ms. Sankhya states, her intention was to show that there had not been any miracle "as had been claimed" in the cement industry she has, on her own showing, not done what she set out to do because the only "comparable data" which would have served such a purpose were not available to her. Using out-of-date figures for comparison was no answer.

If, as Ms. Sankhya claims, she made no attempt to suggest that there had been a debacle in the cement industry then, I think she has to explain the subtitle of her piece: "How to turn debacles into miracles," (No one ever claimed a miracle in the textile sector).

Colombo 3.

Costain de Vos

# The Magistrate's hearing

The government recently decided to revive what are quaintly called non-summary proceedings which had been abolished by the previous regime. This is a procedure we inherited from the UK and it is perhaps useful to know what they say about it over there.

Nicholas Fairbairn QC is Tory MP for Kinross and West Perthshire. The recently begun proceedings in the magistrates' court at Minehead in which Jeremy Thorpe and some others are facing charges of attempted murder were seized upon by the media for some sensation mongering. Mr Fairbairn made this event the occasion for publishing his views on the magistrates' hearing. He calls it cruel and wrong. The procedure is historic in origin.

In medieval times the ordinary citizen who was a source of embarrassment to those in power and authority was frequently accused in the barons' courts of crimes they had not committed or on trumped-up charges. Accordingly when the power of the barons was being effectively checked, a safeguard was introduced whereby the people had to be satisfied that there was a genuine case to answer before the authorities could press their charges.

In those days there was no press and therefore the chances of bogus convictions was all the greater. The need for such a safeguard disappeared centuries ago, but the benefit to the lawyers of two hearings was such that the tradition was perpetuated.

Mr Fairbairn argues that it is central to the principle of the presumption of innocence that the jury should come to their judgment on the evidence of the witnesses alone; it is utterly abhorrent that prospective members of the jury should have dress rehearsals of the evidence. He thinks the continuation of this anachronistic procedure entirely indefensible. It is not a defence of the innocent; it puts them to the cost of two hearings. It makes impossible the task of the jury to distinguish between what they have read, what they have heard from witnesses, and what they are supposed to be going to hear from witnesses. While the procedure may once have been justified it is now totally unacceptable.

### The best swordsman in the world

Matajura wanted to become a great swordsman, but his father

(Continued on page 9)

## Cryptic Crossword No. 13

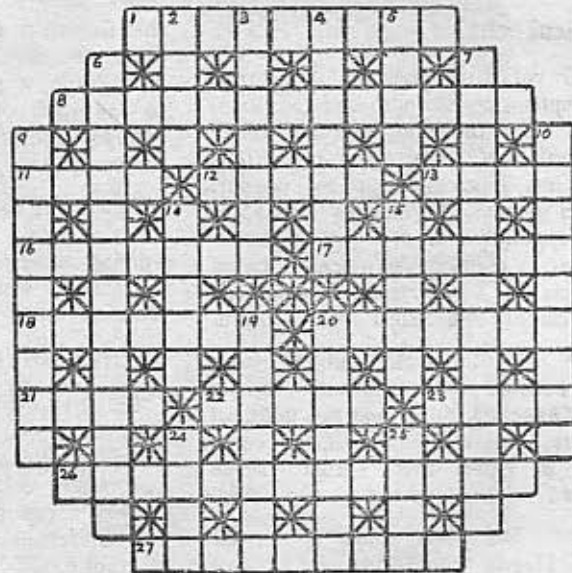
by Stripex

### Across CLUES

1. Rank area for instruction needed even in communist states (5,4)
8. His life is full of ups and downs (4,9)
11. Honour sounds like doom (4)
12. Less by half a minute to us (5)
13. Low joint (4)
16. Tilting two containers by gravity (7)
17. No sleek back part of ship (7)
18. Sunripe, wrongly got up... (7)
20. else pet a tower (7)
21. Sat down of old to glut (4)
22. Confessed to have been in debt, without the fraction of a nickel (5)
23. Female relative, we hear, put into the pot (4)
26. False impression (8,5)
27. Danger! Set wrong cut off (9)

### Down

2. Protective covering for musical instrument (4)
3. Milieu for sinking (7)
4. The male animal is perhaps OK, Bruce (7)
5. Difference (and 24 scraps) (4)
6. Fixing up the vessel is adequate answer (7,6)
7. Scatter nine-pins? I? Oo, no! But that could be according to a person's point of view (2,4,7)
9. Misdirected dish no longer available (3,6)
10. Tenderer E somehow came in again (9)
14. To begin with trees the leader (5)
15. Able, loses head to raise (5)
19. Now the -- reviving old desires (Rubaiyat) (3,4)
20. Tramples relative (7)
24. Objectives see 5 (4)
25. No charge to liberate



### Solution to Cryptic Crossword No 12

- ACROSS— 1. Capitals 5. Mantel 10. Tramp 11. Dexterity  
 12. Animate 13. Manikin 14. Austria 16. Steno 19. Freed  
 21. Mortmain 24. Eternal 26. Manumit 27. Simpleton  
 28. Title 29. Donors 30. Retraced
- DOWN— 1. Catnap 2. Platitude 3. Topmast 4. Lodge  
 6. Avernus 7. Trick 8. Laying on 9. Examiner  
 15. Immolate 17. Enigmatic 18. Obsessed 20. Danger  
 22. Monitor 23. Attend 25. Eamon 26. Minae.

Press, party politics

# Race — the first refuge

**“**Like Carter playing the China card, Sirima has played the Sinhala card, her trumps”, a well-known academic who had taken an active part in planning the UNP's pre-election propaganda blitzkrieg pronounced somewhat pompously at an informal session of the party's back-room boys. “She still has a fine instinct for power” another participant conceded with grudging admiration.

The conversation was centred on the *‘Daily News’* report of a speech by Mrs. Bandaranaike at a Buddhist school at Gampaha. The *‘Daily News’* followed it up quickly with an unusually aggressive editorial entitled “The Ugly Face of Racism”, publishing Mrs. Bandaranaike's contradiction some days after, adding a tame explanation for its own news item. The speeches were in Sinhala and the *‘Dinamina’* had published what Mrs. Bandaranaike described as an accurate report. Strangely enough (or not so strangely) the *‘Dinamina’* had neither liberal passions nor pulp to expend in commenting on Mrs. Bandaranaike's alleged appearance as ‘saviour’ of the Sinhalese.

In an interesting intervention, the TULF and Opposition leader Mr. Amirthalingam saw “some far reaching plot” behind the publication and proceeded to give Lake House, now indulging itself liberally about “development journalism” a brief lecture on “press freedom”, “fair reporting” and “distortions”.

Plot or no plot, observant UNP'ers at the middle and upper levels of the party are nervously concerned about current SLFP tactics.

Several reasons account for their present preoccupations:

(a) the overall economic situation and the mass mood, mainly

rising prices and the failure so far to make any impression on unemployment — the island's major problem, the issue which gave the UNP its massive majority, and the question on which disillusionment in its own ranks is quickest.

(b) the worsening situation in the North, the worsening relations between the government and the Tamils, and the spreading mood among both Sinhalese and Tamils. (The tone of the articles in the Tamil journal of the Royal College magazine showed how the mood has permeated even those social layers which were hitherto untouched and untroubled by these issues).

(c) Given its ideological lineage, the SLFP is a more authentic ‘saviour’ of Sinhala-Buddhist interests. If J. R. marched to Kandy in 1957, Mrs. Bandaranaike in January 14 years ago came out, dressed in white, to fight the good cause from a park named after Vihara Maha Devi.

Some UNP analysts also believe that if Mrs. Bandaranaike tries to outflank the UNP in this situation, her move could also be shrewdly two-pronged.

“It can also be a clever anti-Maitripala move” observed a member of the party's “think-tank”. The UNP is conscious of the SLFP's worries about future party leadership if Mrs. Bandaranaike is immobilised. Prime Minister Premadasa, the cleverest of parliamentary debaters, baited the SLFP MP's on this very point.

The *‘Daily News’* which carried a picture of Mrs. B. gave its headline to Mrs. T. U. de Silva “Boycott Tamil shops”! Mr. Premadasa wanted to know whether the SLFP wanted its leaders to boycott their wives!

As far as the SLFP is concerned, the plot that Mr. Amirthalingam

mentioned is plain enough. The party press hammers away at the same point — the UNP is in deep trouble and the blanket of 140 votes cannot conceal this fact. In fact, the SLFP policy planners argued recently, the rumblings which began with the UNP sessions became louder complaints and even protests in the budget discussions. Jobs, jobs, jobs. Where are the jobs ask the backbenchers, the campaign managers and organisers while a steady stream of young hopefuls still flow towards ‘Sri Kotha’. And of course, goods may be plentiful but where's the money?

According to SLFP thinking, the rising dissatisfaction over material hardships, and fading dreams about election promises has coincided with the UNP's failure to achieve any sort of political reconciliation with the Tamils or even a section of the TULF.

Hence the volts face on standardisation and new tactics on the Tamil issue. When the UNP, keeping its election pledge, abolished the SLFP's scheme of standardisation, it was the SLFP press (notably the Sinhala daily, *‘Dinakara’*) and pro-SLFP “front” which spread the word that the interests of Sinhala students were being sacrificed. Now comes Mr. Cyril Mathew and his emotionally-charged campaign on the same question.

In the budget discussions, speeches about jobs from UNP ranks were also accompanied by bursts of Sinhala chauvinism. These stirring utterances did not come from UNP green-horns but senior politicians.

Not much later the party's (Sinhala) journal announced the formation of a Sinhala Liberation Front and was evidently honoured with an exclusive interview from the front's faceless founder.

While the *‘Daily News’* turned a censorious editorial eye (*‘The Ugly Face of Racism’*) on oppo-

(Continued on page 5)

# Sirima : the battle within

Self-criticism, soul-searching, agonizing reappraisal. Call it what you will. The SLFP's humiliating debacle produced predictable reactions—a quest for scapegoats, a search for shortcomings, a serious demand for change. The call for "re-organisation" represented the convergence of two tendencies:—'modernisation' (i. e. streamlining organisational structures) and "democratisation" (i. e. a freer and fuller play of party opinion in the decision-making process.) The second was the more controversial.

It surfaced sharply because (a) the UNP had made a major propaganda issue out of 'family power' and (b) there had always been subsurface resentment in the party about a style of government which showed the strong impress of Mrs. Bandaranaike's personality and social background. In his letter of resignation Mr. Subasingha had referred to 'an invisible government'. It consisted of the family and the extended family, personal advisers, ministers and party politicians whose fortunes fluctuated and with it their access to the Centre, hand-picked officials (bureaucracy and security service) and financial backers (the mudalalis who attained a pre-election notoriety but have since gone into oblivion or the Free Trade Zone).

