

GUARDIAN

'AHASIN POLOVATA'

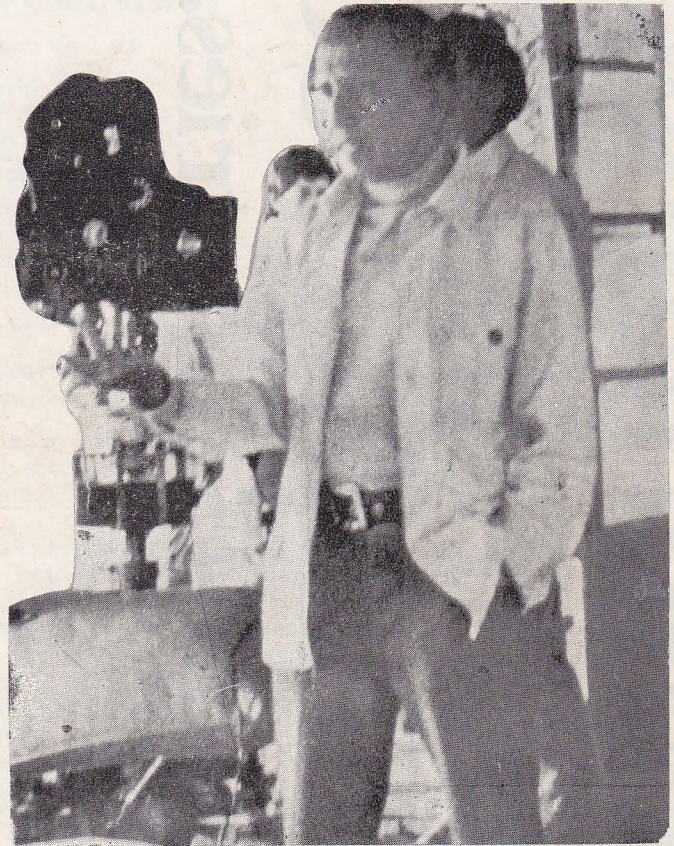
— essay on imagined
adultery

Chandra Wijeratne

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Ayatollah Khomeini



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GARADS

Constitutional impediments

The 'Sun' story that the UNP may consider amending the article in the constitution under which any MP who leaves his party automatically loses his seat has once again set off speculation about one or two Tamil politicians. Any Tamil MP who decided to join the government on his own ran the obvious risk of expulsion. The only way out was for the TULF to keep its ranks together and team up with the government on mutually agreed terms. But that seems out now. Any individual takers? If the answer is 'yes', then the government must clear the path of the constitutional obstacle.

SLFP and Tamils

The SLFP High Command has decided to start a Tamil paper. This, the party feels, is the most effective reply to its opponents who are now publicly insinuating that the SLFP has taken the sinister road of racialism.

The paper is likely to be named after the title of a popular MGR film — "Tomorrow is Ours".

Lake House

Lake House, the building, wears a new look these days all part of an expansion program which is estimated to cost 40 million rupees. Chairman Bodinagoda is thinking big: the newest machinery, a transport fleet, extensions to the building etc. Teams of technicians will soon take wing to the US, Europe and Japan in search of new equipment.

But Lake House has still to crack the hardest nut of all, journalistic professionalism. Another exodus of experienced newspapermen is in the offing to Malaysia and the Gulf. And the new Wijewardena press, now past the blue print stage, may tempt a dozen more to leave the banks of the Beira.

Textile trade

Strikes and lock-outs have put three of the island's major textile factories out of action. While the demands of the unions are largely

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Letters

Of natural disasters and cocksure commentators

"Such is the role of these institutions in a socio-economic order such as ours. To expect such institutions.... etc." Such suchness in Chintaka betrays more than just a cloth ear, it is a sign of confused thinking. Chintaka should do well to think it possible that he may be mistaken; that perhaps he doesn't know all the answers; that some of the valid points he makes would have come across more convincingly had they been presented in more tentative terms. Instead, he opts for the uncompromisingly didactic tone and the cocksure style.

Regarding his bromide about the "surplus generated by the masses" I would recommend to him a study of recent Marxist thinking outside the Soviet Union, and especially of a recent article by Dr. Ian Steedman "Thinking again about profits". (Incidentally, does Chintaka class himself among the parasites or would he call himself a surplus generator?)

When Chintaka speaks of "exploitative societies" he must mean that there are in this world non-exploitative societies. Would he be having in mind the Union of Soviet Socialist Gulags (where troublesome Trade Unionists are locked up in lunatic asylums)? Or, perhaps, the People's Republic of

China where thousands gathered the other day in Tien An Man Square to remember the great Chou and demand democracy and human rights? Or maybe it is Kampuchea he is thinking of?

Chintaka refers to "a society where the administrative apparatus is both representative and open to genuine popular participation". He should tell us where this society is to be found.

Kollupitiya Costain de Vos

Good friend

The other day a Sydney friend was kind enough to pass on to me a copy of the 'Lanka Guardian'. Excellent.

Samson Abeyagunawardena,
Farrer A.C.T. 2607
Australia.

The House that Jack built

I hope you will allow me a little space to say a few words on Mr Elmer de Haan's 1934 letter about repairs needed to a Customs building, resurrected by you in your last issue.

We have, all of us, except the abnormally stupid, been pedantic humorists in our time. We spend much of our childhood picking up a vocabulary; we like to air our latest finds; we discover that

Letters contd. . . .

our elders are tickled when we come out with a new word that they thought beyond us; we devote some pains to tickling them further; and there we are, pedants and polysyllabists all. The impulse is healthy for children, and nearly universal—which is why a warning is necessary; for among so many there will always be some who fail to realise that the clever habit applauded at home will make them insufferable abroad.

Most of those who are capable of writing well enough to find readers do learn with more or less of delay that playful use of long or learned words is a one-sided game boring the reader more than it pleases the writer, that the impulse to it is a danger-signal—for there must be something wrong with what they are saying if it needs recommending by such puerilities—and that yielding to the impulse is a confession of failure. But now and then even an able writer will go on believing that the incongruity between simple things

Solution to Cryptic Crossword No 13

ACROSS—1. class room
8. Lift attendant 11. Fete
12. Minus 13. Knee 16. Canting
17. Keelson 18. Uprisen
20. Steeple 21. Sate 22. Owned
23. Ante 26 Printer's error
27. Estranged

DOWN—2. Lute 3. Setting
4. Roebuck 5. Odds
6. Fitting retort 7. In one's opinion
9. Off course 10. Reentered
14. First 15. Lever 19. New Year
20. Stepson 24. Ends 25. Free.

to be said and out-of-the-way words to say them in has a perennial charm; it has for the reader who never outgrows hobbledehoyhood; but for the rest of us it is dreary indeed.

I notice that you say that Haan was dismissed for this letter; he could scarcely have expected less.

Colombo 10 H. W. Fowler

Reggie Siriwardena, 1971 and all that

We all know that Reggie Siriwardena is a many-splendoured thing but should you give the impression that the *raison d'être* of your paper is to keep painting this resplendent iily? In your last issue alone you carried the following (no doubt unsolicited) testimonials:

"With Mr R. S. whose sensitivity I respect, and with whom I am proud to have been.... etc." (Carlo Fonseka)

"As for Mr. R. S. who is always a delight to read...." (A. Jayaweera)

"Mr. R. S. is the last person in the world I would want to disagree with where matters of artistic judgment and discrimination are concerned. I am happy to find that we have no reason to quarrel".

(A. J. Gunawardena)

Upon what meat doth this our Reggie feed that he is grown so great?

As for Dr Carlo Fonseka he must realise that the tactics of Fabius Cunctator while legitimate on the field of battle and, arguably, in politics, are simply not permissible in polemics. If he is unable to defend his position

that "we must, perforce, choose from among the available political leaders" let him yield with good grace instead of taking cover behind a smokescreen of irrelevancies. Without any evidence he accuses me of being a-political; he misquotes me by alleging that I have "no use for people past their menopause" (the double-entendre is presumably intentional); and finally, he charges me, again with no evidence, with "crying for heroes to follow", and pronounces this adolescent. I have no heroes and seek none; it is Dr Fonseka who has found his hero in Dr Colvin de Silva. My position is that the aims and ambitions of leaders who are long past their political menopause have no relevance to the aims and ambitions of the masses of this country.

Colombo 3 Costain de Vos

Trends . . .

(Continued from page 1)

economic, there is a broader issue involved. Has the free import of garments made the production of local textiles uneconomic?

The once burgeoning handloom industry for instance has reached the stage of near-paralysis. No doubt the Minister of Textile Industry had a sound point when he asked manufacturers to improve quality and design. Local manufacturers of many items have got away with sub-standard products and exorbitant profits in market conditions which allowed him to dictate terms to the consumer.

Import liberalisation does mean competition and therefore a challenge to local producers. But what about employment and the growth of national industry?

Snakes and Ladders on the Campus

With Colombo trailing behind by a week, all the campuses are new open. For the students it's back to the books and the daily trudge to over-crowded lecture rooms. For the dons however it looks like snakes and ladders. Yesterday's Vice-Chancellor is a mere professor, presidents have become deans, deans have been downgraded as heads of departments, while other heads are rolling.

"It is more snakes in the grass than ladders" snapped a senior lecturer who has quietly got himself a fellowship abroad.

While most lecturers are 'neutral' in party politics (either through conviction, disinclination or discretion) several prominent teachers are known to have party affiliations and political sympathies. But the squabbling over posts and perks and academic gang warfare is not strictly according to party lines. Factions within the UNP camp as well as professors who have direct political and personal links with VIP's in the UNP Establishment are engaged in open feuds and backroom manoeuvres.

*** After a long-drawn out battle at the highest levels, Malay Street's favourite lost in the fight for the top post in Colombo. The favourite whose name was mentioned in the official press was suspected of having "SLFP connections".

*** At another campus, two lecturers were interrogated over a nasty anonymous letter about some alleged personal scandal. The lecturers, reportedly left-inclined, were elected to the key posts in the university teachers' association. Was the letter a provocation plant by a rival faction of the establishment?

*** A lecturer who was interdicted nearly one year ago is still in cold storage.

"It's back to the Jennings era". This observation on the recently

re-organised university set-up was attributed to one of the cohort of vice-chancellors now parading in the groves of academe. "No" said an ageing don who has submitted his resignation in disgust over campus intrigue, cut-throatism and job-fixing encouraged not only by political and high-level patronage but in fighting between various UNP factions on the campuses. "It is not the Jennings era" he added in studied disagreement "It is either the Nissanka yugaya (era) or the Kalpage kalpaya. (aeon).

Nissanka is of course Mr. Nissanka Wijeyeratne, Minister of Education and Kalpage is Dr. Stanley Kalpage (ex-Professor, ex-Senator) who is Secretary of the Ministry.

But Dr. Kalpage wears another hat. In fact, he is now known in various Faculty Clubs as G2. G4 (or Gang of Four) was the title conferred by the Sunday Times on Mr. Ridgeway Tillekeratne, another secretary, but in the previous regime. He held four posts—Director of Information, Director-General of Broadcasting, Chairman, SLBC, and Ministry Secretary. In an era where family mattered even more than it does today, Ridgeway Tillekeratne, bureaucratically speaking, was his own grandpa. Or, as Mr. Premadasa, then in Opposition called him, Dr. Goebels.

For the UNP, such memories of omnipotent bureaucrats have proved very short indeed. Dr. Kalpage is not only Secretary of the Ministry but Chairman of the Grants Committee.

In fact, the UNP has done much worse. It proudly pledged the restoration of "university autonomy" and "intellectual freedom".

The Grants Committee, a British concept, is an institutional device which seeks to serve precisely these two purposes. As the UGC report published by the UK government said the Committee is both a buffer and a shock absorber. It safeguards the universities from "political interference"; it is an 'earnest of the government's willingness to provide money without strings; it enables the universities to enjoy public funds without fear that one gift might turn out to be a Greek one!

In the senior common rooms where the UK report is as familiar material as the writings of Eric Ashby, Bowra or Balogh, it is now being said that the government has come to the campus bearing a Malaysian gift!

Dr. Kalpage, a distinguished academic, served as a professor for 4-5 years in the University of Malaysia, a country which practices a peculiar type of "democracy" that may not be controlled with the clinical efficiency of Singapore but is nonetheless a fake democracy as the recent elections proved. Malaysia also introduced racial quotas into the university and all institutes. Racialism is the thinly concealed principle which determines appointments and promotions in the thinly concealed principle which determines appointments and promotions in the administration.

Merit and merit alone was yet another election promise and platt

form boast. "Varsity admission on merit alone" announces the 'Daily News' echoing Dr. Kalpage. True 30% will be on an all-island basis on merit. True, 15% will be reserved for "educationally under-privileged districts" and that's fair enough, if it is fairly practised. But 55% will be on "the relative population of the 24 administrative districts". And what pray does this mean in effect?

Student politics is a familiar irritant to those who like nicely controlled universities which function like high-grade tutorials.

Under the new dispensation, Students' Councils have become Student Assemblies which can be dissolved by the authorities at any time. These assemblies cannot invite speakers from outside unless permission is obtained.

Even before the New Order, one campus president had drawn up his own list of acceptable speakers and told the students he must have advance notice of the questions they might ask the guest lecturer after his lecture! ●

ULF, JVP warnings on racism

The United Left Front expresses its deep concern over the rapid growth of racist propaganda and communal tensions in recent months. Any provocation or thoughtless act can lead to a repetition of the communal violence experienced in 1977 and even earlier" says a press release by the ULF.

"Extremist groups are not merely seeking to operate through some existing capitalist parties and organisations, but are also creating new ones.

"The part played by the UNP government in this state of affairs is to add fuel to the fire. On the one hand, the UNP claims to have improved communal relations by some constitutional changes and by offering Cabinet and District Ministerships to capitalist and pro-capitalist leaders among the Tamils. On the other hand, important Ministers are allowed to

indulge publicly in the most unabashed communalism without being checked. The growth of racist organisations is fostered."

The JVP in a similar statement entitled 'Do not be misled by communal provocation' says, "A conspiratorial move, calling for a boycott of Tamil shops, is spreading throughout the country today, and points up the danger of violent communal conflicts arising once again. Those who are largely responsible for this criminal act are the capitalist political parties of this country. We condemn both their attempt to achieve their narrow political objectives through stirring up communal passions against the Tamil speaking minority among the Sinhala-speaking majority as well as their attempt to mislead the Tamil-speaking population into communal conflict with the Sinhala-speaking people." ●

Hameed in Maputo

When Foreign Minister Hameed returns from Maputo things should be a little clearer on whether the conflicts within the non-alignment movement will make the road to Havana even rougher than it seemed when the foreign ministers met in Belgrade. The agenda for Maputo was exclusively African but there is little doubt that the anti-Cuba campaigners have now been joined by an anti-Vietnam group.

Mindful of the responsibilities of Sri Lanka's chairmanship and the principle of consensus, Mr. Hameed himself has wisely kept off controversies. During the Somali Foreign Minister's visit for instance, he paid a fine tribute to Cuba, the next host. Somalia, egged on by Egypt, started the anti-Cuba campaign before the Belgrade meeting by using Cuban

help for Ethiopia as a convenient issue. The move to 'boycott' Havana or to change the venue collapsed.

Now it is an anti-Vietnam campaign based on the Kampuchean controversy. Peking has fired another broadside at Vietnam in the course of which it states that Vietnam has lost its credentials as a non-aligned member. The Non-aligned nations may well ask Peking (and for that matter Washington or Moscow) what right it has to pronounce a judgment either way. Washington and Moscow will be greatly amused if a non-aligned country says that some NATO or WARSAW pact member has lost its credentials. Is Peking which hates hegemonism developing the same big power psychology?

Despite diplomatic pressures which could be traced to the new Washington-Peking axis, Sri Lanka has so far maintained the correct posture of allowing the non-aligned to decide who is non-aligned and who is not. If Mr. Desai comes here, he is sure to strengthen Sri Lanka's present position on these matters. Individually India still carries the greatest weight within the movement while the African group enjoys the same collectively.

After Sadat's abortive move to make peace with Israel, Egypt is isolated. Sadat's own moral prestige is so low that he was recently snubbed by Ayatollah Khomeini when he tried to play Washington's messenger and self-appointed peace-maker in Iran. The Ayatollah refused to see the Shah, Iran's Farouk and Sadat's honoured guest.

JVP on Tamil issue

The government has recently declared that several incidents have taken place in the North in connection with bank robberies and the killing of several persons. We do not know who is responsible for these incidents. It should be stated that terrorist tactics of this nature are detrimental to the struggle of the Tamil people, as an oppressed section of our society, to gain their basic human rights. The J. V. P. is of the opinion that the struggle of the Tamil people for their rights can only achieve victory as a result of the triumph of the socialist revolution. We therefore condemn terrorist tactics that place obstacles in the path of the socialist revolution in its march towards victory. We do not encourage or approve of such tactics.

Newspapers and their editors have the right to publish or refrain from publishing according to the availability of space and considerations of taste. What they do publish, or better still, what they fail to publish, often serves however as a good indicator, not only of the psychology of the editorial staff, but also of the political leanings of the publishing organisation. Such selective editing also lends itself towards the distortion of other peoples views.

'The Ceylon Daily News' published a JVP statement in their issue of the 4th with selected passages and phrases missing. We reproduce the statement in full, featuring in bold type, the portions censored by 'Lake House'.

"However, it is to be seen that this, and other incidents, have been utilised to launch a programme of harassment and repression of the Tamil-speaking people of this country. Over the past weeks, we have also seen an attempt to stir up racialism while taking shelter behind the

activities of a few persons. It is at a time when such an atmosphere prevailed within the country that it was announced that these bank robberies and murders had taken place. This was an excuse to deploy more members of the Police and the Armed Forces in the North.

Day of the bookies

Emerging from the underground after a brief exile in the mid-seventies, the local book-makers are now having a field day. Immediately after the last General Elections there were hopeful hints even from some Ministers about reviving racing at Nuwara Eliya. There is an unconfirmed report now that one of our business tycoons who is a patron of the British turf is keen on having the sport once again at Boosa.

On November 11 last year, the book-makers who publish the race-card announced a BTT of ten percent on the bets to be paid out by the punter. The argument was, "When you pay for your mineral waters and chocolates you pay a BTT which is included in the cost of the article... In England the betting charge is paid by the punter..."

The punters who have always been forced to accept the terms of the book-makers (inaccurate and incomplete information, for

instance) thought it was not at all fair for him to pay this tax. The Department of Inland Revenue they say, has not imposed it on the punter. In Britain, the tax is there, of course, but it is optional. The punter can, either pay on the bet (on a sliding scale and not a flat 10%) or pay it when he wins. If he loses the bookie coughs it out.

There now seems to be a tug-of-war even among the bookies. One of the Big Three whose political influence is so great that he does not want to compromise has, however, made a minor concession—a payment to the punter of 1/3 on place dividend as against the previous 1/4 on equal betting units of Rs 25 and under.

The punters in turn, feel that even this concession may not last long once the book-makers feel the pinch—if the punters' luck change—G.D.

(NEXT: Politics of Racing)

"Since this situation arose, a series of clashes between sections of the armed Forces and the Police on the one hand and the Tamil-speaking people on the other, have been reported; on the 5th of December in Jaffna town, on the 14th, 15th, 16th, 17th and 18th December in Velvettithurai, on the 16th December at Vasavilan junction and on the 17th December at Palaly. According to information received, large numbers of shops and houses have been destroyed and set on fire. The actions of the Government Agent, Jaffna, in the face of this situation, has been highly commended.

"Just as rumour was used to spread racialism, divide the population and urge them on to kill each other in August 1977, we can see an attempt being made to stir up racist feeling by spreading similar rumours today. A letter bearing the stamp of a high Police official which is supposed to have been circulated throughout Police Stations also brings to mind the incidents of August 1977. Since the government has not yet taken any definite steps regarding such incidents, the doubt naturally arises as to

whether the government lends its concurrence to this situation. Persons who have access to modern equipment have also begun to roneo and distribute literature which arouses Sinhala chauvinist feeling. At a time when the people are fast reaching the stage where they can no longer shoulder the burden of the socio-economic crisis which has been foisted upon them by the state, an attempt can be discerned to divert the attention of the population away from their situation in this manner.

"The J. V. P. strongly condemns this programme of action on the part of the government and protests against such activity, while calling upon the state to halt the repressive measures adopted by the Police and the Armed Forces against the Tamil people immediately. The J. V. P., which appeals to the Sinhala and Tamil working people of this country not to be led astray by activities directed towards the arousing of racialist feelings, condemns the actions of racialist organisations and individuals in stirring up racial disharmony and calls upon all organisations of the working class to come forward to combat this situation.

"The Tamil people of the North live in constant fear due to harassment by the Police and the Armed Forces. Any visitor to the Jaffna peninsula today can see the Tamil-speaking people of the North living in a state of terror comparable to that which affected people all over the country in April 1971. While we strongly protest against the use of terrorism by the state against a section of the population of this country under the pretext of combatting the terrorist activities of a few, we call upon the government to call an immediate halt to these actions."



'My Son Sanjay Is Keeping a Low Profile.'

Why CP (M) opposes Indira

Drawing some parallels in passing between Indira/Sanjay and Sirima/Anura and in the post-election situations in India and Sri Lanka, Mr. Mathew Kurian, former Kerala MP, and a leading member of the Communist party (M) said that both the Congress and the Janata party will soon re-unite and close ranks in order to play the parliamentary game of sharing power. Mr. Kurian, founder-editor of the wellknown Indian journal "Social Scientist" was addressing a meeting in Colombo sponsored by the Institute of Social Studies.