Democratisation or any other term becomes a euphemism in the actual context of the SLFP. Given its now in-built structure, it is inescapably an attack on the apex of power, the family.

The question has now assumed a sharper form on account of extra-party developments influencing inner-party debates and both promoting anxious uncertainties about future leadership.

Parliament can impose civic disabilities on those against whom the presidential commissions of inquiry make adverse reports. An amendment has nullified the effects of an earlier court ruling in favour of Mrs. Bandaranaike.

## Hammer and wedge

The UNP is fully aware of this "succession crisis". Some Cold War strategists conceived of a "magnet and wedge" theory vis-a-vis Eastern Europe. The UNP uses the 'hammer and the wedge', hammering from outside and driving the wedge into the SLFP's top crust.



Recently, Mr. Premadasa referred to Mr. Suriyapperuma as the SLFP's "deputy leader"! Up jumped Anura to say that the SLFP had only one deputy leader Matripala Senanayake. Yet the word in the SLFP's middle and lower rungs is that if Sunetra becomes MP for Attanagalla some day she would be SLFP's "favourite son" (or daughter) for the top post.

## Two leaflets

Sinhaputra (L. G. No. 14) began the barrage from outside in the Lake House press. His attack was on the Bandaranaike personality cult and an attempt to de-mythologise SWRD. More significantly, he sought to draw a sharp contrast between SWRD's "democracy" and "Ratwatte feudalism". Like a lone guerilla, this outlawed SLFP'er (code-named Saradiel because of his Kegallist habitat, both local and Parisian), Sindhaputra trains his long gun on Sirima and the clan.

Now the cry has been raised inside the party with the wide circulation of two (unsigned) documents. Addressed directly to party members it is written in a Sinhala that combines all the picturesque and distinctive features of vituperative polemics and pamphleteering—an earthy robust idiom, a ferocious alliterative aggressiveness, the most flowery metaphors. Full of allusions to "decadent degenerate and corrupt feudallists", it describes the 'court circle' as composed of those who wash the pots and pans in the waluwa,

torch-bearers, drum-beaters, stooges, sycophants, hangers-on and henchmen.

The two documents make the following points:

(a) re-organisation has concentrated even greater power in the leader and the family.

(b) the 'experts' who performed the operation have been rewarded.

(c) Mr. Rohanadeera is singled out for a stinging attack. Who is this fellow? How, when and where did he work for the SLFP? Veterans of the party have a vague recollection of his face just before 1977.

(d) All posts have been abolished except two—president and youth league chief, mother and son.

(e) Besides the 'yes-men' in the new transitional committee, places have been found only for nominees of the Youth League.

(f) Where are veterans like A. P., Buddy and L. B. Jayasena?

(g) The careers of Messrs Ratne Deshapriya Senanayake (his sojourn for several years in Peking etc) of, Stanley Tillekeratne (his travels through many parties and his remark about the stench in Kotte when a market place was opened) and of Suriyapperuma (his diatribe on the coconut plantation raj) are traced at length.

(h) The party papers (Sinhala and English) are controlled by the two daughters.

(i) How did the SLFP lose the loyalty of men like C. P. de Silva, Asoka Karunaratne, Mahanama Samaraweera, Ronnie de Mel, Nissanka Wijeyaratne? They may have had their faults but they left because they were victims of feudal arrogance.

(j) After the 're-organisation' and 'democratisation' the leader is surrounded by men who were never elected by the people, by those rejected by the people or newcomers and drifters. Their only qualification is that they are ready to be of service to the Leader.

(k) Policies matter, not personalities. The SLFP must rally all patriotic and progressive forces around a genuinely socialist program.

## Race . . .

(Continued from page 3)

sition politicians who were — “full of mealy-mouthed concern for the Sinhala people”, it was comfortably astigmatic on these other, unpleasing profiles

Racialism is not the last but the first refuge from frustration and failure. In 1957 the UNP took the high and holy road to the Sacred Tooth Relic to protest against ‘the division of the country’ supposedly represented by the B-C pact. In 1965, Mrs. B. emerged from the Vihara Maha Devi park to protest against regulations which were based on the same Bandaranaike-Chelvanayakam pact, now secretly endorsed by Dudley Senanayake. It was part of the SLFP campaign known as the “masalavadai line”. To their eternal shame, the LSSP-CP aided and abetted the SLFP through their (Sinhala) papers.

An analagous axion embraces the national and party press. A report presented at an international seminar on ‘reporting communal tensions’ showed convincingly how the Lake House in its campaign to destabilise the SWRD regime had spoken on the same issue in three different voices through its Sinhala, English and Tamil papers. Political observers of the current situation can scarcely do without a study of the press and a comparative study of the Sinhala, Tamil and English papers.

Carried away by its self-induced frenzy the ‘Daily News’ could not help betraying its own secret fears and therefore a bit of the truth. The cunning of these (opposition) politicians come out, it said, when “they use the *economic difficulties* the Sinhala people face . . .” (our emphasis). In the attempt of each party to anticipate the other’s move and to outflank and outbid its rival we see the painful effort of a new nation struggling to achieve national integration while caught in the grip of economic stagnation. In part it is a colonial legacy. But how long can history mitigate our common failure?

# The Year of the Child — and how!

January brought new shocks for poor parents and their school-going children. Not so long ago, the kids were ready with their new books many days before the New Year. Their first stop was the book-shop, and then to Bata or DSI later. They adorned their new acquisitions with vivid covers and, by the turn of the year, were at least familiar with the first couple of chapters.

This time, however, even after the schools reopened, the children are having a nerve-racking experience at the portals of the so-called “The Year of the Child.” They see the agony of their hapless parents while the children themselves wistfully scuffle to their new classrooms minus many text books put out by the Educational Publications Dept. As for their other books they could be had only at the black-market while the price of instrument boxes etc. have gone up by 100%.

For the parents who have been jolted by the rising prices all-round, their first shock of the new year was when they discovered that the prices of text-books too, have been increased from between 10% to over 140%.

Perhaps they believed the mainstream-mass-media when the latter adopted a wipe-your-tears stance and commiseratingly announced that the rise in the price of text-books would involve only 8 publications. But when the cat leapt out of the bag a few days ago, they found that not less than 53 titles published by the Educational Publications Dept were upped in price while a substantial number of other books have still not been published. It is unlikely that the latter will reach the book-stalls in the next three months.

A couple of weeks ago, the Ministry of Education urged the Government to raise the prices of text-books by 30% in order to offset the 42% price hike of newsprint. Moreover, the switchover to new syllabus

buses from Grade 6 up has prevented parents even from acquiring second-hand books. And plus the fact that no less than five children came begging for donations with their new book lists to offices in Fort including ours in the last two weeks, may well be a pointer to what “The Year of the Child” has in store for him and her in the coming months. And those who saw the little film dedicated to the children, made by the Dept. of Information and now showing at the cinemas thought it was the first big joke of the month both in terms of cinema and reality.

## Tailpiece

Meanwhile, a desperate middle-class father told this journal last week that when he went to admit his younger son (after spending over Rs. 900 on the book-lists of his three children) to the Grade One of a school in Colombo, he was relieved to hear from the principal that the later had appealed to the more affluent parents not to send their children to school in expensive garb so that the poorer children (and their parents) will not suffer by comparison — G. D.

## Resolution

**A**t an emergency meeting of the Science Teachers’ association, Colombo Campus of the University of Sri Lanka, held recently the following resolution was passed unanimously.

“This House resolves to request the Hon. Minister of Education and Higher Education to institute immediately a full and impartial inquiry into each and every recent allegation made in and outside Parliament regarding the University and G. C. E. (A-Level) examinations. Further, this House requests the Hon. Minister of Education and Higher Education to examine the propriety of any person making public allegations of this nature prior to proper inquiry.”

## The elephant and the militant mouse

**T**he Cuban revolution proves the close connection between the struggle for national liberation and the struggle for socialism. We speak as a party which is pledged both to national liberation and socialism", said Mr. A. Amirthalingam the TULF leader, speaking first in Tamil (translated into Sinhala) and then in English at the Cuban anniversary meeting.

Mr. Amirthalingam continued "Cuba proves that a peoples, however small in number and economic strength can withstand pressures from the mightiest imperial powers, win national independence and build socialism if they are willing to make the highest sacrifices and are provided with resolute leadership. Cuba shows that in the context of this struggle it is necessary to have a correct policy of alliance with progressive forces within the given country and also internationally. The Cuban revolution was the powerful spark that lit the flames of socialist revolution which are still raging throughout the Latin American continent.

"The Cuban socialist revolution is also an integral and inalienable part of the process of socialist revolution and socialist construction on a worldwide scale. That is why our party salutes the Cuban revolution and its magnificent leader Fidel Castro on this its 20th anniversary. This, in our party's view is the historic importance of a revolution for national independence and socialism that took place in a small island ten thousand miles away from Sri Lanka"

Mr. Gamini Dissanayake, the Minister of Lands, Land Development and Mahaweli Development, stated: "Some people say that socialist Cuba is a pawn of the Soviet Union. I reject that

view. Indeed the Soviet Union is so powerful today, that it does not need any pawns."

Speaking on behalf of the L.S.S.P. Dr. Colvin R. de Silva said: "Socialist Cuba is a small island with a small population, and is located only 90 miles away from the strongest imperialist power the world has ever known. However the revolutionary Cuban people have successfully defeated all the counter-revolutionary attacks and conspiracies of U.S. imperialism. Indeed it is no exaggeration to say that the U.S.A. fears the actions and impact of this small country, revolutionary Cuba.

"If I may be permitted to say it, this is akin to a huge elephant being frightened by a tiny mouse. But such is the lesson of history. A tiny but militant mouse can frighten and defeat the enormous yet reactionary elephant."

## Whose grievance man?

**T**he Ombudsman cometh. The 'Sunday Times' has published sections of the draft law. As originally conceived the OMBUDSMAN is the average citizen's grievance man. Grievance against whom? Surely not his neighbour or another man-in-the-street but against the administration or anybody who exercises his authority unjustly.

To judge by the press report however it is a strange beast that is about to be born.

The draft law is very clear on what the Ombudsman CANNOT investigate:

- (a) any discharge of any power or function under the Public Security.
- (b) any advice or act of omission by a lawyer appearing for any public body.
- (c) any act of any member of armed forces, the police or any other force charged with maintenance of public order.

Otherwise the Ombudsman can inquire into infringement of a fundamental right. However it has now been firmly established—and this was part of the government's election campaign and still the basis of a justly unrelenting attack on the conduct of the previous regime—that it was emergency regulations with the blatant violation of fundamental rights. Anything could be done (and often was done) in the name of public order and security.

As Mr. S. Nadesan Q. C. demonstrated in one of his characteristically succinct analyses of recent legislation, the whole corpus of emergency regulations is today ordinary law. Where do we go from there? Certainly not to the Ombudsman—if the draft is passed in its present form.