Though the Janata party had pledged the fullest restoration of civil rights, it was not only dragging its feet in some ways but it has also re-introduced a "mini-MISA" (The Maintenance of Internal Security Act), and was attempting to curb trade union activity through a new Industrial Relations Law. The com-

bined forces of the Left had led a counter-attack and Delhi, the capital, had seen the biggest working class demonstration in recent years.

Nevertheless, added Mr. Kurian, his party had decided to support the Janatha party against Mrs. Gandhi at the Chikmigular by-election because it considered such a step the best tactic at this particular moment. This support he emphasised, was exclusively on civil rights issues, and not on socio-economic or class issues. It is necessary to support the government in undoing the "black acts" committed by Indira, Sanjay and the small coterie which ruled India under emergency. But the C. P. (M) will remain vigilant in regard to certain disturbing trends such as the growth of the semi-fascist R. S. S. and its

(Continued on page 22)

A tavern in the town

From a correspondent

Kandy, the second biggest city in Sri Lanka, was without arrack, beef, cigarettes and bread as the year began. There was arrack if you were willing to stand for it in the hot sun in a queue which quickly folded up around twelve. The beef you could get if you went out to Madawala or Akurana where the Muslims made sure they got their beef.

Cigarettes were there, of course, at fancy prices. And bread just disappeared the moment it was baked, only sandwich loaves were available at Rs 2.50 a loaf of two pounds. They wouldn't even cut a pound of that for you.

On the face of it there seemed no reason why the public was being harassed like this. The papers assured us of tons of flour. Cigarettes were available in plenty and the CWE was doing everything to see that everyone got a smoke. If arrack and beef were not available, why that was a thing of joy for those committed to having a *dharmadweepaya*. You couldn't imagine that a government with a five sixth majority was really in power.

Perhaps the best commentary on the present state of affairs, which may be prevailing well beyond Kandy, is the little comedy that is now being played in Colombo Street, Kandy.

Tipplers were quite overjoyed when they discovered that a third liquor shop had been opened for their comfort, with the new year. But hardly had the cheers died down when the newly opened tavern put down its shutters. Apparently, you couldn't have more than two liquor stalls down the same street.

The law abiding tavern keepers seem to have discovered it for themselves and without waiting

for the law to discover it they decided to close down. But this meant that there were no taverns down Colombo Street, only foreign liquor shops and bars.

The tavern which had been doing business down this street for a number of years gave it up this year unable to find a political backer to renew its rent. An impression had been conveyed to the quarters that mattered that it wasn't even seeking political backing. Well that settled it. The tavern is now closed, the roof needing quite some repair.

Meanwhile to the surprise and delight of the saddened tipplers the new tavern which put down its shutters soon after a grand opening has opened up once more.

They hope this would be permanent.

For the moment the new tavern appears to have got over the tricky excise infringement. The petition drawers who had complained seem assuaged, the residents who suddenly discovered a street full of bars and saloons like in a Wild West township seem appeased.

The Dharmishta settlement they have come to seems to be that the foreign liquor shop sells liquor in bottles the bar sells drinks and the newly opened tavern no drinks but bottles. But nobody is sure whether the rules of this game are being strictly kept. And all this within ear shot of the Dalada Maligawa.

Back in business

'Coming...coming...coming..." Since the days of the controversial D. B. Nihalsingha, the Sunday papers have proudly announced the arrival of Hollywood box-office hits like the 'The Towering Inferno'. But for the picturegoer it was a long wait. The Hollywood majors (Warners, MGM, Paramount, United Artists, Columbia etc) insisted that it was their inflexible rule not to sell distribution rights to State monopolies.

The State Film Corporation, set up by the UF, enjoyed sole rights as importer and distributor.

The present government has not changed this law. Yet, the *Sunday Observer* reported that 69 films have been sold to Sri Lanka under an agreement signed by the Kinematograph Renters Society of Bombay (agent for the US consortium) and the Film Corporation. The contract was negotiated after a visit to Bombay by the Corporation's Chairman, Mr. Eric de Silva and its Consultant, Mr. George Wickremasingha.

Was the report strictly correct? The real buyers of the 69 films are private Sri Lankan firms, notably the Ceylon Theatres Ltd. (the Gardiner group) and Liberty Cinema (the Cader firm). The Film Corporation has endorsed this agreement. Each film has been sold on a percentage basis, the average being 50-50 of the takings. The US companies can now take their share but they have agreed to release the 6.5 million rupees of blocked funds for a film complex of the corporation.

Meanwhile the film world is buzzing with the news that Mr. Anton Wickremasinghe, a film producer and businessman who emigrated to California will be the Corporation's next boss. Mr. Eric de Silva is only acting Chairman. Mr. George Wickremasingha, a former director of the Government Film Unit, held a top post in Ceylon Theatres Ltd for almost ten years.

IRAN (3)

The perils of repression

by Mervyn de Silva

The turbulent events which have made Iran's protracted (and still unresolved) crisis one of the major upheavals of recent years project the image of a situation where nobody is master. Winter holiday or journey of no return, the Shah's departure is a demonstration that the parvenu Pahlevi dynasty has lost, perhaps irrevocably, its once regal and resolute will. It is unlikely that the Crown Prince, even if the monarchy is not destroyed, can ever parade himself as a King of Kings.

Ordered to fill the breach and restore law and order, the Army found itself trapped by a familiar and unhelpful logic inherent in the situation — harsher repression which may incense the people more or appeasement which may be read as a sign of weakness and therefore an invitation to more violence. Torn between conflicting counsel and by factions in the high command advocating different responses, General Azhari bowed out but not before the Chief of Staff, who fled, and several other generals who quit, became casualties of that brief exercise which also cost thousands of innocent lives.

Mr. Sanjabi, the respected leader of the National Front, heterogeneous alliance of anti-Shah forces which forged their unity in militant action, did play a prominent part but he would be the last to claim that he was the drama's primary source of inspiration.

Prime Minister Bakhtiar was thrust onto the stage when an increasingly helpless Shah opted for a token half-hearted gesture of reconciliation which might at least give him time to make a less dishonourable, and hopefully

temporary, exit. Denounced by the National Front, Mr. Bakhtiar clings on.

As for external forces, the two superpowers, mutually suspicious and equally watchful, had almost cancelled each other by reciprocal warnings against direct intervention. The U.S. had to take note of the Soviet Union's logistical advantage of a long border and the "doctrine" of vital security interests legitimised in the Iranian-Soviet treaty of 1923. The American fleet reportedly moving out of Subic Bay for the Gulf did not materialise. Iran is not the Dominican Republic, not even Lebanon. In any case this is not the omnipotent America of the 1950's nor is it the world of the 1960's. And so, Washington was reduced to an unwilling exhibition of what Dr. Kissinger, gleefully enjoying the pleasures of a non-combatant and gloating over the predicaments of the rival party, would call the Carter administration's indecisiveness and impotence.

The director

The real actors of Iran's grand drama are the people. But if anybody could be named its director it is surely the frail 78 year Ayatollah Ruhallah Khomeini, the exiled ecclesiastical head of the Shiite Moslems who number nearly 30 millions or 90% of the country's population.

Though a recent CBS interview attributes to him a contrary opinion, the Ayatollah has consistently disclaimed any intention of replacing the Shah as the ruler of Iran. His present role strikes me as something between Gandhi of India and Makarios of Cyprus.

His genius lay in sensing the mood of the people, and seizing

"At the height of Algeria's anti-colonial struggle, the Algerians and the French fought a symbolic battle over the veil. The French posing as 'progressives' wanted to unveil Algerian women; the Algerians saw in the veil and in Islam a way of resisting the coloniser. The veil recently reappeared on Iranian campuses, not so much as a sign of Islamic piety but as an act of defiance against the Shah's government and its perceived westernism". — (Prof. Foad Ajami).

the hour; in picking his targets with unerring accuracy and in the perfect selection of slogans which while responding to the inmost feelings of the vast majority also gave the masses in motion a unifying sense of purpose and direction.

The people were ready to move; the bursting point had been reached, and the critical moment arrived. A man who had lived in exile for over a decade thousands of miles away, and his advisers, felt the pulse beats of a people whose anger could no longer be contained by fear. But not the Shah, not the government, not the army or SAVAK not diplomatic observers and not even knowledgeable reporters who had, it is true, written from time to time about rumblings of popular discontent.

What happened in Iran says something about the nature of repression. It clogs all channels of communication. It alienates the rulers from the ruled, and finally leaves the people with no choice but to take to the streets, guns, tanks and helicopters notwithstanding, and come what may.

The Shah had honestly believed that his only opponents were some radical, recalcitrant students abroad, some landowners who had suffered under land distribution and the

mullahs who had resented the decline of their traditional influence over their flock as the modern State began to concentrate all power in its hands.

Out of this situation came some curious paradoxes.

In Latin America, the security apparatus of many a repressive regime has been set up, its senior officers trained, and its monstrous gadgetry perfected on American expertise—in prestigious institutions like Washington's Police academy.

As repression becomes the regime's sole pre-emptive strike against popular discontent (and not the ultimate weapon against a perceived danger) and turns in fact into the orthodoxy of the governing groups, the "pure" intelligence operation (that is, information gathering) is soon subordinated to what Premier Bakhtiar himself described last week as "the other side". It becomes the day-to-day arm of repression. One does not need to identify sources of dissatisfaction, analyse its causes and present well-informed reports. All one has to do is to suppress the discontent, using greater and greater force. In the long run, it only sends the opposition underground, intensifying the hate and the anger, until the moment of maximum danger arrives and catches the complacent rulers completely unawares.

So with SAVAK, an institutional byproduct of the Shah-US alliance.

The Iranian army and the elite corps of SAVAK have had close institutional and personal links with the US military and intelligence establishment. In fact Gen. Robert Juyser, Deputy Commander of the Allied Command in Europe was recently in Tehran to 'talk to the generals personally', drum up support for the Bakhtiar regime and to ask the Army 'not to rock the bloody boat'.

However rhetorical, Carter's human rights homilies embarrassed the Shah, an important and staunch US ally though not an outstanding devotee of the 'Magna

Jimmy Carta.' The CIA, the US press reported, was quietly ordered to loosen contacts with Iranian opposition groups. So that source of information dried up.

The CIA had to lean even more heavily on SAVAK which had already become the cruel arm of State terror and a popular hate-symbol. Yet when the explosion came, Carter blamed the CIA for poor intelligence and the Shah dismissed the SAVAK chief.

In this instance at least, the CIA was more the casualty of US foreign policy. For all the uplifting talk about 'morality in foreign policy', the US 'national interest', as perceived by the governing parties demand the defence of the Shah one of America's vitally important allies. It is not possible to be with the oppressor and the oppressed at the same time.

Moslem movement

December sees the end of Moharrem, the holy month when Shiite Moslems mourn the death of Imam Hussein defeated in the battle of Kerbala (Iraq) by Yasid in the 7th century. From his headquarters (actually a unimposing complex of old cottages) thirty kilometres from Paris, the Ayatollah sent a message to the oil workers of Iran: "It is your religious duty to strike..."

So, in the curious chemistry of the Iranian crisis, oil and (holy) water did mix.

Besides Iran's nodal location (Fred Halliday's phrase) 'its tremendous importance is based on its status as oil producer and supplier.'

Oil wealth had nourished the Shah's imperial visions and these ideas, however distastefully grandiose they may have seemed to some eyes in Washington, could be comfortably accommodated in US grand design, and more particularly in the Nixon-Kissinger Doctrine, itself a product of the defeat in Vietnam, a self-critical reassessment of US power and its limitations and an appreciation of the need for new tactics and new 'security' arrangements.

As Michael Tantzer a specialist writer on world petroleum has remarked, oil, of all commodities, is "the supremely political one". It was the Shah's weapon, the manifest repository of his power. How neatly the Ayatollah and the opposition turned it against him?

S. Korea Private prosperity, public discontent

The recent 'elections' to the South Korean National Assembly saw a protest vote against President Park Chung Hee's economic politics, says *Financial Times* (London) correspondent Richard C. Hanson.

At the outset Mr. Hanson explains that there are few features of democracy in South Korea and that South Koreans have only a very limited democratic weapon open to them since the National Assembly is mostly powerless and in any case the President personally appoints 1/3rd of the 231 member body. Furthermore like in Malaysian 'elections' held earlier in 1978, the campaign issues were severely restricted. In South Korea it is illegal to speak out against the Constitution, the President and 'sensitive' governmental policies. This left 'economics in command' of the campaign issues.

In term of votes, President Park's Democratic Republican Party (DRP) came in second place while the opposition New Democratic Party (NDP) emerged first. This is said to be the first electoral setback suffered by President Park since he came to power in a US-backed military coup d'etat in the early 1960's. Diplomatic observers feel that the setback mirrors widespread public antipathy towards the present state of the S. Korean economy.

The S. Korean economy is conventionally portrayed as a 'strong and stable' one, and a model of what can be achieved by a policy of unbridled export-led

(Continued on page 24)

Background to Indo - China conflict

By Amara Senanayake

It was hugely amusing to read an 'analysis' of the events in Kampuchea featured recently in a national daily, which characterised the recent overthrow of the Pol Pot regime as a "Putsch." Lenin informs "us that the term 'putsch', in its scientific sense, may be employed only when the attempt at insurrection has revealed nothing but a circle of conspirators or stupid maniacs, and has aroused no sympathy among the masses ... Whoever calls ... a rebellion a 'putsch' is either a hardened reactionary, or a doctrinaire hopelessly incapable of envisaging a social revolution as a living phenomenon."

Lenin's devastating indictment is altogether too harsh to be levelled at our commentators writing in the mainstream media. The problem I think, is not only one of world outlook and class standpoint, but even more importantly one of methodology. Western domination of the global information structure reinforces cultural colonialism and intellectual dependence in the periphery. The cliches of the Western correspondents trip off the typewriters of their local mimics with a readiness that would both amaze and gratify their gurus. And so, we read of a "putsch against Pot Pot," of "Vietnam's desire to have a federation of Indo-Chinese states," to "threats to peace and stability in the ASEAN region," to "the historical antagonism of the Kampuchians for the Vietnamese" etc. etc. ... As Fr. Francois Houtart, (the renowned scholar and Rector of Belgium's prestigious Catholic University at Louvain) said in Colombo a few months back, when Western nations go to war it is presented

"SIHANOUK APPEALS FOR U. S. HELP"

(Headline last week)

"In early September 1969, I left by plane for Hanoi to attend funeral ceremonies for the revered founder and leader of the Vietnamese independence struggle, the late President Ho Chi Minh. I had deeply admired 'Uncle' Ho. He belonged not only to Vietnam, but to Indo-China, to Asia, and even to the world, for he stood for the rights of oppressed people everywhere; in the former colonies, and for the blacks of the United States as well. For me, an Asian he was above all a fellow Asian.

"As the plane took off I thought how ironic and sad it was that my first visit should be occasioned by the death of my friend. I learned later that hardly had my plane left — right at the airport — than Sirik Matak turned to his friends, of whom Lon Nol was one, and said that now was the perfect time to depose me.

"From sources in the United States I learned later that the CIA had drawn up a directive a month earlier recommending support for such a coup which a CIA contact on Lon Nol's staff had promised 'would take place in the near future'. By the time I flew off to Hanoi, the CIA had already assured Lon Nol of their support. It remained only for Lon Nol and Sirik Matak to work out the details and agree on the timing. As part of this scenario, I was to be assassinated if I happened to be in the country at the time."

— Prince Sihanouk — "MY WAR with the CIA" (Pelican)

as a fight over rational ideas such as democracy, fascism etc; but when non-white peoples fight, Western ideology presents it to us as being rooted in some irrational historical fear and ethnic antagonism of a peculiarly un-W. A. S. P.ish character. It is a pity verging on tragic irony that these value-loaded analytical tools have been accepted and utilized by our own 'intellectuals' seemingly oblivious to the fact that these self same tools are in fact ideological weapons wielded subtly against our own peoples.

What took place?

What took place in Kampuchea? The processes underway in the politics of Kampuchea are incomprehensible if taken in isolation from that country's social for-

mation. Of course this is true not only of Kampuchea, but of all societies at any given time of their evolution. Such is the materialist conception of history. Likewise, it is necessary to recognise the relative autonomy of the political factor even though it is determined in the last instance by the given socio-economic formation. Such is the dialectical method.

The impact of French imperialism on the Asiatic mode of production that predominated in pre-colonial Kampuchea was significantly less than the corresponding impact it had on the feudal structures that prevailed in neighbouring pre-colonial Vietnam. In Kampuchea there was only a peripheral growth of colonial capitalism and consequently only a

miniscule proletariat. Pre-capitalist relations of production predominate in the Kampuchean social formation. The classic problem of how to establish and ensure proletarian leadership, or more correctly, hegemony within the anti-imperialist revolutionary process in a society where the proletariat constitutes a numerically small minority, was a problem which confronted Kampuchean revolutionaries in an extreme form. Under the guidance of the Third International, this problem had by and large been resolved in the case of China and Vietnam.

The Chinese Revolution

As Jean Chesneaux notes in his excellent book 'Peasant Rebellions in China - 1949', while there had been very many unsuccessful peasant jacqueries over the centuries in China, the victory of the Chinese Revolution was ultimately determined by the Communist party's success in ensuring proletarian leadership of the peasant movement in terms of ideas, men and structures. Having based itself originally on the working class, the Chinese Communist Party retained its proletarian character even after it retreated to the countryside following the defeat of the urban insurrections in 1927, by ensuring through ideological struggle the hegemony of proletarian consciousness within its ranks.

It may be said in retrospect that Ho Chi Minh who headed the Far East Secretariat of the Comintern, achieved this with an even greater degree of success than the Chinese Marxist-Leninists. The hegemony of the proletariat was ensured in terms of ideology as well as social composition in the case of the Vietnamese Communist Party. In this regard it is important to recall that even when Ho Chi Minh decided to change the name of the Vietnam Communist Party, the title he opted for was

that of the Vietnamese Workers (Lao Dong) Party — this in a country with a predominantly peasant population (the party of Labour of Albania is a similar case in point).

As long as the Kampuchean revolutionaries were incorporated in the Indo-China Communist Party, (linked to the Comintern) under the leadership of Ho Chi Minh, the hegemony of proletarian ideology within the Kampuchean revolutionary process was ensured. However, when the specificities and the concrete conditions of the national struggles in each of these countries objectively necessitated the dissolution of the Indo-China Communist Party, this factor (i. e. the Vietnamese Party's guiding role) began to lose its decisive influence. In a series of internecine conflicts and factional struggles the Sorbonne-returned Khieu Samphan-leng Sary-Pol Pot group gained the leadership of the Kampuchean revolutionary movement. Though highly dedicated revolutionaries and militant anti-imperialists, this group adopted the politico-philosophical positions not so much of the proletariat, but rather of the petty-bourgeois peasantry. They took up cudgels against imperialism from the class standpoint of the non-proletarian intermediate strata. There were four main factors that led to this and reinforced it.

The objective factor

Firstly, the objective factor which was the Kampuchean social formation, the nature of which we have briefly dwelt upon earlier in this article. Such a social milieu inevitably and spontaneously generates a non-proletarian peasant petty-bourgeois mentality against which a relentless ideological-theoretical struggle has to be waged if it is to be prevented from becoming the hegemonic ideology within the anti-imperialist ranks. Obviously, the Kampuchean revolutionaries were unable to sustain this struggle successfully.

The other three factors will be discussed in the next part of this essay.

NEXT: Sino-Soviet schism.

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'Ahasin polovata' — essay in imagined adultery

by Chandra Wijeratne

A critic familiar with the history of the Sinhala film and the role that has been played in its development by Lester Pieris faces a peculiar difficulty in speaking about his more recent films. This difficulty was clearly dramatised during the showing of his newest film, *AHASIN POLOVATA*. The film is preceded by a short documentary on Rukmani Devi including extracts from some of her earliest films like *BROKEN PROMISE*, *KELA HANDA*, *DASCON* etc. These extracts, with their stazy sets, unbelievable hamming, pedantic dialogue, artificial characters in artificial situations, demonstrated vividly the pioneering role played by Pieris in rescuing the Sinhala film from that abysmal situation and moving it forward towards a more realistic reflection of Sri Lanka and its society. This is a historic task that he performed from *REKAWA* onwards, and most notably in *GAM PERALIYA*.

Acknowledgement of this role and the respect due to him should not, however, inhibit us now from looking critically at his more recent film.

AHASIN POLOVATA is a technically accomplished film, but its skill is placed in the service of a basically banal theme of love and remorse among the bourgeoisie of Sri Lanka. The story tells of a doctor whose marriage to the daughter of an equally affluent feudal family ends in disaster because of some doubts raised in his mind regarding her fidelity towards him. His doubts are aroused when he sees photographs showing her in the company of another man, taken before her marriage. He questions her, she refuses to answer, and, as a result



*Tony Ranasinghe and Vasanthie Chathurani.
A scene from 'Ahasin polovata'*

of this argument and conflict, she has a miscarriage and dies. He is overcome with remorse, withdraws into a shell and nurses his guilt. He is finally pulled back by the affection shown towards him by his wife's younger sister.

The film is a detailed portrayal of the anguish felt by the doctor and the growing intimacy between

for the narration— a movement to and fro in time in which most of the story of the doctor and his wife is narrated in flashback and recollection, juxtaposed with the growth of his relationship with the younger sister. Even this, however, cannot totally hide the weaknesses of the story.