## Theologians meet here

**T**he Christian Church has in the past been considered a bulwark of reaction. But in recent times, particularly among the minorities in North America and among Third World ecclesiastics, there has been a growing radicalism. So much so, that the Third World dominated World Council of Churches has been lumped with the 'Communists.' Vatican Council II and the process that it launched also contributed to this trend.

Theologians from the Third World met in Dar Es Salaam in August 1976 and formed the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians. Coinciding as it did with the Colombo Non-Aligned Summit, it reflected a desire on the part of the Churches in the Third World, to be part of contemporary developments. This Conference, opened by President Julius Nyerere, decided to hold three continental conferences.

Consequently, the African Theological Conference was held in Accra in December 1977. It was followed by the Asian Theological Conference which is now

(Continued on page 19)



IRAN (2)

# The illusions of power

by Mervyn de Silva

In modern times, the oil industry was the first object of nationalist attack, and western counterattack, like the Suez Canal in Naszer's Egypt or the copper mines in Allende's Chile. A 20-million dollar plot hatched by Allen Dulles in a Swiss chalet saw the downfall of Premier Mossadegh and the return of the Shah.

Years of ruthless repression found "protest" seek sanctuary abroad among Iranian emigres, notably professionals and students in the West, in spite of the long, murderous arm of SAVAK.

Inside Iran, all opposition was suppressed but 'protest' grew underground. The sole forum of criticism was the mosque the only challenging voice, the preacher.

## Bizarre coalition

Into the wide embrace of the nationalist movement, thwarted and held down, came other forces, other groups. When the 'protest' finally erupted it unleashed therefore a strange, even bizarre coalition of forces—the small trader in the bazaar and the radical students from the campuses, the mullahs and the Marxists, the oil workers and small farmers. It is this which gives the events and forces in motion a puzzling complexity.

"The Iranian crisis may turn out to be a more important world event than Vietnam" an experienced British correspondent recently expelled from Iran told me, adding "Even if that judgment is not correct, Vietnam was much easier to cover as a major story, once you grasped the nature of the conflict and the basic issue, the contending forces. Here in Iran, not much is clear".



The Shah of Iran

While the reporters in the field record the surging struggle trying to make deeper sense of the crisis, western academics often impose arbitrary and artificial interpretative concepts on the events. The most favoured is "traditionalism versus modernisation". Others study the strongly emerging force of Islamic ideology in world affairs.

To Mr. Carter's manifest annoyance the CIA had reported that there was "no revolutionary or pre-revolutionary situation".

The C. I. A. team which has now been augmented by several top analysts from the various intelligence establishments in Washington may be excused. Marxist analysts, whether orthodox or not, whether from the Prague-based 'World Marxist Review' or Euro-Communists in Paris or Trotskyist 'thinkers' in London are puzzled, if not mystified. They are all reading their Lenin and Trotsky.

Lenin's reference in 1916 to 1905 in Czarist Russia is a favourite text.

Lenin spoke of "all and sundry oppressed and discontented elements ... bringing into the movement their prejudices, their reactionary fantasies their weak-

nesses and their errors ... (of a movement) variegated and discordant, motley and outwardly fragmented ..... but objectively they will attack capital. ... "

At different levels of consciousness and articulation, this is true. Ayotollah Khomeini, who is often presented as a religious fanatic or obscurantist 'reformer' makes a most rational critique of Iran, attacking the very roots of the system. He challenges the very legitimacy of the Pahlavi dynasty pointing out that the son is the creature of the U. S. just as the father was installed by the British. The oil industry must be in Iranian hands. Genuine independence is as much his demand as cultural and religious revival.

## Real enemy

His closest adviser, Dr. Ibrahim Yazdi, is very clear about the new Iran they want. Is't Iran, in reality, a colony? he asks, looking forward to a truly independent, non-aligned Iran which would be free of domination by any foreign power.

In the streets, the marchers cry "Allah is Great", "Death to the Shah" and "Down with Carter" and they attack banks, the Hyatt hotel, Texaco buildings and personnel, the British embassy, and Kentucky Fried Chicken restaurants! However vaguely, they seem to see the face of the real enemy.

The businessmen no longer worry about the Shah or his chances of survival. They are concerned about themselves, their families and their money. Many of them have joined the exodus of US citizens. According to

banking circles in London, over one hundred million pounds sterling fled Iran in a matter of three days.

So the 'power bloc' which sustained the Peacock Throne has been torn asunder. The mosaic of dictatorial power which the Shah had carefully constructed has fallen piece by piece. But no stable balance of forces, no new equilibrium has been achieved yet. In this state of flux, other forums and voices—parliament and the press—enjoy the perhaps transient glory of freedom.

#### Classic errors

With a blind vanity proper to the arrogant occupant of the Peacock Throne, the King of Kings told a British parliamentary delegation that the popular protest was engineered by a "lot of mullahs pining for the seventh century".

Both the Shah and his western patrons who probably believe that Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness is best guaranteed by IBMs, F-15's and MacDonald's Hamburgers, made three classic errors which not only expose the fallacy of cherished (western) theories of modernisation but now demand an astoundingly high and instant price from the guilty:

(a) They underestimated, misunderstood and misrepresented the force of nationalism and popular tradition in which the potency of religion and cultures is an axiomatic factor. Little did they suspect that this nationalist sentiment would be the driving force of popular protest directed at the offending intruder and its local agent, the Shah.

(b) While the unjust distribution of wealth is a perennial source

of social discontent and tension, the sudden acquisition of new wealth (oil revenues) aggravates these conflicts particularly when such wealth is drained out or wastefully consumed.

The people of Iran gradually awakened to the fact that their wealth was plundered by foreign interests, robbed by a corrupt ruling clique, wasted on ostentatious living and frittered away in buying highly sophisticated weaponry in order to feed the Shah's grandiose visions of military might and regional hegemony.

(c) The Shah and the US, despite recent noises about human rights were certain that any opposition to or even criticism of this 'path of glory' could be controlled by rigid repression and State terror (SAVAK).

To the evident embarrassment of its ardent tutors, SAVAK even extended its savage arm to dissident Iranian students on American campuses!

The sudden eruption of the Iranian crisis and its monumental proportions are the result of the dramatic telescoping of these processes and its inevitable consequences.

Any analysis of the Iranian situation which makes claims to be a comprehensive study would need to examine each of these factors and their interaction.

Updating a chapter on Iran in his "Arabia without Sultans", Fred Halliday has just produced a new book "IRAN—Dictatorship and Development". Mr. Halliday, the young British Marxist who has also written on Sri Lanka, is particularly strong on the build-up of the Iranian armed forces, its economic and international ramifications, and the pivotal socio-political role of the army.

In his book "Iran—the Illusion of Power", Robert Graham, who served in Iran as correspondent of the *Financial Times*

presents some fine insights into the havoc in Iranian agriculture and the heavy burdens borne by Iranian farmers. The over-development of Teheran with all the ugly and predictable social consequences, and the ever-widening urban-rural disparities are problems familiar to other large Third World countries from Brazil to Indonesia. Once more, Iran's new-found wealth only magnified the evils and exacerbated social tensions.

Frank Giles, deputy editor of the *Sunday Times* and a personal guest on several occasions of the Shah is putting the finishing touches to a book in which he seeks to argue that the king was the victim of social forces that his own program of "reform" released. The reforms did not go deep enough..... and could not, so soon. But the accent in Giles' book, I was told, will be more on the strategic factor, the crucial importance of Iran to western interests and the effects of any radical change in Iranian foreign policy.

#### Foreign policy

While Iran's geo-strategic importance is self-evident, any changes in Iranian foreign policy will surely depend on the nature of any new regime. Since the first part of this article was written the Chief of Staff of the army has fled and two senior generals have quit the High Command. The new government of Prime Minister Bakhtiar has already been denounced by the National Front and he himself described as a traitor by Ayotollah Khomeini.

The Ayotollah's own stand has become more and more uncompromising as he promises life imprisonment for the Shah (on a winter holiday?) and brands President Carter as the main enemy of the Iranian people.

If there is no military takeover, the nature of any regime will of course depend on what new balance of forces is achieved and how stable it is.

Crucial to all this is the Islamic movement.

Next: Islamic nationalism

## Press opinion

### අනන්

#### A betrayal

The increase in the price of textbooks should be regarded more as a cruel blow that has been struck against both education and intelligence than as yet another burden placed on the people. What is significant here is not the extent of the price, increase but the mental outlook behind such an increase. Taxes in books, papers and printing materials, we have urged even earlier, are taxes on knowledge. Books are as much a basic need as food. But when state has not hesitated to increase the price of not only books but textbooks used by schoolchildren, we can gauge the nature of the Dharmishta society the Government hopes to create. As we see it the outlook behind the price increase of school textbooks arises from the Political Principles of the U.N.P. A U.N.P. government does not like to see the people increasing their knowledge by reading books or children their learn-

ing. 'Unnecessary questions' are raised only when learning increases.

### ජනදින

#### Double talk

Although a bill has been passed to secure the protection of the consumer and a promise made to implement it this year there is yet no sign of such action. A clear example of how the public sector itself is violating the clauses of the consumer protection bill is the cigarette. Every cigarette pack made locally should carry the warning that smoking is injurious to health. Because of the prevailing strike, we presume that the cigarette manufacturing company is unable to carry this warning. But has the CWE taken steps to see that the cigarettes imported by it carry such warnings? None at all. Although foreign cigarettes are available in plenty now none carry the health warning. When the state sector ignores the law how can one expect the private sector to obey.

#### Private view . . .

(Continued from page 2)

said he wasn't quick enough and could never learn. So Matajura went to the famous dueller Banzo, and asked to become his pupil.

'How long will it take me to become a master?' he asked. 'Suppose I become your servant to be with you every minute. How long?'

Banzo said: 'Ten years.'

'My father is getting old. Before 10 years have passed I will have to return home to take care of him. Suppose I work twice as hard, how long will it take me?'

'Thirty years' said Banzo.

'How is that?' asked Matajura. 'First you say ten years, then when I offer to work twice as hard you say it will take three times as long. Let me make myself clear. I will work unceasingly. No hardship will be too much. How long?'

'Seventy years' said Banzo. 'A

pupil in such a hurry learns slowly'.

Matajura understood. Without further questions he became Banzo's servant. He cleaned, he cooked, he washed, he gardened. Banzo ordered him never to speak of fencing or to touch a sword. He was very sad at this but he had no choice. Three years Matajura slaved as Banzo's servant.

One day while Matajura was gardening Banzo came up quietly behind him gave him a terrible whack with a wooden sword. The next day as Matajura was cooking rice he received another heavy blow. Thereafter day in and day out, from every corner and at any moment he was attacked by Banzo's wooden sword. He learned to live on the balls of his feet, ready to dodge at any movement. He became a body with no desires, no thoughts except eternal readiness and quickness. He began to learn so that he brought smiles to the face of his teacher. Soon Matajura was the greatest swordsman in the world.

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## Which way for the Left?

### (6) N. Sanmugathasan

*Mr. N. Sanmugathasan a founder member of the C. P. was General Secretary of the Ceylon Trade Union Federation. In the early '60s he led a breakaway faction from the CP over the Sino-Soviet dispute. As leader of the Ceylon Communist Party he had the closest relations with the top leadership of the Chinese Communist Party including Mao Tse Tung and Chou En Lai. He was jailed after the 1971 insurrection. He had been increasingly critical of Chinese policies and now endorses the Albanian position on international affairs. The interview is by Gamini Dissanaiké.*

*Q: When you broke away from the pro-Moscow CP, your party contained many outstanding young militants, and seemed to possess tremendous dynamism and revolutionary potential. However it was all the way down-hill from the zenith of '64-'65 and most of these young cadres such as Rohana Wijeweera, Gamani Yapa, Kalyandada Tirana-gama, Nihal Dias, etc. left your party and proceeded to form independent organisations. How do you explain this process of fissure and gradual debilitation?*

*A: There are many reasons. Obviously, all those who broke off with us from the pro-Moscow CP did not do so for the correct reasons. I do not like to refer to names, with, perhaps, one exception to explain what I mean.*

*Wijeweera was and is no Marxist-Leninist. He was given an anti-Soviet and pro-Chinese certificate at that time by the Soviet revisionists to enable him to infiltrate our party ranks—which he did. Even according to evidence led in the CJC Trial, he tried to wrest the leadership of the Party and, failing, went out to found another party. Today, apart from the pro-Moscow revisionists clique, his is almost the lone voice that supports Soviet Social Imperialism and its Cuban satellite. This clearly indicates the insincerity of views and such people could not have lasted in the party long.*

*You say that some of these young cadres went out to form*

*independent organisations of their own. Well, what has happened to them? Has any one of them developed to the position of having a national impact—except Wijeweera who misdirected his organisation to disaster.*

*Of course, there were mistakes on our part also. We allowed a gap to develop between our theory and practice, between our words and deeds. Born out of a revisionist party, we could not easily break away from revisionist organisational forms and styles of work. Organisationally, we did not completely sever the umbilical cord that tied us to the old party although we did so theoretically. By the time we came to correct these errors in our 9th. Congress in 1968, some damage had been done.*

*Q: Most of these militants claimed that you imposed a bureaucratic one-man rule within the party, stifled inner party democracy and initiative, thereby restricting the emergence of new and independent thinking. In retrospect, what is your response?*

*A: I repudiate this charge completely. Since we broke from the revisionists in January, 1964, we have held five Congresses. That is a record of which few other political parties can boast. All decisions at such Congresses and at all meetings of the Central Committee, in between, have been taken democratically after plenty of discussion. Besides, how could*



Sanmugathasan

*I have imposed my views, except by persuasion?*

*Q: Some say that it was a mistake for you to have broken away from the CP on an international issue rather than on the problems of the Sri Lankan revolution, and that rather than adopting an independent line you instead counterposed a Sino-centric perspective for a pro-Soviet one. What is your own contention?*

*A: The cause of the split with the modern revisionists was not only international but also national. The main question at issue was whether it was possible for the working class to advance to socialism by the peaceful, parliamentary road or not. This had nothing to do with countries. It so happened that the Soviet Party opted for the peaceful path while the Chinese party said that advance was possible only through revolution. We agreed with the Chinese party.*

*However, we did make the mistake that we gave the impression that we agreed with whatever the Chinese Party said or did. Some even thought that we were organisationally affiliated to the Chinese party. This was a mistake.*

*Q: Would you agree that the impact of the Maoist movements*

throughout the world, quite strong in the 1960's has diminished in the 1970's, together with a loss in China's international prestige itself? How would you explain this phenomenon?

A: I agree. As China tended to place its national interests above the interests of the international revolutionary movement, particularly during the last years of Mao's life and after his death this was inevitable.

Q: Recently you appeared on the same public platform as Mrs. Sirima Bandaranaike at a meeting held to denounce the new constitution. Some young militants say that even in the 1960's you vacillated on occasion in the direction of the SLFP and that you are repeating the error once again. What is your assessment of the role and potential of the SLFP?

A: My appearance on a common platform with Mrs. Bandaranaike is an example of getting together with diverse political forces on common day-to-day issues. It is not a political front.

We have never vacillated in our attitude to the SLFP. In our view, the SLFP started off as a party of the national bourgeoisie with a potential to play a limited but nevertheless, vacillating and temporary progressive role—particularly, in contrast to the UNP. But, having been in power for 14 years and in three governments, considerable sections of the national bourgeoisie graduated to positions of the comparadore (pro-imperialist) bourgeoisie and the Party, itself, began to be dominated by these sections, particularly, when it was in power.

There are still progressive forces within the SLFP and among its following. It has a right, a middle and a left. We can have no hope of the right. The middle section will vacillate and an attempt must be made to neutralise this section. We can hope to win only the left section as an ally of the working class. But any such alliance must be under the leadership of the working class. This section will in-

crease in size as the anti-national policies of the UNP become more dominant. But we must be on guard to see that this section does not create any confusion among the ranks of the revolutionaries.

Q: On the Left, you have been one of the strongest opponents of the slogan of 'Eelam', going so far as to assert that the Tamil people are NOT a nation. As a result, I have heard you referred to as "a minority convert to majority chauvinism". What is your reply?

A: I think that the slogan of "Eelam" is both anti-national and reactionary and is in the interests of neither the Tamils nor the Sinhalese. It is a cry born out of frustration and despair as a result of systematic discrimination practised against the Tamils by successive governments which were dominated by Sinhala reactionaries. It also represents the bankruptcy of bourgeois Tamil leadership. Both the SLFP and the UNP have been guilty of fomenting communalism and of using the State machinery e. g. the police and the army, to harass the Tamil people. In this connection, the UNP seems to have outdone the SLFP. We unhesitatingly condemn this. But "Eelam" is not the answer. The correctness or incorrectness of a slogan can be judged only by the fact whether it is in the interests of the working class and revolution and whether it unites the revolutionary forces or not.

The unity of the revolutionary forces from among the Sinhalese and the Tamils is necessary to overthrow the UNP government. The establishment of a government, under the leadership of the working class, is a pre-condition for the solution of the majority problem. Once such a revolutionary change takes place, the just problems of the Tamil minority can be solved, under a unitary state, within a system of regional autonomy.

One last point. The demand for "Eelam" has the support of the Indian expansionists, particularly in Tamil Nad, and the

Soviet social-imperialists while the TULF irresponsibly talks of obtaining Cuban support.

Q: You have also displayed unremitting hostility towards the JVP, branding them as K. G. B. and/or C. I. A. agents. How does your attitude differ from that of the LSSP-CP leadership whom you excoriate? Shouldn't you engage in reasoned ideological polemic rather than such name calling and mud slinging? It is said that you display more animosity towards the JVP, TULF and LSSP-CP than towards the SLFP.....

A: We have never branded the JVP leadership as being K.G.B. and/or CIA agents. What we have said is that Wijeweera acted in the interests of Soviet revisionism and internal reaction. It will be remembered that the second half of the sixties saw a tremendous development of the revolutionary movement among the youth. Reaction realised that they could not stem this tide through the shopworn theories of Trotskyism or the milk and water solutions of modern revisionism. So, they had to bring into existence a pseudo-revolutionary movement which could distract the youth from the genuinely revolutionary path. The mixture that was ordered, with a judicious addition of communalism, was the JVP.

By its ill-conceived and ill-timed attempt at insurrection, it doomed thousands of its members to death and opened the way for wholesale repression. To make this assessment is not to sling mud. We have a right to question the bona fides of a party which according to reliable evidence, had come to an agreement with the UNP, before the elections, according to which in return for J. V. P support for the UNP at the elections, the UNP if returned to power, would release all JVP detainees and prisoners. Both sides seem to have kept their bargain. We have engaged the JVP in a continuous polemical debate as no other party has done. As early as August, 1970, we published "An open letter to all those misled by the JVP." We were the first to make

an analysis of the April events, written by me whilst still in jail. After the JVP leaders were released, we published another letter to "All those who were still mis-led by the JVP." Part of the result of this continuous polemic is the fact that most of the lieutenants of Wijeweera, barring one or two have left him.

*Q: Your party as well as Mr. Keuneman's CP agree upon the theoretical platform of the CP's 4th congress held at Matara in 1950, which upheld the thesis of the "progressive national bourgeoisie." Your own party seemed to have modified its view around 1976 and then shifted back to the old position after the UNP victory. What really is your position on this question and how do you differ from the pro-Moscow CP?*

A: I have explained our attitude to the SLFP in my 5th answer. We have never modified our view about the SLFP.

*Q: How do you assess the present conjuncture that the country finds itself in, and what are the immediate tasks of the Left in this context?*

A: Sri Lanka is a semi-feudal country. Our economy is subjugated to that of foreign imperialism. The UNP, as the most representative party of the comprador bourgeoisie, has still further tightened the strings that bind our economy to the chariot wheels of foreign imperialism. We are controlled by the dictates of the World Bank and other imperialist lending organisations. That is why we had to cut down on the subsidies, de-value our rupee and liberalise our imports and, as a result, send our cost of living sky-high.

Our immediate tasks are anti-imperialist and anti-feudal; and, thereafter, to lay the basis for the socialist tasks. To achieve these tasks, we must unite, under the leadership of the working class, all forces opposed to the UNP, reject bourgeois parliamentary democracy and follow the revolutionary path advocated by Marxism-Leninism.

The left movement has been betrayed by the LSSP and the pro-Moscow revisionists. We have practically to go back to the starting point and start all over again. The LSSP and the revisionists can have no place in any future left movement. The genuine Marxist-Leninists must forge ideological and organisational unity and unite all revolutionary forces.

*Q: When you speak of the unity of progressive forces do you exclude the JVP and TULF, and if so, why?*

A: Yes the reason is that they are not progressive. The TULF has worked to disrupt national unity while the JVP works to disrupt anti-UNP unity.

*Q: You have strongly criticised the foreign policy posture of the post-Mao Chinese leadership, namely Hua Kuo Feng and Teng Hsiao Peng. But surely it is obvious that this selfsame policy line was conducted at least as far back as 1971, when both Chairman Mao and Chou En Lai were alive? I refer to the Nixon visit; China's attitude to events in Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Sudan, Chile, Madam Marcos' visit etc etc. Why did you wait so long to voice your criticism?*

A: Our differences with the present leadership in China are not basically on matters of foreign policy. If China said that Soviet Social imperialism posed the greatest threat to China nationally, one could even agree. But when, through the Three Worlds Theory, it says that Soviet Social imperialism is the main threat to the whole world and that it is permissible not only for the second and third world to unite but also to unite with U. S. imperialism to isolate Soviet imperialism; and seeks to impose this theory as a strategy for the world communist movement we cannot agree.