But what really characterises the film is a basic refusal to look

Vittorio de Sica once said that the only drama of the middle class is adultery; had he known our middle class as depicted here, he might have added that its greatest drama is imagined adultery.

him and his sister-in-law. But, viewing the film, one feels that the basic situation is too slight to bear the weight of the film. It is probably because a chronological development would have exposed this deficiency that Lester Pieris and his script-writer resort to a very sophisticated framework

beyond the surface. The characters act in a certain way, but, although some comments are made on the inability of the two protagonists to understand and communicate in spite of their affection for each other, it seems never to occur to either the director or the script-writer to

ask why these characters behave in that particular manner. Why is it they cannot communicate with each other? Why do they react emotionally to certain stimuli? Why is he so short-tempered and why cannot she be frank with him? In short, how has the consciousness that they demonstrate in their attitudes and actions been determined? To have asked such a series of questions might have shifted the film from being a merely precious exercise in the depiction of the superficialities of emotion, to a searching examination of the realities of human emotion in their social setting and a deeper analysis and exposure of the bankruptcy of bourgeois society in Sri Lanka.

The breakdown of relations between husband and wife is shown to us through two incidents: he reprimands her for playing the piano while he is reading and he laughs at her hair-style when she is ready to go out with her friends. These lead on to the climatic questioning about the photographs. However heavily they may be surrounded with an artificial framework of symbolism, one refuses to give these incidents the emotional weight they are intended to carry—because they are depicted as incidents in themselves; they do not ever become the surface demonstrations of an underlying tension—because that tension which underlies all marriage, and bourgeois marriage in particular, is not within the grasp of the film. Or to invert this problem—if the Sri Lankan bourgeois is so bound up with the surface minutiae of life, should not the situation lead to an analysis (in the film) of his class background, his emotional immaturity, and his sense of insecurity?

Vittorio de Sica once said that the only drama of the middle class is adultery; had he known our middle class as depicted here, he might have added that its greatest drama is imagined adultery.

Lester Pieris knows the bourgeois milieu in Sri Lanka very well but he does not use his knowledge

to sharpen our understanding of this class. Is it because he also accepts their own valuation and estimation of their worth? One could contrast him with a filmmaker like Claude Chabrol whose searching films of the French bourgeoisie critically reveal, as it were, the total essence of bourgeois life.

Final analysis

In the absence of any deep understanding that could have been obtained through the kind of questioning indicated above, Ahasin Polovata, in the final analysis, a trivial film and triviality is not what our most accomplished film maker should now be giving us, though one might say that, from *DESA NISA* onwards, he has been doing precisely that. One hopes that with the projected film of *Village in the Jungle*, he will find his way back to meaningful realist cinema, a cinema that depicts not merely how things happen, but also why things happen in the way they do.

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Movie maker vs the critics

by Gamini Dissanaiké

In a recent interview vouchsafed to a Sinhala film weekly ('Suratura') Lester James Peries lamented over the calibre of our film critics. Nowadays, he announced, the guys (not dolls) who scribble about road accidents and parliamentary affairs have emerged as critics. Can they write anything meaningful about the cinema?

Mr. Peries was returning to a subject on which he had chosen to pontificate from the pulpit of the Catholic film seminar several months ago. There, he had pronounced *ex cathedra* that a group of 'new Marxists' was monopolising film criticism ('Reds under the Bed' and all that) and judging movies from a purely political standpoint. Thereupon, the 'Daily News' columnist 'Saturn' came into the controversy sideways and offered a striking contrast in expertise between an eminent band of film critics of yester-year and the present day blurb-writers and scribblers. (It is pertinent to note that in this distinguished group 'Saturn' included both Mr. Reggie Siriwardena, the most regular contributor to this magazine and the critic who now edits 'Lanka Guardian')

Having given the reader this brief synopsis of the debate, I must state at once that I have no intention of waving a red rag at any Papal Bull. A few words, however, on behalf of our tribe.

There could be one or two critics who have not dealt in the journalistic trivia that has earned such scorn from the august Mr. Peries, winner of so many awards, judge at so many festivals and old pal of Lindsay Anderson.

A short step

To borrow a phrase from Mr. Gunadasa Amarasekara, there may be critics who write only on "profound human experiences" such as the sentimental outpourings we find in 'Agony' columns of the Sunday press, material very dear to the, "meaningful" cinema of the Lester Peries of 'Ahasin Polowata'. From 'lonely hearts' to 'lonely artists' is but a short step for some critics and some artists.

Speaking for myself, however, I admit freely that I have, as a journalist written about parliamentary matters as well as road accidents. I feel certain that the experience has sharpened both my political awareness as well as my road sense. At least I am conscious of direction, of where artists are going, of vehicles of communication and why casualties take place.

Writing from the lobby has only strengthened my belief that the arts, particularly those addressed to mass audiences, cannot be divorced from society and environment, both local and external. The more one understands such phenomena, the better one responds to the arts.

If Mr. Peires has assumed that there has been no 'film culture' in Sri Lanka, what about the many publications, discussions and film societies whose ongoing work and commitment to the medium that was seen and felt for the past 20 years? And hasn't Mr. Peries himself participated in these activities at least a few times though invited many times? And haven't people like Siri Gunasinghe and Mahagama Sekara, Dharmasena Pathiraja and Vasantha Obeysekara attempted to examine some major social problems through their works? Taking these three groups (including the critics) as a whole, were they not responding to the cry of the Third World in terms of cinema made loudly and consistently by such artists like Pontecorvo, Solinas, Ousmane, Mirdal Sen etc.?

And reverting to accidents, I am now almost sure that Lester himself is a 'casualty' of our cinema and, considering his direction of development after "Gam Peraliya" (1963) makes it fairly clear that this film can be identified, in retrospect as a 'historical accident' of the Sri Lankan cinema. To my mind, the strength of that film, though romanticized, lies in the screen-play of Reggie Siriwardena. Pitifully estranged from the masses, part and parcel of the upper petit-bourgeoisie but a good technician, Lester makes films that reflect and serve interests of his own social class. negative and defeatist in content and glossy in form.

The proper setting

His latest release "Ahasin Polowata" (From the Sky to the Earth" alias "White Flowers For the Dead") is a case in point. It also strikes me that Cairo was the proper setting for this latest award to Lester. This film is as much a betrayal of Lester's talents as Sadat's half a Nobel Prize was a prize for his treachery to the Arab and Palestinian cause.

When awarding the prize for "the best film from the Third World" the judges said "for the precision and realism with which this film has portrayed the social life in Sri Lanka ..."

A few words then about social reality and art. Without philosophising one could say that the reality of a thing embraces all its essential aspects. If more of such aspects are identified and known then more of this reality can be grasped. Social reality would concern the essential features of an ever-changing society—evolution and revolution. For one to be fully conscious of the nature of conflict in society and the relationship between individual behaviour and social life, and of the tensions and struggles which arise from social inequalities is to comprehend social reality at a higher level. This is the level of understanding of Tolstoy for instance, as Lenin observed.

It is not only that society is cleaved into classes which are in constant conflict but the struggle itself shapes social change and transformation. The artist who grasps this fact, intellectually or intuitively, approaches his material with a certain maturity. Whatever their medium, such artists strive "to crystallize mass consciousness," as Frantz Fanon put it. Lester Peries himself has on occasion acknowledged this truth. But in his own descent into crass sentimentality and romantic triviality he has ignored social reality.

Title belied

And moving from the abstract to the concrete or, rather to the earth as the title of our film in question suggests, "Ahasin Polowata" is based on a weak novel by Eileen Siriwardena. The book was (according to Lester) personally recommended for a film by Dr. Ediriweera Sarachchandra! The film is about two middle-class families and, in the main, about the personal experiences of Dr. Sarath the protagonist. His wife dies giving birth to their first child and he views their brief relationship in retrospect. He tries to see their relationship in a better perspective. In the end he takes his young sister-in-law for his second wife. Here, the director is on his favourite ground and as usual, tries to portray the whole situation in highly individualistic terms and stereotyped characters, completely ignoring the larger matrix of social relationships. He has uprooted his characters from social forces—they are like gossamer, eternally floating in the sky and, despite the title of the film, never come down to earth.

None of the main characters—Sarath, Vinitha, Pushpa, Vijay or Emanis have been depicted as creatures of their milieu. Nor is there any complexity of feelings. What was the cause that broke down the married life of Vinitha and Sarath? Was it over the hair-style or the former's teenage relationship with her cousin Ravi who died long ago? What prevented Vinitha from discussing that episode frankly with her husband? And, could Sarath who loved ballroom dancing with his wife and appreciated her pianoplaying, have so outrageously objected to her hair-style or her playing his favourite melody? Was it because they were so individualistic and the tragedy was a result of 'fate'? Are we to take seriously the comments of Emanis to his master that "though the Wijeratne family is rich, they are bad people; anyone who joins that household will be doomed"? Or the words of Vijay to his brother-in-law: "Vinitha was irascible; you never understood her"? It seems that though both Sarath and Vijay were medical men, the former was blissfully oblivious of even the rudiments of psychology or psychosomatic maladies! Funnily enough, Sarath who turned the searchlight unto himself tries to redeem himself by taking his own sister-in-law's hand. Yet, we are not given a convincing reason for such a union. If Sarath and Vinitha represented the same social group and yet headed for disaster, how could ano-

ther one be averted with his union with Pushpa? And how on earth could the latter couple come down to earth unless they commit 'class suicide' in Amilcar Cabral's phrase and move onto higher levels of understanding?

The director who is both confused and confusing is responsible for making a bewildering film when one tries to relate it to society.

And how good is the film even in terms of bourgeois art? One could say that it is a welcome sign to see a film dealing with an adult experience. But does the film strike you as an adult experience? Where were the continuity, consistency of character relationships, conflicts and dramatization? (cf. Piyal and Nanda in "Gam Peraliya"). The late Rukmani Devi in a newspaper interview told us that the trifles deserve great attention in family life. Very true. But this film does not offer any such "trifles" in a convincing manner nor tell us why the candid communication between husband and wife ebbed away towards tragedy.

Lindsay Anderson had a positive viewpoint when he tried to depict the sick-society of his own country in "If" and "O Lucky Man" and so did Louis Bunuel with his "The Discreet Charms of the Bourgeois". It is not unfair to compare and contrast three 'international' film makers, is it?

The decline

And not even all those flowers (eclipsing the Chelsea Flower Show that Her Majesty graces every year) that nearly swamp the film and the lyrical photography of Donald Karunaratne could redeem this weak movie. Acting talents were wasted. Many camera angles were faithful plagiarisms taken from the Western cinema. The music was sheer cacophony. Editing was mediocre.

Summing up, "Ahasin Polowata" clearly reflects the decline of its maker and as one of our tribe aptly puts it—it is "Kabeleng Lipata" (from the frying pan to the fire) for the Sri Lankan cinema. In the movie Sarath's aunt (the late Rukmani Devi) reminds him of the line that he has once inscribed in his prize-book to the effect that he would never allow his mind to retreat into a cave. Over the years, Lester's artistic imagination and creative ability likewise seemed to have retreated into a similar cave. Our tribe of new critics have made periodic attempts to tempt Lester James Peries out of his seclusion as a 'lonely artist'. However, it seems to have been a wasted effort. Quite obviously, the best thing to do now is to let him languish in his cave and roll-a-rock over the entrance!