Besides, entertaining Nixon or Marcos when they want to come to Peking and establishing state to state relations with their countries is one thing. It is another

thing to be entertained by and entertain Tito and to praise him as a great communist—after having upbraided him as an arch renegade from communism for more than two decades.

The first is a reversal of policies by Nixon and Marcos. The second is a reversal of policies by China. To the latter category falls China's action in cutting off all economic and military aid to Albania.

*Q: We gather that preliminary discussions that were underway among the Maoist parties in Sri Lanka broke down due to the Sino-Albanian and Sino-Vietnamese questions. What are the prospects for a reunification of the Maoist movement in this country?*

A: I would prefer to talk of Marxist-Leninist parties and not Maoist parties. Yes There have been attempts to unite all genuine Marxist-Leninist parties. But this is a process of struggle. Many more ideological hurdles have to be crossed before such unity can be achieved.

There is no Sino-Albanian question. The question is whether the Theory of the Three Worlds is correct or not. We think it is wrong.

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# 1971 and all that

by Carlo Fonseka

My letter to the 'Lanka Guardian' of 1 October has evidently provoked much sound and fury. I am particularly delighted to be challenged by my former amiable student and present JVP theoretician, Dr. S. C. Fernando. I note with regret, however, that he has still not learnt one of the most elementary lessons I try to teach my students, namely, the importance of distinguishing between fact, belief, knowledge and truth, not only in the theory and practice of medical science but also in our general approach to reality.

If Dr. Fernando subscribes at least to the Pocket Oxford Dictionary definition of the word 'fact' as "a thing that is known, to be true" he would not complain as he does in the 'Lanka Guardian' of 1 December that "Carlo Fonseka always derives his facts from the counter-revolutionary regime and the traitors of the revolutionary movement". Does it matter from where I derive my facts, if in fact, they are facts? I hope that Dr. Fernando, who has already declared that "for Marxists there are only two types of morals namely Marxist morality and the Bourgeois morality" will not go on to announce that as with morals so with facts, there are two types of facts, namely Marxist facts and bourgeois facts!

The pamphlet I alluded to (April Insurrection and the JVP) which Dr. Fernando dismisses as the work of "traitors of the revolutionary movement" was actually written by a group of young people who played a much more active role in the 1971 insurrection than Dr. Fernando. In a sober reappraisal of their 1971 revolutionary misadventure, these young men have identified the following as the

political errors they committed: (1) not organising the working class (2) not organising the peasants (3) inadequate understanding of the class struggle (4) not being revolutionaries who were experienced in the class struggle (5) not working in close collaboration with the masses (6) regarding the JVP as the party of the proletariat (7) not organising the minorities (8) not attempting to win over social forces in sympathy with the socialist cause (9) staging the insurrection at an inappropriate moment and (10) subjection to Guevarist influences.

Instead of indulging in name-calling Dr. Fernando should tell us whether the above analysis contains misstatement of fact and if so, he should correct them. It is only then that we can really begin to examine the validity of his claim—which even Mr. A. C. de Zoysa eloquently expounded in public recently—that the 1971 uprising was nothing but a reaction to the counter-revolutionary repression launched by the United Front government.

In his letter Dr. Fernando has set me a self-assessment test consisting of 9 questions on Marx, Engels and Lenin. Question No. 3 reads: "Did any one of them lead double lives"? I am glad to say that concerning Engels I have now found the answer. Recent authoritative work has established that Engels' life in Manchester was divided between business and communism. So successful in business was he that by the end of the 1850s he had an annual salary plus a share in the profits that gave him an annual income of about £20,000 in present day terms.

Moreover, Engels went in for activities beloved of the Manchester bourgeoisie: he attended the Halle'

concerts; he bought a fine stallion and rode regularly with the Cheshire hunt; and he was a prominent member of two prosperous clubs—the Albert Club and the Schiller Institute of which he eventually became Chairman. Engels actually contended that hunting with the Cheshire was good training for revolution. Whether Dr. Fernando would call the sort of life that Engels led, a double life, I do not know. The important point, though, is that wealth did not shake Engels' revolutionary views. That is why even when Dr. S. C. Fernando drops in to see me for a chat on revolutionary Marxism in a Mercedes Benz, I do not accuse him of leading a double life.

With Mr. Reggie Siriwardena whose sensitivity I respect, and with whom I am proud to have been among those who protested against the CJC Act and other undemocratic actions of the previous government, my difference is not a major one. Because he freely shared the illusions engendered by the 1970 General Election victory, I contend that he implicitly condoned in retrospect the coalition strategy which engineered that victory. When, therefore, with the benefit of hindsight, he perceives repression, torture and murder as the outcome of that strategy, he cannot wholly exculpate himself from some share of the responsibility because he has been, like all others who shared his illusion, something of an executioner's assistant by proxy.

It is to Reggie's everlasting credit that he pleaded with the executioners to be gentle and not brutal about the whole sordid business. All I am pleading with him now is not to shoot the executioners because to them also the whole business was no picnic. Even if we totally reject the evidence that before 1971 the JVP openly preached violence, manufactured bombs, stole guns and ammunition, robbed large sums of money and possessed explosive

materials and liken the young people who attacked 93 police stations between the 5th and the 11th of April 1971 with guns, hand bombs, incendiary bombs, and hand grenades, to boys who throw stones at frogs in sport, let us not forget, as some Greek poet observed, that the frogs do not die in sport but in earnest. As with frogs so with policemen!

Correspondent Carol A. Perera who says that he knows nothing about politics is obviously only a baiter of rationalists. Accordingly I propose to leave him on one side to grapple with such weighty matters as the logical proof of God's blindness which looms so large in his memory (Lanka Guardian 1 November).

Finally I come to Dr. Costain de Vos whose scintillating letter of 15 December represents a triumph of wit over seriousness. He prefers beer to hay and his basic attitude to politics reminds me of W. B. Yeats, who wrote:

The statesman is an easy man  
He tells his lies by rote  
A journalist makes up his lies  
And takes you by the throat,  
So stay at home and drink  
your beer,  
And let the neighbours vote?

To such a man I have nothing much to say. Dr. de Vos laments "the barrenness of our political leadership". He has no use for people past their menopause. He is crying for heroes whom we could follow. In this he is rather like the almost adolescent Sarti in Brecht's "Galileo", who, disgusted by his teacher's recantation cries: "Unhappy is the land which has no heroes". Dr. de Vos knows the reply the old man gave: "Unhappy is the land which needs heroes."

## 1971, the JVP and the falsification of history

by A. Jayaweera

An Irishman once entered a pub when a brawl got underway. He turned to the bartender and inquired "Is this a private fight or can anyone join in?" This is precisely my query concerning the Siriwardena / Fonseka / de Vos debate on '1971 and all that'—a debate which has assumed the character of a protracted war of attrition, or if your preferred ideological idiom isn't Maoist, that of a fairly permanent revolution. Anyhow, Dr. S. C. Fernando's intervention has prompted me to wade in after weeks of watching from the sidelines.

At the outset I must state that I agree, in the main, with the substance of the critique of the 'Old Left' leadership made by Dr. Fernando and Mr. Siriwardena, though I much prefer the tone of the latter's contribution to that of the former. Having stated that I must hasten to add that I detect an ideological illness in Dr. Fernando which demands immediate attention. The good doctor tries to educate his (professional) counterpart Dr. Carlo on the nature of the 1971 uprising, the JVP, etc. The fact that Dr. Carlo does indeed need some enlightening on certain political matters isn't in question. (Witness his recent conversion to the LSSP). However Dr. S. C. Fernando's effort in this direction brings to mind Marx's remark in the 3rd thesis on Feuerbach: "the educator himself needs educating."

To proceed, Dr. Fernando says "The new left with its strong base among the rural proletariat was gathering momentum when the repression was initiated". Thus the comrade Dr. proves once again that the JVP members and supporters still have not understood the meaning of the word 'proletariat', in spite of proven postprison proficiency in foreign languages. By 'proletariat' is meant the class

of modern wage-labourers, who having no means of production of their own are reduced to selling their labour power to live. By rural proletariat we mean farm labourers hired by the year, the month or the day. Having neither land, farm implements nor funds, they can live only by selling their labour power for wages. Now, the new-left (and here Dr. Fernando very obviously refers to none other than the JVP) did not "have a strong base among the rural proletariat, but rather on the rural petty bourgeois youth. A concrete analysis of the entirety of the empirical data available on the socio-economic background of the participants in the 1971 uprising proves this conclusively." I welcome any empirical proof from Dr. Fernando, on the proletarian (rural or otherwise) nature of the JVP and 1971, while I for my part am more than willing to reproduce in the pages of the journal, concrete data to back up my contention, if the comrade doctor so prefers.

Dr. Fernando goes on to assert that "(The JVP) was just beginning to win over the urban proletariat, oppressed national minorities, plantation proletariat, intelligentsia and the other oppressed classes around it. "Now that's a revealing remark. Doctor, shouldn't the urban and plantation proletariat (especially the former) have been the point of departure for the JVP in the '60s rather than its alleged point of arrival in 1971? Isn't the urban-industrial proletariat where to begin rather than the place to conclude?

In any case, the JVP wasn't "beginning to win over" any other social classes and strata mentioned by Dr. Fernando. Misunderstanding the dialectical relationship between reform and revolution, the JVP rejected trade union struggles over economic demands. It's Trade



Union section, together with its newspaper was set up late in the day, as a kind of after thought. This attitude of the party effectively blocked the access routes to the urban proletariat which was in the clutches of a class-collaborationist leadership. So 1971, far from being a proletarian uprising, found the working class segments either hostile, unsympathetic or neutral towards the JVP.

As for "winning over the plantation proletariat and oppressed national minorities"—that, Dr. Fernando, is a sick joke. The J.V.P.'s position on the plantation workers was very much akin to the N. Q. Dias-Cyril Mathew standpoint. Alleging that the plantation workers were agents of Indian expansionism which was engaged in a cold war against this country, the JVP went on to say that these workers were relatively privileged in comparison with chena cultivators. It also recommended a solution of forced repatriation a la Burma's Ne Win. (Has Dr. Fernando forgotten the crack about the Talaimannar pier and the rifle butts?) This posture of the JVP was so absurd that the most exploited segment of the Sri Lankan proletariat was portrayed as an agent of the Indian monopoly bourgeoisie, while simultaneously counterposing it to the other exploited sections of our society such as the chena cultivators. So much for the worker-peasant alliance! The national question, concerning the Tamil people of the North and East, was totally ignored by the J.V.P. (By the way Doctor, the Tamil people aren't an 'oppressed national minority' as you put it, but rather an oppressed nation and a failure to recognise this betrays residual traces of social chauvinism.)

In short, when the April insurrection broke out, both followed and preceded by capitalist repression, the JVP was far from "winning over the urban proletariat, the plantation proletariat and oppressed nationalities" thanks to its petty bourgeois sectarianism, ultra-left adventurism and social chauvinism.

Next point. Dr. Fernando refers to the Janatha Sangamaya (i. e.

the Premapala Hewabattage - Patrick Fernando led group which broke away from the JVP) as "a clique of traitors of (sic) the revolutionary movement who worked hand in glove with Felix and the bourgeois state apparatus to destroy the revolutionary movement." For my part I have little sympathy for the Maoist theories, organisational flabbiness and peasant oriented practice of the Janatha Sangamaya, but the kind of name calling that Dr. Fernando indulges in can sometimes boomerang. For instance, Mr. Wijeweera's readiness to tell all in the course of his (relatively mild) interrogation, it is alleged, was pretty helpful to the C.I.D. Some, construe this as "treachery to the revolutionary movement." I know of one young bhikkhu at Vidyalankara Campus who claims that comrade Wijeweera personally betrayed him to the police. I for one prefer to reserve judgement on all these matters; but Dr. Fernando really ought to be much more careful before slinging mud at his erstwhile companeros.

Back to a little bit of theory. In his 3rd paragraph, Dr. Fernando alleges that the LSSP/CP leadership "really represented the rising bourgeoisie" while in the very next paragraph he refers to the LSSP/CP leadership as being "hired agents of the bourgeoisie." Now these twin contentions are mutually exclusive and contradictory. Dr. Fernando must decide, and inform us, whether the old Left is bourgeoisie. It is an important distinction. To draw a parallel, it is one thing to say that the USSR sometimes capitulates to and collaborates with imperialism but quite another thing to say that the USSR is itself imperialist.

So in conclusion it appears to me that Dr. Fernando has indulged in a little bit of "suggestio falsi, suppressio varietatis" (suggesting the false and suppressing the truth) in his reply to Dr. Carlo. If one prefers Nixonian diplomatic jargon one might say that Dr. SCF has misrepresented facts. To put it in the comrade Dr.'s own words,

(Continued on page 21)

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# Why I resigned

*Professor Bettelheim of the Sorbonne University is one of the foremost Marxist intellectuals of Europe. This is his letter of resignation from the Franco-Chinese Friendship Society.*

As you know, the events which have followed the death of Chairman Mao have deeply worried me. Like many other friends of China, I have felt serious apprehensions for the future of socialism in China since the arrest of the four leaders who played a central role in the course of the Cultural Revolution and who—with the exception of Chiang Ching—enjoyed the confidence of Mao Tse-tung.

The charge that the Four tried to carry out a coup d'état is in no way convincing. It is general practice for people who have successfully carried out a coup to claim that those they have deposed were trying to seize power by force.

My doubts with regard to the political consequences of these events are all the more serious since two of the arrested leaders, Yao Wen-yunn and Chang Chun-Chiao, have made an important—even though incomplete—contribution to the analysis of the class basis of capitalist restoration in China.

However, whatever my worries and doubts, it seemed to me indispensable, before taking a position, to see what arguments were advanced by those who have taken over the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party, and what actual political line was going to be followed by them. What has transpired in the course of the more than six months which have gone by since the events of October 1976 unfortunately have only confirmed my fears.

The way in which the "criticism" of the Four has been and

is being conducted has nothing in common with Chairman Mao's teaching. There is no Marxist analysis to be found in the published material, simply slander and scandal, the low level indicating the inability of the present Chinese Communist Party leadership to develop any serious criticism of what the Four's political line might have been.

During the campaign conducted against the Four, one finds accusations which apply directly to the practices of the current leadership. One can read that the "falsification" of photos to which the Four resorted proves that they were at once both "vile conspirators and opportunists wanting to seize the party and the state" (Hsinhua dispatch; March 27/77) Condemning the falsification of photographs and every distortion of historical truth is certainly just; however, these practices presently predominate, as can be seen for example, in the double issue of China Reconstructs of Nov: Dec/1976, where falsified photographs appeared openly.

Other accusations made against the Four negate the very requirements of Marxism. Thus, for example, the approach made against Chang Chun-Chiao for having wanted to carry out a class analysis of present Chinese society and, further—more of having wanted to develop Marxism—this is called a denial of scientific socialism and counter-revolutionary revisionism.

Other accusations are still more unbelievable or, if they were to be accepted, would raise serious questions as to the life style of

the leading cadres of the Communist Party, such as the accusation laid against the Four of having meals served to them in restaurants without wanting to pay for them; of that addressed to Chiang Ching of having ordered an "Empress" dress.

Finally, other accusations amount to exaggerations which openly misrepresent the facts; they are gross falsifications. Thus, newspapers and magazines of the last few months have said that the Four lived a decadent and corrupt bourgeois life. Wang Hung-Wen is said to be a typical representative of the new bourgeoisie. The Four are said to have obstinately upheld the positions of the landlords and the bourgeoisie and to have been 100 percent committed to the capitalist road. They are presented as sworn enemies of the Communist Party, of the working class, of the whole people and the Chinese nation; as being guilty of espionage, of capitulating to foreigners, of importing instruments intended for the use of their secret agents, and of importing luxury articles. They are stated to have deliberately squandered state funds in order to damage socialist accumulation, and to have exalted material incentives. They are even presented as Kuomintang agents.

If such accusations correspond to reality, that could only cast the gravest doubts on the composition of the party leadership and on Mao's own vigilance. If they were true, we might well expect some or all of the present leaders also to be revealed in due course as Kuomintang agents guilty of "spying for the enemy"

But if, as I believe, the charges do not correspond to reality, it is impossible to trust leaders who deceive the people by eliminating those with whom they have disagreements, not by clearly explaining the basis of the disagreements, but rather by resort to slanderous attack.

Under these conditions, one is inevitably led to the conclusion

that the fidelity to Mao Tse-tung's political line is simply a smokescreen designed to conceal a quite different line. In fact, an examination of texts published in China during the last few months, as well as what it is possible to establish as to actual practice, has led me to believe that a revisionist line is presently triumphing. The criticism of Teng has been abandoned, while calls giving production primacy over revolution predominate. Discipline and order are exalted, while there is no longer any question of the right of people to reserve their opinions, not to mention the right and duty to rebel against a bourgeois policy. Questions as to the position of women during the socialist transition period are denied. The struggle against bourgeois right is scarcely mentioned any more. The problem of the existence of the bourgeoisie within the party is juggled away. An appeal to class struggle is replaced by an appeal to struggle against the Four.

In an all round way, the necessary criticism of the Four is conducted from a revisionist standpoint and not from a revolutionary one. No distinction is made between what they might have said or done wrong, and the points on which they might have been correct. More precisely, their mistakes are used in order to reject their correct analysis as well, in contradiction to the requirements of dialectical materialism and in a way that reinforces bourgeois ideas.

What we know of what is going on in China confirms the revisionist orientation of the present policy. Factory regulations are becoming oppressive. Open-door schooling has practically been abandoned. This means that while paying lip-service to Cultural Revolution its gains are in the process of being liquidated.

As far as foreign policy is concerned, the struggle against the two superpowers has gradually been replaced by a struggle against social imperialism alone. As a consequence, United States imperialism is denounced less and less. Its interventions, or those

of its allies, in the life of other peoples, are frequently even seen as "positive"—this was the case with the events in Zaire. But when two imperialist bandits are confronting one another, it is wrong to take the side of one against the other. The present international practices of the Chinese Communist Party damage China's prestige with people, especially in the Third World. In fact these policies play into the hands of social imperialism.

Such is the judgment which I am driven to make on what is happening at present in China. We have too little information at our disposal to know the magnitude of the forces opposed to the present political course. Certainly these forces exist, as testified to by the scale of repressive actions of the last few months. It is impossible to predict under what conditions and over what stretch of time China will get back on the revolutionary road.

Experience shows us how much the present leadership of the Chinese Communist Party uses every sign of approval from abroad to try and increase its prestige with the Chinese masses. Thus to give approval to the political line presently dominant in China, or even to maintain an attitude that might appear to be approval, is of service neither to the Chinese people nor to all those who are struggling for socialism in China.

The Franco-Chinese Friendship Association is dominated by a trend which supports the present Chinese Communist party leadership—this in spite of doubt felt by numerous friends of China within the association. From that I draw the conclusion that it is correct for me to present my resignation as Chairman of the Franco-Chinese Friendship Association, which is what I am doing through this letter. I request that you please transmit this to the National Bureau and to members of the association, and present the text in *Aujourd'hui la Chine*.

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## Sinhala cinema, class and personal relations

by Reggie Siriwardena

Writing in these columns several months ago about Pathiraja's *Bambaru Avith* on the eve of its release, I indicated that the film was likely to generate critical discussion about its 'social content'. The discussion did materialise, but what it revealed to me was the existence of a serious confusion about what is 'social' and what is 'personal'

It would appear that for most left-wing critics in this country, economic exploitation is social, but sexual exploitation is not. That, at any rate, was the implication behind the criticism most frequently urged against *Bambaru Avith* from the left—that the theme of class conflict was overshadowed by the personal clash between Victor and Cyril over the girl Helen. But sexual relations don't exist in a social vacuum, nor did Pathiraja in *Bambaru Avith* present them as such: for Victor's readiness to use and to discard Helen was the clearest possible manifestation, within the realm of personal relations, of the class structure. The failure to realise this may be linked with the fact that the Marxist movement in this country has never caught up with Engels's *Origin of the Family*, let alone with more recent Marxist thinking about the relations between the sexes; but for the critic of film, theatre and literature, the dismissal of relations between men and women as purely 'personal' is disabling.

I suppose, too, that for most left-wing critics Lester James Peries's current film *Ahasin Polowata* is something to be rejected in the same terms as his earlier *Nidhanaya*—as both 'elitist', to use the favourite swear-word. But, for me, the two films are



The strains of poverty: Sarath (Dharmasiri Bandaranayake) and Kusum (Dhammi Fonseka) in Vasantha Obeysekera's *PALANGETIYO*, Sri Lanka's entry at the New Delhi International Film Festival.

very different in character, though the fact that they were made by the same director and script-writer, working in both cases from a literary original, as well as the interest the films have in common in morbid psychology, make it interesting to compare them.

In *Nidhanaya* Lester and Tissa Abeysekera, working from a very insubstantial short story, succeeded in giving their material a much richer significance by rooting the abnormal psychology of the hero in the social milieu of a decadent class and in his declining economic fortunes. (The assumption of some local critics that you can illuminate the social structure only by making films about the lives of workers or peasants is one of the most elementary of fallacies.)