Which way for the Left?

(7) Janatha Sangamaya

Janatha Sangamaya (People's League) was founded in December, 1977 by a group of political activists who helped to build the JVP. They were actively involved in the '71 insurrection but broke away as a result of debates and criticisms that took place, especially, while in detention, on JVP policies and programme. The objective of the Janatha Sangamaya is to unite all revolutionary forces.

Premapala Hewabatage, Patrick Fernando and Wasantha Dissanayake of the Executive Committee talk with **Gamini Dissanayake** of the 'LANKA GUARDIAN'

Q: When and why did you break with Wijeweera and the JVP?

A: We left the JVP or were made to leave. This happened after the insurrection on various occasions up to 1976. There was no adopted procedure on, either to join the JVP or to be expelled from it. Some comrades, for instance, the District Secretary for Kegalle, Sarath Wijesinghe died in the struggle without knowing that he had already been booted out by Wijeweera from the JVP. However, the main causes for these departures were (a) disagreement with the theory, programme and policy of the JVP as being un-Marxist and/or incorrect, (b) disagreement over the attitude of the JVP leadership with regard to the mistakes committed by the movement, (c) refusal to accept the attempt made by the leadership to shirk the responsibility for the struggle from the point of view of a Marxist revolutionary and (d) the anti-democratic procedure adopted by the leadership in the theoretical struggle against the article "Internationalism or Opportunism" written by Wijeweera and inflicted on the movement as its official view.

Q: Why did it take you so long to realize these shortcomings of the JVP? Surely, groups like Sanmugathasan's, Keerthi Balasooriya's "Kamkaru Mawatha", G. I. D. Dharmasekara, Gamini Yapa and others made critiques of the JVP pre-

viously. Didn't these have any impact on you?

A: Well, the obvious and, of course, the main reason for that is our deficiency in grasping Marxism-Leninism, its organisational methods as well as the class struggle in our country. On the other hand, we were not very alert to the necessity to look at our own work critically and struggle assiduously against our own mistakes. The JVP at that time did not have such a style of work and we doubt very much whether it has remedied the deficiency. Even with regard to the JVP itself our knowledge was deficient and the majority of the comrades came to realize the true nature of the JVP only after they were brought together, from various parts of the Island, to the prisons after the April struggle. There, we had the chance to exchange views and information from all over. There were many comrades who had already realized many shortcomings and mistakes in the movement but had stuck on in the hope that they could successfully struggle from within and rectify them. With regard to critiques made by other organisations, the training we got from the JVP then, just as it is now, made us look at them with hostility and thus prevented us from fully appreciating even the valid criticisms. Here we must mention though, that some of their criticisms were factually incorrect or were malicious in content.

Q: Would it be correct to say that your organisation is more representative of the original JVP than Wijeweera's party today?

A: Actually, the majority of the old cadre is neither with Wijeweera nor with us. However, the majority of the old cadre with revolutionary aspirations is closer to us than Wijeweera's JVP.

Q: If this is so, why don't you call yourselves the JVP? We gather that you once considered the idea of calling yourselves the (New) JVP or the JVP (Marxist-Leninist). Why did you abandon the idea?

A: Adopting the JVP name, we accept, is an easy method of profiting by the immense respect that people have towards those thousands of heroes and heroines who sacrificed their lives in the struggle. It is also for Wijeweera than for many a more devoted and responsible comrade in the movement to stake a claim in this, since he was the most popularised leader. He and his group were never slow in cashing in on this popularity. Actually, they had already done it even before the Janatha Sangamaya was formed.

We were interested more in learning from and profiting by the historical significance of the '71 struggle than in a cheap tug-of-war over the name.

Q: Rohana Wijeweera has publicly denounced our organisation as comprising "Traitors" who fell on their kness in front of Felix Dias Bandaranaike and conspired with the bourgeois state apparatus to destroy the JVP" What is your response?

A: Branding all, especially, other organisations with revolutionary inspiration and intent, blindly as traitors and opportunists is a cheap tactic Wijeweera adopted always to prevent his followers from being influenced by criticisms of others whether valid or not. This is his idea of theoretical struggle

and is the main form of such struggle in the JVP even today.

We, of course, reject his charge of being stooges of the government who fell on our knees before Felix etc; with the contempt it deserves. Moreover, there are more comrades with us than with him who got far more severe punishments (including 3 sentenced for life) from Felix's infamous tribunal. Not only is there no person with us who helped the state apparatus in the CJC or other cases, but also there aren't any persons who involved themselves in helping with the investigations of the CID prior to or after the insurrection. On the other hand, there are people, right at the top of the JVP who even in 1970 went from house to house with the CID betraying comrades who hid themselves in temples while comrades gave up their lives in the struggle and others who betrayed more than a hundred before a night ended. The best witness against this base allegation would be Wijeweera's own conscience if he has one that is. Let him knock on his conscience.

Q: You yourselves have published a self-criticism concerning the events of 1971. However, your position on the current theory and practice of the JVP isn't that well known. What is your position?

A: The current theory of the JVP, just as it was in the past, is a hotch potch from various sources. At one time, Regis Debray and Che Guevara were the main lending agents. Later on Satre and Trotsky replaced them. The whole unholy mixture is liberally seasoned with quotations from Marx, Engels and Lenin taken out of their context of course, with both ends decapitated in most instances and is then presented as Marxism. Anything is acceptable so long as it helps Wijeweera to extricate himself from the theoretical or practical problem he is faced with under the circumstances. In order to get the help of Mr. Bala Tampoe as well as international publicity with the help of the 4th International the leaders while in prison and

during the CJC trials espoused Trotskyism. They even boasted that the biggest branch of the 4th International would be built up in Sri Lanka. Once out of prison, however, though clinging onto the main concepts of Trotskyism, they refuse to identify themselves as Trotskyites and have toned down their previous criticisms of USSR and Cuba. Right about-turns and somersaults could be expected in the future.

Q: How do your criticisms of Wijeweera, the JVP and 1971 differ from the critiques made by other groups?

A: We do not consider Wijeweera as an ultra-special and indispensable person. The JVP and the '71 struggle we consider as a creation of the youth of this country in search of a revolutionary change in society. This strata in turn was and is the creature of the existing socio-economic conditions. This progressive force should be directed correctly. Our criticisms too, would be valid only if they serve this end. We do not criticise personalities but rather their policies and programme. Our policy with regard to criticisms of other Left organisations too, is the same. We do not accept that the '71 struggle was initiated or directed by foreign powers. Though reactionary forces did profit by the deficiencies of the '71 struggle, we cannot say that, that alone is sufficient to brand the JVP as a CIA agent etc;

Q: What kind of evolution would you envisage within the JVP? Where do you think the JVP is heading?

A: The intention of the present leadership of the JVP is to come to power by hook or by crook. It is irrelevant whether it will be through the parliament or by an armed struggle or even a coup. They would modify their theory and tactics accordingly. At present, though they still talk of revolution, their program of work is wholly parliamentary. Their manifesto is the best evidence for this. It bears no relation whatsoever to a programme of a revolutionary party. If the fond dreams they have conjured up,

in gaining power through parliamentary elections, especially among the new cadre, are shattered, it would be quite natural for them to lean towards an ultra-Leftist and adventurist conspiracy.

Q: How do you explain Wijeweera's huge popularity today in contrast to the weakness of other radical groups including your own?

A: The strength or weakness of a political party or organisation is not gauged solely by quantity or current popularity. A correct leadership and programme is also necessary, for qualitative development. It is true that the JVP is at the moment, the most popular out of the radical groups as you name them. We would say that this popularity is not due to the superiority in theory or programme but rather to the superficial activity of its cadre as well as to the unscrupulous use of the regard the people have towards those who fought gallantly in '71.

Q: Why couldn't the JVP arrive at a correct line even after the defeat of '71? Revolutionary movements have arrived at correct positions even after shattering defeats.

A: Revolutionary movements have arrived at correct positions and will arrive at correct positions only if, as Lenin says they accept honestly their mistakes and shortcomings, search assiduously for the causative agents and remove them, carefully investigating and evaluating objectively one's own organisation. But the JVP leadership after the set back in '71 did none of these but tried safeguarding one's prestige and leadership. Those who tried to make an honest appraisal of the situation or requested one were either boycotted or expelled.

Q: What is your view of the SLFP? Do you think it represents the 'progressive national bourgeoisie' and has a positive role to play?

A: The SLFP originally represented the interests of the national bourgeoisie which was in contradiction with imperialists and their

(Continued on page 22)

Fiction and the Marxist critic

by Reggie Siriwardena

In his book *Tolstoy or Dostoevsky* (1959) George Steiner commented on the paradox that, while the aristocratic Tolstoy had been honoured by the Soviet regime as 'the mirror of the Russian revolution', Dostoevsky, 'the injured and humbled artisan of letters, the condemned radical and survivor of Siberia, the man who had been familiar with every species of economic and social degradation, was posthumously exiled from the "homeland of the proletariat"'. Steiner was writing in the shadow of the Stalin era, when some of Dostoevsky's books—*The Devils*, for instance—were taboo because of his right-wing political beliefs in his latter years.

Things have changed since then in the Soviet Union. Whatever the restrictions on contemporary literature, the wraps are off as far as the classic writers of the 19th century are concerned. In anticipation of the 1981 centenary of Dostoevsky's death, the Academy of Sciences of the USSR has been producing over the last few years a monumental thirty-volume edition of his *Complete Works* in Russian. When the Russians honour one of their great writers, they do him proud: this edition includes not only all of Dostoevsky's novels and short stories (in a variorum text) but also the surviving manuscript drafts and notebooks for the novels, as well as articles, diaries and letters—all accompanied by editorial commentary and notes. Nothing even remotely comparable has been produced in English for, say, Dickens; and no student of Dostoevsky will ever need anything more by way of text.

But the 'rehabilitation' (so to speak) of Dostoevsky's fiction in the Soviet Union raises afresh

the question of what meaning his work has for the contemporary reader. Marxist criticism has never been quite at home with Dostoevsky—understandably, since the novelist, in his years of artistic maturity, was also, in his public life, the champion of Tsarism and the Orthodox Church. Steiner draws attention to the fact that George Lukacs, who wrote voluminously and admiringly on Tolstoy, devoted only one 'indecisive and superficial' essay to Dostoevsky. The great 20th-century vogue of Dostoevsky has been in the West, where he has been hailed as the explorer of tragic and timeless realities of existence, as the forerunner of existentialism and the philosophy of the absurd.

Yet, as I shall try to show in this article, Dostoevsky can well be brought within Lukacs's concept of 'critical realism' that is, to quote Arnold Kettle's definition, 'literature written in the era of class society from a point of view which is sufficiently critical of class society to reveal important truths about that society and to contribute to the freeing of the human consciousness from the limitations which class society has imposed on it.' If Lukacs didn't see Dostoevsky in these terms, it was, I think, for two reasons: that he was, like most Marxist critics, put off by Dostoevsky's reactionary political ideology, and that Lukacs's conception of 'realism' was too narrow and mechanistic. Dostoevsky's realism isn't of the photographic kind: as he said in a famous letter to Strakhov, 'I have my own idea of reality in art; and what most people will call almost fantastic and an exception sometimes constitutes for me the very essence of reality. The ordinariness of events and the conventional

view of them is not realism in my opinion but, indeed, the very opposite of it.'

The question of the relation between ideology and art which has bedevilled much Marxist criticism of literature is a large and complex one to which no complete answers can be offered in a brief article; but I would suggest that in literature—at least, in good literature—ideology never exists, as it were, in the raw. It is incarnated, or modified, or sometimes even completely transformed, in the writer's imaginative vision of his world, which is the mode through which creative literature (as distinct from intellectual discourse) communicates. And that is why critics who read a novel in the same way that they would read a political treatise or a political pamphlet are wrong.

There are cases of a false ideology distorting the writer's vision (this, perhaps, is what happens in Dostoevsky's *The Devils*). But there are also cases where the artistic imagination runs counter to the writer's ideological intention and corrects its bias. In *The Brothers Karamazov*, for instance, Dostoevsky no doubt wanted the spiritual faith of Alyosha and Father Zosima to carry greatest weight in the novel, but artistically it is the scepticism and rebellion of Ivan that win the day. (Dostoevsky in a letter written after his religious conversion described himself as 'a child of the age, a child of disbelief and doubt up to this time and even—I know this—to the end of my life.')

There is another fact that is overlooked in simplified Marxist approaches to literature—that relationships of class and power are not limited to the narrowly political or economic sphere. Social

formations reflect themselves in inter-personal, sexual and family relations, and the characteristic strength of the great 19th-century novelists, of whom Dostoevsky is one, is in bringing together the social and the personal.

If we approach Dostoevsky with these considerations in mind, we shall find that there is an underlying unity in his work which transcends the changes in his beliefs. Whether early or late, whether in his secular-radical or his religious-conservative period, his fiction is marked by the recurrent themes of power and money.

In the first volume of Professor Joseph Frank's projected four-volume biography—*Dostoevsky, The Seeds of Revolt: 1821-1849*—there is a story of Dostoevsky's encounter, during his first journey to St. Petersburg, with a government courier who beat his young peasant coachman with his fist, impelling the driver in turn to lash the horses to a swifter gallop. It is easy enough to relate the young Dostoevsky's moral nausea at this sight to the impulses which were to take him a few years later into the radical sect known as the Petrashevsky circle, and ultimately to involvement in the ill-conceived conspiracy that led to his arrest and imprisonment.

But Dostoevsky was to remember and write about this incident nearly forty years later, when his political beliefs were very different, and to imagine 'the young peasant, on returning to his village, being ridiculed because of his sore neck, and then beating his wife to revenge his own humiliation.' This flash of insight is in keeping with the way in which Dostoevsky sees his world in his fiction—in terms of power-relationships. And these relationships of domination and submission are more than political: they extend to the personal relationships between man and man and between man and woman.

What Dostoevsky the thinker believed was that these sado-masochistic elements (to use the language of modern psychology) were a permanent feature of human nature. But we don't have to

accept this view in order to respond to Dostoevsky the artist. We are entitled to see in his art a revelation (one of the most perceptive in modern literature) of the fact that, in a society based on coercion and exploitation, relationships at every level are moulded in terms of power, and that the serf in one relationship might become the tyrant in another. 'A base spirit which has emerged from oppression,' wrote Dostoevsky of his character Opiskin in *Stepanchikovo Village*, 'is itself an oppressor.' But in his mature work we see that not only base spirits but even finer natures like Nastasya Filippovna in *The Idiot* can be distorted by being dominated and exploited.

Behind the character-structures of the people in Dostoevsky's novels lies a society with a tradition of serfdom and bureaucratized autocracy. But, by the mid-19th century, this society was deeply permeated by capitalist relations, and the reflection of this social process can be found in Dostoevsky's intimate interest in money and its power over human beings. From his maiden novel, *Poor Folk*, to his last masterpiece, *The Brothers Karamazov*, money is a pervasive ruling force in his fiction; and the attempt to control other people's lives through money is seen in his work as the greatest violation of human integrity. When, in the great scene that closes the first part of *The Idiot*, Nastasya Filippovna taunts the guests at her birthday party by casting a hundred thousand roubles into the fire, she is asserting her moral independence against a world that has reduced human relations to the cash-nexus, that has transformed human beings themselves into a commodity.

Power and money—these recurrent themes of Dostoevsky are those which dominate the mature fiction of the English novelist from whom he learnt a great deal—Dickens. Yet, to compare their work is to realise that the politically right-wing Dostoevsky was, in his art, a more acute social critic than the populist Dickens. (One recalls Engels's

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Politics and hunger

by Ivan Ribeiro

How the Other Half Dies - The Real Reasons for World Hunger by Susan George. Penguin Books, Ltd., Middlesex, (U.K.), 1976, £1.

During the last two years, grain stockpiling attained the level of the 1960s. These stocks, which are not considered by the m in producing countries as reserves but rather as surpluses, have caused a significant fall in the level of international prices. As a result, the farmers in some of those countries started to reduce their production, arguing that the prices are not remunerative; and the Carter Administration is inclined, among other measures, to return to the policy of "land freeze" adopted until 1973. The reader is certainly aware of the meaning of this policy: to adopt a set of incentives and subsidies to restrict the area sown to grain.

Meanwhile, according to FAO's estimates, there were about 500 million hungry and undernourished people in 1970, and this number is expected to increase by nearly two thirds by 1985. The comprehension of this paradoxical situation (grain surplus and deliberate reduction of production versus people starving) and the study of the ways to resolve it can be considered crucial to our time. Within this context, Susan George's book can be considered a valuable contribution.

The author argues that "the food crisis has too long been presented as the result of nameless forces and, so to speak, in the passive voice. Such and such happens, this or that occurs, but there are no living, visible actors on the stage." George intends to identify who (or what) is acting and to name the names clearly, having as premise that "famine, hunger and poverty are not inevitable, but are caused by iden-

tifiable forces within the province of rational, human control."

Beyond the reach

With this aim, the author has assembled a remarkable amount of information and carried out a penetrating analysis of the activities of some of the institutions that are supposed to deal with poverty and hunger in the world, namely the United Nations and some of its agencies and the World Bank. The author was also concerned with the multinationals dedicated to agribusiness and to other subjects connected to the problem of hunger as, for example, the population myth, technology and the green revolution.

George's analysis of the World Bank is interesting and stimulating. On the basis of a very good documentation, she analyses whether the Bank can be considered as a developer. She demonstrates that the "bankable" approach still prevails as the basic element to determine the effectiveness of a project and shows that the projects, as a rule, still remain enclaves, whose effects are beyond the reach of, and not necessarily related to, the country as a whole and to the rural poor in particular. The way the Bank deals with the problem of agrarian reform and its possible role in improving the living conditions of the peasants is a special point of the author's focus.

Quoting some Bank documents, George shows how its recognition of the fundamental role agrarian reform can play in reducing poverty and hunger in rural areas is not accompanied by concrete support and incentive. On the contrary, she maintains that it has happened that when a country, expanded a process of agrarian reform on the basis of a law passed in Parliament (Chile during the

Popular Unity Government), the Bank decided to withdraw all financial help to that country.

As regards FAO, George studied basically two aspects of its activities: the Industrial Cooperative Programme (ICP) and the Investment Centre (mainly the FAO Bankers Programme). Her conclusions are very interesting. According to her, FAO, within the whole UN system, is unique in its integration of both multinational industry and commercial banks into its official structure. After disclosing some positive and negative aspects of ICP, she asks whether this FAO activity is really necessary when there is another department in the Organization (the Agricultural Services Division) capable of providing assistance to developing countries in search of food industries. Concerning the FAO Bankers Programme (which includes fifteen major Western banks), she criticizes the prevalent "bankable" approach and the excessive placement of loans to food-exporting activities, disregarding production for the local population.

Another interesting part of the book is that dedicated to agribusiness. Attention is paid to how the consumption habits, both in developed and in developing countries, are influenced by the propaganda of the big multinationals acting in the sector. Illustrating her reasoning with American agribusiness (where the headquarters of the bigger agribusiness multinationals are located), George shows that food industries spend more on advertising and less on research than any other industry in the U.S. And with good reason: during 1950-70 milk consumption dropped by 20 percent, while that of soft drinks went up by 79 percent. Fruits, vegetables and potatoes on American tables declined by more than 50 while junk foods enjoyed spectacular gains: unenriched commercial bakery products went up 67 percent, potato crisps 85 percent, ice-cream 29 percent and fruit

(i.e., artificially flavoured) punch no less than 750 percent. This is what certain nutritionists call "commerciogenic malnutrition," and the worse is that these consumption habits do not remain only in the U.S.A., but are disseminated by the agribusiness multinationals in developing countries, deteriorating their nutrition patterns and living conditions still more.

The real roots

George ends her book with two chapters entitled respectively "What can they do" and "What can I do." In the former (by "they" she means those ill-defined groups in positions of power who are supposed to be able to alter the *status quo*), the importance of alternative food sources, immediate food aid, the quick implementation of a World Food Security System, the creation of an early warning system and investment in agricultural development (but not following the "bankable" approach and not without actual income equalization effects) is stressed. Finally the importance of land reform in the context of planned action against dependence in the developing countries is pointed out. In the next chapter, attention is called to the need of organizing people at all possible levels, with the aim of studying the actual reasons and causes of hunger in the world and, simultaneously, to carry out concrete actions destined to overcome it.

These are, in synthesis, the basic topics dealt with in this well-documented, courageous and helpful book. It would not be exaggerated to say that it will certainly help the reader to improve his knowledge of the real roots of the misery and starvation that affect hundreds of millions of people in developing countries.

However, it is necessary to mention that the book was written in a very personal and excessively colloquial style that somehow reduces its effectiveness. George sometimes presents her reasoning in a very linear way, hampering a better understanding of the issues under consideration. This

happens, for instance, when she considers the issue of technological choice as being an option between dependence and self-reliance. No doubt, at a higher level of abstraction, this is a correct assumption. In certain developing countries, however, this issue is much more complex than, for instance, a simple choice between "techniques and inputs supplied by multinationals and consultant companies or a strong local artisan sector to provide farmers with adequate and improved tools," as she puts it. The appropriate decision depends here upon the stage of economic development attained by the country concerned and the respective role of agriculture in the national economy (among other factors), and these aspects should have been mentioned.

Another point that warrants some reservation is the affirmation that one "should study the rich and powerful, not the poor and powerless," a sentence that the author considers as one of the most important of the last chapter.

Although the study of the rich and powerful is a fundamental aspect of the fight for changing the situation of the poor and powerless, it is also indispensable to understand why it is so hard for the poor, living in miserable conditions (and knowing it, as George remarks), to mobilize themselves and to unify their efforts to change their status. This is a permanent challenge for social sciences scholars (without any paternalistic bias) and for people concerned with changing society everywhere in the world.