In *Ahasin Polowata*, on the other hand, the abnormal jealousy

of the hero remains an 'odd obsession', a purely personal quirk of character with no relation to anything outside itself. This limitation of the film to doubt derives from the thinness of the novel on which it is based, but the complexities of the narrative structure in the film and the intricacies of the flashes of memory don't, to my mind, compensate for it. Where in *Nidhanaya* the complexities of the film's form arose out of the density of its substance, in *Ahasin Polowata* the technical interest seems to me to have outpaced the experience.

To dismiss indiscriminately every film that is not directly concerned with an economic or political theme as 'elitist' betrays, I think, a very simplified notion of the relations between the economic and political structure and the rest of life. I fear that most

'committed' critics would like to see our cinema take the road of the political theatre of recent years — a prospect that fills me with the deepest gloom. For the political theatre is the creative counterpart of the ideological formulas of the left-wing critics: it shares the same inability to relate the abstractions of political theory to the flesh-and-blood existence of real human beings.

That the political theatre deals so often in allegory may be partly due to the need to circumvent censorship. But it also has a good deal to do with the fact that the political playwrights have nearly always been working from concepts and slogans rather than from observation and experience of life, so that the characters on the stage become flat stereotypes of their social role — as 'capitalist' or 'bureaucrat' or 'worker' or 'revolutionary' — rather than the various and complex human beings (their class character refracted through their individual personalities) whom we know in real life.

Against this background I should like to salute Vasantha Obeysekera's new film *Palangetiyo* (screened in the current New Delhi International Film Festival and shortly to be released for local audiences). It not only marks Obeysekera's coming of age as a film-maker but is highly significant for the growth of our cinema. The strength of the film is grounded in the solidity and depth with which the characters and their relations have been conceived in the script (Obeysekera's own). The personal relations explored in *Palangetiyo* are firmly rooted in the realities of class and social environment, but the characters have the life of individual human beings, and aren't mere stereotypes of their class.

*Palangetiyo* is the story of a young man, Sarath, born into a peasant family who has risen with the help of his education to become manager of a printing press in Colombo owned by a well-to-do mudalali. A clandestine love-affair develops between him and the mudalali's daughter, Kusum; when the father creates

trouble for them, they elope. Sarath takes Kusum to his village home, but Kusum, unused to such an environment, is bored and unhappy; and Sarath's mother and sister are irritated by the fact that she does no work about the house and expects to be waited on.

Recognising the frictions, Sarath takes Kusum back to the city, but since he still has to find a new job, he moves in with her into a shack in a tenement garden. The rest of the film presents the slow disintegration of the marriage under the stresses of poverty, Kusum's inability to adapt herself to her new situation, her longings for the old life of ease and comfort, and her romantic dreams, which she now comes to centre round another young man in the tenement garden. The film ends in a tragic denouement.

The film's greatest merit is that Obeysekera views all his main figures with a critical but compassionate sympathy; there is no attitude of complacent superiority to any of them, no black-and-white representation, whether in terms of morality or of class. It would have been fatally easy to portray Kusum as the stock figure of a spoilt rich girl, but Obeysekera avoids this error. While we realise the immaturity of her romanticism (formed on sentimental novelettes and films) as well as the unreality of her social values, we are still brought to recognise that, given her upbringing and her background, the strain of life in a tenement shack must inevitably be too strong for her. Nor is she, even in the second half of the film, heartless or callous: she oscillates between the romantic attraction she feels for her new lover and a lingering tenderness for Sarath and a guilty sense of responsibility to him. The character is conceived with so much depth that it comes through in spite of the inexperience of the fledgling actress playing the role.

Even the jealous spinster-cousin who creates problems for the lovers in the early part of the film isn't presented as the villain-

ness of the piece. In one of the most powerful sequences of the film, Obeysekera intercuts between the clandestine love-making of Sarath and Kusum and the agonised contortions of body and face of the cousin as she lies awake in bed, tortured by her own desire and her jealous imaginings. The scene evokes in us a kind of horrified compassion. An equally admirable balance is maintained in the sequences in Sarath's village home; we understand the irritation of Sarath's mother and sister at what they can only see as Kusum's pampered selfishness, and yet we are made to share Kusum's sense of isolation in this unfamiliar environment.

For some critics, no doubt, what I see as the virtues of *Palangetiyo* will be damning defects: if all you are interested in doing is in presenting cardboard cut-outs of the bourgeoisie, the petty-bourgeoisie and the proletariat as invariable types, then you will inevitably see *Palangetiyo* as seriously lacking. All I can say is that any caricature of life in these terms would not seem to me to promote either artistic or political enlightenment.

## Theologians . . .

(Continued from page 6)

being held in Colombo. And this will be followed next year by the Latin American Conference. A World Theological Dialogue including the Third World and the Northern Hemisphere, will be held some time in 1981.

The Colombo conference which has adopted as its theme: Asia's struggle for full humanity and search for a relevant theology, is being held at the Holy Family Retreat House at Wennappuwa. The conference terminates on January 20.

# Demythologizing Rukmani Devi

by J. Uyangoda

Three months have passed since the death of Rukmani Devi. Her immense popularity as a singer and an actress as well as the sudden emotions aroused by her unexpected tragic death is being exploited by those clever money-makers of the media. Sinhala newspapers, particularly those devoted to "art", are flooded with over-exaggerations of her abilities, sentimental and silly anecdotes from her life (for example, how she eloped with Eddie Jayamannel) and highly emotional eulogies, which in no way help the reader to form a serious opinion about the artiste—Rukmani Devi. Almost all those scribes are not bothered to evaluate and assess Rukmani's artistic career which runs well over three decades and the contribution she had made to the fields she took part. What is now going on in those quarters is only an exercise of mythologizing Rukmani Devi—an exercise which, in the short run, is also good for their motif of profit maximization. Once the money value of her popularity and sudden emotions generated by her tragic death is over, she will surely be thrown into the abyss of obscurity by the same people who now not only weep themselves, but also make others too weep over Rukmani's death. How Mahagama Sekara was treated is still fresh in our memory.

Here, an attempt is made to trace some limitations as well as capabilities of Rukmani Devi—the singer and the actress.

It is an undisputable fact that Rukmani enjoyed a vast popularity. (Ironically enough, she had been a Sinhala artist, though born Tamil). Irrespective of this immense popularity, one must not fail to recognise the fact that Rukmani belonged not to the present, but to the past which is better to be

forgotten as far as the progress of Sinhala music and cinema is concerned. She had been a singer and an actress both in the stage and the screen. One of the most important factors regarding Rukmani's career was that she was brought up under the shadow of the first which had been a conditioning factor of Rukmani's future career. In the field of Sinhala Cinema (more South Indian than Sinhala!) she was among the pioneers. As a singer she represented, more or less, an intermediate and regressive stage that lies between, so to speak, the Ananda Samarakoon era and Amaradeva era. She came to the theatre at a time when the Sinhala stage drama was almost entirely dominated by a "tradition" which invariably lacked any artistic quality or independent potential. As a film actress she was among those people who, though they can be regarded as the pioneers of the film industry, knew nothing about the art. Both as a stage and film actress she was reared under the tutelage of B.A.W. Jayamanne, who was more than prepared to supply his "recipe stuff" to his predominantly urban and semi-urban customers whose aesthetic sense eventually today remains mainly sub-standard. It was under the guidance of those "Masters" who were mere imitators of North Indian tradition that Rukmani began her singing career.

What is being emphasized here is that, Rukmani began her career at a time when all the fields of art she participated in were either in a state of utter backwardness or in their formative stage in which the signs of future deformities were already explicit. This fact is all the more important because Rukmani's future too was, to a greater part, to be determined by those conditions.

Rukmani, throughout her career, had been a product, a prisoner and a victim of this backwardness and deformity of the arts she practiced, which no one, including herself had ever understood. It was as a singer—only as a singer—she showed some potentialities though she never developed them in an independent and progressive way. She possessed a unique voice—a genuinely oriental feminine one—but voice alone does not a singer make! Like most of our present day artists, she lacked vision and insight, two vital qualities to be an artist proper. The result was that she allowed herself to be further exploited by those charlatans who claimed to be creative artists.

Rukmani exhibited some traits of a wonderful singing style of her own, but, unfortunately, Sinhala music, both in lyrics and melodies, was so poor, vulgar and corrupt in quality that she remained where she began, throughout her life. From a musical career of about four decades, what has she left for the coming generations? Nothing constructive, nothing positive. Most of the lessons the younger generation should draw from Rukmani are negative ones. Had she left any memories in the minds of her enthusiasts, it was only as a "nightingale" which alone does not suffice to keep her memory alive.

I think, it is in this "nightingaleness" that the strength as well as the weakness of Rukmani remained. She should have projected and developed this capability along a path that could have led her to a position free of those fetters imposed upon her by the epoch in which she lived. Moreover, it would have enabled her to leave a legacy to be inherited, a tradition to be followed,

(Continued on page 21)

# Relevance and criticism

by A. J. Gunawardena

Mr. Reggie Siriwardana is the last person in the world I would want to disagree with where matters of artistic judgement and discrimination are concerned. I am happy to find that we have no reason to quarrel: We are on the same side even on the question of 'relevance'. Mr. Siriwardana says (*Lanka Guardian*, Dec. 15):

"As for relevance" I grant that term has been recently over-worked as a critical cliché and often misapplied". This is precisely what I was driving at in my original piece (Nov. 15) which, admittedly, was written in the heat of the moment and may have lacked the apparent rhetorical lucidity of Mr. Siriwardana's more practised voice.

I am as much for 'relevance' as Mr. Siriwardana is. If I was 'glancing at' anything (certainly not the article that he refers to, which I haven't read), it is the modishly 'engage' critic's habit of

## Demythologising . . .

(Continued from page 20)

for many a generation to come. But without being conscious of her own capabilities and limitations, she remained, until her death, a sweet victim of, to use a common cliché, vicious forces of commercialization.

Of course, Rukmani is not to be blamed for all her weakness and failures. Most of the limitations she had were imposed upon her by the epoch she lived in. Her major weakness in this context, was that she failed to understand the necessity of shattering the fetters, so to speak. For that task it would have required a greater knowledge, courage and virtuosity and a broader outlook than what an ordinary artist possesses. Being a mediocre, if not ordinary, artiste, she was not called upon to perform such a gigantic task by the forces of history, as Hegel may say.

discovering 'relevance' where precious little art seems to exist. This has been my recent experience with several musical events that have received the imprimatur of such critics. Music is only the latest victim of this habit which has already created much havoc in Sinhala writing, drama, and cinema. It will touch Television too, whatever the economic auspices of the programming. This tendency, however well motivated, ultimately hurts the growth of relevance in the arts, a cause which I hold dear.