Break with tradition

'Let's for ever remember our comrades'

(සඳු සමරමු මසාමනාලයරජ)

A 'Niyamuwa' Publication - Price: Rs. 2/-.

The publication of a collection of poems of this nature should in itself be a unique event to us in Sri Lanka. This anthology, published under the auspices of the J. V. P., contains twenty eight short poems written by young men who were incarcerated in connection with the April 1971 uprising. It is not known as to why the editor of this anthology preferred that the authors of these writings should remain anonymous. However, this is not the only reason why the effect of this collection of poems on the reader tends to be lukewarm. If one expects to find in this anthology—and legitimately so—an outburst of suppressed emotions of sensitive young people kept behind bars, he would be disappointed.

The poems appearing in this collection do not depict either the horrors of prison life or the pent up feelings of young individuals in prison. Instead, we find impressions mostly about the

sufferings of those outside prison, experienced vicariously by those inside, and, of course, political harangues. The result is that the emotive power which is essential to any work of art is at a low level.

The editor in his preface introduces this collection of poems as "the first step from our stance to create a proletarian literature and art." This raises an important point. What really is meant by "proletarian literature and art", if there could be such a thing? Neither the preface nor the poems in this collection give us an answer to this question.

The extent to which poetical and even political consciousness could have been engendered by simply writing one's own human experiences appears to have been overlooked by the poets whose works are found in this anthology.

However, publications of this nature serve an essential purpose in that they break the traditional and slavish attitudes adopted by most of the recognised writers. It also encourages the emergence of publications that would discover new realities in the future.

— H. A. Seneviratne

Press opinion

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Another deception

A drowning man clutches at a straw in the hope of saving himself. Likewise the government, which is slowly sinking in the mire of the 'free economy' created for it by the World Bank, hopes to extricate itself by pitching the prices ever high. To avoid the wrath of the people at the never ending spiralling of prices the government is now trying to blame the cyclone relief for its fiscal measures. The Government is not strong enough to face the truth. Its overwhelming five sixth majority now trembles in the face of an economic crisis. The fever will begin to rise only later. The biggest thing that the Government has done in two budgets is to smother the capitalist class with reliefs and privileges. To do that they have had to put the burdens on the poor. Now the Government proposes to levy a tax on the capitalist class, effective only for 1979, to help cyclone victims, but really as a diversionary measure hoping the people will forget the numerous concessions given to the capitalist class. But the tax the government hopes to

levy is only a drop in the ocean and a complete deception of the people. By limiting the tax to 1979 it exposes its hand even more.

ජනදින

Bus services destroyed

From next month private bus owners will be able to run services in competition with the CTB, according to the Minister of Transport. What the government has done by this is to permit the bus mudalalis to raise their heads once more. There is no doubt that the bus service has gone to the dogs. It was in an effort to check this degeneration that the Government changed the CTB into and decentralised the bus service. But that step only increased the expenses of the CTB. We are not convinced that the Government took any meaningful steps to prevent the bus services degenerating and to provide a decent bus service to the public. If the Government says that it has worked to disillusion the people of any faith in nationalised services that we can accept. By what is taking place the Government seems to have clearly succeeded in that.

Which way . . .

(Continued from page 17)

lackeys. Consequently, after having come to power, some progressed into the compradore capitalist class. There is a struggle going on between these two interests for the control of the party. Hence it is just as incorrect to classify the SLFP with the UNP as to expect the SLFP to provide correct leadership to the anti-imperialist struggle or to boost it with the hope of manipulating it for one's own purposes later on.

Q: When you speak of Left Unity do you include the LSSP, CP and JVP?

A: Yes. It is the crying need of the day. Only those who are more concerned with reaping the ultimate glory of the struggle and who conduct the class struggle from the public platforms only, cannot be aware of this. Opportunism cannot be defeated by ranting or mud-slinging or even merely by theoretical struggle isolated from practice. It is exposed and defeated well and truly only in united struggles against the class enemy.

Q: What is your position on the struggle for Ealam.

A: We accept that the Tamils here are entitled to the right of self determination as they are a nation. But according to Lenin, it becomes correct or wrong de-

Why CP . . .

(Continued from page 6)

relative influence with the ruling coalition.

The CP (M) he said regarded both as bourgeois parties based on the landlord class and led by Indian capitalists.

Answering several pointed questions on why the C. P. (M) helped the Janata candidate, Mr. Kurian explained: "We made it absolutely clear we are not in any alliance with the Janata. But in politics, you cannot stand aside. We who had suffered so much at the hands of Indira had to do our best at least to reduce her majority. In other places, we have contested them both and won. We did excellently in Tripura, and we can get some satisfaction from the percentage polled in West Bengal and Kerala."

The Indian bourgeoisie is an advanced bourgeoisie, he said. That is why there was resistance to Indira from both the Right, led by J. P.'s campaign, and by the Left. The issue was democratic rights. The bourgeoisie was divided on what tactics to use in meeting the Indian economic crisis of 1974-75, itself conditioned by the world economic crisis. Mrs. Gandhi chose one way, hoping also to instal herself and her son in power for ever.

We must use this period when there is division in the enemy's rank to unite left forces and offer the Indian people a credible, socialist alternative — a genuine socialism and not the rhetoric and politics of camouflage of Indira. Meanwhile Indira is back, and Sanjay is lying low. We must thwart their efforts at a come-back and another 'dark period'.

pending on whether the proletarian revolution benefits from it or not.

Q: In brief, what is your international policy-line

A: Briefly, our international policy is based on proletarian Internationalization. We oppose both American Imperialism and Soviet Social Imperialism. We accept that we are confronted with problems today with respect to Chinese foreign policy. On the whole we are still studying it in the present context.

The Mahaveli debate

It is almost impossible to dam the Mahaveli debate. A forthcoming book will probably prove the most controversial of all its' title certainly is provocative—"The Truth about the Mahaveli." The author's qualifications are impressive. Mr. Gamini Iriyagolle, son of the late Mr. I. M. R. A. Iriyagolle, Education Minister in the Dudley Senanayake government (1965-70) joined the Civil Service in the late 1950's and served the provincial administration, the Land Commissioner's Department, the Ministry of Agriculture and the Industries Ministry. At one point in his career he was directly involved in negotiations with the World Bank for aid to the Mahaveli Diversion project.

For a long time now he has been sceptical about many of the plans announced by successive governments and the cheerful claims made by experts.

As he says in his "Foreword" he was asked to stop talking and start writing. The prodding came from a critic he could not ignore—his wife—and the encouragement from respected colleagues. The book is dedicated to two such colleagues, Neil Bandaranayake and Mervyn Perera, both of whom died last year.

One of the chapters is titled "Misleading the Public".

Adventure unlimited

V. S. C. Anandan was hitting the headlines during the festive season when he twisted himself once again into the Guinness book of records. Anandan has now launched a Club, called the Adventurers, in order to encourage daring young adventurers like himself, train and set international records. He himself is working at four new endurance records which he hopes to attempt during the coming year. Among them is the record for walking, now set at 314 miles. Also in his sights are a driving endurance and a cycling endurance record.

Cuban campanero

Fidel Castro once remarked that Cuba is not only a Latin American nation, but also an Afro-Latin nation. Nowhere is this reflected better than in Cuba's music—that is, apart from her foreign policy. Ceylonese youth had a taste of Cuba's Afro-Latin music last month when there were several meetings commemorating the twentieth anniversary of the Cuban Revolution. These were truly meetings with a difference. And what a difference! Apart from the speeches by the local politicians (not always convincing in their revolutionary fervour) the rallies featured a visiting Cuban music group, which ensured that the evening ended with a bang. In a masterly synthesis of tradition and modernity, of nationalism and internationalism, of beat and ballad, the band provided the audience with a succession of songs which had the crowd on its feet within minutes. In a display of that rarest of commodities i.e. 'left unity', serious young leftist from all ends of the ideological spectrum were swaying, clapping and toe tapping to the sizzling Afro-Cuban rock rhythms.

The most popular personality of the evening was undoubtedly the band's black drummer-cum-lead vocalist, a portly campanero who looked as if he could have held off a South African armoured column single handed. To the huge delight of the packed crowd two little Cuban children (one, the son of the Ambassador) joined the genial drummer in a spontaneous dance on-stage. The most touching moment of the evening however was a soulful rendition of the wellknown ballad for Commandante Che Guevara. The performance at Colombo's New Town Hall was preceded and followed by other such performances at some provincial towns, and built up tremendous goodwill for Cuba among young Sri Lankans.

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Private prosperity . . .

(Continued from page 9)

growth. However, Richard Hanson reports that this policy has also caused dangerously high inflation, particularly in respect of food prices and housing. Inflation which was 10% in 1977 will be 16% in 1979 while food prices increased by over 22% in 1978. The income gap between the poorest and the well-to-do

continues to widen at a higher pace.

Inflation stems mainly from two sources namely the domination of the economy by monopolies and oligopolies which fix prices and secondly, a policy of liberalized imports. South Korea now imports almost every food item from red peppers to Swiss cheese and U. S. biscuits which were previously absent from the market shelves, writes correspondent Hanson. ●

ZAIRE

West pulls purse strings

Over six months after French and Belgian paratroops, using American airplanes and support personnel successfully repelled a guerilla invasion of the Shaba province of southern Zaire, the country's economy has become even more enslaved than ever, to Western nations and institutions. 'West pulls Zaire purse strings until books are in order' is the caption of an article by Jim Browning recently featured in the *Christian Science Monitor*.

Zaire is the world's leading exporter of the strategic metal cobalt and is also a leading ex-

porter of copper. Despite this abundance of natural and mineral wealth, the dependent nature of the Zairean economy vis-a-vis the West has increasingly underdeveloped the country. Thus, Zaire is now more than US \$ 3 billion in debt to the IMF, World Bank, private banks and Western governments.

The Zairean government is now trying to negotiate yet another loan from the IMF before its next meeting scheduled for march '79. Western creditor nations have refused to grant further short term aid unless the Zairean economic

Fiction and . . .

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preference for the reactionary Balzac over the progressive Zola.) Even in his best novels, *Little Dorrit* and *Great Expectations*, Dickens ultimately evades the implications of his social criticism by escaping into the happy ending which ensures hero and heroine a personal fulfilment in isolation from the rest of society: 'They went quietly down into the roaring streets, inseparable and blessed...' 'In all the broad expanse of tranquil light they showed to me, I saw no shadow of another parting from her.'

For Dostoevsky no such evasion was possible: Myshkin and Rogozhin have to lie down at the end beside the body of the woman they have destroyed. The difference is not merely in the greater genius of Dostoevsky, but also in the fact that the deepening crisis of Russian society sharpened his tragic insight and his apocalyptic vision.

system is "reformed" and there is 'tighter' and more rationalised management of the nations extensive public expenditures, reports Jim Browning.

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