Since the mid-fifties, a particularly escapist theory of beauty has provided the central set of beliefs in the Sinhala arts. This regressive aestheticism can be corrected only through the agency of *substantial* works of art which encounter reality in other terms. The critic's function becomes especially responsible at such a time, for the Seal of Approval can easily turn into the Kiss of Death. Notably so in the field of music where we are still in the midst of a process of secularisation.

The South Asian musical culture, of which we are an inalienable part, has always given primacy to the voice. To quote an unimpeachable authority, Ravi Shankar, "All forms of Indian music are based on the voice. Although instrumental music developed its own technique and style, fundamentally it imitates singing". This fact we must acknowledge, whether or not we wish to change. Hence my reference to the 'authentic mainstream of song.'

Originality too has to be seen against the same background. The 'copying of a tune' does not make a song 'second-hand.' The South Asian musical culture has always treated melodies and ragas as common property, a practice that pre-dates the cinema by centuries. Moreover, our late affiliation (re-affiliation?) with the North Indian stream made

the borrowings altogether necessary. And I can assure Mr. Siriwardana that some of the melodies were eminently worth naturalising.

Mr. Siriwardana's aside about 'Indian music being essentially chamber music' also betrays a partial view of our parent tradition. 'Indian classical music, however elitist in some of its phases, has never meant the enervation of voice, or the precious cultivation of vocal chords. A perfect example of what I mean was provided the other day by Lakshmi Shankar. She did use the microphone, but she could also have held an audience of two thousand with her naked voice. My point, surely, is not that the microphone should be proscribed, but that the voice must not become an appendage to it.

Incidentally, Lakshmi Shankar's recital was, for me, two hours of unalloyed musical pleasure. I did not, however, understand a word of what she sang. To say this is not to 'ring the bell backward', but to suggest the deep implications of the nature of meaning in music. And to hint at possible affirmations in the tradition represented by Rukmani Devi.

## 1971, the JVP . . .

(Continued from page 15)

he too, like Dr. Colvin R. de Silva, has produced a political thesis which is "a complete distortion of a historical event and its objective reality."

A word to Dr. Carlo. Before the hurly burly's done, and when the battle's still on, Dr. Colvin R. de Silva and the Old Left leadership will be on that side of the barricades i. e. "on the side of the Versailles against the Communards". You can safely put your money on that, Doc.

As for Mr. Siriwardana, (who is always a delight to read), he has yet to tell us how he characterizes the JVP and 1971 in "a precise and strict" political sense.

# The House that Jack built

Sub-Collector's 'Bungalow',  
Kalpitiya, Repair of

Many a time afore now have I raised my voice in lament, regarding this matter, but none has hearkened to my prayer. The repairs still continue to be unrepaired. The situation is desperate, deserving of the utmost sympathy, and calls for ready despatch and deft handling by the Director of Public Works and his minions who, alas, alack, up to now have displayed an ineptitude and incompetence that would seem remarkable in even a Professor Marrs. The details are as follows:-

1. The trap-door of the lavatory has perished and fallen off its hinges—apparently, somewhere in the miocene age—and has still not been repaired. The lavatory itself faces the kitchen, the floor of the former sloping in the direction of the kitchen drain. As a result, the washings of the lavatory trickle sedately through the doorway and form a tributary, as it were, of the kitchen drain—a highly unsatisfactory and absolutely insanitary state of affairs.

Moreover, the meagre proportions of the special outlet for the lavatory washings, coupled with a natural disinclination on the part of a liquid to seek any but its own level—(an attitude that, in my humble opinion, is one of intense snobbism, deserving the highest censure. Such credenda may be allowed to an august personage such as, let us say, the Principal Collector of Customs, but certainly not to a lowly liquid composed as it is of hydrogen and oxygen with a touch of faecal matter)—make it impossible for the washings to ssek communion with the lavatory drain.

Further, the complete lack of any sort of drainage facilities in Kalpitiya makes the close

## NOTE BY EDITOR:

It is not generally known that Elmer de Haan, pianist, composer, critic, and pedagogue—the bane of his teachers, the scourge of his professors, a thorn in the flesh of Unmusical Ceylon—once served a nine-year-stretch at the Customs where he came up against the full might of the British Empire in the persons of Glanville, Wodeman, Strong, Hoare, Holmes, and Davies, master-minded by archschemer Robert Marrs, Cagliostro of the University of Ceylon. The struggle was waged on the side of the Imperialists with an unbridled ferocity and screaming savagery (increment stopped three times in one day and thirteen times in a single month) that would have appalled a Genjhis Khan or an Attila.

Haan, for his part, faced his oppressors with characteristic urbanity and calm insouciance. Witness, his gentle rebuke, in a little matter of cacography in which Secretary Davies was involved: "At Royal we usually spell 'defer' with one 'F'." Transported to Kalpitiya, Haan immediately set about writing his magnum opus—"The House that Jack built," a report that was hailed on all sides as a Classic, and ultimately led to his dismissal on a charge of 'Insubordination, Indiscipline, and Impertinence.' Whereupon, Haan returned to Colombo and to music criticism much to the dismay and chagrin of our local cacophonists.

- proximity of the lavatory to the kitchen wholly objectionable and unhealthy. As there is no bathroom - where did my predecessor bathe, if ever? I suggest that the existing lavatory be converted into a bathroom - with all modern fittings, of course - and a new lavatory built further down the garden.
2. Many a bitter complaint have I voiced anent the unique qualities of the kitchen chimney. In fact, the longer one dwells in this crib - any other term would be but blatant flattery - the more one is compelled to arrive at the fitting conclusion that the 'architect' who designed this horror had done so in consultation with the Wise Men of Gotham, or had adopted as his model the 'House that Jack built'. It is impossible, otherwise, to explain the crazy scheme that is the basis on which the blue-print of this cottage has been prepared, particularly, in regard to the 'amenities', if one may use such a term in the present context.

The kitchen chimney serves the same purpose as do the dummy funnels on the present-day mammoth liners. That is to

say, it certainly does lend a tone of dignity and cheerfulness to an otherwise drab building of grim and foreboding aspect. But, unlike in the liners, a kitchen chimney should be something more than of mere aesthetic value; it must be of some practical use. This chimney does not, never did, and, in fact, was never meant to emit smoke. Any smoke issuing from it would be promptly regarded by the village yokels—all ignorant Paynims—as a divine manifestation of Allah and they would forthwith invest the chimney with all the miraculous properties of a shrine.

Whenever a fire is lit in the kitchen, the smoke, finding all natural avenues of escape denied it - (both door and window are kept shut continually owing to the abnormally high winds that prevail here) - quietly insinuates itself, with a gentle persistence that is impossible not to admire, through the chinks in the roof into my bed and dining rooms.

I request that it be demolished forthwith and the old-fashioned but readily utilizable trap-door installed instead.



3. The cottage itself is in a shocking state of disrepair. The doors and windows do not shut and the locks do not lock. It is, perhaps, a trifle fortunate that the 'beneficial' effects of the teachings of Christ and His Bishops have yet to pervade this far-flung outpost of British Colonialism, else, the robbers and brigands would have a field day at my expense. The entire building needs painting very badly. I pointed this out to the District Engineer when I first arrived here but he, great soul, being endowed, apparently, with X-ray eyesight, was able to gauge whether the inside of the building needed painting by standing on the road and gazing on the outside. My temerity in suggesting that he inspect the inside was justly rewarded with a withering stare. "Ne sutor ultra crepidam".

4. The pump, an ancient relic of a bygone civilization, has at long last fallen into desuetude. Decrepit and ailing in every joint, racked with the rheums, it carried with extreme difficulty the burden of its years, and now has finally handed in its dinner pail. Silent and unworkable, it lies prostrate on its cement base, a grim reminder of ferrous ephemerality. When I arrived to assume duties, it had already acquired a certain idiosyncrasy as a result of which no one, not even I, could pump water OUT of it before first pouring water INTO it.

I know some clever young jackanapes in Colombo will instantly question this senseless procedure, a modern version, as it were, of the labour of Sisyphus. But we of Kalpitiya, with the instinctive reverence of the yokel for age and its foibles, view with kindly tolerance this imposition on our patience, and none is there, sufficiently lacking in piety, to oppose this view. As the pump has been erected on an open bit of heath across the road, the public make use of it just and when they want. On several occasions I have watched

wayfarers of either sex, making a bee line to the pump from a field adjacent and proceeding to lave the secret parts of their anatomy. The general use of the pump by each and sundry has resulted in the enclosure being converted into a veritable pig-sty. The fence should be repaired and a lock fitted to the gate.

5. The 'bungalow' is situated at the apex of a triangle of land, two sides of which are bounded by the main street of Kalpitiya. It is thus, impossible for the inmates to obtain even a modicum of privacy. Buses ply at all hours along the street, the greater portion of which runs practically flush with the back verandah, which is not enclosed. Hence, the man in the street is a privileged and by no means disinterested spectator of my daily home life. As I do no work whatever in the office, there being no work to do, I am subjected to the merciless scrutiny of every passer-by for the full twenty four hours that comprise a day in Kalpitiya. It is imperative that the entire length of garden be enclosed with cadjans so as to ensure my obtaining the privacy necessary to one of my gentle birth and breeding. This must be attended to immediately. Under the present conditions, I am forced to perform my daily ablutions before the vulgar gaze of the Kalpitiya populace, an ordeal far too trying to a bashful nature such as mine.

It is my earnest hope that this memorandum, couched as it is in language most temperate, yet, sublime, shall be the humble instrument to procure for the Customs of Kalpitiya those several amenities that are considered "de rigueur" to a civilized way of life. "Quousque tandem abutere patentia nostra".

Commending my soul to God,

I remain  
Kalpitiya, Your obedient servant,  
31st March, (Sgd) Elmer de Haan  
1934.

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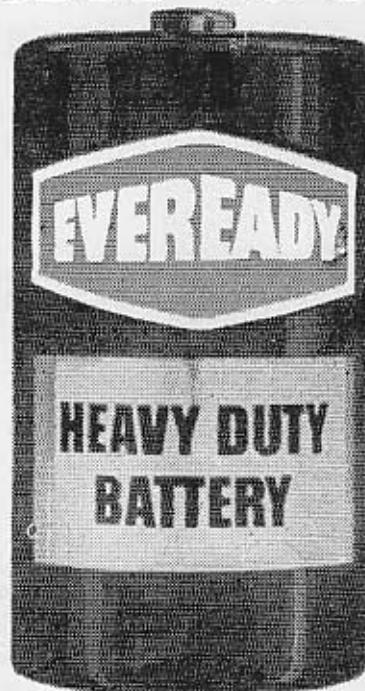
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